

SILVERLENS

MARIA  
TANIGUCHI

FIGURE STUDY

**SILVERLENS**

MARIA  
TANIGUCHI

FIGURE STUDY

4 MAY TO 17 JUNE 2023  
505 W 24TH ST, NEW YORK, NY

email

website

whatsapp



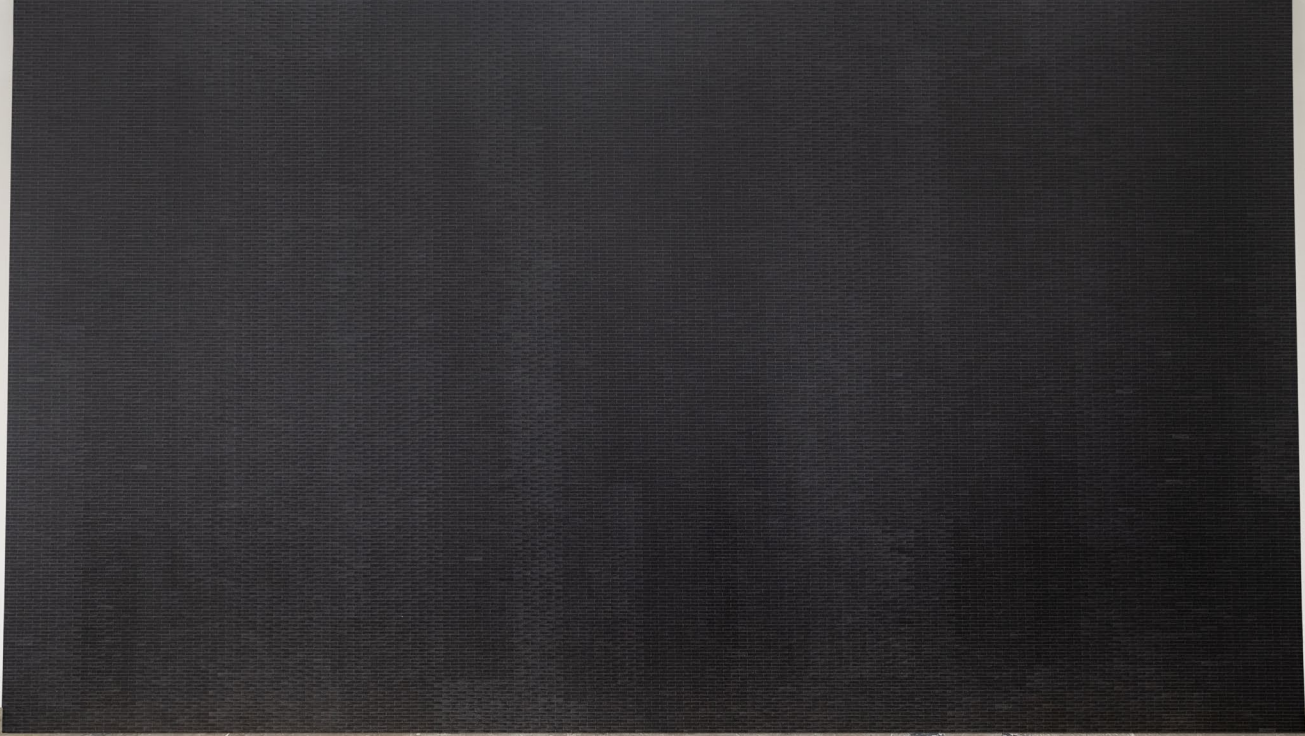
# THROUGH THE MOTIONS<sup>1</sup>:

## LAYING BRICK WITH MARIA TANIGUCHI

Murtaza Vali

For a decade and a half now, Maria Taniguchi, whose practice includes sculpture, installation, video, and printmaking, has obsessively and methodically produced a singular type of painting. Of varying sizes and proportions, these dark brooding monochromes, most often larger-than-life in scale, consist of tessellations of hundreds or thousands of identical rectangular units, each measuring two by six centimeters, arranged in neat lines. The units in each row are offset from those in the row above or below by half the width of the rectangle, resulting in the familiar staggered brick pattern known as a running or stretcher bond. This referent gives them the moniker Taniguchi and others have come to use to describe them: brick paintings.

Despite their precise, minimal appearance, these canvases are unnervingly uncertain. They are neither strictly abstraction nor representation; they both are and are not an image of a brick wall. Taniguchi further emphasizes this ambiguity by simply leaning many of the larger canvases in the series up against the gallery wall, so that they inhabit space as both painting and sculpture, image and object. The taller ones feel totemic, looming over the viewer like monoliths or stele. The broader ones, like the monumental sixteen-foot wide canvas in this show, resemble walls not just representationally but also phenomenologically. Their opaque impenetrable expanses evoke actual barriers; they impose, resist, enclose, contain, obstruct.



