

My name is Reginald Balanga. I'm a Filipino-born Canadian artist based in Toronto. I work with sculpture, installation, drawing, and photography to engage in themes of memories, migratory grief, and belonging. I use mark-making, altered objects, abstract forms, and interventions to portray the states of being temporary, in-between, and out of place.

My formative years were spent in a place where the sky was covered with the leaves of centuries-old mango trees. Under this canopy is my grandmother's ancestral house where I would secretly collect pencils, crayons, and paper from her sari-sari store. Right before I moved to Canada, my grandmother passed away, and this place was destroyed by a typhoon. Since then, whenever I start something new, I reflect upon that place, and draw inspiration from its memory.

My artistic journey began in a rural town in the Philippines, where I had no formal education in art. I taught myself graphic design, digital media and photography to get creative jobs. When I eventually migrated to Canada, I worked in the advertising and design industry for more than a decade, before deciding to pursue an Illustration degree at OCAD University.

During the pandemic, the virus caused long-term effects on my memory and physical ability. It impaired my memory and triggered a chronic illness that hampers my ability to draw. These changes in my abilities prompted me to start making work about my childhood memories, leading me to shift my practice from illustration to fine art and an open disciplinary practice.

I created a series of works that look back at my upbringing. In "We Swept Leaves in the School Yard" and "Country Roads, Take Me Home" I remember my childhood memories in school, the leaves that I used to see, and the landscape of the countryside. In "Imagined Rice Fields" and "Glitched Tabos", I ask how my history could help me find belonging in a foreign landscape.

I have also made public, site-specific and performance work. In "Empty Wrappers", "Locker 3199" and "Hyperventilation", I transform liminal spaces and objects to portray the anxieties of being transient. In "Portable Sculpture No. 2", I carry a make-shift balik-bayan box around my neighborhood, to perform the experience of being disconnected and unsettled.

Recently, I was chosen to attend residencies in Oaxaca and Chiang Mai. These experiences helped me learn their indigenous cultures and contemporary arts in Mexico and Thailand. These residencies helped me find new mentors and friends, and have inspired works such as "Entwines", "Deities of Innocence" and "Dreamt Pages." Most recently, I was an artist-in-residence with the School of Visual Arts, where I completed my work "The Ephemeral Fort."

I want to study at UC Davis because it's a great place for me to continue my inquiry about my positionality and belonging. Being in Northern California, with proximity to the Bay Area, will provide me resources to research the history of Filipino migration in America, and offer the opportunity to experience firsthand the present reality of its communities.

I'm interested in working with the program's diverse faculty - Robin Hill for her work that spans drawing, sculpture and photography; Beatriz Cortez for the themes she explores such as temporalities and imagined futures; Darrin Martin for his performance work and sculpture; Tim Hyde for his expanded photography; Annabeth Rosen for her abstract ceramics and UC Davis' diverse faculty. I'm eager to make use of its facilities in sculpture, photography, video and ceramics. And I look forward to building a community with my cohort.

Lastly, I want to understand California - the place I heard about as a child, where my uncles left for in the 70s, and where they settled and started their families. I want to gain an understanding of why they decided to stay there and why they barely looked back home - to the place where the sky was covered with the leaves of centuries-old mango trees.