# Chapter Two

**Roberto Chabet: Shifting surfaces and Hanging Lines**

While Maceda’s *Cassettes 100* served as the earliest deliberate citation of a Kaprow-inspired Happening at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, other artists active at the CCP also stretched performance art’s capacity to blur the distinction between art and life for critical ends. For example, Roberto Chabet, Maceda’s one-time collaborator for *Udlot-Udlot,*[[1]](#footnote-1) was notably described as “an artist of happenings” by art critic Benesa.[[2]](#footnote-2) Benesa referred to Chabet’s performance at *Exhibition of Objects* in 1973 as a prime example of Chabet’s penchant for provocation. During the opening night of the exhibition at the CCP, Chabet dramatically ripped apart *Contemporary Philippine Art*, a large tome documenting recent art history in the country.

Chabet later expressed that the performance, which he called *Tearing to Pieces*, occurred because he “did not think it was allowed then to say something negative about the book in the newspapers so what better way to comment on it.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Chabet’s allusion to “newspapers” seemed to refer to restrictions on free press under martial law that limited freedom of expression. Though smaller in scale than *Cassettes 100*, *Tearing to Pieces* served as not only a method of criticism, but also as a demonstration of how performance art—with its close relationship to life—circulated information through gossip and hearsay despite dictatorial control of mass media.[[4]](#footnote-4)

While Benesa situated Chabet within a global practice of Happenings that had gone “out of fashion in the international art scene,” the title of his article, “Chabet: Art As Happening,” permitted a level of interpretative slippage. “Happening” in this case alluded not only to a form of performance art practice, but also suggested art under Chabet as lively or interesting, similar to how one describes a crowded venue as “happening.” Always a provocateur, Roberto Chabet Rodriguez played many roles in the art world during the late twentieth century. More known for his installations and as the father of Philippine conceptual art, happenings made up only a small part of Chabet’s artistic contributions.

Before becoming a fine arts professor at UP-Diliman for nearly thirty years, Chabet served as the Cultural Center of the Philippines’ inaugural Museum Director from 1968 to 1970. He had studied architecture at the University of Saint Tomas and taught at the university as a lecturer in the same subject before his CCP appointment.[[5]](#footnote-5) Despite his lack of formal art instruction, Chabet quickly became a fixture in the Manila art scene after he “barged” into Luz Gallery with a handful of his artwork in the early 1960s.[[6]](#footnote-6) Arturo Luz, the gallery’s proprietor and an established painter himself, stated that Chabet was the “one painter of talent” that Luz had found in the first few years of running the Gallery.[[7]](#footnote-7) Luz had also been the one to advise the young Chabet to sign his work with his exotic sounding middle name lest he be mistaken for one of the many other Rodriguezes in the Philippine art scene.[[8]](#footnote-8) Chabet frequently exhibited at Luz Gallery—one of the more reputable galleries of the period—and further cemented his position in the Philippine art world when he received the First Prize in painting at the Art Association of the Philippines 14th Annual Exhibition in 1961.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Imelda Marcos had appointed Chabet as the director of the art museum for her ambitious Cultural Center of the Philippines in December 1967.[[10]](#footnote-10) As part of the appointment, Chabet received a Rockefeller Grant given to the institution to observe museum practices across America.[[11]](#footnote-11) The Rockefeller Grant undoubtedly informed Chabet’s artistic consciousness as it permitted him travel extensively to observe contemporary practices throughout both continents.[[12]](#footnote-12) Chabet also spent the summer of 1968 in Europe to attend the Milan Triennale, Venice Biennale, and Kassel Documenta IV. In December that year, he returned to Europe after more time in North America and passed his last month in England. His American itinerary included major cities and cultural centers including New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington D.C., visiting the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco Museum of Art, Art Institute of Chicago among others. Chabet also visited smaller cities such as Detroit, Mexico City, Santa Fe, and Phoenix to observe museum operations at more minor institutions.[[13]](#footnote-13)

During his time in New York, Chabet witnessed the ongoing installation of *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* at the Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition surveyed more than 300 works associated with Dada and Surrealism in the early 20th century, including a sampling of works that demonstrated the “artistic heritage of these movements.”[[14]](#footnote-14) In the exhibition, Chabet would have seen works like Duchamp’s *Bicycle Wheel* and *Bottle Rack*, Robert Rauschenberg’s *Bed* and Claes Oldenburg’s *Soft Typewriter*, among others. The visit to the Museum of Modern Art allowed Chabet to experience in person the continuing legacy of Dada, “anti-art” and the incorporation of quotidian things in fine art—a practice he continued in the Philippines upon his return. Like many artists in the 1960s, Chabet was also drawn towards American movements such as Pop Art, earthworks, minimalism, and post-minimalism, noting his particular indebtedness towards the latter two.[[15]](#footnote-15) He cited Robert Rauschenberg, Eva Hesse, and Robert Smithson as artists of particular interest.[[16]](#footnote-16) In 1973, Chabet also dedicated a series of new works exhibited at Luz Gallery to the memory of Eva Hesse, who had passed away in 1970.

