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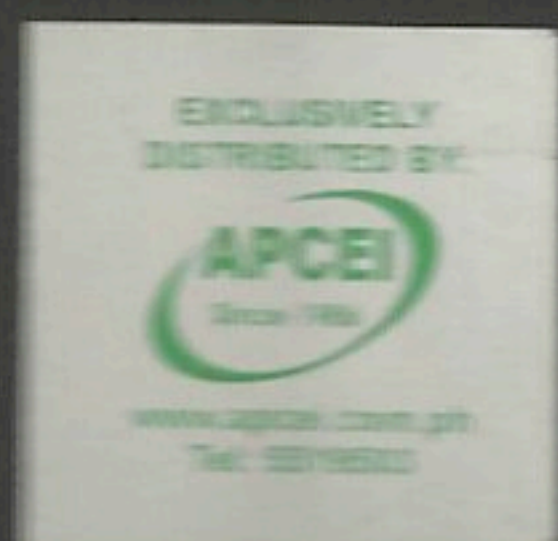
10 Point of View Tips to Overcome The Financial Crisis

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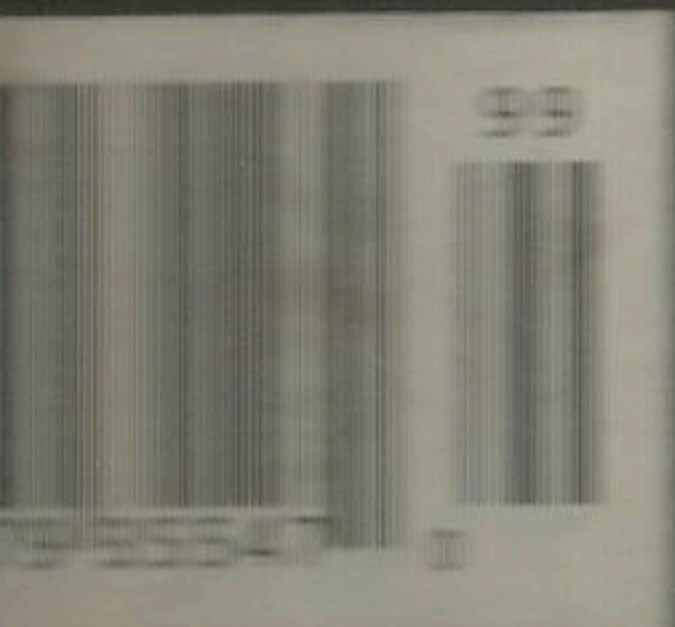
SPECIAL EDITION

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ACAF 08 New York
Jakarta Biennale
Sherman Foundation

Ay Tjoe Christine - Chang Chien-Chi - Dolorosa Sinaga
Melati Suryodarmo - Patricia Eustaguio - Yoko Ono





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Death To the Major, Viva Minor, at Slab
 Installation view

Patricia Eustaquio

JAUNTS THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez

Filipino artist Patricia Eustaquio's *Death to the Major Viva Minor* at Slab, Silverlens Gallery (16 October to 22 November 22) comes at a curious juncture in the Philippine contemporary art world. Couched in the daily headline-grabbing bemoaning of a global financial crash, it tempts at what might be accidental parallels—of validation processes made up of leavings and takings, hollowed out cavities once brashly dedicated to blue-chips now playing sanctuary to the humbled but still marginally insolent speculator.

Yet there is none so inherently angry nor contentious about Eustaquio's recent outing though it clearly rings with a subtle tenor of a manifesto resolutely elevating visuality and voids. With the exhibition's musical references appearing more as mere subterfuge than direct allusions to aural experience, viewers encountering this choreographed mélange may soon enough find themselves stopped in their tracks, not taking too long to figure out that none of it - notwithstanding the leather keyboard, the ghost of an upright piano et al - is actually about J. S. Bach's music (referenced through

the citation of the late composer's collection of solo keyboard music, *Well Tempered Clavier*, in both catalogue and press). Eustaquio herself quickly confesses that "the works in a way are an homage to music, though perhaps it is with slight mockery that I do this: an act justified only by my absolute ignorance of it." Hers is an avowedly surface-level, outsider's take on a reference set deliberately chosen because it is, in effect, inaccessible.

