

"As Wild As We Come" by Wawi Navarroza at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

[A. theartling.com/en/artzine/wild-we-come-wawi-navarroza-kristin-hjellegjerde-gallery/](https://theartling.com/en/artzine/wild-we-come-wawi-navarroza-kristin-hjellegjerde-gallery/)



September 14, 2022 by
Jenevieve Kok



From 19 August to 17 September 2022, **"As Wild as We Come"** is on view at **Kristin Hjellerjerde Gallery**. This exhibition comprises **Wawi Navarroza's** latest collection of self-portraits, continuing the artist's vivid layered explorations into identity, place, and belonging with a specific focus on the female experience, motherhood, and bodily transformation. She contemplates the neverending formation and flux of the self and crosses geographical, corporeal, and spiritual thresholds. Weaving together a multitude of references from ancient and contemporary cultures, this exhibition is Wawi's first solo show at Kristin Hjellerjerde Gallery's London Bridge space.



La Bruja II : Vagus (Self-Portrait Rebirthing the Self) by Wawi Navarroza. 2022. Archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Lustre mounted on dibond, Artist frame with wooden mat board and glazed, coloured frame.



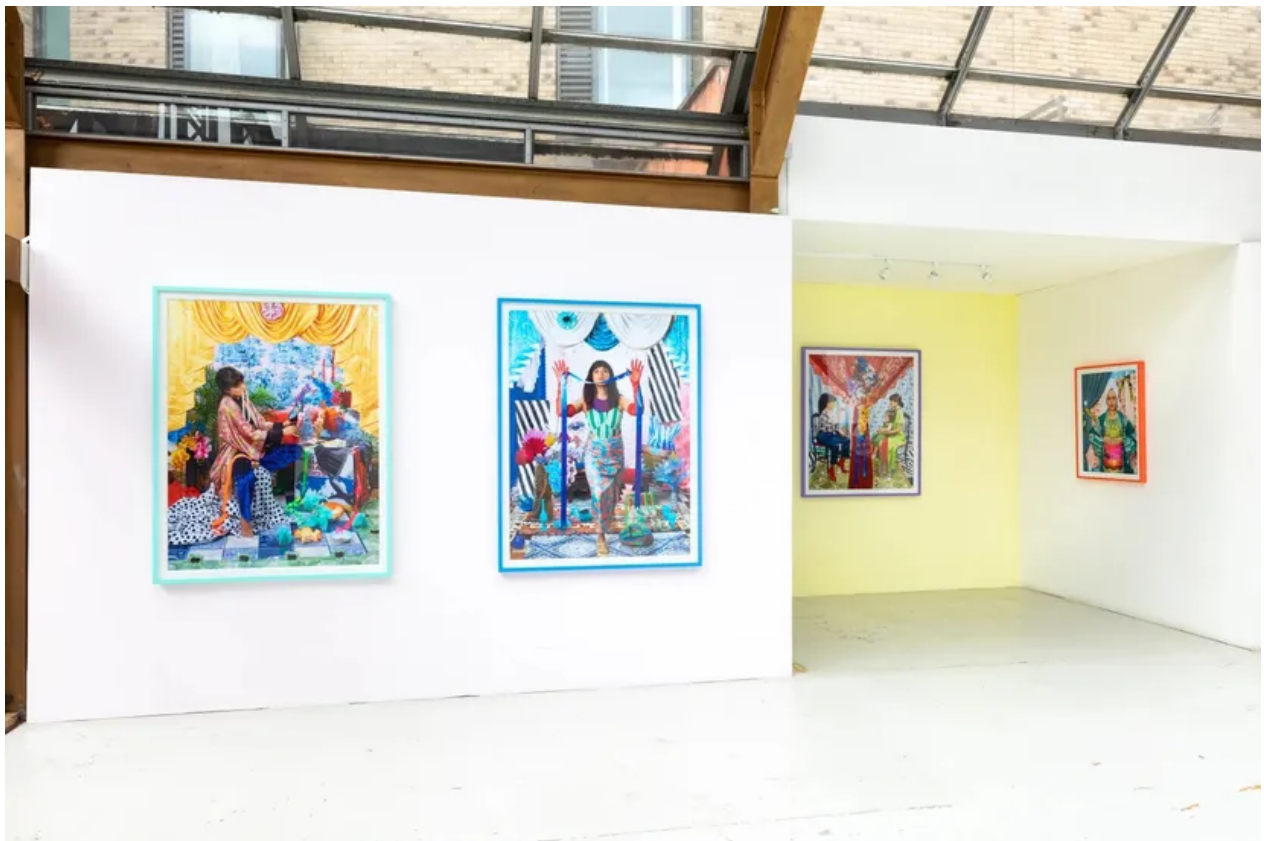
Todo Lo Que Tengo: Bottomless: Bereket (Self-Portrait with Vessels) by Wawi Navarroza. 2022. Archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Lustre mounted on dibond, Artist frame with wooden mat board and glazed, coloured frame.

