



NOME

**Art | Basel** booth M12



b. 1989, Manila, Philippines

**CIAN DAYRIT** is an artist working in painting, sculpture, and installation. His interdisciplinary practice explores colonialism, ethnography, history and mythology. Dayrit subverts the language and workings of institutions such as the state, museums, and the military to understand and visualize the contradictions these platforms and formats are built upon.

His cartographic artworks, often materialized through embroidery, textile, and mixed media collages, plot the patterns of imperialism and feudalism in activities such as the extraction of natural resources and the displacement and exploitation of marginalized populations. At the same time, the works summon new imaginaries that recognize the overlapping struggles and periods of resistance. His multimedia works examine how empire scored out the maps of the modern world, how its aftermath perpetuates industrial development, and how alternative territories might be imagined from the ground-up. Through narratives that expose the inner-workings of imperial power, Dayrit's work invites us to reconsider how we spatially perceive and interpret the world.

He has been exhibited in international biennials, including the Biennale of Sydney, Gwangju Biennale, Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art; Bangkok Biennale; Kathmandu Triennale, and New Museum Triennial "Songs for Sabotage", New York. Dayrit has also participated in exhibitions at Museo Reina Sofia and CentroCentro in Madrid; Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh; ParaSite, Hong Kong; and Hammer Museum, L.A. His work will be shown in 2024 at Barbican Art Gallery, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, UK. His first solo exhibition in the United States, entitled *Liberties Were Taken*, opens at the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston on 31 May 2024.



THE LAND

INUTANG NADUGONG PA

GIAN

***Intensified Necropolitical Framework for Ecocidal Ravenous Nation-building Operations (INFERNO), 2024***

Inspired by the Bayeux tapestry, Cian Dayrit's *Intensified Necropolitical Framework for Ecocidal Ravenous Nation-building Operations (INFERNO)* explores how diverse scenes examining the multi-faceted consequences of colonialism can coalesce into a single story. Within Dayrit's larger project of counter-mapping militarism in the Philippines, *INFERNO* interrogates the role of state forces as a tool for puppet regimes in perpetuating neo-colonial conditions. The work comprises a large scale tapestry installed within wallpaper depicting different elements of military life, including a helmet, barbed wire, flags, and towers enclose the work.

The tapestry's background incorporates a selection of photographs by Dean Worcester, an American colonial administrator to the Philippines in the early 1900s. The images are fused together using artificial intelligence to form a lucid landscape. A pastiche of colonially drawn maps of the region replaces the sky, reflecting the disoriented state of an overexploited nation. The seven beasts embroidered across the tapestry represent the structures in which militarism manifests in Philippine society. From the expansion of agri-business plantations, the persistence of dynastic business clans, to the institutionalisation of impunity and the corruption of the military establishment, these figures visualize the interconnected workings of the armed forces and the dominant classes within both historical and contemporary conditions of neo-colonialism and climate injustice.





THE PEOPLE X SECURING

SISTANG REHIMEN SINGILIN

Indonesian Government for Ethnic Minority and Religion Affairs



Over years of developing work related to these topics, he has developed a rich symbolic lexicon. *INFERNO* incorporates many important motifs within the artist's practice and each choice of material and formal motif has a distinct meaning for him. Clouds appear as a natural phenomenon strategically used to conceal. In his maps they are used to hide, or not represent, certain territories. Often they will appear adorned with eyes—which references the internet as a surveillance tool—or with bird's feet protruding from them, which refers to impending capture by ravenous oppressors. Dayrit often uses amulets as protectors or spells against the violence of the state. The bells used in the outlines of cutout bombs in this work are from the T'boli people of Mindanao, and are traditionally intended to guide the way and ward off evil spirits. The use of these bells are a nod to the sonic and visceral experience of bombardment in indigenous lands.

