



**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**ELIZA O. BARRIOS**, based in San Francisco, is an inter-disciplinary artist. Working primarily in new media and site-specific installation, Barrios questions systems of belief by exploring various processes of self-reflection. Barrios holds a Bachelor of Arts from San Francisco State University and a Masters of Fine Arts from Mills College. Barrios' work has been exhibited at museums and at new media and film festivals internationally and domestically. She has also received an Honorary Fellowship from the Djerassi Resident Artists Program. Barrios is also part of Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. (with Jenifer Wofford and Reanne A. Estrada). Mail Order Brides/M.O.B. have been scheming, entertaining, and creating together for over fifteen years. [www.elizabarrios.com](http://www.elizabarrios.com)

**KIAM MARCELO JUNIO** is an artist living in Chicago who works in multiple media, including photography, video, printmaking, installation, burlesque, and performance art. Their research and art work centers around queer identities, the Filipino American diaspora, post-colonialist Asian American tropes and stereotypes, and military and civilian power dynamics. Jerry Blossom is Junio's alter-ego, a genderqueer Filipino femme-presenting persona who hails from an alternate post-queer, post-colonialist utopia. Junio served seven years in the US Navy. They were born in the Philippines and has lived in the U.S., Japan, and Spain. They are also a registered Yoga teacher. [www.iamkiam.com](http://www.iamkiam.com)

**KAT LARSON** is a Seattle-based cross-disciplinary artist whose practices include printmaking, painting, sculpture, performance and video. She is focusing on video and performative installations currently and explores her body as a conduit for spiritual connections, specifically with her female ancestors whom she has tagged "BloodMuthas." Outside of video and performance, she continues to work with striking found objects, clay, encaustics, and organic materials such as dead bees and dirt. [www.katlarson.com](http://www.katlarson.com)

**MIGUEL LIBARNES** was born and raised in the Philippines. At the age of eighteen, he moved to the U.S. and studied visual arts at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He now resides in Brooklyn, New York. Focusing on his identity as a queer, Filipino surfer, with a highly conservative Catholic upbringing, he aims to blend this mixture of conflicting cultures through art. [www.miguelibarnes.com](http://www.miguelibarnes.com)

SHE IS A HOT MESS. YOU KNOW WHAT I HAD TO TELL HER? "KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF OF MY MAN."



**GINA OSTERLOH** investigates operations of mimesis and perception through photography, video, and performance. Her photographs depict constructed life-size room environments activated through still performances, papier-mâché models, and cardboard cutouts. Current exhibitions include *This is Not America: Resistance, Protest and Poetics*, Arizona State University Museum; and *Demolition Women*, curated by Commonwealth & Council, Chapman University. Osterloh's first monograph, *Group Dynamic*, is available through RAM Publications. [www.ginaosterloh.com](http://www.ginaosterloh.com)

**JEFFREY AUGUSTINE SONGCO** is a multi-media artist. He was born, baptized, and raised in New Jersey to Filipino parents. He is classically trained in ballet and voice, but "genetically," he is an architect. He holds a B.F.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and an M.F.A. from San Francisco Art Institute. He has exhibited in San Francisco at Steven Wolf Fine Arts and the Asian Art Museum. His writings have appeared in *Art21 Blog*, *Bad At Sports*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Hyperallergic*. [www.songco.org](http://www.songco.org)

**RONALDO V. WILSON**, Ph.D., is the author of *Narrative of the Life of the Brown Boy and the White Man* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), which won the 2007 Cave Canem Poetry Prize, and *Poems of the Black Object*, (Futurepoem Books, 2009), awarded the Thom Gunn Award and the Asian American Literary Award in Poetry in 2010. Co-founder of the Black Took Collective, Wilson is also an Assistant Professor of Poetry, Fiction and Literature, and Core Faculty of the Ph.D. Creative/Critical Concentration in the Literature Department of the University of California, Santa Cruz. His latest books: *Farther Traveler: Poetry, Prose, Other*, is forthcoming from Counterpath Press, and *Lucy 72* will be released by 1913 Press, both in 2015. He has held fellowships from the Ford Foundation, The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Yaddo, Cave Canem, Kundiman, and Djerassi. He was recently an Artist in Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts and a 2014 Artist in Residence with the Center for Art and Thought (CA+T).

