

FEB 15 –
MAR 15,
2025

THE PHILIPPINE WINE DANCE

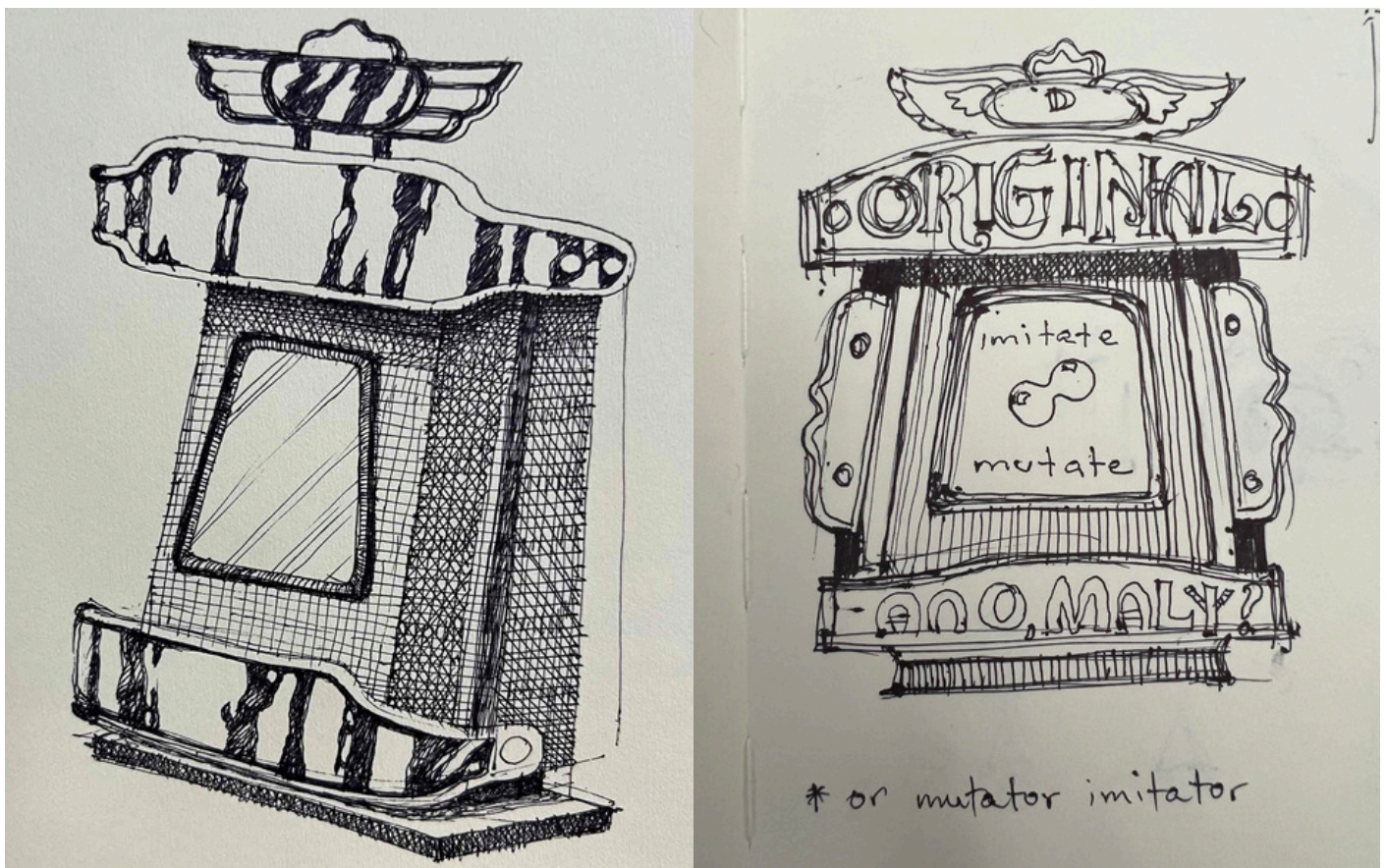
Mark Justiniani

THE
DRAWING ROOM
CONTEMPORARY ART

BINASUAN: The Philippine Wine Dance

Isa sa katangian ng bawat partikula sa quantang mekanika ang walang-hanggang paggalaw. Ang paggalaw na itong nagbibigay forma, ay batay sa kakayahan ng mga partikulang umikwit, o magkaroon ng kapasidad umikot alinsabay sa bigat at belosidad. Kung gayon, mahalaga sa paggalaw na ito ang posisyon ng partikula, na bagamat di-tiyak ay kayang tanyahin, at ang panukat na panahong nagsasabing nagaganap ito. (Excerpt written by Janine Go Dimaranan)