Death to the Major Viva Minor simultaneously hints at the way the visual has historically been lesser regarded for its reliance on mimesis whereas music has theoretically been regarded as more agential and thus accorded undeniable specificity. Patricia Eustaquio's underhanded posing of these distinctions imaginably stands as the un-making of a sacralized musicological manuscript made up of a set of preludes and fugues easily recognizable to those within the ambit of basic music education. On an arguably subtle level, the motley crew of objects in allusive rigor mortis (a crochet cover sans piano, a violin with its innards bared, morose images transposed from two-dimension to three etc.) hints at



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Death To the Major, Viva Minor, at SLab
 Installation view

how spaces and things variably shed off and don consequence in various sensate planes.

Indeed eons ago, before desktop computers and television sets became the nodal points that they have since become in Filipino homes, pianos were one of the surest indications that a family had surmounted the class divide. Time was when any upwardly mobile middle-class Pinoy parent subjected their children (musically-inclined or otherwise) to a thought-to-be rite of passage—the learning of music as civilizing (some would say homogenizing) tool with its grueling scales, finger exercises, and numbing repetitions. All these ceremonial bouts with tutelage culminated in the seminal event of at least one public recital where both students and parents dolled up in finery reminiscent of other life-markers like flamboyant debuts and weddings.

It is perhaps in this light that the reference to *Well Tempered Clavier* (WTC) becomes doubly fascinating even to the non-pianist. Since it was the pantonal (using all 24 keys) range and summoning of a broad span of techniques and modes of expressions in its fugues that gave it a particularly pedagogic functionality, WTC's Books I and II brought the aspiring artiste to reckon with the breadth and depth of music that could be coaxed out of this boxed instrument. Interestingly, much

has already been said about how Bach left out prescriptive elements such as tempo in most of the pieces making up WTC, thus leaving room for the tension between the pianist playing the *correct* notes and interpreting the suggested emotional character or composer's intent. The term well-tempered has similarly sparked debate on the composer's tuning logic and has even given rise to advanced mathematicians drawing up simulative algorithms to figure out the workings of Bach's mind in this respect. And yet for this particular visual spread that Eustaquio has served up, all these wiki factoids remain mere asides as she underlines instead Bach's deliberate dissolution of categories of major and minor in deference to such heuristically pertinent constructs as latitude and multiplicity.

Referring back to the exhibition's allusive title as a reinstitution of the *other* arts that make no claim to the divine that musicality has canonically been accorded, we quote the artist further -

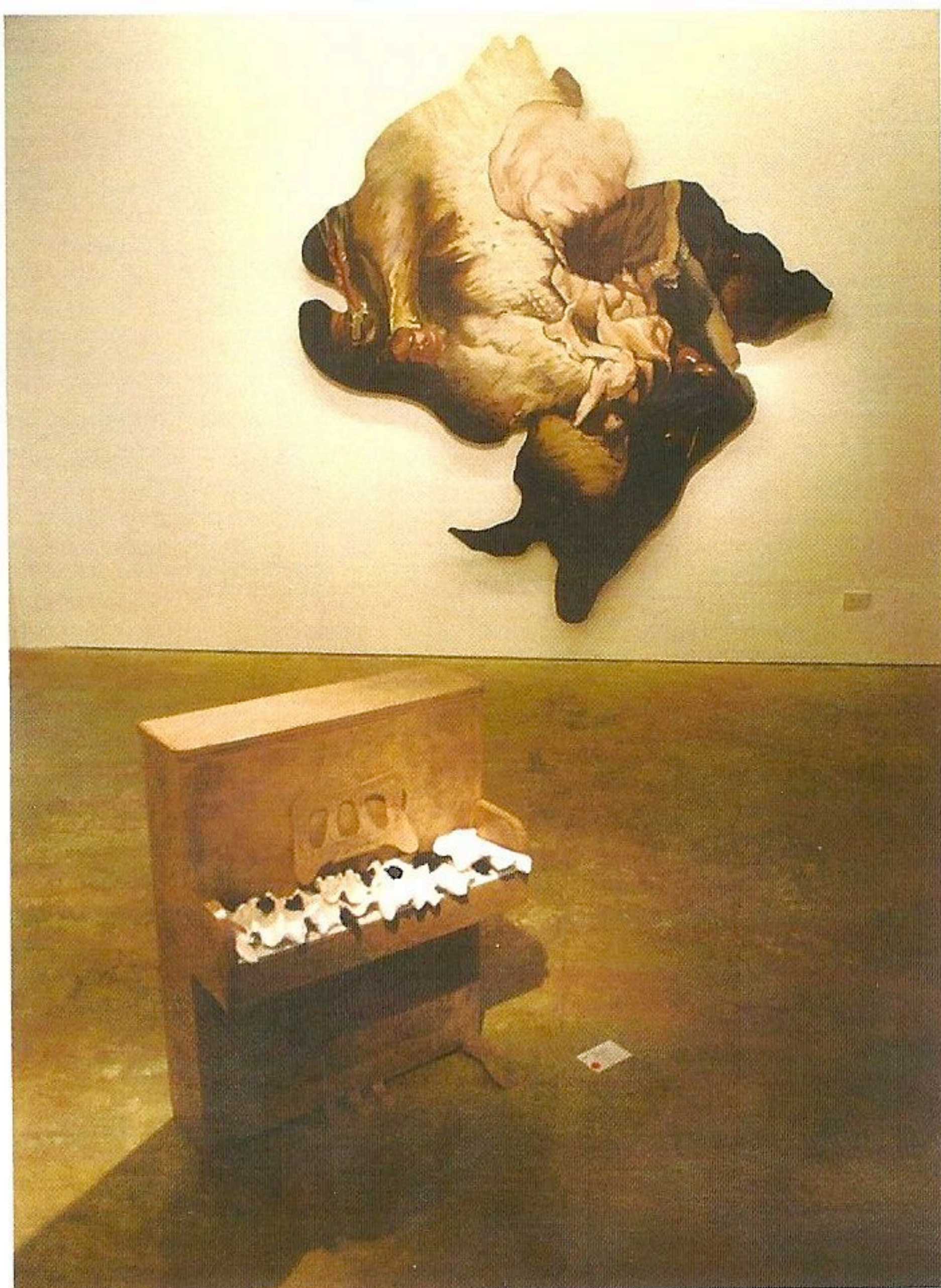
"Hierarchies are inevitable and they change with time; this is what I was reminded of in my process of investigating music and the sublime. To pin weight on one over the other is common but not necessary. Still life pictures and landscapes revered in past centuries are now called 'low art', while lace-making and ceramics just never made the cut. My works therefore are also as much