Dayrit considers this work a call for solidarity and a gesture of protest against necropolitical world-building premised on a skewed sense of development through imperialist plunder. He uses velvet on the borders of the tapestry in order to allude to the power relations that enact the violence his work represents. Traditionally linked to nobility and power, velvet fabric has historically cloaked centuries of oppressive systems. Brass ornamental figures are sewn to the velvet trim around the tapestry: drones and explosions line the top border, while dogs and crocodiles representing the violence of bureaucracy and state forces alternate with human figures who are either targeted or caught between the violence.



S E R V I N G

S I N G I L I N P A G - B A Y A R I N

Handwritten text in red and green ink, including the name "MUSA ORA" and the year "1689".

Handwritten text in green ink, possibly "NEW SOFT".

Directly beneath the top velvet border, Dayrit has embroidered the motto of the Philippine armed forces, “serving the people, securing the land,” in upside down text, which reflects the artist’s belief that they are not upholding this credo. The bottom text reads “*inutang na dogu ng pasistang rehimen, singilin, singilin, pag-bayarin,*” a common protest chant that translates to “debt of blood by the fascist state, make them pay, make them pay.”

Cian Dayrit’s distinctive visual language evolves from his grasp of his own political identity in relation to social conditions. His works incorporate references to emblems, seals, flags, maps, and monuments that have been used to build mythologies, belief systems, and ideologies, which in turn shape society. *INFERNO* is Dayrit’s largest tapestry to date and exemplifies his engagement with mapping as an artistic practice. For Dayrit, maps—like the military insignia and emblems that appear throughout his work—function as an object of power. Studying these forms, and the civilizations that produced them, form the basis of his activist artistic practice. “Much of my tapestries respond to European tapestries representing territory,” Dayrit explains. “These majestic objects glorified feudal relations and violent power dynamics. My work subverts these traditions. Beyond this, I am interested in reclaiming and redistributing the innate power of the cartographic interface as I/we expand its authorship to express the struggles and aspirations of the masses.”







*Intensified Necropolitical Framework for Ecocidal Ravenous Nation-building Operations (INFERNO), 2024*

Embroidery, objects, digital print on fabric and wallpaper

(in collaboration with Henricus and Veronica Lazo)

155 x 755 cm

95.000 EUR [VAT excl.]



Inspired by a mediaeval etching, the “Plantationocene Pig” takes the form of a wild boar in which we see symbols related to agriculture, toxicity, environmental destruction, justice, and resistance. This embroidery reflects upon the semi-feudal conditions in the Philippines by addressing the political economy of the land—particularly how deforestation and economic policies have allowed for the expansion of corporate plantations. Green revolution policies and the dominance of agro-chemical multinationals have led to soil degradation, food insecurity, displacement, corporate land grabs, and ecological collapse.





“Command” is a hybrid creature with five tentacular legs and wings who represents the armed forces of the Philippines, including the navy, army, and airforce. With a name that riffs on the title “commander in chief,” “Command” is swayed by the interests of imperialist states: a dragon representing China and an eagle that represents the United States. The creature’s legs spell CAFGU: an acronym for the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit, a paramilitary group controlled by the army. This division is primarily manned by poor communities who do most of the military’s dirty work.

The beast “Paramilitary Arms” is a multi-armed figure whose appendages bear the names of the dominant paramilitary groups in different regions. Names like “investment defense forces” refer to the private hired goons employed by big corporations to guard large-scale mining, plantations, and other development projects.





This embroidery is inspired by a talisman that depicts an intoxicated, three-headed Lucifer standing on top of the world. He wears a sash with the epithet "*verum bonum pulchrum*" [the true, the good and the beautiful]. This phrase was frequently used by Imelda Marcos—wife of the ousted dictator Marcos and the mother of the current president Bongbong Marcos. It reflects the family's megalomaniac urge to accumulate while remaining detached from social realities. A crown reading gago, or "idiot," glistens beneath the monster's feet.

This neo-colonial beast resembles a giant fish with a gaping mouth, many eyes, and multiple arms. Banners surrounding it refer to different aspects of neo-colonial relations and neoliberal policies.