After he returned to the Philippines, he resigned from the CCP in late 1970, just one year after the building officially opened to the public. Chabet had realized then that he had completed his three years of service—the minimum required by the Rockefeller Grant—and withdrew from his position at the earliest possible instance. Joy Dayrit, Chabet’s long-term companion and friend, wrote in her journal that Chabet had “written the letter of resignation, a letter I suppose he had been composing for the past two years. He sounded firm and sure about his resigning and I was…surprised.” [[17]](#footnote-17) In the same journal entry, Dayrit further expressed:

I respect Bobby for what he did. He let go of prestige and all the fringes that go with it simply because he did not believe in all that crap. What is being a director when you can’t say what you want or do what you really want to do. Bobby believes in his art and the only way to develop that art is to be by himself, thinking and answering only for and to himself.[[18]](#footnote-18)

While Chabet’s resignation from the CCP relieved him of certain bureaucratic obligations, Chabet’s departure from the CCP did not end of his relationship with the institution. He remained affiliated with the CCP throughout the 1970s, even serving as an artist-in-residence under his successor, Raymundo Albano.

Though Chabet only served as the CCP’s Museum Director for a single year of exhibitions, he established early curatorial programs for the Center and its developmental strategies, including the *Thirteen Artists* exhibition—a recognition that continues today at the CCP.[[19]](#footnote-19) As the Museum Director, he expanded support towards sculpture and experimental projects with exhibitions such as *Sculptures* and *Illumination*.[[20]](#footnote-20) The latter exhibition dealt with perception and served as “an investigation on the effects of light, lighted materials, light moving in time,” exemplifying the kind of conceptual impulses typical of the CCP.[[21]](#footnote-21) Shortly after his departure as Museum Director, Chabet became a fine arts professor at the University of the Philippines, where he advised countless students for nearly three decades. He also became the de facto leader of a group of loosely affiliated conceptual artists called *Shop 6*, which Chabet has cited as an “alternative” venue to the CCP.[[22]](#footnote-22) Despite quick resignation from the CCP, he and his students, including members of *Shop 6*, frequently exhibited at the Cultural Center during and after the Marcoses’ reign.

While critics and scholars considered Chabet and his affiliated band of conceptual artists deeply tied to the CCP and complicit with Imelda Marcos’ cultural agenda, such an interpretation fails to acknowledge that the regime did not operate as an impenetrable authoritarian power. As demonstrated by *Cassettes 100*,the Marcoses permitted inconsistencies to legitimate their position as a non-oppressive governing force. Among these contradictions included some freedom and experimentation in the arts—such as abstraction—to exhibit the regime’s cultural and personal sophistication to the world.[[23]](#footnote-23) As an artist working in the Philippines who thoroughly understood his position in that world, Chabet used the CCP and authoritarian support for the arts as a platform to relieve the Philippines of its prior anxiety to be both “Filipino” and “international.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

The following chapter is neither a complete résumé of Chabet’s oeuvre, which would be impossible to do in one chapter, nor is it an attempt to examine all his contributions to the CCP. Instead, it focuses on a handful of specific works made shortly after Chabet’s return from the Rockefeller Grant as he began to incorporate found objects and indigenous materials to his art-making practice. While Chabet is often declared the father of Philippine conceptual art, this chapter examines how his foray into conceptual art began in part as a response to abstraction. Though Jonathan Beller argues in his essay that “the radical edge” of “the viscerality of visual abstraction…drives to a struggle that may indeed be continued,” he claims that the “radical edge of this work was sheared off in H.R.’s canonization by the Marcoses, just as the Marcoses utilized a nationalist progressive discourse for fascistic ends.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

Beginning in the 1970s, Chabet’s curatorial and artistic efforts freed abstraction—and Philippine modernism—from instrumentalization by the Marcoses (or any faction) through its inclusion of everyday materials and debris. Hidden in the aesthetic arrangements of Chabet and his followers were abject objects made to look aesthetically appealing to fulfill Imelda Marcos’ agenda of beauty. Yet, while flat planes of interlocking garish painted colors (what Beller describes as “army camouflage”)[[26]](#footnote-26) make up much of Ocampo’s abstraction, Chabet’s “eccentric abstraction,” made from pieces of rubber and mangrove branches purchased from the market, protrudes into the world and its local realities.[[27]](#footnote-27) His work engaged directly with contemporary global discourses, but his penchant for impermanent materials and exhibition practices evaded international circulation and comparison. Chabet put forth the consumption of art (and of the world) as reciprocal and fluctuating processes negotiated between the viewer and their surroundings based on sensorial processes in conflict with the rational, top-down control by the Marcoses.

**Tearing Contemporary Art to Pieces at the CCP**

In 1973, Chabet took to one of the CCP’s small outdoor atriums with a copy of Manuel Duldulao’s recently published *Contemporary Philippine Art*. He then proceeded strip out pages from the book’s spine and shred them into pieces in a performance aptly titled *Tearing to Pieces*.[[28]](#footnote-28) Chabet performed *Tearing to Pieces* during the opening of *Exhibition of Objects*, an exhibition curated by Albano, Chabet’s replacement at the CCP.[[29]](#footnote-29) Albano had initially joined the museum division at the CCP under Chabet’s tutelage and, although Chabet had expected him to resign after his departure, Albano took over the museum director position. There, he continued their shared proclivity towards conceptual practices.[[30]](#footnote-30) *Objects* was just one example of an exhibition at the CCP that advanced the agenda of experimentalism originating under Chabet’s brief leadership.[[31]](#footnote-31) *Objects* included “examples of objects” described in Albano’s curatorial notes as “diversions of painters and sculptors” and “extensions of their visual preoccupation.”[[32]](#footnote-32) Artists who participated in the exhibition were mostly painters exploring the potential of object-making, including Lee Aguinaldo, an established painter who exhibited *Duchamp’s Last Crap*, a work made from ceramic, wood, and cardboard. *Objects* took place in the CCP Small Gallery—a small, modest white cube gallery space immediately across from the aforementioned atrium.