Virgilio Almario describes Mark Justiniani as "quite incantatory" for his engaging way of articulating propositions that are brought to life by his art. This rings true for anyone who interviews him and attempts to write about him or his work. In our conversation, he told me to imagine a spinning manananggal and that my brain will complete the image so what I will see is a whole person rotating. That was how he concluded the narration of a cluster of concepts that come together in the current exhibition. (Excerpt written by Con Cabrera)



The Philippine Wine Dance, artwork studies, 2025



Luwalhati, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 102 x 98 x 18 cm, 2025

The first work in the series attempts to visualize the initial spark of light during the early formation of the universe, a transition from opaque to transparent. *Luwalhati* means glorious; *luwal* is birthing while *hati* is to divide. The layers of meaning in the word describe a complex polarity as well as an encompassing sense of creation. *Ang oras na kumukulo (orakulo)* is a playful idea visually depicted by the waves and orb-like distortion of the surface. As an opening image/world in the awaiting narrative of the exhibition, *Luwalhati* is the macrocosm of where the (hi)story will unfold.



D' Original Ano Mali, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 74 x 67 x 13 cm, 2025

Through precise transformation of surface and light, the replication part of the creation story is illustrated. The biological and chemical is scrutinized mitigating into the micro Justiniani chooses to focus on in this presentation. His statement (*anong mali?*) is a proposition and a disposition leading to moments in art history as the chosen pathway to understanding how the universe works.



Amor, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 74 x 69 x 14 cm, 2025

From the universal, the sequence segues to human affairs particularly the Philippine art world, where the lay of the land was previously dominated by the Amorsolo school. In this work, the artist emphasizes that art movements are always succeeded by antithetical ideals. Textually represented by *a... sinta*, that is both to desire and to critique. Gold and golden refers to Amorsolo as a painter, a revered artist who can conjure shine of light and currency.



Maestro Monumental, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 76 x 66 x 14 cm, 2025

This work visualizes the battleground where Victorio Edades and Guillermo Tolentino debated over the rightfulness of modern art as the form for Filipino artists to pursue during their time. For Justiniani, this discursive moment steered the direction of local art, outlining clearer paths for its inevitable branching out. The descriptive words *true* and *good* highlight the anchors of each argument as interpreted by the artist.



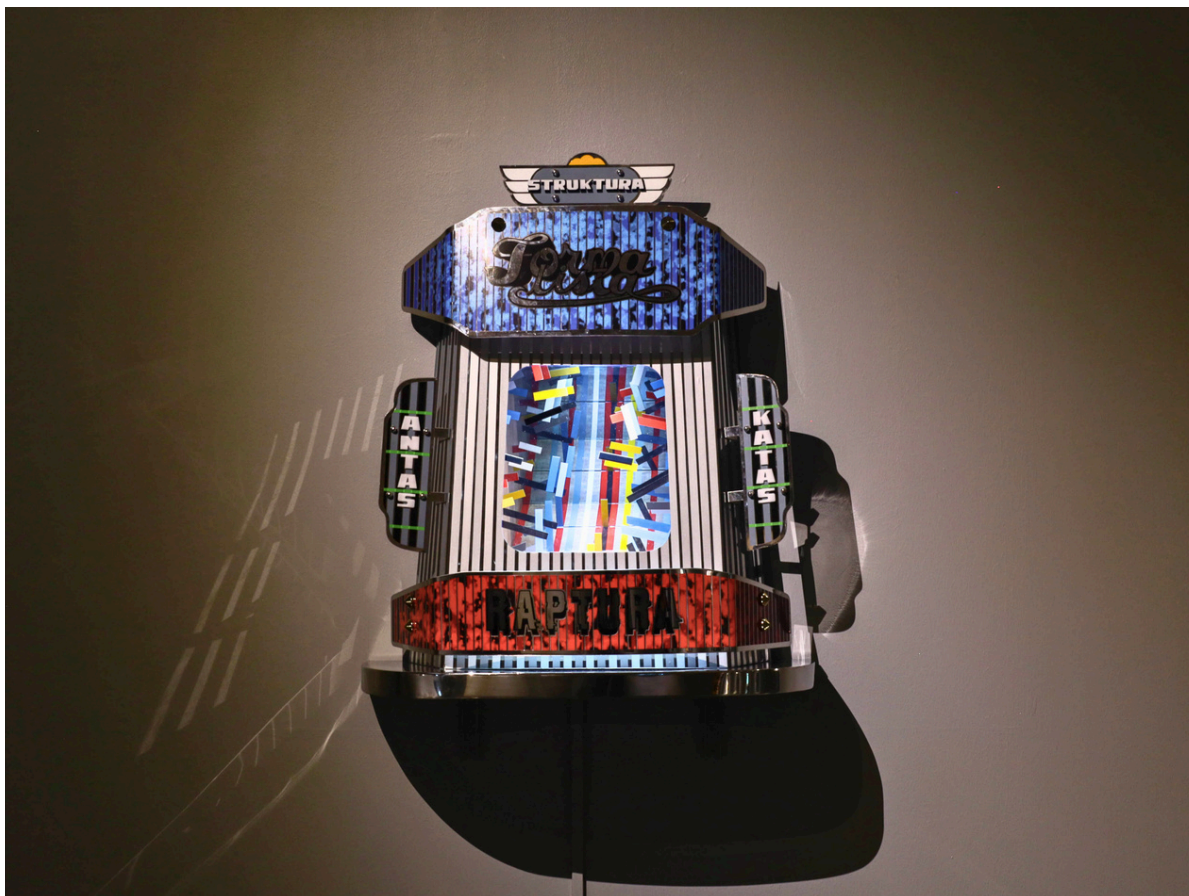
Victorio's Victory, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 76 x 66 x 14 cm, 2025

