

Maia Cruz Palileo

The World Tangled in You
September 10 – October 24, 2026
New York

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present *The World Tangled in You*, an exhibition of new paintings by Maia Cruz Palileo and the gallery's first presentation of Palileo's work in New York. Featuring both large- and small-scale canvases, the show finds the artist fully engaging with the complex legacies and material possibilities of painting, as well as an increasingly expansive sense of the ways in which family and personal narratives, geopolitical histories, and formal expression intersect. *The World Tangled in You* is on view in New York at 520 W. 20th St. from September 10 through October 24, 2026. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, September 10, from 6 – 8 PM.

Palileo has structured their project as an ongoing series of questions. Over the course of their two-decade career, they have continually deepened their exploration of the links between their family's roots in the Philippines and the context in which migrations, colonial violence, and the negotiation of cultural identity have taken place, on a global scale, for hundreds of years. In *The World Tangled in You*, whose title is borrowed from a poem by Shirley Ancheta, the artist offers a passionate love letter to painting, one characterized by joy and aesthetic discovery as well as confrontation with the stark realities of history. While the subjects of the paintings are often associated with Palileo's research in archives that contain photographic and other documentation of the Philippine-American War, the compositions and material choices are equally evocative of nonverbal, intuitive states of being. For Palileo, both modes of making and looking become part of the historical record as it is rewritten in the present.

This new body of work finds Palileo further experimenting with compositional strategies developed in the preparatory collages that have been an integral part of their process over the last few years. By deconstructing, layering, and repeating sections of archival photographs, they make the landscapes and people in the images more abstract; any narrative associations that the images engender also become less linear and more cyclical as elements occur more than once in different parts of the composition. This nonlinearity becomes more apparent as the materiality of paint on canvas introduces yet another layer of immediacy, and makes the compositional choices gleaned from the collages operate in three dimensions. These disruptions in traditional narrative representation—which Palileo has likened to visual equivalents of a record skipping—allow them to imagine a new kind of storytelling, one in which the places where history has gotten stuck reveal both the effects of violent domination and the possibility of transformation on personal and collective scales alike.

Palileo is interested, in other words, in precisely those moments that feel “off” because they offer possibilities to understand the evolution of their—and their community's—history in new ways. One of the show's major paintings, in which an X-like form occupies the center of the composition, provides examples of such possibilities in action. The image on which the painting is based was one of the first the artist encountered during their research in the Philippine archives at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Upon close inspection, the X shows itself to be constituted by the presence of dozens of gun-carrying soldiers marching in a formation that, in Palileo's rendering, resembles an infinity symbol. While this is ostensibly a landscape painting—a horizon line bisects

an expanse of earth, sky, and foliage—it takes the conventions of the genre and folds them in upon itself. The result is a critique of the colonialist pretensions associated with “capturing” the promises of nature and honest inquiry, on the part of the artist, about the intractability of war, and about how to psychologically digest the unthinkable while openly wondering about where to go from here.

Palileo takes a similar approach to other decisions that are at first glance purely formal. The visible pleasure with which they move paint across their surfaces might evoke for some viewers those maximalist tendencies in the history of western painting that privilege bravado and ambition, but for Palileo it is also a way of physically inhabiting—and redefining—the erasures and scars that populate the stories they heard about their family as a child. Their color choices too can offer indexes to life outside of art. They sometimes reflect research into the popularity, in design and other applications, of certain hues during key years in their family’s history (khaki was predominant in 1946, the year of Filipino independence, for instance); at other moments they reveal surprises and incongruities, like the colors of outdated uniforms worn by American soldiers during the Philippine-American War, that reframe traditional understandings of conflict and colonialism.

If the results of these inquiries range farthest and widest in the large-scale works on view, it is in the smaller paintings that Palileo demonstrates just how intimate, exploratory, and embodied they can be. It is notable that the artist uses their research as a point of departure rather than a repository of findings to be explicated after the fact. Accordingly, they approach images in the smaller works head-on, often without the kinds of collage-based interventions that define the larger ones. This allows them to meet their subjects with the present moment fully in mind, and to experiment with varied ideas about how paint itself, with its weight, viscosity, and luminosity, can dictate its own stories and reflections about the physical world and the passage of time. In this Palileo does more than expand the terms of the global histories that have affected their life and identity. They also expand the terms by which history can be told and retold, in words, images, feelings, and visions alike.

Palileo has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Cummer Museum, Jacksonville, FL (2023); Kimball Art Center, Park City, UT (2022); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2021); and American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington, D.C. (2019), among others. Recent group exhibitions include *Imagining an Archipelago: Art from Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Their Diasporas*, Colby Museum of Art, Waterville, ME (2026), which will travel to Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, San Juan (2027), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2028), and Newark Museum of Art, NJ (2028); *Everything Now All At Once*, Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC (2026); *Spirit House*, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2025) and Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA (2024); *Seven Rooms and a Garden*, Moderna Museet, Skeppsholmen, Stockholm (2023); *Spirit in the Land*, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC (2023); *The Outwin: American Portrait Today*, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. (2022); *A Point Stretched: Views on Time*, San José Museum of Art, CA (2022); and *Our Blue Planet: Global Visions of Water*, Seattle Art Museum (2022), among many others. Their work is in the permanent collections of Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; Cummer Museum, Jacksonville, FL; San José Museum of Art, CA; Fredriksen Collection, National Museum, Oslo, Norway; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC; Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY; and Tang Art Foundation, Hong Kong. Palileo lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.