*Tearing to Pieces* refers both to Chabet’s initial action of tearing apart *Contemporary Philippine Art* and the pile of scraps overflowing from a trash bin exhibited during *Objects*. The work has usually been understood as a critique of the book’s decided lack of academicism and a rejection of its contents.[[33]](#footnote-33) Excluding the introduction, the book is divided into ten short chapters that cover the beginning of Philippine modernism with discussion of the Philippine Art Gallery and the Art Association of the Philippines. It covers capsule histories of other emerging galleries such as Luz Gallery, the Contemporary Artists Gallery, Gallery Seven, Solidaridad, Galerie Bleue, and the Hidalgo Art Gallery. Central chapters cover critiques of artists such as H.R. Ocampo, Vicente Manansala, Arturo Luz, and Fernando Zobel—artists responsible for the “triumph of the New Style in the Philippines.”[[34]](#footnote-34) Chapter seven begins to discuss print-making and introduces Chabet and the last three chapters examine art from the mid-1960s onwards with particular focus on Imelda Marcos and the inauguration of the CCP.

In an interview with Duldulao, Cid Reyes stated that despite its “tremendous success and acceptance by a public once hostile and indifferent to Philippine art,” those in the art world met *Contemporary Philippine Art* with derision because it was not “scholarly enough” and relied “largely on press releases and articles, even gossip items.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Artists further expressed offense that an outsider—someone who had previously worked in advertisement—created an entire historical tome about them, the first one to be published in the Philippines. Chabet, for example, later criticized Duldulao because he “actually never went to the exhibitions or openings,” though the latter claimed otherwise.[[36]](#footnote-36) Local criticism from the art world did not perturb Duldulao however, as he explicitly acknowledged that he had written *Contemporary Philippine Art* for an international audience.[[37]](#footnote-37) He expressed that the book was not intended for the “erudite elite” but rather “for an American friend curious to know about Philippine art.”[[38]](#footnote-38) His aspiration for international circulation and recognition mirrored the desire of Filipino artists exhibiting in major international biennials in the 1960s.[[39]](#footnote-39)

As recognition for his contribution to the arts, Duldulao earned a Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) award in art in 1972—the same year he published *Contemporary Philippine Art*—as the first non-artist recipient. The book, much like *The Struggle for Philippine Art* published that same year, chronicled the “vital span of years from 1950 to the present,” which, according to Duldulao, “saw modern art rise from jeer to cheer.”[[40]](#footnote-40) *Contemporary Philippine Art* covers art making from the conception of the Philippine Art Gallery (PAG) to the international biennials of the 1960s to the newly minted Cultural Center of the Philippines. The text follows a relatively teleological understanding of modernism that mimicked the West as it progressed from romantic figuration to pure abstraction or “non-objective” art in the Philippines. *Tearing to Pieces* not only served as Chabet’s rejection of modernism as necessarily teleological (“from jeer to cheer”), but also engaged directly with the contemporary politics of the Philippines by circumventing constraints placed on the freedom of press.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Yolanda Johnson (then Laudico), one of the initial members of *Shop 6*, documented Chabet’s performance of *Tearing to Pieces* in a series of color and black-and-white photographs. **[fig. 2.1]** In the first photograph, Chabet beginsby presenting an intact copy of *Contemporary Philippine Art* squarely in front of his torso. His body replaces the display function of the low pedestal behind him; his hands carefully cradle the book’s edges like a bookstand. His expression appears rather deadpan and humorless. He wears an unremarkable yellow t-shirt, loose pressed slacks, and black footwear—nothing that diverges from everyday clothing. Though the grayish text of the title fades into the book’s white cover, a circular detail of H.R. Ocampo’s *Song For April* renders the overall book familiar. Finally, a grayish gallery wall and three overhead lights backdrop Chabet; this is the only photograph of the artist and the book inside the gallery during *Tearing to Pieces* documented in the Chabet Archive.[[42]](#footnote-42)

In the subsequent photographs, Chabet has removed the book from the familiar space of the art gallery. Chabet performs the majority of *Tearing to Pieces* in the atrium, an open-air rectangular plot enclosed on all sides with windows opening into the CCP’s fourth floor hallways. Though the atrium literally occupies a space outside of the building, it technically remains part of institutional control because of its location in the heart of the CCP. Chabet chooses this ambivalent space—one that is simultaneously physically embedded within and outside of the institution, a position that metaphorically matches his own vis-à-vis the CCP—for *Tearing to Pieces*. Not only does he remove the book from its honored spot on the elevated pedestal, but he casually sets it directly on the grass in the atrium. No longer an object of veneration, the book becomes a mere thing implanted into the realm of the everyday, a symbolic gesture towards the current shift in Philippine contemporary art. Yet, the chosen space for the performance seems to mark art’s transition from institution to the everyday as ambivalent and artificial since an atrium is a space that exists because of the building that surrounds it.

