

# UC Davis

## Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies

### Title

Sherwin Rio

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# LEESE STREET STUDIO



*Sherwin Rio*

**I**nterdisciplinary artist Sherwin Rio employs metaphor and storytelling through a Filipinx-American visual language to investigate historical and contemporary colonial narratives while intertwining familial and intergenerational knowledge. In works such as the Kentucky site-specific sculpture *THE SPIRIT'S WORK IS SHARED LIFTING* and the immersive video installation *WITH WIND, COME WHAT MAY*, the Florida-born artist positions embodied aspirational metaphors for concepts of bayanihan, bahala na, magkwentong, and the South/East Asian proverb of being like bamboo that sways in the wind. By applying these lenses, he offers a Filipinx worldview on societal issues like dismantling white supremacist nationalism, surviving a time of vast pandemic uncertainty, navigating diasporic identity, and more. In the latter work and in *BIRD ON A STRING: AGAINST THE WIND(OW)*— both installations where one can only watch the video component by staring against fan-generated wind— Rio invites the viewer to intimate anecdotes of his mother sharing philosophical wisdom and spiritual advice, and of his grandfather sharing hand-caught suburban pigeons as a wordless, visceral apology.

Rio presents his work through a Filipinx-American visual language of household fans, his personal barong tagalog shirts, the sport of boxing, and lashed bamboo. *FOOTWORK* substitutes boxing opponents with two standing oscillating fans who asynchronously 'trade blows' against one another within a bamboo and manila rope boxing ring. The artist makes here a double reference to the athletic footwork of boxing and the dance footwork of tinkling while immobilizing the instrumental bamboo poles with tight rope lashings and by replacing the fighters as stationary fans. In a similar material fashion, Rio uses bamboo and rope in a site-specific installation that transverses layers of historical titled *A COMPLETE CROSSING: FORT MASON PIER 2 HISTORIC RAILWAY & FOOTBRIDGE INTERSECTIONS*. Positioned on a pier at historic Fort Mason in San Francisco, which was the main port of embarkation for U.S. military involvement in the Pacific, the work extends the existing architectural metaphor, of a singular footbridge as the two intersecting railway tracks beneath it, by inserting representation for the excluded track— completing the intersection's echo. The

work attempts to imagine corrected narratives surrounding the hushed brutalities of militarized colonial and imperialistic intervention like the Philippine-American War, and glimpses an alternative way of thinking about what is left out of history.

Sherwin Rio is currently based in San Francisco, CA. He received a dual MFA/MA from San Francisco Art Institute in 2019 and a BFA from the University of Florida in 2014.

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# THE SPIRITS WORK IS SHARED LIFTING

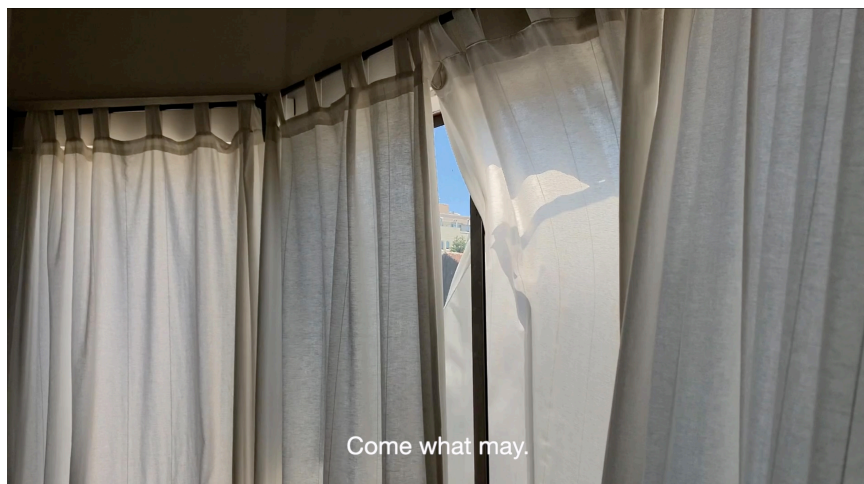
*Sherwin Rio*



THE SPIRIT'S WORK IS SHARED LIFTING, 2019, hand-split and engraved Indiana limestone, fabricated steel, metal wheelbarrow handles, found pallet wood, rope, and cement. Approximately 12 x 12 x 6 ft. Located at Josephine Sculpture Park in Frankfort, KY. Photographed by the artist.