Born in Manila in the Philippines, Wawi's practice is rooted in a deep, embodied sense of place that is best understood through the lens of "Tropical Gothic", a term coined by Filipino national artist Nick Joaquin. She describes the "Tropical Gothic" as a fitting portrait of Filipino culture that is a syncretic blend of the local with a heady mix of Spanish Catholic and American Pop while remaining distinctly South East Asian. In terms of her own artworks, it provides a useful framework, or as she describes it, "a container for everything that I can't exactly define – all of the things that I've been observing, living, breathing from childhood until now".



Mouth of Pearls: Oriental & Overseas (SelfPortrait) by Wawi Navarroza. 2022. Archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Lustre mounted on dibond, Artist frame with wooden mat board and glazed, colored frame.

Her photographic works employ a process of in-studio collage in order to examine and disentangle this process of synthesis from both a very personal perspective and in relation to reductive stereotypes surrounding the Orient. Wawi notes, for example, that the term "wild" has often been used in association with the Orient to describe something unknown, dangerous or savage, but here, in the title of the exhibition, she reclaims the word as an expression of defiance, knowing, vitality, and play.



In her latest body of work, her self-portraits mark a particularly transformational period for the Wawi in which she has become a mother who has moved across the globe from Manila to Istanbul, a country which sits on the cusp of Asia and Europe, the ancient and modern world. Though both experiences were destabilising in different ways, she chooses to reflect on how they have enriched her perspectives of the world and renewed her connection to both her body and art. There is a distinct celebratory atmosphere throughout: in the riotous melding of colour, pattern, and texture – an aesthetic that recalls the artist's memories of fiestas in Manila – and in the depiction of birthday cakes, in a trio of still life works, which refer to the birth of Navarroza's child but also her own rebirth as a mother.



The Shopper: Heart Sutra (Self-Portrait with Artichoke) by Wawi Navarroza. 2022. Archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Lustre mounted on dibond, Artist frame with wooden mat board and glazed, coloured frame.

Wawi's orchestration of the image is made visible through visual anomalies. In the work "The Shopper", for example, the background is composed of different checkered patterns containing glitches where the grid overlaps or repeats itself. The artist, who also appears dressed in checkered clothing, stands in front of a roughly cut-out shape of a blue and white vase as if she, herself, is contained. As in many of the works, she brings together the contemporary with the ancient, the banal with the spiritual. There is a shopping bag filled with potatoes flung over her shoulder while she holds an artichoke heart with open palms in front of her chest, imitating a gesture of prayer. Meanwhile, a small rectangle of woven polychromatic, upcycled fabric, that's commonly used in the Philippines as a doormat, forms a halo behind her head.



It is this slippage of meaning that makes the works so compelling; each time we return to the image, we are able to unlock new layers of symbolism and construct our own narratives afresh. In this way, Wawi enacts her own kind of resistance. Her bright, joyous collaged scenes rally against notions of seamlessness and stability in favour of hybridity, creative curiosity, and transformation



New Pleasures by Wawi Navarroza. 2022. Archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Photo Lustre mounted on dibond, Artist frame with wooden mat board and glazed, coloured frame.

About Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Established in 2012, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery has fast gained a reputation for exhibiting a diverse roster of innovative, international artists, both emerging and established, with strong theoretical and aesthetic bases.

Since its inception the gallery has embraced a collaborative, multicultural curatorial approach, maintaining a deep devotion to the artists it represents while fostering close relationships with museums and curators worldwide.

Drawing on her own international background, Kristin Hjellegjerde seeks to nurture new talent by offering artists a dynamic, inclusive platform through which they can be introduced to local and global clients. She works closely with other curators and collectors as well as developers and architects to develop unique and exciting exhibition concepts.

In 2019, she curated 'Kubatana', a museum exhibition focused on African artists at Vestfossen Kunstlaboratorium, Norway and in November 2020, she joined forces with Jacqueline Goldenberg to launch JK Masters, an art consultancy that aims to present secondary market artworks to those who are looking for something unique and special of the highest quality and/or historic value. In October 2021, Kristin Hjellegjerde was featured in Monocle Magazine's Top 25 Global Entrepreneurs of 2021.

In April 2018, the gallery opened a space in Berlin, which was shortly followed by the launch of a second location in London, occupying a two-storey building in the vibrant neighbourhood of London Bridge. In June 2020, the gallery opened its first annual summer space in a converted shrimp factory in the beautiful coastal town of Nevlunghavn, Norway. Following its success, a second summer space launched in 2021 in an 18th-century German castle forty minutes outside of Berlin at Schloss Görne. In Autumn 2022 the gallery will expand its presence in the US with the opening of a permanent space in Palm Beach.

Exhibition Dates: 19 August - 17 September 2022

Address: 2 Melior Place, London SE1 3SZ

Opening Times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm

All images are courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

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