After setting the book on the ground, Chabet kneels behind the book as if it were an offering or a sacrifice of some sort. **[fig. 2.2 – 2.3]** He extends his body into a yogic headstand with his face looking away from *Contemporary Philippine Art*. By upending himself, the book, which was once at his feet, is now close to his head, suggesting that its position—physically and metaphorically—is necessarily mediated through human interaction. His inversion also foreshadows the presence of bodily exertion throughout *Tearing to Pieces*, highlighting art as a product of the artist’s physical effort. **[fig. 2.4]** Chabet then carefully lowers himself and casually rifles through the book’s pages—a gesture that mimics reading. Instead of reading the text, however, he proceeds to deliberately rip apart the glossy pages of Duldulao’s art historical opus. He takes the act of reading, a mode of intellectual consumption, and substitutes destruction as another method of expenditure. As part of his procedure, Chabet forcefully presses the palm of one hand against a page of the book and then pulls its edge with his other hand; his action indicates thought and deliberation to how the paper comes apart—a process similar to constructing collages.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In other photographs, Chabet has changed into another nondescript shirt—this time blue instead of yellow. **[fig. 2.5]** After this minor wardrobe adjustment, Chabet performs another leisurely yogic inversion as he raises himself into a shoulder stand against the outer spine of *Contemporary Philippine Art*. The book had been left open with its pages splayed on the grass, a position that might allude to the presence of an absent-minded reader. **[fig. 2.6]** A lone female figure, most likely Dayrit, casually leans against the atrium’s glass wall and watches as Chabet tears apart the pages of *Contemporary Philippine Art*. **[fig. 2.7]** Though one photograph appears to show Dayrit gingerly moving one of the pieces from the book, she largely serves as a passive observer during *Tearing to Pieces*. Unlike Chabet, who Laudico photographed in a range of active poses, Dayrit either leans against the glass window or sits cross-legged, weighed down by her daily possessions, including a transparent vinyl “Piti Paty” tote and a black knitted purse. She makes little attempt to physically participate in Chabet’s book tearing effort, appearing in the photographs as a bystander to Chabet’s process. Her ultimate inclusion as one of the makers of *Tearing to Pieces*, however, indicates that even in this passive role of observance, she, as spectator, is still considered an author of *Tearing to Pieces.*[[44]](#footnote-44)While Dayrit is the only other figure besides Chabet seen in the atrium, glimpses of other spectators watching from inside the CCP are also visible behind the dark windows.

**[fig. 2.8]** Chabet changes his shirt one last time; one photograph shows Chabet tugging on a plain red shirt similar to his previous two.[[45]](#footnote-45) After Chabet changes into the red shirt, he shifts to a more active position behind the book as he prepares for the end of *Tearing to Pieces*. While the prior photographs show Chabet kneeling on both knees (even when he dramatically throws a fistful of paper pieces against a window), he now kneels on only one knee—a position that allows for greater mobility. **[fig. 2.9]** His other foot steps on the book to hold it in place as he continues to deliberately remove pages from the hardcover. **[fig. 2.10]** As Chabet finishes tearing out the last pages of the book—some with his teeth—he throws the pages against the one side of the atrium’s glass window, the only side that has a sheer curtain.

Towards the end of *Tearing to Pieces*, the photographs shift from color to black-and-white. Though bits of bounded pages are still seen in these last photographs, *Contemporary Philippine Art* has mostly been stripped of its pages. **[fig. 2.11]** Chabet then rips apart its black hardcover, gleefully brandishing the book’s spine, emblazoned with its title, for public scrutiny. Since he had thrown the pages against the windowed atrium throughout the performance, a pile of torn paper gathers along one side of the space. **[fig. 2.12 – 2.14]** In the last photographs documenting *Tearing to Pieces*,Chabet is shown wildly mixing the torn pages with his arms. He faceplants onto the pile of scraps, pretending to pass out from the physical exertion of the performance. One of the final black and white photographs shows Chabet as he poses himself casually atop of the torn pages, his previously deadpan expression replaced with a satisfied Cheshire grin.

According to Duldulao’s account of Chabet’s performancein *The Philippine Art Scene*, another book he published in 1977, the performanceended with Chabet “pouring…the scraps from a paper bag into a wastebasket in view of the attendees.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Photographic documentation of the performance in the Chabet Archive, however, concludes the performance in the atrium. **[fig. 2.15]** A list of artworks from *Objects* exhibition files does identify an object exhibited as *Tearing to Pieces*; a corresponding black and white photograph shows a small pile of paper scraps—remnants of Duldulao’s book—next to a small rubbish bin. The exhibition list identifies the work’s medium as “(artists specified medium, ‘Philippine Contemporary Art’) waste basket, torn pieces of book” and credits the object to Chabet, Dayrit and Laudico. This identification demonstrates the importance of textually ascribing the “torn pieces of book” to Duldulao’s oeuvre.[[47]](#footnote-47) Since Chabet had rendered the displayed pieces relatively illegible, comprehending *Tearing to Pieces* hinged on the belief that the tattered bits of paper were indeed from Chabet’s earlier performance.

Though Reyes compared *Tearing to Pieces* to a “Savonarola-inspired book-burning gesture,” the act of tearing rather than burning meant that there were pieces of legible text left after the performance.[[48]](#footnote-48) Photographs from *Tearing to Pieces*, many of them shot in close frame to Chabet’s body, clearly document Chabet’s deliberate and self-conscious method of destruction as one that purposely left pieces of the book behind.[[49]](#footnote-49) In one photograph, for example, Chabet obscures his face as he presents a single page to the camera. His hands hold the top of the page as if he is about to rip it in half, which, following other photographs, he most likely did after this picture was taken. Underneath him and at his knees are other pages that have been ripped apart or are waiting to be ripped apart.

Through this presentation, Chabet indicates the importance of his destructive methods. Instead of setting the book on fire or drenching the pages in dark liquid to render its text indecipherable, Chabet chose a form of destruction that left bits of the book’s text readable, even though the viewer might not immediately identify the book itself. The destructive act of tearing was also a generative one as the pieces from the performance were used to produce an object—the overflowing trash bin—for *Exhibition of Objects*. While some of the words and images remain readable on the scraps of paper, Chabet obscured the narrative expounded in the original by mixing the pieces in random configuration. **[fig. 2.16]** A black and white photograph documenting a pile of pages left on the grass during his performance—the only photograph to not include Chabet—includes the front cover of *Contemporary Philippine Art*, whole and un-torn, like a fallen general with his soldiers.