UNTITLED, 2023

acrylic on canvas

108h x 192w in

274.32h x 487.68w cm

SPI\_MT095

email website whatsapp

**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 192w in

274.32h x 487.68w cm

SPL\_MT095







**UNTITLED, 2022**

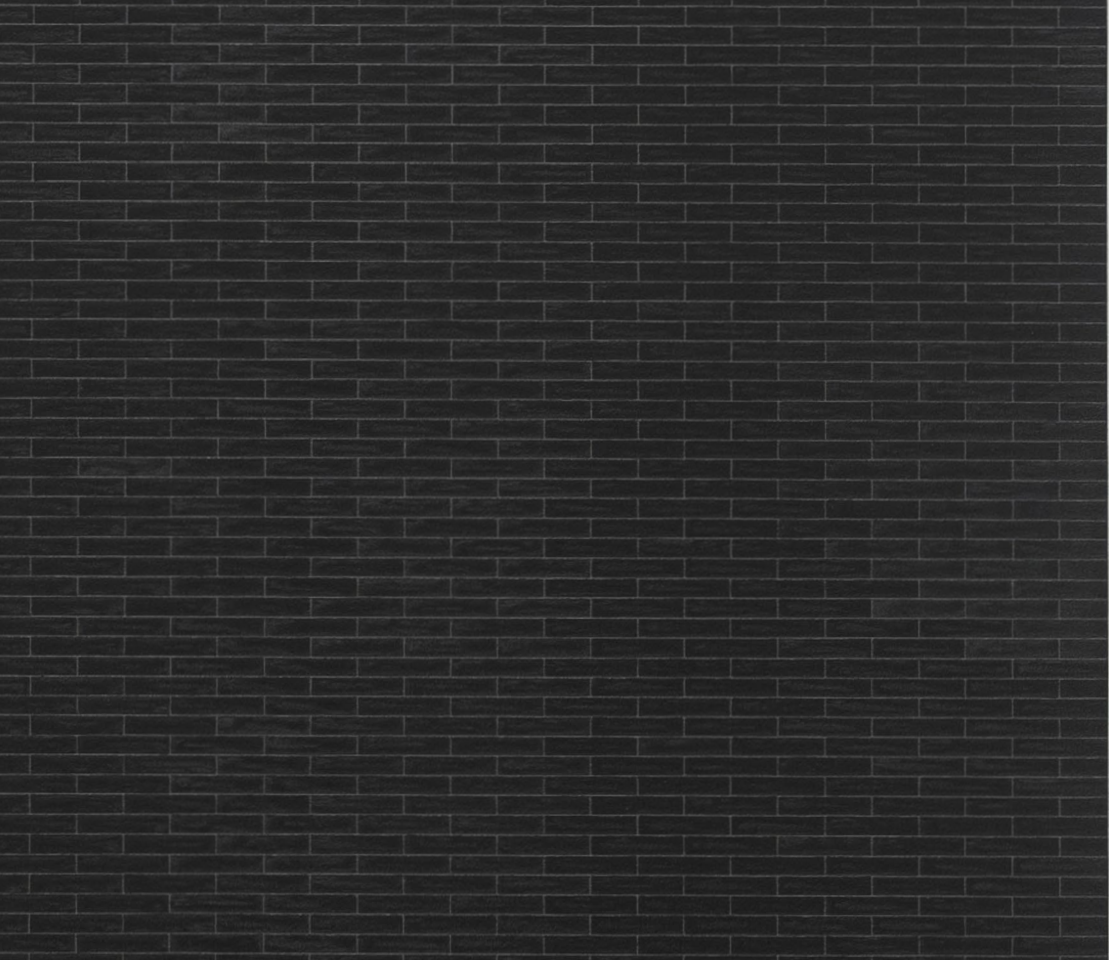
acrylic on canvas

90h x 45w in

228.60h x 114.30w cm

SPL\_MT093

**email   website   whatsapp**



DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2022**

acrylic on canvas

90h x 45w in

228.60h x 114.30w cm

SPI\_MT093

Taniguchi begins these canvases by applying a flat even base coat, usually a dark grey, though she has been experimenting with color, introducing subtle undertones of deep purple in some recent examples. This ground is carefully overlaid with her signature brick pattern drawn in graphite. Working with the canvas on the floor, Taniguchi then meticulously and painstakingly fills in each brick-like unit individually with a thin wash of black acrylic paint. She works methodically and sequentially, in a manner analogous to how a bricklayer might build a wall. She works in sections, until she is interrupted or distracted, or either she or the paint she has mixed for the day is exhausted.