The shift in sensibility from *klasiko* to *moderno* is driven by modern art's entry into the artistic landscape and is represented by a figure from the painting *The Builders* by Edades. Justiniani asks: Are modernists the inheritors of the legacy of Philippine art? Wouldn't this be an illusion since development as a result of transplanted style is foreign to the local milieu?



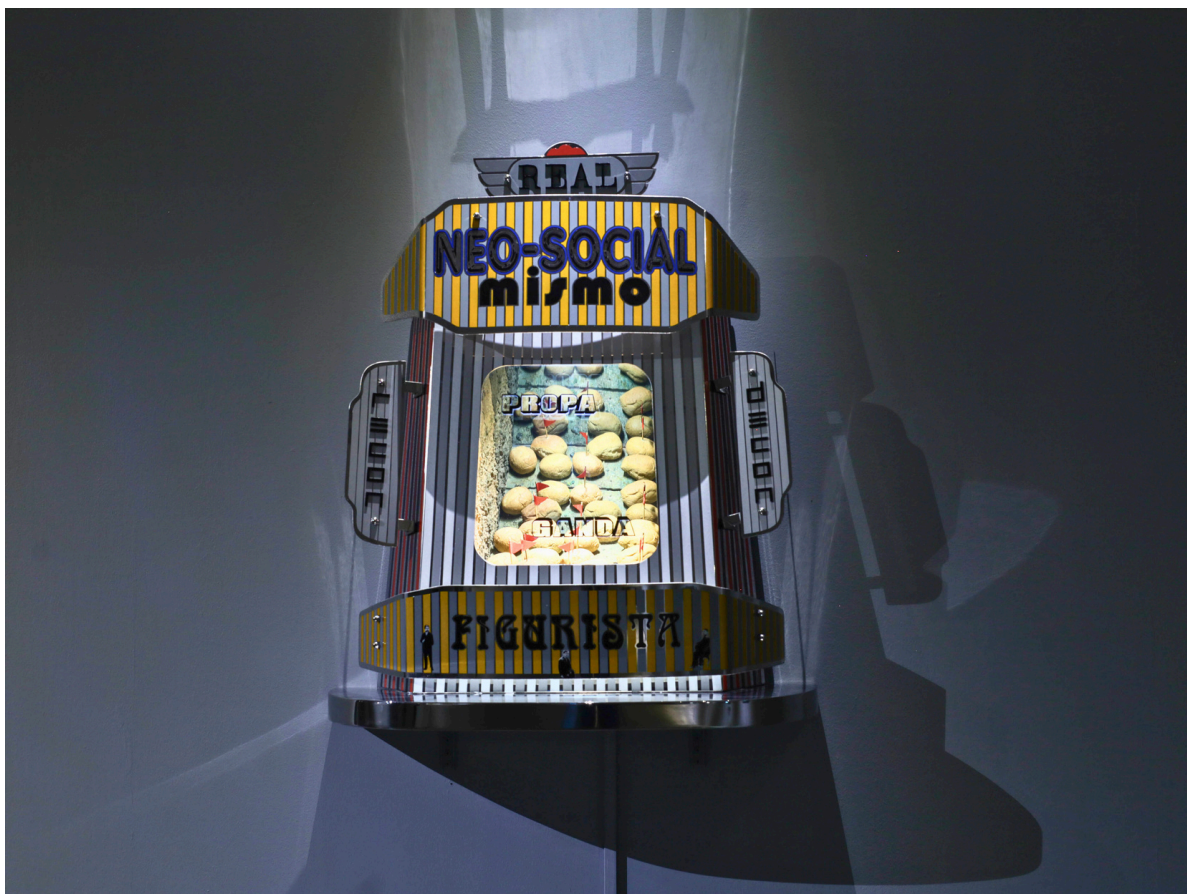
The Gatherers, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 76 x 66 x 14 cm, 2025