By leaving remnants of Duldulao’s book displayed and identified in *Objects*, *Tearing to Pieces* was not about destruction or even criticism, but rather the generation of conversation around the text and the book’s modernist narrative—one that also implicated Chabet, who Duldulao included in *Contemporary Philippine Art*.[[50]](#footnote-50) Duldulao further embraced his first book’s prominent position in Philippine performance art in his following manuscript, *The Philippine Art Scene*. There, he smugly reported that “with the help of the mass media and in spite of Chabet’s opinion, or perhaps partly because of it…a thousand copies of *Contemporary Philippine Art* were sold in exactly ten days.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Chabet also acknowledged that *Tearing to Pieces* brought attention to *Contemporary Philippine Painting* in a way that contributed to its sales.[[52]](#footnote-52)

While *Tearing to Pieces* did not impede the success of *Contemporary Philippine Art* through its criticism, Chabet’s performance served a different purpose. *Tearing to Pieces* picked at Duldulao’s desire—similar to Imelda’s—to create an easily consumable and digestible history of contemporary Philippine art catered toward an international audience. Itdrew local attention to Philippine art through hearsay and conversation, attention that resonated through the years in later interviews with Chabet and Duldulao.[[53]](#footnote-53) *Tearing to Pieces* also revealed how Imelda Marcos’ support for avant-garde and experimental practices allowed for legible and “shocking” acts that permitted circulation of thoughts, ideas, and criticism in a regime that otherwise kept tight control over the dissemination of information.[[54]](#footnote-54) As experimental performances helped to prove the regime’s tolerance and desire for creative innovation, Chabet was able to use the CCP as a platform to express his discontent and create intrigue around art and its history as it emerged in the Philippines. *Tearing to Pieces* seemed to have real life repercussions as it increased sales and general public interest in art. In placing the performance in the CCP’s atrium, Chabet also seemed to recognize his own implication within the CCP and its structures despite his attempt to operate outside of it—literally and figuratively.

***New Works* Exhibition (Tribute to Eva Hesse)**

Shortly after *Tearing to Pieces*, Chabet held a solo exhibition at Luz Gallery in February 1973 called *New Works* or *For E.H.* Chabet intended the exhibition to be a tribute to Eva Hesse, an artist Chabet held in high regard, after her passing in 1970. Nathaniel Gutierrez, the same photographer who documented *Cassettes 100*, captured the black and white photographs for this exhibition. Most of Chabet’s work displayed in *New Works* include thick, boxy black or white plywood frames with pieces of rubber repurposed from the interior tubes of tires stretched across the frames in assorted horizontal arrangements. Chabet’s choice of rubber reflected Hesse’s own penchant for industrial and every-day materials; their configuration recalls the sensuousness of the body reminiscent of Hesse’s later installations. Many of the boxes, such as *Kite Traps*, were treated like paintings and placed flushed against the gallery’s white wall, while others hung like a line of mobiles from the ceiling. Chabet also placed black plywood boxes filled with tire bits on the floor of the gallery.

In a positive review of *New Works*, Reyes identified Chabet’s simple plywood and rubber constructions as extending from “post-minimalism” from “the art-historical viewpoint” and “eccentric abstraction” according to Lucy Lippard.[[55]](#footnote-55) The works in *For E.H.* engaged with post-minimalist strategies such as seriality (following their minimalist predecessors), the exploration of unprocessed materials, and a greater emphasis on sensuality and corporeality.[[56]](#footnote-56) Reyes described Chabet’s work as a “lush metronomical arrangement of rubber strips” that had a “gawky, disconcerting elegance.” [[57]](#footnote-57) However, Reyes further noted that Chabet’s work might also be considered “art of the ugly” to the “universal audience” as “there were repressed giggles” from local attendees who were “somewhat dumbfounded” and “saw something they were not used to seeing.”[[58]](#footnote-58) For a local Philippine audience, Reyes implied that these objects would be more familiar in a garage rather than a gallery.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Chabet had previously used tires in a one-night installation at Dayrit’s Print Gallery in May 1970 with a group of artists called The Liwayway Recapping Co. The exhibition—Chabet’s brainchild according to Dayrit—consisted of “an exhibit of objects” that included “tires, black balloons, mirrors, strips of colored paper, a shadow” and so forth.[[60]](#footnote-60) Chabet’s collaborators for Liwayway included Albano, Rodolfo Gan, and Boy Perez. The exhibition took place in the evening and lasted only four hours. **[fig. 2.17]** The photographs documenting the exhibition include a number of what appears to be painted white inner tubes dangling from the ceiling and accumulations of round black balloons floating low to the ground. The balloons are strange given that their strings appear too short, causing them to just hover over the ground rather than fulfill their function as balloons. The white inner tubes hover in different angles throughout Print Gallery and resemble giant blood cells circulating through the gallery space.

**[fig. 2.18]** This odd assortment of hanging and floating objects in the exhibition recall some of Hesse’s own work, particularly a photograph of her studio in 1966 that also shows an assortment of dangling things, including a dark inner tube that hangs at the end of a rope. One of the objects next to it appears to be Hesse’s *Vertiginous Detour*, which comprises an acrylic and polyurethane on papier-mâché ball encased in a net at the end of another rope. The perceived weight of the ball pulls it downwards as many smaller pieces of rope attached to the net begin to tickle at the ground like octopus tentacles. The full roundness of the ball that pulls at the slack of the net also makes it *feel* like an organism rather than a thing. Like Hesse, Chabet experimented with the unexpected manipulation of materials to draw attention to the corporeal.