The “Many-headed Strongman” is based on Bukidnon mythology. Dadanhayan ha Sugay [meaning lord from whom permission is asked] is a malevolent authoritarian deity. In this iteration, he holds a rifle on horseback in a pose that references a magazine portrait of Duterte after he was elected president.



A tiger with a serpent's tail farts the idea of a "new society," a myth the Marcos family has held onto as a promise of bringing the Philippines back to its glory days. A halo on the creature's tail is a belt that references China's belt and road program. Named "political dynasty," this beast references the plunder of dynastic clans in conjunction with foreign powers and multinational corporations. The tiger represents the Marcos family while the Philippine eagle stands for the Dutertes.



Selected works by the artist



Cian Dayrit's *Fabulous Exploits of the Far East* draws from Amado Guerrero's analysis of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions in the Philippines as discussed in his seminal work, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, published in 1971. The exhibition visualizes the dynamics of Philippine society as a bastion for the longest-running protracted people's war against puppet regimes and their subservience to imperialist states and neoliberal policies while inviting discourse, engagement, and self-criticism to look for one's position in the process of the struggle.

At the same time, Dayrit interrogates colonialism, power, and the establishment of imperialist identities as presented in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The totalizing effects of colonialism and the necessity for the colonized to overcome the alienation produced by systemic oppression are at the core of Dayrit's four series of works that respond to these exigencies. Recalling documentation that cites an American military officer during the pre-commonwealth era who described Filipinos as "fabulous exploits," the exhibition examines the identities forced upon colonial subjects by ruling powers.

Contemplating the essence of mapping as a tool to orient and navigate these contradictions and dichotomies, Dayrit sets out to identify the movements that had given colonialism its form and historical content through sculptures, installations, and textile works that unpack and address the inner workings of imperialist plunder and its actual and direct effect on people while foregrounding shared cultural, economic, and political realities. Hence, the ugliness of these issues is materialized through charming and intentionally aesthetically appealing objects that tread the line between sarcasm, humor, and wit to analyze and exorcise the oppressor.

Gwen Bautista for the show *Fabulous Exploits of the Far East* at NOME





Juxtaposing images borrowed from Dean Worcester's archives with embroidered texts and other elements, *Natural History of Struggle* articulates Dayrit's commitment to presenting counter-narratives to the imperial archives. Exuberant annotations reframe these images and insert the history of struggle and the protracted people's war. The series looks at the central and inescapable role of violence in colonialism and in subverting power structures rooted in such forms of dehumanization. In reclaiming these images, Dayrit stitches onto the colonized figures guns, spears, and pre-colonial anting-anting to arm their bodies against the colonial gaze. Three pieces of the six composing the series are part of institutional collections in the EU and in the USA, among them the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid.

*Natural Histories of Struggle: Cult, 2021*  
Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
120 x 180 cm

25.000 EUR [VAT excl.]



*Natural Histories of Struggle: For Land, 2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric (collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)

125 x 185 cm

25.000 EUR [VAT excl.]



DIGMANG BAYAN

PROGRESS

INVESTMENT

COUNTRY CLUB

SHOPPING

LEISURE

DEVELOPMENT

INPUNITY

1%

PLUNDER

INDIGENOUS CULTURE IS ROOTED IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND



The series *Natural History of Struggle* in the group show *Machinations* at Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid 2023





Medea, the tragic figure, challenges societal norms, becoming an anti-hero that prompts reflection on the intricate relationship between humanity and the environment. Energy, as a bridge between life and the earth, undergoes abstraction, exploitation, privatization, and weaponization in contemporary society, leading to existential crises like climate injustice and war. The Medea project (Measurements of Earth Data for Environmental Analysis, 1993), initiated by Al Gore, harnessed global surveillance for climate change study. *Neither Created Nor Destroyed* engages with Medea's anti-hero persona, exploring civilization's dynamic history. This artwork, an embroidered monochrome, functions as text, immersing the audience in geopolitics, political economy, and climate complexities.