Evoking contemplation, a *balik tanaw*, the artist raises questions on possibilities by way of critique of the past. Relating to the Parable of the Sower where some will be caught and possibly be nurtured, while some will fall on dry land. Recollecting as an action, Justiniani imagines an alternate history where the modernists are neorealists. In this version, they continued to grow amidst socio-political realities and the movement was unaltered by the West's indulgence in form. This allohistory comes from the artist's belief that neorealism is an incomplete project.



Formalista, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 85 x 71 x 30.5 cm, 2025

Most reminiscent of Justiniani's White Rain series from the nineties, this work emphasizes *istraktura* (*na may antas at siyang katas*) as best visible through mimesis, which was previously considered highest in the hierarchy of forms. The importance of mimesis was asserted by Aristotle after Plato dismissed it as the lowest. In a formalist lens, partiality to the status of form was a beautiful proposal of truth. This advocated truth had moments of resurgence in the modern period. Perhaps through rapture, the possibility of neosocialism could have emanated from the dialogue between social realism and formalism.



Neo-social Mismo, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 85 x 71 x 30.5 cm, 2025

Here, *mismo* is used to emphasize the potentiality from the previous proposition that neorealism (also neosocialism) is an abandoned pursuit since abstract impressionism was then introduced. The radicalism in this era was supposedly the counterpoint of formalism. To connect to the broader historical agenda, Justiniani inserted figures of Jaena, Rizal, and Del Pilar of the propaganda movement. The ubiquity and simplicity of the *pan de sal* (a nagging reality) is in between the open terms *recon* (-stitute, -struct) and *decon* (-tamine, -secrete).



Apologia, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 74 x 69 x 14 cm, 2025

This work is a confession, zooming into the condition of the self in the scheme of things. Justiniani visualizes Plato's Apology of Socrates, compelling the persona of the artist to question supposed knowledge, accepting and overcoming ignorance. By positioning the self in different standpoints, the question looms: "Am I a contemporary artist or a temporary con artist?" He dialogues with himself and is confronted by self-image: a *propeta* (linked to the divine; a seer) or a *roleta* (reliant on luck; a fluke; a con).



Proto Conception Immaculada, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 102 x 102 x 18.4 cm, 2025

Justiniani temporarily liberates himself from diving deep into the self by acknowledging the immateriality of his ideas in relation to the vastness of the universe. In the hierarchy of forms, *concept/conception* is the origin/*una*. The spheres are manipulated layers and lights connecting to physics. The invisible force that drives matter to move and transform is made tangible. The work is an attempt to illustrate a divine process.



Ang klasikong obra maestra ng may likha, hand-cut vinyl on stainless steel, reflective media, LED bulbs, found objects, 94 x 84 x 23 cm, 2025

Within the discourse represented in the debate between Edades and Tolentino, the *obra maestra* does not contradict (complimentary not/from contradictory) the attempts of copying from nature because of its perfection. Instead, the *may likha* (creator, created, creative) converges with the process of making that is a distillation of ideas and materials from various sources, including the natural world. This merging is also a return to the universal, the genesis of the universe, the evolution of the psyche. Justiniani's revelation in this exhibition is a speculative exercise and he momentarily concludes it by challenging us to think about *likas*; means both inherently natural and to leave. It is in our nature as humans to question and/or escape.