A scrapbook of the exhibition in Dayrit’s archives specifies that The Liwayway Recapping Co. “has no assets, no ambitions, no funds, makes no profits, and therefore pays no taxes.” [[61]](#footnote-61) She implies that the artists chose to operate outside of the financial and thus political concerns—such as paying taxes and supporting government ventures—associated with art-making.[[62]](#footnote-62) Using found or donated materials further allowed them to do so as they avoided paying a hefty price on paint.[[63]](#footnote-63) The text in the scrapbook directly addresses the reader as it acknowledges the exhibition photographs as a mediated experience, stating, “For those of you who missed the direct experience of this exhibition, these pictures are for you to look at…You won’t feel the same sensation we felt when we experienced the exhibition as a whole that evening.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The text implies that a significant part of the installation depended on the direct bodily engagement with the exhibition, which had only been up for four hours. Temporality, as we will see again with Shop 6, or the quick overturn of exhibitions permitted artists to elude top-down control of their practice as shows were quickly disbanded.

**[fig. 2.19]** Similar images could be seen for an exhibition curated by Chabet at the CCP in 1970 called *Illuminations*, also by the Liwayway Recapping Co. The exhibition was “an investigation on the effects of light, lighted materials, and light moving in time” that included equipment such as projectors, spotlights, black lights, suspended mirrors, suspended pieces of aluminum, foam rubber, and interior tires—a mixture of opaque and reflective materials that produced instability.[[65]](#footnote-65) The bits of aluminum and the mirror reflect the viewer and his surroundings, incorporating the viewer’s own body into the installation. According to sketches of *Illumination*, we also find that the “interior tires,” which appear white in photographs, were actually painted pink, or more precisely, “flesh with blush.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

Recorded music played throughout the one-week installation included contemporary rock bands such as the Rolling Stones, Santana, and Yes, as well as “avant-garde works” by Xenakis, Mimaroglu, John Cage, and Varese—composers from whom Maceda had also drawn inspiration. In addition to this mix of rock and avant-garde music, a “soundtrack of water leaks and flashbowls” also played during *Illuminations*, which coincidentally occurred during a typhoon in Manila.[[67]](#footnote-67) Not only did *Illuminations* include music by composers interested in using sounds from the everyday; it also included noises that corresponded to the weather outside the CCP. *Illuminations* seemed to be more than just an experimentation of light, but also a visual and sonic exploration of how art operated in and interacted with the world around it.

The 1970 exhibition at Print Gallery and *Illuminations* were examples of Chabet’s early efforts to use found materials shortly after he returned from his travels in the United States and Europe.[[68]](#footnote-68) In *New Works,* however,the interior tire tube, which had once been left whole and merely painted, has been slashed and stretched by Chabet, who exploited and displayed its material properties. Similar to *Tearing to Pieces*, many of Chabet’s works in *New Works* have an undertone of violence. In nearly all of the works, strips of tattered rubber are speared on hooks and pulled across frames. They resemble hide or leather that has been stretched to create a taut surface, recalling the corporeality of the body. The uneven edges and imprecise size of the varying strips seem to allude to their status as the effects of destruction—like the pieces of black rubber left on the road after a tire has blown out—that have been recuperated into new form

While the majority of the rubber strips were stretched across the empty expanse at the center of Chabet’s constructed plywood frames, creating the illusion of surface, shorter pieces pierced between two hooks generate irregular grids on the surface of black painted plywood. These create an uncomfortably textured, uneven surface. With many of the works shown in *New Works*, Chabet experimented with unconventional, repurposed materials to explore the instability of line and surface that refused the rigid order of Minimalism and the modernist vision of Marcos’s New Society. Through his technique of piercing of stretching his materials over sharp metal hooks, Chabet, like Hesse, also called attention to bodily presence—his own and the viewer’s—for its potential to disturb the fantasy of abstraction as “a universal language transcending all boundaries of nation, state, class, and gender.”[[69]](#footnote-69)

**[fig. 2.20 – 2.21]** Black square and rectangular plywood frames filled with rows of black rubber strips comprise *Kite Traps*, one of the series in the exhibition. Like conventional paintings, these works were also hung flush against the wall, rendering them incapable of actually trapping the kites purported by their title. They vary size and arrangement; while some of the larger *Kite Traps* were exhibited as a single work on a wall, others were paired or arranged in grid-like formations. According to Reyes, Chabet described this particular series as “drawings”—perhaps due to their preoccupation with the iteration of line.[[70]](#footnote-70) All of the *Kite Traps* incorporate strips of industrial rubber stretched across a plywood frame to make multiple horizontal black lines. Each end of the rubber strips was pierced through small metal hooks attached to the inside of the plywood box. Their close proximity creates an illusion of a surface that has been carefully slashed multiple times.

Chabet might have called this particular series“drawings” not only due to their preoccupation with line, but because they, like drawings, rely on laborious and continuous acts to produce a work. Writing about Chabet, Bunoan expresses, “He said at one point he would make as much as a hundred drawings each day.… He explained that drawing is not so much about a finished picture, but is a continuous process of making marks. The mark becomes a line, the line becomes a shape, the shape becomes an image, and the image becomes a memory of what was once a mark.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Chabet later implied that he had obtained some of the materials for the exhibition from “a re-tiring company or something for tires” in return for a free tour of the CCP.[[72]](#footnote-72) The black strips stretched through the frame in *Kite Traps* correspond with Chabet’s claim that they had come from tire tubes as they bubble and pull in a manner consistent with the attempt to straighten rubber from the rounded inner tubing of tires. In repurposing rubber tires that refuse to unfurl into absolute and perfect straight lines, Chabet used an imperfect material that inherently fails to do the thing he desired as he tried to pull and pierce it into submission. Despite Chabet’s effort to stretch the black rubber strips into iterated parallel lines, excess flaps of rubber stubbornly sag over each other, visually signaling the artist’s lack of mastery over them.

