

PATRICIA EUSTAQUIO (b. 1977)

To survey Patricia Eustaquio's paintings and sculpture - and the clothes that she designs, which are somewhere between the fine art of collage and origami, and yes, fashion - is to see into the closet, or the luggage, of a girl: archetypical, spunkily ladylike, and prone to entertain fictions within and without. Also, pioneering, as she holds the distinction among contemporary Filipino painters of having processed conceptual art all the way to its roots in phenomenalist thought.

Ages ago, long before poverty became fashionable in Philippine-International art (at least outside film), she made a pair of canvas shoes and walked, saint-like, the streets of Manila and then documentaristically painted the shoes. The art of slumming it? Was she secretly playing hookie? Neither, of course: she was practicing the art of art, which remains an adventure of making what is just underneath the surface come to the surface. The shoes-piece was her senior thesis, and although her strokes back then still wanted finer wrist-action, if not a more discerning sense of what brush to choose, it was already clear that she can't help but be conceptually brilliant.

In her first solo show *Split Seam Stress*, with *Closet Cornucopia*, she interpreted painting as a cabinet of clothes and showed that it was stuffed, but as she directed her art toward creating what she refers to as "environments," she positioned the painting beside a headless mannequin displayed at a corner. Her intelligence is key: aware of spaces, the show was on view at the Ayala Museum, a wing of the Greenbelt complex, where she once taught art classes. Whether the sculpture evoked a trophy wife, a dunce-like fashionista, or a decapitated infidel - as well as a brilliant feminine reworking of the work of Yinka Shonibare, who explores global politics and African identity in tandem - she makes viewers aware that she can see, and enjoins others to become as unapologetically and strongly clear-eyed. Taken together, the environment could be read as a critique of the superficial appreciation of art, as well as no-joke philosophizing about make-up, and the sheer fun of pretending to be clueless about contexts.

If painting and beauty are relentlessly matters of surfaces and subsurfaces, and as an old, distinguished artform, a painting is also a wall - and her surfaces are walls of not-quite self-clothing (sonic pun not intended, and quite inapplicable) - then Patty's wall is about the sensitivity and durability of visibility itself: like fig leaves in the unforgettable days of all sorts of self-censorship, her painting covers her essential girlish, playful cool.

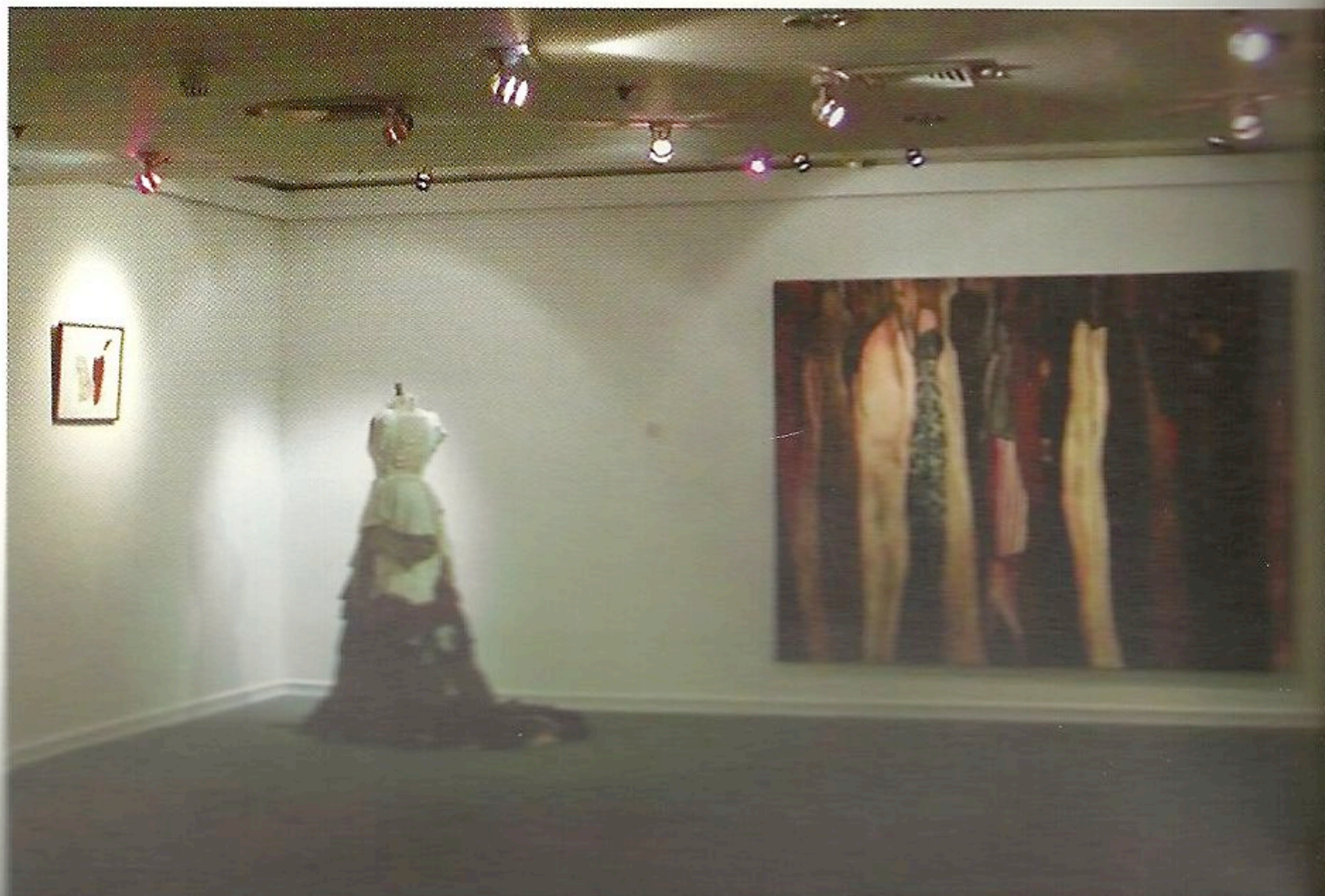
In more recent work, the objects of her intelligence have become manicured and royally Dutch. Her canvasses, shaped like paint splatters, look like the after-effects of paintball games and a master's cold, secret tantrum: architecturally expressionist, assisted by assistants, and ahead of the china. Does that make her painting American, French, Scandinavian or Filipiniana? None of the above. That makes her herself: a Modernist in the age of ecological back-peddling and so much so-so art. She paints, and visually, without even moving, she rocks as too few other painters can.

Patty Eustaquio is a Thirteen Artists' Award recipient, a prestigious award given to Filipino artists by the national arts commission, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, every three to four years. She is also the winner of the Ateneo Art Awards in 2009. She continues to exhibit her works, and recently opened her third solo exhibition at SLab. She was part of art fairs in Hong Kong, Shanghai and New York in 2008. Her works were exhibited in Pulse Art in New York in March 2009. (MG)

1



2



1. CLOSET CORNUCOPIA, 2003, oil on canvas, 183 x 244 cm

2. SPLIT SEAM STRESS, 2003, Exhibition at the Ayala Museum

3. CLOSET CUCKOO, 2002, oil & encaustic on canvas 183 x 244 cm

4. REPRISÉ I, 2008, oil on canvas, 244 x 213 cm

5. DEATH TO THE NAUGHTY NA NA NA, 2008, Exhibition at Silverlens
Lila Gallery, Manila, Philippines