# VIDEO: WITH WIND, COME WHAT MAY

*Sherwin Rio*



WITH WIND, COME WHAT MAY, 2020, Video and audio installation with curtains and fans, Dimensions variable. <sup>1</sup>  
Video still.

# BIRD ON A STRING: AGAINST THE WIND(OW)

*Sherwin Rio*



BIRD ON A STRING: AGAINST THE WIND(OW), 2019, Suspended garage door, window guillotine, fans, audio, and video projection, Dimensions variable.  
Photo and video documentation by Alex Taylor.

# FOOTWORK

*Sherwin Rio*

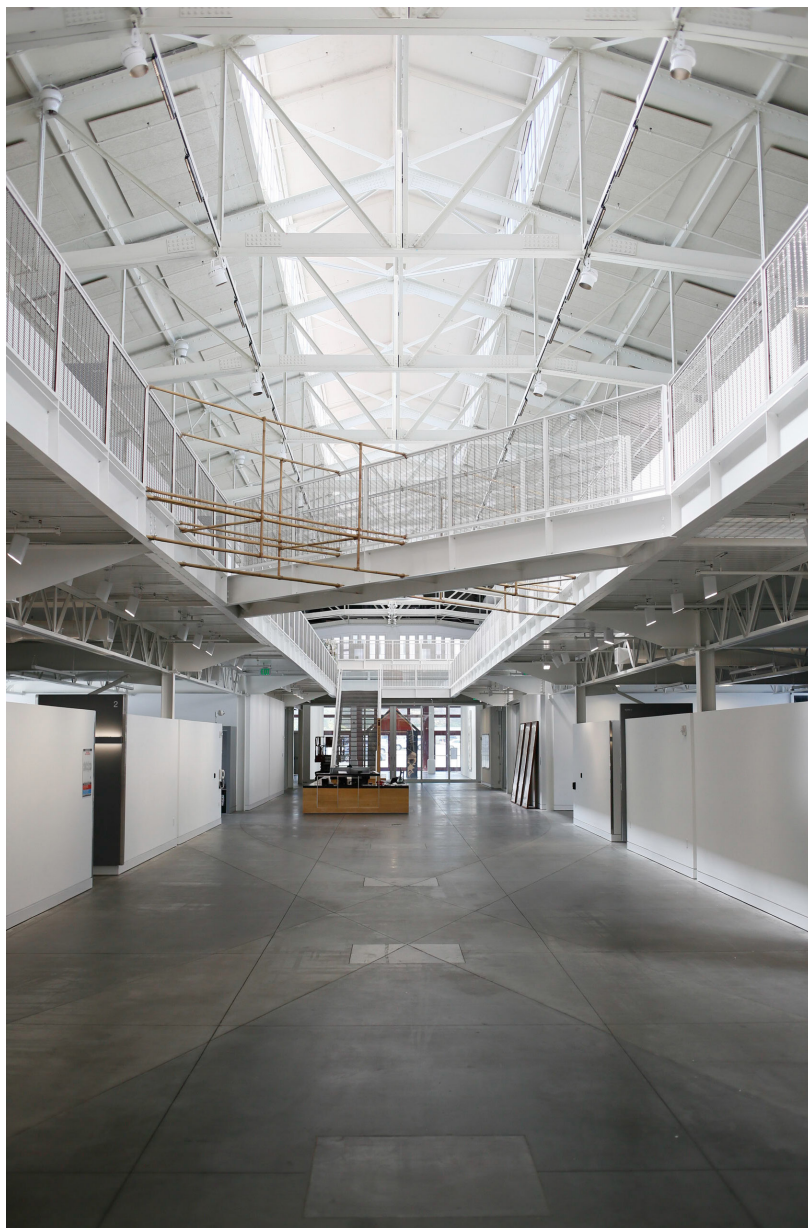


FOOTWORK, 2017, Bamboo, rope, twine, wire, fans, & wind, 8 x 8 x 4 feet.  
Photo and video documentation by Alexander Taylor.



# A COMPLETE CROSSING: FORT MASON PIER 2 HISTORIC RAILWAY & FOOD BRIDGE INTERSECTIONS

*Sherwin Rio*





*A COMPLETE CROSSING: FORT MASON PIER 2 HISTORIC RAILWAY & FOOTBRIDGE INTERSECTIONS, 2018, Site-specific bamboo, rope, and wire installation at Fort Mason Pier 2 SFAI Campus, 4 1/2 x 3 1/2 x 27 1/2 feet. Photographed by Marco David Castaneda.*