The rubber strips in *Kite Traps* further exhibited their disobedience as stubborn lines as they drooped beyond the confinements of their frames, broaching into the real space of the gallery. In a set of these two rectangular vertically oriented “drawings,” some of the pieces of rubber dangle carelessly outside of the plane created by the black painted plywood as a result of being too long, or simply too thick. The lines overlap haphazardly over the black frame and some even break the frame altogether, extending into the white wall. One of the lowermost strips drape over the bottom of the frame, its wavy bottom once again indicating that the strips have been stretched from obstinate tubes. Another set of *Kite Traps* shows one that has rubber caught between the frame and the wall, a bit of it peeking out from under the painted plywood. The black rubber in *Kite Traps* escapes the frame from all sides. Though Chabet could have easily cut off the excess bits of rubber, he allowed them instead to push outside of their confined spaces.

While Chabet permitted his materials to physically expand into the space of the viewer, his employment of quotidian materials already implied contiguity with the world outside; hence why local viewers might have found some of the works in the exhibition more appropriate for the garage rather than a gallery. The structure and size of the *Kite Traps* also recalls windows: the rubber strips resemble shutter slates that obscure the view of an open vitrine. The spaces between the slates invite the viewer to peer through to glimpse at what might be concealed—in this case it is nothing more than awareness of the white wall. Staring long enough at *Kite Traps,* the viewer must acknowledge the lack of distinction between figure and ground as white wall and black rubber oscillate between fulfilling both functions, generating the sense of uncertainty present in viewing abstract works.

Chabet filled all but one of the *Kite Traps* with enough bands of black rubber that they resemble tattered black surfaces. **[fig. 2.22]** An arrangement of six square and identically sized *Kite Traps* placed in two rows of three included the only *Kite Trap* that differed in composition. Five of the works echo other *Kite Traps* as their thick rubber ribbons, despite varying in number and size, create an illusion of black surface. One frame at the top right of the configuration, however, has only one lone black band stretched across the expanse of white wall, dividing the composition at its center. While black seems to dominate the other works in *Kite Traps*, this work seems to emphasize the whiteness of the wall behind it, marking the wall as part of the work itself. The contrast of color between the wall and the single band permits the viewer to clearly see Chabet’s method of making as the tension of the black rubber pierced onto the hook is more readily visible without the distraction of iteration. By understanding each stretched rubber strip as a single unit and not a mere emergence of messy surface, the viewer comprehends *Kite Traps* and drawingas the result of a repetitive, laborious process.

**[fig. 2.23]** *Sky Horizons*, another work in the exhibition, includes twelve identically sized white frames hung from the ceiling at even intervals with transparent wire or string. The distance between each frame is just enough to discourage the viewer from walking between them, suggesting that the work operates as a unit rather than a series of discrete parts. Like the abovementioned singular composition in *Kite Traps*, all of the frames in *Sky Horizons* include only a single expanse of rubber horizontally stretched across two metal hooks, causing, as the title indicates, the impression of a horizon line. These pieces appear more irregular than those in *Kite Traps* as the rubber segments are thicker and seem to become more jagged towards the center of the frame. While the rubber pieces in *Kite Traps* casually poke out of their frames into the real space of the viewer, *Sky Horizons* seems to break free from the wall altogether as its frames determinedly occupy the space in the center of Luz Gallery.

Though Chabet used black for the other frames in the exhibition, he chose white for *Sky Horizons*, the only work that hung from the ceiling in *New Works*. While the black frames in *Kite Traps* demarcate difference between the wall and the work, the whiteness of these frames blurs the edges of *Sky Horizons* into the whiteness of the wall, accentuating its expansion into real space. Like the single line of rubber in *Kite Traps* that calls the viewer to recognize the wall as an imperative part of the work, the white frame commands attention to the wall, but in its sameness rather than difference. The whiteness of the frames further draws attention to the wall itself as part of the material contents to be viewed in *New Works*. The gallery and its white walls—adorned with Chabet’s other compositions—are absorbed into the multiple frames of *Sky Horizons* as they extend further and further away from the wall.

One frame, however, remains affixed to the wall at the end of the gallery. It hangs comfortably at an eye level, reminiscent of conventional painting. The remaining eleven frames hang parallel to the one on the wall, one after another in equal distances extending across the middle of the gallery. Despite the lack of footprint as it dangles in the air, *Sky Horizons* commands space in the gallery in similar fashion to sculpture as it demands the viewer to walk around it. The black rubber horizon on all the white frames are also placed at the same height as each other, giving the line real depth—particularly if the viewer positions herself in line at one end of *Sky Horizons*.

In an article for the *Philippine Supplement* titled “Installations: A Case For Hangings,” Albano discusses installation as “a term to describe open sculpture or three-dimensional objects that depend on the physical situation of a given space.”[[73]](#footnote-73) He refers to installation as “a technical description of a work that needs or needed to be attached to the ceiling, wall or floor not unlike that of an electrical installation.”[[74]](#footnote-74) According to Albano, since “installations enabled artists to broaden their list of materials for art: sad, stones, bags, rubber tires, painted bread,” this form of artwork was “natural-born as against the alien intrusion of a two-dimensional western object like a painting.”[[75]](#footnote-75) By attaching one part of *Sky Horizons* to the wall, Chabet emphasizes its relationship to painting; the affixed frame simultaneously anchors *Sky Horizons* to that wall but also articulates its emancipation from it.

