

artasiapacific



MO_Space

Joebau *Throw Hide & Twist*

Conceptual artist Joe “Joebau” Bautista’s “Throw Hide & Twist,” hosted by MO_Space in Taguig, Metro Manila, explored the manifold ways that prompts and action can create associations between artist, artwork, and audience. Spanning mixed-media paintings, wall-bound works, and a participatory installation, the displayed pieces embody variations of the artist’s titular commands—“throw,” “hide,” and “twist”—and accordingly take varied and sometimes contrasting material forms.

Mounted in two rows on a gallery wall were *Hide on Board 1–9* (2020), a set of framed ink works. Disrupting this neat arrangement was *Hide on Board 10* (2020), which was hung off to the side. Seen collectively from afar, the series may appear as ordinary ink paintings on flat paper sheets, yet the one work separated from the rest hinted at something unusual, drawing viewers closer to reveal the works’ disparate materials and layers. The wide swirls and thin squiggles of black ink are in fact applied onto plastic, the impermeable and slippery surface registering liquid densities in drips and splotches. The plastic sheets were then cut into geometric shapes and collaged on paperboard. The actual material on which the gestural ink abstractions were rendered

is hidden in plain sight due to its pellucid quality.

Joebau similarly plays with transparency in *Hide on Wood 1–5* (2021). Brightly painted wooden planks in red, yellow, blue, orange, and white lean against the gallery wall, each plank wrapped partially in a clear and colorless plastic bag. Although the plastic covers the tops of the planks, their bright colors are not muted. As in *Hide on Board*, these works draw attention to the transparent property of plastic, but the bags are loosely placed over the wood in a way that retains their original shape and highlights their separateness as objects in their own right.

Further into the exhibition were *Hide and Twist 1–4* (2021), a series of wall works composed of black-painted plywood affixed to plastic sheets painted with ink, and bright-orange metersticks bent in angular configurations. Like in *Hide on Board*, the ink and plastic serve as composite layers of contrasting materials all “hidden” in black. What is notable is the participatory element introduced by the jointed metersticks, which the audience may twist in different directions. Through the action of an external mover, the measuring device transcends its linearity, and the work transforms its shape.

Painted metersticks reappear in *Twist Again 1–5* (2020),

bringing a pop of neon to acrylic canvases featuring scribbles in black or grayish-white over monochromatic grounds in colors such as teal and pink. Although these sticks are fixed in place, each canvas features two clouds of white where Joebau swirled paint over the surface with his bare hands, the pale shapes a remnant of the artist’s kineticism and agency over his art.

In a separate room at the back of the main exhibition space was the installation *Throw Me* (2021), accompanied by a sign inviting the audience to throw small cheesecloth pouches of flour against a black plywood wall. The artist himself does the same in a video screened in front of the installation, its recorded sounds echoing the thump of each bag thrown by a visitor in situ. The audience thus appears to join the artist in extending the work, each participant’s agency defined by the force of hand and shape of the cloth bag as it leaves a mark.

“Throw Hide & Twist” explored multiple ways of materializing concepts, asserting the dynamic relations between a prompt and execution to achieve critical effects in the works, and hinting at the agencies that connect the artist and audience.

JOHN ALEXIS BALAGUER



Installation view of JOEBAU’s *Hide on Wood 1–5*, 2021, painted wood and clear plastic covers, 214 × 61 cm each, at “Throw Hide & Twist,” MO_Space, Manila, 2021. Courtesy the artist and MO_Space.