

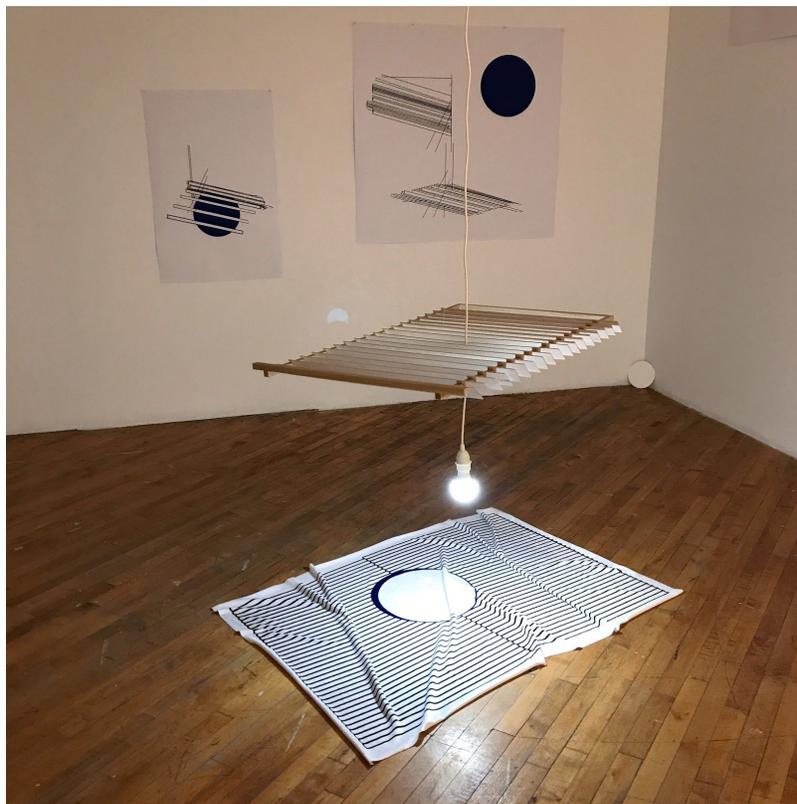
A response to Katrina Mendoza's Softerscape

Flux Gallery, 8-16 December, 2017

**By Mariana Muñoz Gomez
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Katrina Mendoza's exhibition, *Softerscape*, is made up of layers of personal recollections – snapshots of displaced moments, made into spaces to crawl into, or roll through. These spaces are not for you and me, though, but for someone much smaller: perhaps the self we picture as we sift through memories and imaginings. In one of Mendoza's digital prints, a circle about six inches wide peeks out from under some shutters. An illustration shows circles within a structure made up of blinds. In another print, two small circles dance against a metallic pink backdrop.

In the drawings and installations of *Softerscape*, Mendoza takes apart memories that comprise her visual lexicon to reconstruct them as minimalist vignettes in new contexts. Speaking to the artist reveals that she draws from imagery in her mind's eye: awnings and stalls at a Filipino market, dividers in doorways, her grandparents' house.



Installation shot of "kumot" and other works in *Softerscape* (2017), Katrina Mendoza. Image reproduced with artist's permission.

The digital drawings overwhelm each other at times: small moments all laid out for one to see. One installation in the gallery creates a different spatial shift, allowing for glimpses through wooden blinds to find a sleeping circle—the fabric print "kumot," ("blanket" in Tagalog,) beneath. Mendoza brings some of the animated characteristics out of the flat plane, into "three dimensional life"¹ as acrylic objects. One sleek acrylic circle leans coolly by a silk awning made

¹ Katrina Mendoza, in conversation with the author, December 1, 2017.

non-functional through several layers of dissociation. Another shy object blends into a corner, catching the light and throwing it back onto the gallery's wooden floor.

Peeking into these abstracted scenes feels like encountering a memory that surfaces as you fall asleep – the glint of a plastic pick in an ex-lover's fingers; sunlight streaming through leaves, drizzling onto a friend's hair; prolonged eye contact with an animal, during which you know that it knows what you don't have the words to say.

Mendoza's pieces in *Softerscape* are reminiscent of a dream where small details tip you off, yet not enough to wake you. She describes the exhibition as “distractions from a view” and “comfortable covers for one side only.”² Mendoza has noted a “general mood of disappointment”³ and “unwanted surroundings”⁴ in response to her immediate environments, and to the global political climate.⁵ By defining these “distractions” as “comfortable covers for one side only,”⁶ Mendoza not only references the physical two-dimensionality of many of the artworks in this exhibition; she implies they are temporary options for escapism. An escape which may only be an option for some individuals, particularly in times of social or political turmoil.

Escape means something different to every person. Despite the intimacy of Mendoza's visual references, which are unrecognizable to most, one can easily drift into the dream of her memories in *Softerscape*.

Mariana Muñoz Gomez is an artist interested in language and identity, working in various media including text, screenprints, and photography. Find her on instagram at @marianamnz.

² Katrina Mendoza, “Softerscape”, artist statement in exhibition pamphlet, (Flux Gallery/aceartinc, December 2017), 1.

³ Mendoza, in conversation with the author, December 1, 2017.

⁴ Mendoza. “Softerscape”, 1.

⁵ Mendoza, in conversation with the author, December 1, 2017. Corrupt and violent leaders are in power all over the world, and have been in many countries for a long time. For instance, current President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, served a total of seven terms as Mayor of Davao City before assuming office as President in 2016.

⁶ Mendoza. “Softerscape”, 1.

Bibliography

Mendoza, Katrina. Conversation with Mariana Muñoz Gomez, December 1, 2017.

Mendoza, Katrina. "Softerscape," artist statement in exhibition pamphlet, (Flux Gallery/aceartinc., December 2017).