

Media Release

For immediate release

Art duo the Aquilizans weave cultural stories from pineapple fibre

See Through, a new art installation by artist duo **Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan** debuts at the Institute of Modern Art **8 October–18 December 2021**.

Made in the Philippines, where the couple are currently based, the project investigates the piña cloth; a textile deeply connected to the social and economic history of the Philippines.

Piña cloth is produced by the indigenous Aklanon people, on the northern coast of Panay island. It is created using pineapple fibre from the leaves of the red-pina plant (*ananas comosus*) and is extremely fine and delicate, with its dexterous weave giving it a luminous quality and shimmering surface lustre.

For this artwork the Aquilizans have collaborated with Aklanon weavers to produce large bolts of this labour-intensive material. The fabric is then embroidered in the callado-style, a technique local to Lamban where the Aquilizan's studio is based. This embellishment tells the story of pineapple fibre; tracing its journey from plant to garment alongside the cultural histories embodied in the textile.

The intricate and luxurious white-on-white textile became synonymous with the Philippines globally through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and highly sought-after among the upper echelons of European society for handkerchiefs, petticoats, and christening gowns.

Locally in the Philippines the piña has been used to make 'barong tagalog' and 'baro't saya', customary garments now worn by men and women respectively on formal or important occasions.

The process of creating the textile is painstaking, detailed, and extremely difficult to mechanise. The fibres are fragile and snap easily, so work needs to be gentle and often strands need to be painstakingly reknotted.

The Philippines Folklife Museum details the labour involved in this process: "It usually takes 15 to 20 days to warp enough yarns to complete a 'sucod' of 18 to 20 'bucos' or 54 to 60 meters of cloth..."

In the gallery, *See Through* celebrates piña as an object of beauty, a product of masterful indigenous knowledge and skill, and as a vessel for conveying complex and contested histories of place.

See Through demonstrates how weaving forges a connection between environment and person—linking the textile to the earth from which the fibre grew, to the hands that deftly created it, and the knowledge that has passed through generations of Aklanon people to retain its craft.

Embroidered into the surface of the textiles in the exhibition are symbols and a narrative timeline that traces the history of piña and the pineapple in the Philippines and across the globe.

Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan use *See Through* to present their deep research of this remarkable fabric and honor their ongoing collaboration with the Aklanon weavers and Lamban embroiders, all the while unravelling piña cloth and the potent histories it holds.

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Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan

See Through

9 October–18 December 2021

Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

<https://ima.org.au/exhibitions/alfredo-and-isabel-aquilizan/>

Download images [here](#).

Institute of Modern Art

Judith Wright Arts Centre

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Fortitude Valley QLD

ima.org.au / [@ima_brisbane](https://www.instagram.com/@ima_brisbane) / #IMABrisbane

About the IMA:

Since 1975, the Institute of Modern Art has been the hub of Brisbane's contemporary art scene, presenting an annual program of exhibitions, public programs, publications and offsite programs by Queensland, Australian and international artists.

Artist Biography

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan and their family moved from the Philippines to Australia in 2006. Drawing on their experiences of displacement and moving between places and cultures, their collaborative artworks engage with ideas of migration, diaspora, belonging, and memory. Their art practice spans over 20 years, in which they have shown in numerous exhibitions and biennales throughout Australia and internationally. Their work has been featured in the Asia Pacific Triennial of

Contemporary Art, Queensland Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art; the Biennale of Sydney; the Singapore Biennale; and the Venice Biennale among others. Their project In-habit: Project Another Country, was shown at the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney in 2012, the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, and travelled to venues throughout regional Queensland and New South Wales (2013–2019).

Project collaborators:

Aklanon Weavers—Raquel Eliserio, Carlo Eliserio, Eduardo Dela Cruz, Eda Cualig.

Lumban Embroiderers—Lucy Llantos, Troy Llantos, Lumban Community Embroiderers.

Neli Go, Cristian

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