**EXHIBITION DATES**

September 4 - November 1, 2014

**RELATED EVENTS**

One-Day Symposium  
Thursday, October 16, 12pm-7pm  
Free Admission

**Symposium Schedule, October 16**

12-12:15	Opening remarks by curator Jan Christian Bernabe
12:30-1:30	Gina Osterloh
1:45-2:45	Kiam Marcelo Junio
2:45-3:00	Coffee break
3:00-4:00	Jeffrey Augustine Songco
4:15-5:15	Ronaldo Wilson
5:30-7:00	Closing Roundtable Discussion
7:00-8:00	Reception



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QUEER SITES AND SOUNDS  
September 4 - November 1, 2014





# QUEER SITES AND SOUNDS

We live in an age of rapid advancements in digital and new media technologies, an age where a tweet from Lady Gaga can be read simultaneously by her millions of followers across the world. These advances in technology, especially new media and digital technologies that rely both on textual and graphic user interfaces (GUIs), have opened up new opportunities for creative expression and sociality. The Internet, which is seemingly boundless in its sublime scope and its spatial dimensions, is ironically replete with social and communal boundaries: some cohere normative modes of communality, while others de-center or unsettle real-time or real-world social relations and expectations. Even at its most evanescent, the virtual is never detached from the offline world and vice versa. *Queer Sites and Sounds* starts with the premise that, as José Muñoz writes, “queerness” allows us to question or even feel that, in this globalized digital and new media present, something is amiss ... something just doesn’t feel right, but that’s alright.

Feeling disoriented because of the hyper-exchange of information, through the crowdsourced Wikipedia platform, for example, or billions of images on Instagram, offers users a unique set of data points from which to analyze what I call *new media and digital normativity*, ways of being that cohere or center normative modes of sociality. Conversely, the breadth of information allows users an opportunity to feel the queerness of the Internet, to consume content that stands counter to the centering impulses of virtual and offline realities. The microblogging platform Tumblr, for example, has become a new media space that inspires queer curators to generate creative alternative or nonnormative narratives that reveal their awareness of the centering impulses of the social, as well as their own curated rebuttals. Tumblr’s “reblog” function, I argue, enables what Carol Mavor, in her writing on photographic technology, calls “photography’s inherently reduplicative process of sameness.” Tumblr users may reblog content ad nauseam, creating a queer new media universe or queer sociality just on this one Internet platform as reblogging perpetuates sameness of content over and over across the platform.

*Queer Sites and Sounds* is thus a timely exhibition in that Filipino queer digital and new media cultures continue to be an understudied field, despite the saturation of digital and new media technologies within the Philippines and throughout the diaspora. Though there have been Filipino Internet ethnographies prior to Web 2.0 by Emily Ignacio as well as seminal studies of race online by Lisa Nakamura and Jennifer González, Filipino queer digital and new media cultures represent a highly focused area of cultural phenomenon that is in need of intellectual and creative interventions.

As the curator for *Queer Sites and Sounds*, I am left with questions that I encourage others to explore: How does the exchange of information within the Filipino diaspora via the Internet unsettle or perhaps affirm Western notions of gender and sexuality? How might we think of the ontologies of digital and media technology as always already queer? How do Filipino queer digital and new media practices overlap other queer communities of color? How do we study these queer diasporic digital entanglements? How might we deploy queer as an analytic frame to discuss the forms which content takes—forms that go beyond the expected, that make us scratch our heads, that leave us feeling unsettled or that something is indeed amiss?

Premiering January-March 2014 on the website of the Center for Art and Thought (CA+T), *Queer Sites and Sounds* featured digital artwork, videos, audio recordings, scholarship, and writing that queried the ways that we think of queer as both an embodied identificatory practice and as a relation to narrative and digital forms and digital literacies. I conceptualized *queer* broadly to include non-heteronormative genders and sexualities in both Filipino and Western contexts (e.g., *bakla*, tomboy, LGBTQ), as well as in the context of performativity, form, and aesthetics (e.g., kitsch, camp, affect, abstraction, and repetition). The works in the show, I maintain, challenge and exceed how Filipino bodies, affects, and processes are conventionally understood and how they are indeed entangled with other queer bodies and practices virtually and offline.

A serendipitous screening of *The Amazing Truth About Queen Raquela* (2008), directed by Olaf de Fleur Johannesson and which I saw while traveling in Amsterdam in 2011, anticipates many of the themes explored in *Queer Sites and Sounds*. Centered on a transgender Filipina who dreams of leaving the islands, the film reveals how queerly entangled Filipino bodies are with other queer global communities on- and offline, as Raquela earns money for her ticket out through chat rooms and webcamming. In the islands she is part of a larger transgender community, yet while online she is reduced to a particular type of queer body by the Westerners who pay to watch her perform. The film served as an inspiration for *Queer Sites and Sounds*, as I questioned the very reductive image Western viewers constructed of Raquela and, more broadly, how Filipino queer new media and digital art may garner similarly reductive responses—those that remain grounded on conventional notions of embodied queerness and that take for granted the compositional forms that these works inhabit.