Wormhole (edition 2 of 3)

Mixed media installation, LED bulbs, mirror, lightbox, stand

230 x 164 x 27

2025

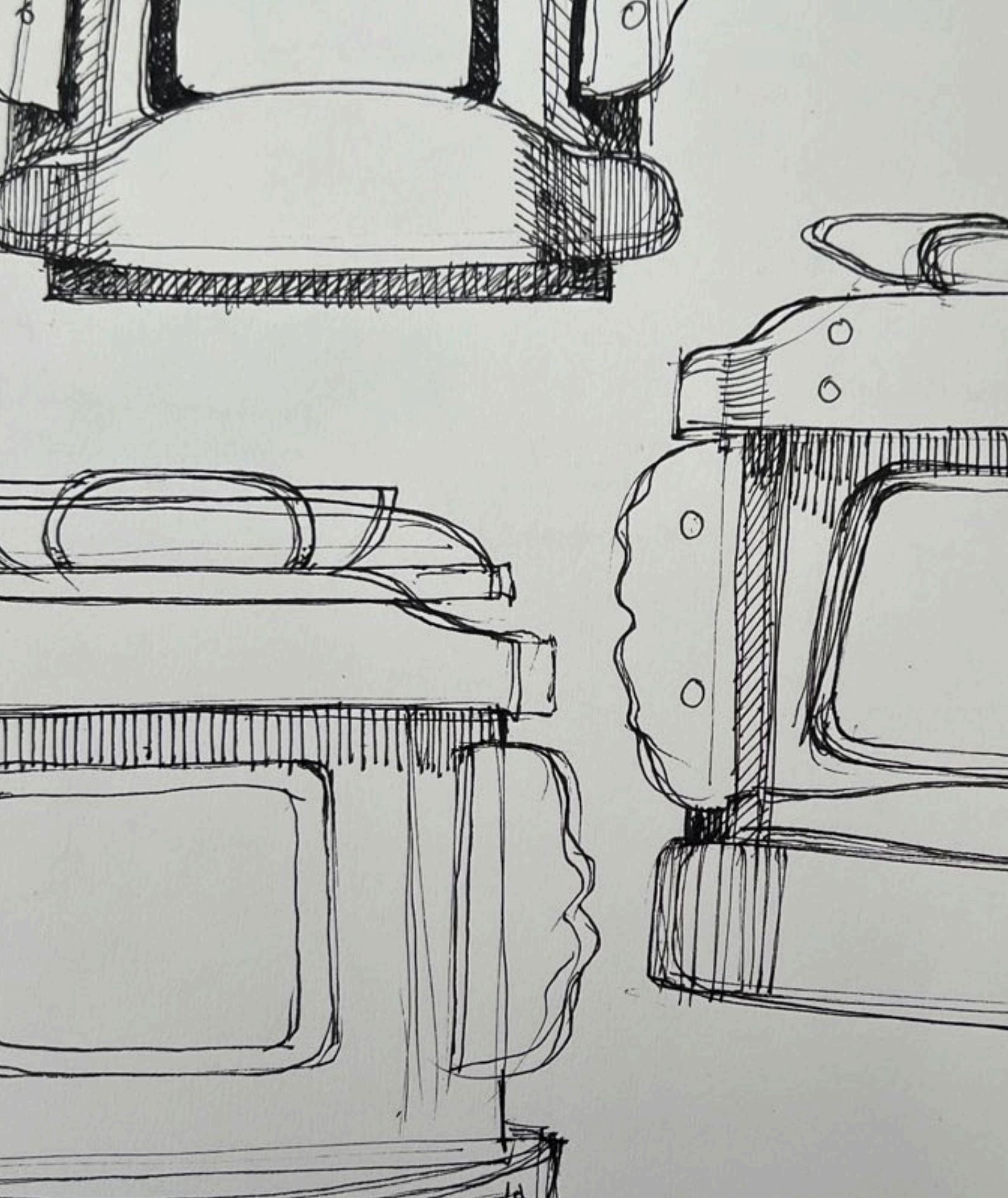


MARK JUSTINIANI

Mark Justiniani is a contemporary artist known for his innovative approach that blends elements of magic realism with a deep engagement in physics. His work often explores the intersection of reality and imagination, creating immersive environments that challenge viewers' perceptions of space and time. Justiniani infuses his pieces with surreal qualities, inviting audiences to experience the extraordinary within the mundane.

By integrating ideas related to light and gravity, his installations manipulate various properties to evoke wonder and curiosity. This blend of artistic vision and scientific exploration enhances his narrative and fosters a dialogue about the complexities of human experience and the universe.

In 2024, Justiniani exhibited "Void of Spectacles," showcasing monumental immersive installations at the Ateneo Art Gallery. His work "Arkipelago" was featured at the Philippine Pavilion during the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019. He has participated in Bangkok Art Biennale, the Yokohama Triennale, the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, the Children's Biennales and Festivals of the National Gallery Singapore and the Japanese Palais in Dresden.



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