**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPL\_MT108

[email](#) [website](#) [whatsapp](#)

**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPL\_MT108



DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas  
108h x 48w in  
274.32h x 121.92w cm  
SPI\_MT108





**UNTITLED, 2023**


acrylic on canvas

108h x 72w in

274.32h x 182.88w cm

SPL\_MT096

[email](#) [website](#) [whatsapp](#)



DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 72w in

274.32h x 182.88w cm

SPI\_MT096





Despite the rigor of her process, she is not precise when she prepares her paint, forsaking measurements and formulas for instinct and muscle memory. Any leftover paint is simply reused during the next work session, with water added to dried pigment to make it usable again. As a result, though the pattern remains uniform within one and across all the canvases, the painted surface rarely is, with the saturation of pigment and the tone it produces varying subtly with each unit.

In some places, when a particularly dilute preparation was used the pigment pools in the center of the brick resulting in a darker denser core encircled by an only just perceptible halo. At other times, when the wash was thicker to begin with, a gentle almost invisible gradient extends across the brick, tracking the strokes of the brush. Changing atmospheric conditions in her home studio further impact the way the paint dries, with the heat and humidity of tropical Manila imprinting itself on these canvases.

Upon close and sustained looking the paintings appear to vibrate, to hum. While the delicate graphite pattern is reflective, the painted units within it absorb light. The lines project while the bricks withdraw, resulting in a visual tension, an almost ontological oscillation between drawing and painting, graphite and paint, line and surface, structure and substance. However, Taniguchi's primary interests are not formal or retinal. These paintings are not simply another clever attempt at approaching the zero degree of painting that the Suprematists first sought out.

**UNTITLED, 2023**

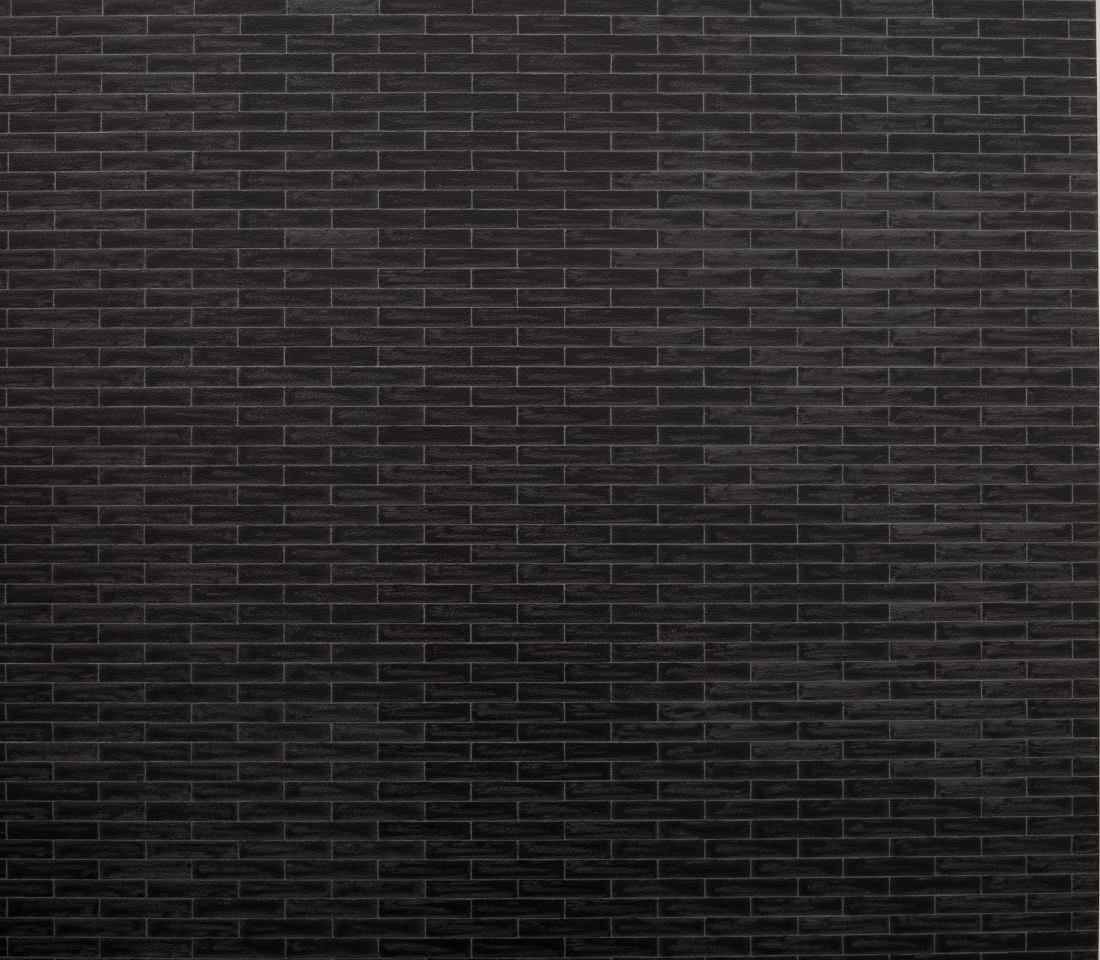
acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPI\_MT133





DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPI\_MT133

**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPI\_MTI34

**email website whatsapp**



DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas  
108h x 48w in  
274.32h x 121.92w cm  
SPL\_MTI34





**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

90h x 45w in

228.60h x 114.30w cm

SPL\_MTI36

**email   website   whatsapp**

DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

90h x 45w in

228.60h x 114.30w cm

SPI\_MT136



Simple but sophisticated, the brick paintings shrewdly synthesize the formal gestures of Frank Stella's and Ad Reinhardt's iconic black monochromes with the conceptual and performative works of On Kawara and Tehching Hsieh, which embed repetition back into the realm of everyday life, using it as a tool through which to interrogate and reflect on existence, presence, time, and labor.

In Taniguchi's paintings, repetition, as a methodology, is not intended to produce identity but reveal difference, registering the inconsistency, unpredictability, and contingency of the artist's hand and body and the context in which she works. Her daily practice of painting, is also, like that of Kawara's and Hsieh's practices,

ritualistic and meditative, even therapeutic in our times of information and sensory overload. She has described it as a means to regulate, to quiet and focus an otherwise easily distracted mind.<sup>2</sup> Akin to breathing, repetition presents a path towards mindfulness, towards presence, towards embodiment, allowing one to paradoxically both inhabit and transcend the body at work. Sitting or lying on top of the canvas as she works, Taniguchi is literally and metaphorically subsumed by and into each painting and the rarefied geometries we encounter in the gallery are imbued with the physical act of their creation. Unsurprisingly then, through the years, Taniguchi has frequently returned to bodily metaphors to explain what she does: the brick pattern as skin, as nervous system.<sup>3</sup>

**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPL\_MT135



DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

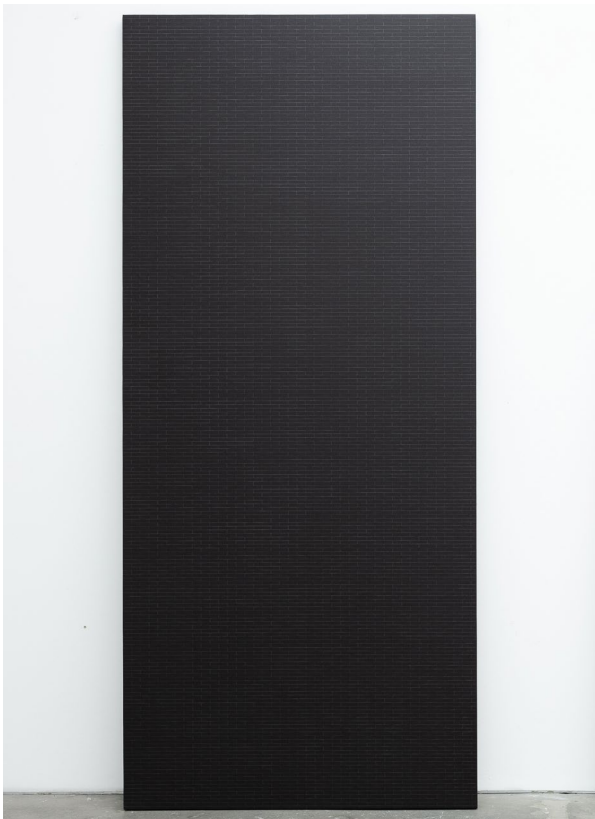
108h x 46w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPL\_MT135



The brick pattern, which can extend endlessly, is neither representational nor compositional. It is, instead, a standardized matrix through which each painting can register the process and conditions of its manufacture, can record the history of its making. It functions as a syntax or protocol that translates the inchoate and contingent noise of this lived experience, the raw data of painting, into information, into code, into signal. These paintings are ultimately about time and labor, not as abstract autonomous concepts but as embodied phenomena, interrelated and mediated through the energy, effort, and exertion of a body at work. The brick pattern is a mode of working or, more precisely, a work ethic. It allows us to understand painting as praxis.