*Neither Created Nor Destroyed*, 2023  
Embroidery and objects on textile (collaboration with Henricus)  
214 x 158 cm

28.000 EUR [VAT excl.]





*Valley of Dispossession* (2021) ties together the histories of land grabs and workers' struggles for agricultural revolution, revealing how imperial practices of extraction, in particular mining, have destroyed the land. The textile is a map of the Philippines region of Central Luzon, where people were first oppressed by colonial rule by Spain in the mid-sixteenth century. The new nation's elite took possession of the land, displacing Indigenous communities. On the large scale textile map, slogans, river systems, borders, locations of land grabs and sites of destruction, even a sea monster, are laboriously embroidered to make visible peasant and Indigenous struggle and resistance in the region. By mimicking and evoking the appearance of medieval manuscripts and early cartographic documents, Dayrit demonstrates how old and persistent these systems of exploitation are. The many stitched QR codes in *Valley of Dispossession* open on to a world of research, leading to videos, reports and data gathered by human rights groups.

Amanda Pinatih for Unravel at Barbican London

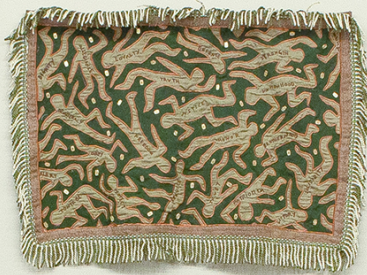


*Valley of Dispossession*, 2021

Objects and embroidery on textile (collaboration with Henry Caceres)

198 x 165 cm

27.000 EUR [VAT excl.]



*Schemes of Belligerence*, 2021  
Textiles, objects and mixed media on woodwork  
Dimensions variable

105.000 EUR [VAT excl.]



How can lives damaged by the weight of militarism and shadow terrains of incarceration be accounted for? Cian Dayrit composes projects that unfold as long-drawn serial narratives, mapping events to interrogate imperial histories, the expanding lexicon of state terror, and the foundations of the neoliberal economy that “unmake” common practices of ownership and environmental justice. Dayrit has also designed workshops in counter-cartography, which he regularly organizes with groups of students, peasants, and activists across the Philippines. As Frantz Fanon writes 1961 in *Wretched of the Earth*, “Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land but from our minds as well.” In his work, mapping is an infographic landscape and an instrument to unfasten the toxic knot of colonial and corporate violence while also denoting how peasants and minorities are targeted, internally displaced, surveilled, and always left vulnerable to the hardening of nationalist boundary-making.

*Schemes of Belligerence* (2021) is an immense multipart installation of embroidered quilts and sculptures, both crafted out of wood and assembled, plotting sequences of masculine valor that reckons with schemes of torture, the centuries-long trap of indebtedness, and martial culture in neocolonies. Taking the format of a trophy room, *Theatrics of Power* (2021) is made of found uniforms, patches, badges, photographs, totems, and weaponry that deliberate on the emboldening spell of disciplinary authority. The carved wooden sculptures of *Methods of Madness* (2021) relay the embodied trauma of corporal punishment, circuits of manipulation by puppet governments, and indoctrination strategies that rattle the nerves and sanity of everyday life.

Dayrit’s collaboratively-made tapestries further expose the United States’ interventionist politics, including the massive exports of weapons technology under Rodrigo Duterte’s strongman regime and the Philippines’ recent Anti-Terror Bill. His pictographic references include satellite images of American military bases in the Philippines and South Korea, air raids, and waves of brutality against the Filipino people carried out in the name of defense, allegiance, and development.





Uniformed personel who do you really serve? Hmmm?





N O M E



For inquiries please contact  
Luca Barbeni at [luca@nomegallery.com](mailto:luca@nomegallery.com)

NOME | Potsdamer Str. 72 | 10785 Berlin  
[www.nomegallery.com](http://www.nomegallery.com)