The term *queer Filipino bodies* takes on various visual and conceptual forms in *Queer Sites and Sounds*. These bodies are captured within photographic and

filmic frames, such as the bag-head body in **Jeffrey Augustine Songco’s** *Confessional*. In this CA+T-commissioned new work, the juxtaposition of body with text creates a critique of reality television media and whiteness. The campiness of Songco’s work—the snippet of catty text juxtaposed with what has become Songco’s iconic bag-head figure dressed in white—draws out a queer of color critique on media consumption as well as homonormativity. Alternately, the bodily figurations in **Gina Osterloh’s** *New Family* and *Anonymous Front* series, cloaked against the constructed backdrops, make viewers linger on the scenes, questioning the figurative bodies: who they are and why do they attempt camouflage when at closer inspection their bodies can be made out? Osterloh’s bodily figurations are clearly part of a larger scene but are queerly distinct from it. **Kiam Marcelo Junio’s** performance as their alter ego Jerry Blossom captures how the disjuncture between gender expectations and karaoke performance works together to critique legacies of American empire and popular culture. Queer Filipino bodies take on epistemic and affective registers in **Eliza Barrios’** video projection installation, *Threshold* and **Kat Larson’s** *The Katherines*, as each work tackles queer affect through performance and doubling. Finally, what are Filipino queer bodies without humor? **Miguel Libarnes’** *Mascara* stands as a metaphor for the resilience of Filipino queer bodies despite the constraints they confront, even if these constraints take on the form of relentless waves of water.

I had the wonderful opportunity to work with the poet and performer **Ronaldo Wilson**, CA+T’s second artist in residence. Over the course of two months, Wilson created eight experimental video pieces that layer his spoken word recitations, sounds that he created using Apple’s GarageBand, and original film footage that Wilson shot. Edited together using iMovie, the resulting panoply of colorfully titled videos unsettle through quick breaks in editing, repetition, and song; the subtitles are asynchronous to the spoken words, further disorienting the linearity expected of film. Sights and sounds in Wilson’s videos draw viewers in while simultaneously exploding their ideas of what poetry is and can be in this new media and digital moment. In several of the videos, Wilson uses masking to transform his body into a gendered “other” who embodies a critique of homo- and heteronormativity. I am particularly excited to include all of Ronaldo Wilson’s videos for *Queer Sites and Sounds* as well as his impromptu poetry sound recordings. The latter are grouped in triptychs—or in three poems—and were produced spontaneously in various settings. Wilson used no script, just the flow of words from mind to mouth, with the everyday sounds of each setting serving as the recordings’ backdrop.

*Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.*  
 – José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* (NYU Press, 2009)

The works in *Queer Sites and Sounds* reveal the amazing possibilities of today’s current digital and new media moment, and this exhibition showcases Filipino queer expressive practices that dare us to look, listen, and reflect.

*Queer Sites and Sounds* features work by Eliza Barrios, Kiam Marcelo Junio, Kat Larson, Miguel Libarnes, Gina Osterloh, Jeffrey Augustine Songco, and Ronaldo Wilson.

- Jan Christian Bernabe  
 Operations, New Media and Curatorial Director for the Center for Art and Thought

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Jan Christian Bernabe is an interdisciplinary scholar of Asian American art history and visual culture, comparative race and ethnic studies, and queer cultural studies. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in the Program in American Culture. He is currently at work on several articles and book projects that fall within the emerging field of contemporary Asian American art history and criticism. As a multidisciplinary artist, Bernabe uses everyday or vernacular new media and digital imaging technologies to create artwork that captures his interests in queer bodies, affects, spaces, and temporalities. <http://www.janchristianbernabe.com>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Queer Sites and Sounds* is presented at UC Riverside’s ARTSblock’s Culver Center of the Arts. The exhibition has been curated by Jan Christian Bernabe, the Operations, New Media and Curatorial Director for the Center for Art and Thought, along with assistance from Clare Counihan and Matthew Andrews. Support for the exhibition has been provided by the California Institute of Contemporary Arts, UC Riverside’s Queer Lab, UC Riverside’s Department of Media and Cultural Studies, and donors to the Center for Art and Thought. General support for UCR ARTSblock programs has been provided by UC Riverside’s College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, and the City of Riverside.

IMAGES (Cover) MIGUEL LIBARNES, *Mascara*, 2012, still from video performance, 3 mins. 32 secs. Courtesy of the artist. (Insert, from left to right) KIAM MARCELO JUNIO, Still from video performance, *Inside the Artist’s Kitchen*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist. ELIZA BARRIOS, *Sustain*, 2011. Video still, 1 min. 56 secs. Courtesy of the artist. KAT LARSON, *The Katherines*, 2011/2012, Video still, 44 seconds looped. Courtesy of the artist. (Back cover, clockwise from top left) RONALDO WILSON, *Pink*, 2014. Video still, 5 mins. 47 sec. Courtesy of the artist. GINA OSTERLOH *untitled (double figure): (sun, water, bleach)*, 2011. 11.5x14.5 inches, Archival pigment prints with UCV laminate and custom gray frame. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles. JEFFREY AUGUSTINE SONGCO, *Confessional*, 2014. 30x12.5 inches, Digital color print. Courtesy of the Sarita See and the artist.