**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPL\_MT087

**email   website   whatsapp**

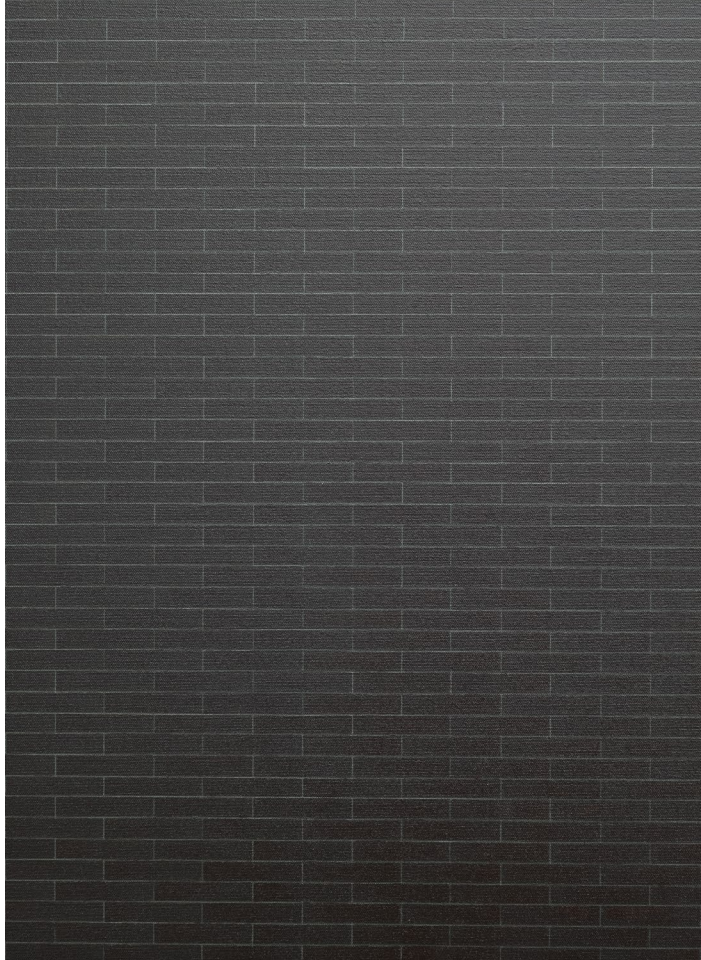
DETAIL OF:  
**UNTITLED, 2023**

acrylic on canvas

108h x 48w in

274.32h x 121.92w cm

SPI\_MT087





Taniguchi's titles are as austere as her canvases. The brick paintings are, for the most part, untitled and unnumbered. This exhibition, "Figure Study," simply repeats a title she has used before, first for an installation in 2012-13 that was anchored by a looping just under forty-minute long black-and-white video of two men digging up earth in a dense forest.<sup>4</sup> A deadpan durational document of labor, this key work makes explicit the importance of these concepts in Taniguchi's painting practice, and hints at its social, cultural, and political subtexts. A significant percentage of the Philippines's annual gross domestic product consists of the remittances of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW). Many of these migrant workers engage in types of labor—manual

(such as the workers in the video), domestic, and care work—that are repetitive, and seemingly interminable. Such physical and reproductive labor builds, sustains, and maintains worlds and lives, is both structural and integral and, more recently, essential, but ultimately remains invisible. Taniguchi's brick paintings render such labor, and its temporal logic, visible and palpable. Embodied in and through her body, they materialize in paint on canvas. Each painting marks the passage of time and holds the memory of its manufacture. It is itself a body, a vessel that receives and collects the facts of its creation. Each is, in that sense, both a history painting or, as the exhibition's title astutely suggests, a "figure study" of a body at work.



MARIA TANIGUCHI

*Figure Study* 2012

single-channel HD video, b/w, sound, (00:37:11 min.)

Edition 1 of 3 + 2 AP

SLABMT056\_001





**MARIA TANIGUCHI**

*Figure Study*, 2018

single-channel HD video, sound, (00:3:51 min.)

Edition 1 of 3 + 2 AP

SPI\_MT140\_001





## ABOUT THE WRITER

Murtaza Vali is a critic, curator, and art historian based in Brooklyn and Sharjah. A recipient of a 2011 Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for Short-Form Writing, he publishes regularly in art periodicals and exhibition catalogues for non-profit institutions and commercial galleries around the world, including essays in recent monographs on Fahd Burki (Jameel Arts Centre/Mousse Publishing, 2023) and Seher Shah (Rizzoli, 2023). Vali is Adjunct Curator at the Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai, where he curated the widely acclaimed inaugural group exhibition *Crude* (2018), which explored the relationship between oil and modernity across South West Asia, and is currently working towards a follow up examining hotels and the hospitality industry across the Global South. Other recent curatorial projects include: *Proposals for a Memorial to Partition*, Jameel Arts Centre (2022-23); *Curator-at-large of Oh, Gods of Dust and Rainbows*, FRONT International 2022: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art (2022); and (with Uzma Rizvi) *Accommodations*, the National Pavilion of Saudi Arabia at the 17<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale (2021).