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Horns II (triptych), 2008
 Glass vitrine and polymer clay rings
 Dimensions variable

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Arteria Axillaris, 2008
 Ceramic (stoneware)
 22 x 7 x 3 inches / 57 x 17 x 7 cm





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Psychogenic Fugue, 2008
 Crochet lace and epoxy
 43 x 83 x 41 inches / 108 x 22 104 cm

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Background: | Foreground: |
| <i>Denouement</i> , 2008 | <i>Untitled (Piano)</i> , 2008 |
| Oil on linen | Carved leather and ceramic |
| 96 x 86 inches / 244 x 219 cm | 33 x 23 x 13 inches / 83 x 65 x 32 cm |

about the materials they come in and the processes involved in creating them, as well as the subjects they portray.”

Patricia Eustaquio’s own notes and show catalogue reveal SLab (the new site which her exhibition inaugurated) was indeed a former piano school and this literal and metaphorical taking over of the visual where classical music used to roost further allows *Death to the Major Viva Minor* to come across as imaging the categorical demise of stigma and hubris—the up-ending of venerated hierarchies where music’s ubiquity ironically makes it less precious and desirable, thus letting art get its last laugh. (Tangentially but fittingly enough, visitors to the exhibition took home bits of the old piano school floor which had been turned into funky wooden keychains by opening night. The artist’s own discards—turd-like keys which would have gone unto the mini leather piano were also passed along to guests during the same evening.)

It is in trawling through these emptied then re-filled shells and carcasses, these debris come upon ingenious re-functionality laced in incongruities of material (form) and signifier that allows *Death to the Major* to make possible a harking back to her previous explorations. We find within the adroit misuse/re-use traces not only of earlier object troves but of her own process in resolving design questions. Having proven she can deftly

wield the tools of couture as she can pen and brush, Patricia Eustaquio here becomes textbook illustration of forms and ideas casually migrating across platforms. In openly declaring her being enamored by surface, she demonstrates how the wayward cut, the seemingly misplaced seam, the disjunctive bauble paves the way for orthodoxies to be eclipsed and new ways of perceiving to occur. And yet it is in nodding recognition to the seductive pull of totalizing claims that the artist proposes this prettified depiction of an otherwise traumatic toppling of a sense of order stubbornly clinging to charged notions of history and value. [4]

Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez is a writer-editor-curator based in Manila
