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## Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies

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# LEESE STREET STUDIO



Named for the work space of Filipino American artist, educator, and activist Carlos Villa (1936-2013), Leese Street Studio presents interdisciplinary visual work by artists of the Filipinx diaspora.

*Marigold Santos*

**I**n my practice, I explore the ways in which ideas of self-hood can become multiple and hybrid, and reinvented and recreated through a reflection of movement, migration and change, while considering the fragmented yet empowering relationships to heritage. Negotiating narratives of the past and present through a diasporic lens results in the creation of a personal myth, a visual vocabulary influenced by the Filipino and Western folktales of my early youth, social politics, science and pop culture of the late 80's and early 90's, and the geography and landscape both of my homeland and present environments real or imagined. Persistent is the reference to a feared Filipino folkloric creature known as the **Asuang** (aswang) - a supernatural shape-shifting witch and ghoul with the ability to self-sever. In my work the narrative is reconfigured and radically reconceptualized; these **Asuang** speak not of malevolence, but of self-awareness and actualization, transformation, and resilience, in an effort to celebrate and embrace plurality of identities, and represent the lived experience as multifarious and in flux.

Marigold Santos was born in the Philippines, and immigrated with her family to Canada in 1988. She pursues an inter-disciplinary art practice that examines lived experience and storytelling, presented within the otherworldly. Her paintings, drawings, sculptures, and tattoo work explores self-hood and identity that embraces multiplicity, fragmentation and empowerment, as informed by experiences of movement and migration. She holds a BFA from the University of Calgary, and an MFA from Concordia University. As a recipient of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, she continues to exhibit widely across Canada. Her recent solo exhibitions include MALAGINTO at the Montreal Arts Interculturels, SURFACE TETHER at the Art Gallery of Alberta, as well as hiwa-hiwalay at Patel Brown

Gallery (2020) and binhi at buhol at Jarvis Hall Gallery (2021). Her paintings were included in *Relations: Diaspora and Painting* which exhibited at Fondation Phi (2020). Her work is also found in many private and public collections including Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, RBC, Equitable Bank, The Art Gallery of Alberta and Alberta Foundation for the Arts. She maintains an active studio practice and resides in Treaty 7 Territory, in the city known as Calgary, Alberta.

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# SHROUD (IN THREATBARE LIGHT) 1

Marigold Santos



*shroud (in threadbare light) 1*, 2020  
40"x 72", Acrylic, pigment, gesso on canvas

In this reconfigured version of the malevolent character of Philippine folklore by Marigold Santos, the *asuang* (*aswang*) appears to be comprised of woven elements in a state of simultaneous unraveling and repair, while accompanied by fragments of flora that seem to emerge from the figure. Set in a landscape familiar yet surreal, and within a +me that suggests liminality and transition, *shroud (in threadbare light) 1* evokes themes of sensorial memory, heritage, and resilience.

# SHROUD (IN THREATBARE LIGHT) 2

Marigold Santos



*shroud (in threadbare light) 2*, 2020  
40"x 72", Acrylic, pigment, gesso on canvas

# SHROUD (ITIK ITIK) II

Marigold Santos



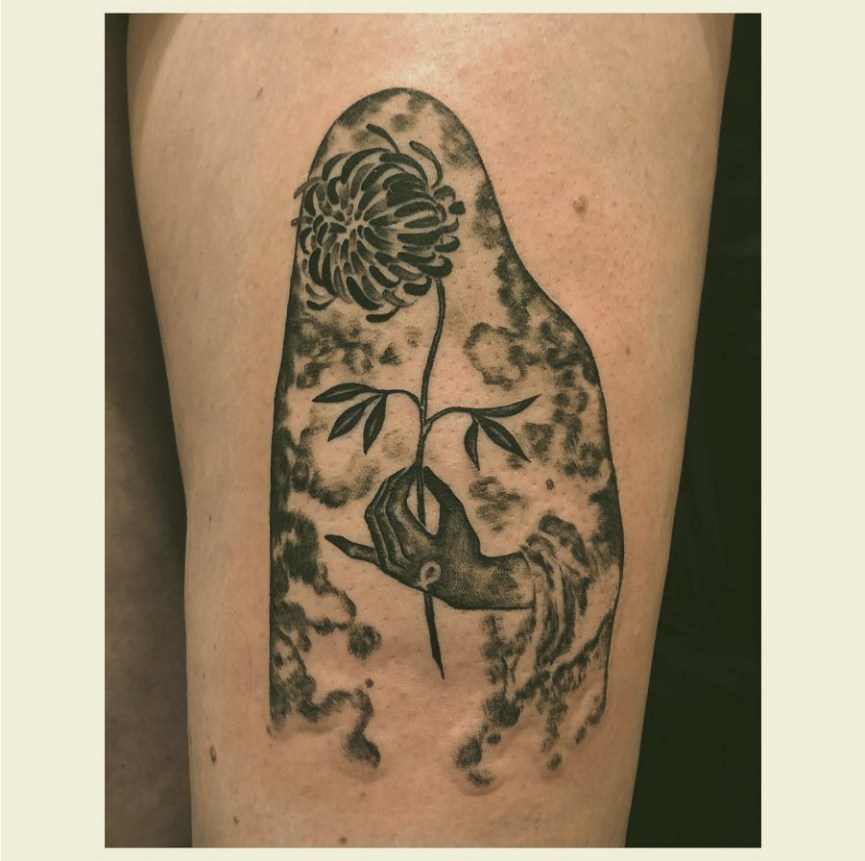
*shroud (Itik Itik) II, 2020, 11"x 10", Ink on paper*

These shrouded figures, another iteration of the aswang (aswang) character in Santos's work, appear to be in mid-dance. Performing a fragment of a traditional folk-dance, these gesturing bodies are in fluid motion as they enact a self-awareness built on vulnerability, heritage, transformation, and empowerment. Working with brush and ink on paper, the drawings within this series embrace the inherent qualities of ink as Santos plays with formal and conceptual notions of porousness, transparency, and permanency.



## SHROUD (OF PRESERVING)

Marigold Santos



*shroud (of preserving) 2020, tattoo on skin*

From ink on paper to ink on skin, Santos acknowledges the deep ancestral history of culturally symbolic markings on skin within her heritage, pre-contact and onwards, and within communities in the Philippines and in the Diaspora. Tattooing only the specific imagery from her visual language, Santos expands her artistic practice to include a community aspect of sharing, responsibility, care, and respect through her tattoo medium. Tattooing offers a broader spectrum of accessibility and engagement with her artistic practice and serves as an entry point for her own deepening research and liberation consciousness.



# GOLD WOMAN

Marigold Santos



GOLD WOMAN, 2019,  
score collaboration with Mahmood Hussain, video 25:41

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyOP\\_jFQvIw&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyOP_jFQvIw&feature=youtu.be)

In this video work, an effigy of a giant golden figure is ablaze on a pyre of rocks. With various parts of the body at times in flame or in smoke, the figure slowly transforms into disintegrated severed pieces of a whole. Accompanying this meditative piece is a composition of collaged musical compositions layered with fragments of a poem written by Santos and recited in both English and Tagalog.