# INDEX

<sup>1</sup>This seemingly banal phrase, that Taniguchi used to describe her painting process in a 2017 interview, wonderfully conveys both the sense that her “brick paintings” are a type of “action painting,” their surfaces recording the countless embodied actions that lead to their creation, and that this process is simply an everyday ritual or habit, almost unconscious, guided by muscle memory. Maria Taniguchi in Christina Chua, “On the Walls: An Interview with Maria Taniguchi,” *The Artling*, January 16, 2017, <https://theartling.com/en/artzine/on-the-walls-interview-maria-taniguchi/>.

<sup>2</sup>Maria Taniguchi in Marlyne Sahakian, “Where I Work: Maria Taniguchi,” *ArtAsiaPacific*, June 25, 2013, <https://artasiapacific.com/ideas/where-i-work-maria-taniguchi>.

<sup>3</sup>Taniguchi describes the brick pattern as “skin” in Chua, op. cit., and as “nervous system” in Diana d’Arenberg, “Maria Taniguchi,” *Ocula*, November 22, 2016, <https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/maria-taniguchi/>.

<sup>4</sup>For discussions of this important installation see Chantal Wong, “It’s difficult to talk about Maria’s work,” *LEAP: The International Art Magazine of Contemporary China* 35, October 29, 2015, <http://www.leapleapleap.com/2015/10/it-is-difficult-to-talk-about-marias-work/>, and Susan Gibb, “Maria Taniguchi, “Big Data and Raw Materials,” Maria Taniguchi (Tokyo: Taka Ishii Gallery, 2017), n.p.

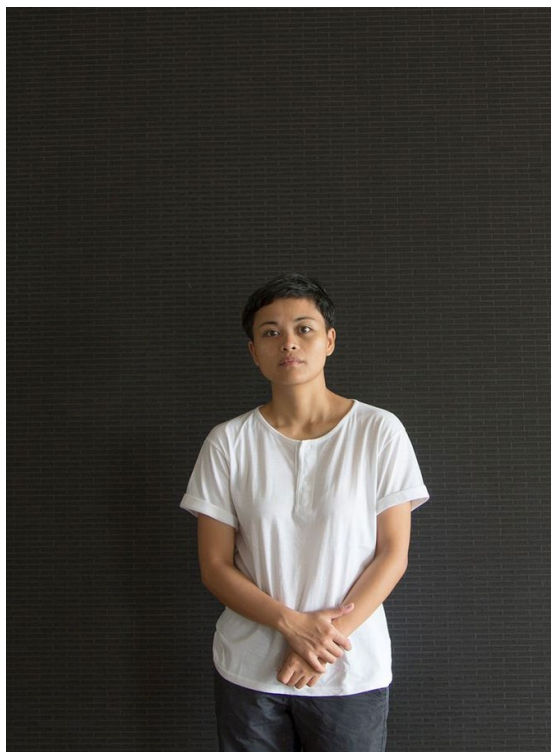
## MARIA TANIGUCHI

### Bio

Maria Taniguchi's works encompass painting, sculpture, video and installation. Her practices investigate space and time along with social and historical contexts. Her series of "Untitled" brick paintings is an ongoing series that had been initiated in 2008. Each painting consists of seemingly countless rectangular cells, each one outlined by hand with graphite and filled with gray and black tones. The painstaking process creates a subtle yet complex pattern on the surface. These paintings develop in various extents, most of them reaching meters in size. The constructive structure embodies architectural elements, resulting in the paintings themselves manifesting as monumental existences within the space. The artist has referred to her brick paintings as the fundamental root of her larger artistic practice, while the other artworks such as sculptures and installations are reflection, or refractions of it.

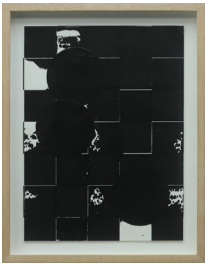
Maria Taniguchi was born in Dumaguete City, Philippines, in 1981. She won the Hugo Boss Asia Art Award in 2015 and was a LUX Associate Artist in 2009. Recent exhibitions include the 12th Gwangju Biennale: Imagined Borders, Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Centre, South Korea (2018); 21st Biennale of Sydney, *SUPERPOSITION: Equilibrium & Engagement*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia (2018); *History of a vanishing present: A prologue, the Mistake Room*, Los Angeles (2016); *Afterwork*, Para Site, Hong Kong (2016); *Globale: New Sensorium*, ZKM Centre for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2016); *The Vexed Contemporary*, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila (2015); and the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, QAGOMA, Brisbane (2015). Her work is held in numerous public

and private collections globally, including the Tate Modern, London; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; and Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; and KADIST, San Francisco and Paris; among others.



## MARIA TANIGUCHI CV

b. 1981,  
Dumaguete City, PH



*Untitled (room of phases), 2022*

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Figure Study*, Silverlens, New York
- 2021 *room of phases*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2019 *Maria Taniguchi*, Carlier | Gebauer, Berlin
- 2017 *Maria Taniguchi*, Ibid, Los Angeles
- Maria Taniguchi*, Silverlens, Manila
- Maria Taniguchi*, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo
- 2016 *Maria Taniguchi*, Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong
- Maria Taniguchi*, Ibid Projects, London
- 2015 *Maria Taniguchi*, carlier|gebauer, Berlin
- 2014 *Maria Taniguchi*, Silverlens Singapore and Manila
- 2013 *Art Statements*, Art Basel 44, Basel
- 2011 *Echo Studies*, Jorge Vargas Museum, Manila

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Art Fair Philippines*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2022 *Horror in the Modernist Block*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
- We Belong to Each Other: an exhibition on joy*, carlier | gebauer, Berlin
- The Armory Show*, Javits Center, New York
- Art Fair Philippines*, Silverlens, Manila
- Art Dubai*, Madinat Jumeirah Conference & Events Centre, Dubai, UAE
- 2021 *Art Histories of a Forever War: Modernism between Space and Home*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
- Considered Gestures* curated by Yael Buencamino, Silverlens, Manila
- 2020 *Collision Point on Dimensions*, The 5th Floor, Tokyo
- Floating World*, Perrotin, Hong Kong
- Dhaka Art Summit*, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Construction of Truths*, curated by Joselina Cruz, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila
- 2019 *La Ultima de las Tribus (The Last of the Tribes)*, curated by Viviana Kuri, Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Guadalajara
- SPECTROSYNTHESIS II*, Sunpride Foundation, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Thailand
- 5th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art*, curated by Xiaoyu Weng, Ekaterinburg, Russia
- Who Writes?*, curated by Jo Ying Peng, Galeria OMR, Mexico City
- The Empathy Lab*, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco
- Survived!*, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo

## MARIA TANIGUCHI CV

- Blood and Soil: Dark Arts for Dark Times*, curated by Anders Kreuger and Julija Fomina, CAC Vilnius, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Primary Drives*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2018 *Visayas Islands Visual Arts Exhibition and Conference (VIVA EXCON)*, Roxas City, Capiz
- 12th Gwangju Biennale: Imagined Borders*, curated by Clara Kim, Gwangju, South Korea
- In Search of Southeast Asia through the M+ Collections*, M+ Pavilion, Hong Kong
- SUPERPOSITION: Equilibrium & Engagement: 21st Biennale of Sydney*, curated by Mami Kataoka, Sydney, Australia
- 2017 *Sydney Contemporary*, Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia
- Anarchéologies*, curated by Marcella Lista, Centre Pompidou, Paris
- Almost There*, Jorge Vargas Museum, Manila
- Marching in Circles*, curated by Robin Peckham, Long March Space, Beijing
- Damage Control*, Ibid, Los Angeles
- Translación*, Inaugural Exhibition, Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Silverlens, Manila
- 2016 *JUDEA*, curated by Arin Rungjang, West, Den Haag, The Haag
- Oceanic feeling: Maria Taniguchi and Sriwhana Spong*, curated by Susan Gibb, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Singapore
- 44 Salon International de Artistas*, curated by Inti Guerrero, Salón Nacional de Artistas, Pereira, Colombia
- MAPS*, ROH Projects, Jakarta
- Apeiophobia / Aporia*, Human Resources, Los Angeles, California
- With Institutions Like These....*, curated by Victor Wang and Alex Meurice, The Averard Hotel, London
- Globale: New Sensorium*, curated by Yuko Hasegawa, ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe
- Histories of a Vanishing Present: A Prologue*, curated by Kris Kuramitsu, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles
- Afterwork*, curated by Cosmin Costinas, Para Site, Hong Kong
- Riviera*, curated by Caterina Riva, Swiss Institute, Milan
- With Institutions Like These....*, curated by Victor Wang and Alex Meurice, Averard Hotel, London
- 2015 *Hugo Boss Asia Art Award*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai
- Reverence & Reproach: Modernist Legacies in Contemporary Film & Video*, Tate Britain, England (screening)
- 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Australia

## MARIA TANIGUCHI CV

- Sights and Sounds: Philippines*, The Jewish Museum, New York  
*TOWER*, Ibid, London
- Sights and Sounds: Global Film and Video*, Jewish Museum, New York  
*The Vexed Contemporary*, curated by Joselina Cruz,  
Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila
- Missing Links: Exhibition of Southeast Asian Moving Image*, curated by  
Gridthiya Gaweewong, Jim Thompson Art Center, Bangkok
- 2014 *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics*, Museum Of  
Contemporary Art (MHKA), Antwerp  
*Material Memory*, Fluxxia Gallery, Milan  
*Erase: From Conceptualism to Abstraction*, Osage, Hong Kong  
*Michael Van den Abeele, Flora Hauser and Maria Taniguchi*,  
Inaugural Group Show, Ibid, London  
*The Bold Sopranos*, curated by Arianna Gellini, Gallery Exit, Hong Kong
- 2013 *HIWAR | Conversations in Amman*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa,  
Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman  
*The Philippine Contemporary: To Scale the Past and the Possible*,  
curated by Patrick D. Flores, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Manila  
*The Midnight Marriage*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2012 *WITHOUT A MURMUR*, curated by Joselina Cruz,  
Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Manila  
*A Reader of Materials and a Writer of Forms*, curated by Lucy MacDonald,  
MOT International, Brussels  
*Rambler's Association (with Adam Avikainen)*, Artspace, Auckland  
*The Porous Border*, curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Gallery G23, Bangkok  
*Detroit: LUX Associate Artists Program*, London (screening)
- 2011 *Video e identidad cultural en Filipinas: 1999-2009*,  
CaixaForum, Barcelona (screening)  
*Young London*, V22 Collection, London  
*Roving Eye: Video from Southeast Asia*, Sorlandets Kunstmuseum, Norway  
*Jump Cut: Dialectic Dream*, curated by Caterina Riva, The Barber Shop, Lisbon  
*Complete and Unabridged: A survey of Philippine Conceptualism*,  
Osage Gallery Kwun Tong, curated by Ringo Bunoan, Nilo Ilarde, and Gary-Ross  
Pastrana, Hong Kong  
*+Pyramid (with Bea Camacho)*, Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila
- 2009 *Lost in Your Eyes / Foreign Correspondent*, FormContent, London  
*boyleANDshaw Art Salon Project 4*, curated by Elea Himmelsbach,  
Artprojxspace, London

## MARIA TANIGUCHI CV

### AWARDS

- 2015 Hugo Boss Asia Art Award for Emerging Asian Artists, Shanghai
- 2012 Ateneo Art Awards, Manila
- 2011 Ateneo Art Awards, Manila
- 2001 Grand Prize, Metrobank National Painting Competition
- 2001 Grand Prize, Shell National Students Painting Competition

### RESIDENCIES

- 2013 Khalid Shoman Foundation, Darat Al Funun, Amman, Jordan
- 2012 ARTSPACE, Auckland
- 2003 Plastique Kinetic Worms, Singapore

### COLLECTIONS

- Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing
- M+ Museum, Hong Kong
- The Burger Collection, Hong Kong
- K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai
- Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane
- Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco/Paris
- Tate Modern, London

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Taniguchi, M. (2020, May/June). Maria Taniguchi on Felix Gonzales-Torres and Judy Freya Sibayan. *ArtAsiaPacific*, p 17.
- Maerkle, Andrew. "Under the Skin." *Art-it* 19 May 2017. Web.
- Cornell, Lauren. "Future Greats." *Art Review*. Jan. - Feb. 2016.
- Lin, Ming.. "Maria Taniguchi, Ibid, London." *Art Review Asia*. Spring 2016.
- Taniguchi, Maria. "Blooming Pool." *Writing: Cabin Fever*, edited by Sarah Elson and Heman Chong. Launch Pad, 2016.
- Rebecca Morrill. "Maria Taniguchi." *Vitamin P3: New Perspectives in Painting*, edited by Tom Melick and Rebecca Morrill. Phaidon Press, 2016.
- Susan Gibb. "Dogs in Space, Witches of Dumaguete." *Sriwhana Spong and Maria Taniguchi: Oceanic feeling*. Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, 2016.
- Joselina Cruz. "Maria Taniguchi: The Act and the Object." *Hugo Boss Asia Art Award for Emerging Artists 2015*, edited by Li Qi. Rockbund Art Museum and Sternberg Press, 2015.
- Chantal Wong. "It Is Difficult to Talk about Maria's Work." *LEAP: The International Art Magazine of Contemporary China* 35 (Sept.-Oct. 2015).
- Kathleen Ditzig. "Review: Maria Taniguchi." *Flash Art* 295 (Mar.-Apr. 2014).
- Joselina Cruz. "Maria Taniguchi." *Kaleidoscope Asia 19: The Making of Asia* (Fall 2013).

**MARIA TANIGUCHI**

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