While the gallery space and its contents complete the experience of work, *Sky Horizons* also hinges on its relationship with the viewer and the viewer’s bodily position, which Gutierrez attempted to capture by photographing the installation from various vantage points. **[fig. 2.24]** One photograph directly faces into the hollow center of the collective frames, flattening the experience of *Sky Horizons* into the two-dimensionality of painting. This experience is framed by the plywood box closest to us—within it, the rest of the frames and black horizon lines are visible. Though the frames are all physically the same size, the viewer experiences them as increasingly smaller as they recede into the wall, indicative of the shifting perception of things in space. The depth created by the repeated rubber horizon line evokes the illusion of painting as a window that recedes into another world. Yet, this time, the depth actually occurs in real space and the impression of this reality as illusionistic (and thus flattened painting) relies on the bodily movement of the viewer. Painting is not a surface onto which a reality has been projected, but rather on which surface is continually made and remade.

Gutierrez also photographed *Sky Horizons* from two other distinct perspectives—one of which encompasses all of the frames of the work receding to the last frame flushed on the wall. **[fig. 2.25]** This vantage point offers us the most comprehensive view of the various components of *Sky Horizons*; it permits us to see that the frames are the same size and evenly distributed. Unlike the flattened composition of the first photograph, this angle also emphasizes how much space *Sky Horizons* occupies in the gallery. While this perspective provides an absent viewer with the knowledge of how different parts of *Sky Horizons* operate together, another of Gutierrez’s photographs only includes three of the farthest frames from the wall.

**[fig. 2.26]** In this photograph, *Sky Horizons* is not represented in its entirety, and it no longer appears as the central work. From this vantage point, the last white frame of *Sky Horizons* appears to border a large square of plain white plywood on the wall, its farthest right corner aligning perfectly with the square of plywood, projecting a strip of black rubber across its empty surface. The frame as a frame is demonstrated to be an always contingent thing that depends on the position of viewer and its relationship with the surrounding objects; the viewer’s movement allows for alternate framings, including the importation of a spare landscape onto a blank board.

Affixed on and around the broad squares of plywood on the wall are small rectangular boxes with pieces of rubber tire stretched across them that resemble miniature, black-framed versions of *Sky Horizons*. The placement of these boxes in relation to the plywood feel strange and out of sync; they protrude beyond the edges of the white plywood onto the surface of the white wall, suggesting the two to be interchangeable parts of the installation. **[fig. 2.27]** The shifting relationship of the small black boxes between the wall and the plywood suggests the nature of painting as one contingent, to some extent, on the size of the work in relation to its protrusion from the wall.

Following Hesse, who tended towards muted monochromes of beige, black, white, and gray, Chabet made all of the exhibited work black and white. **[fig. 2.28]** His oneexception was *Pink Painting*, a lone painting constructed out of a large square of plywood and various colors of cut-up nylon stockings. Chabet departed from black and white with a color Briony Fer describes as the “meeting of flesh and commodities” for Hesse during the 1960s, a color that had deep significance to the artist before she “abandon[ed]” her use of color in 1965.[[76]](#footnote-76) *Pink Painting* seems to be an homage to Hesse’s earlier experimentations with the color. The painting includes eight columns of nylon stockings cut into smaller tubes and stretched across rows of metal hooks. The even spacing of the metal hooks and the nylons pierced onto them result in a grid of varying gradations. Instead of the sharp lines that characterize the modernist grid, however, Chabet’s nylons droop over each other like lazy tongues, blending the distinct rows into fleshy columns. They expose the effort necessary to maintain the rigidity of the grid, a structure that Rosalind Krauss declares “emblematic of the modernist ambition within the visual arts.”[[77]](#footnote-77)

Krauss argues in “Grids,” a seminal article published in *October* a few years after Chabet’s *New Works*, that the grid “functions to declare the modernity of modern art” in part because it “states the autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal.”[[78]](#footnote-78) On *Pink Painting*’s hook-laden surface, floppy bits of stubborn nylon index Chabet’s struggle with the grid’s ubiquity as a as an artist from the Philippines. *Pink Painting* acts as a failed grid—one that reveals the effort necessary to retain its integrity. The grid’s stringent denial of representation “announces, among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse…walling the visual arts into the realm of exclusive visuality and defending them against the intrusion of speech.”[[79]](#footnote-79) Yet, Chabet’s extraneous pieces of nylon—despite the attempt to aggressively affix them onto the plywood with pointed hooks— refuse flatness and the ease of the grid as they droop uncomfortably, some resembling gaping mouths or hanging tongues. Rather than engendering speech or narrative from others, *Pink Painting* looks as if it might speak for itself.

The pink in *Pink Painting* might refer to more than just color. Chabet’s use of re-purposed nylon stockings—an intimate piece of clothing tightly fitted to the female body—also generates the illusion of folds of flesh and skin, impressing upon the viewer its potential for vulgarity. While nylon stockings symbolize the commodification of feminine propriety, in its new form it also displays woman as mere commodity. The abstracted nylons of varying colors are stacked on top of each other like objects meant to be plucked off a shelf at a store. As a work of abstraction, *Pink Painting* exemplified how found materials, like stockings, and their real-world associations could evoke sexuality otherwise be forbidden by the legibility of figuration—particularly in a very Catholic country. The grid cannot control the plenitude of the body.

**[fig. 2.29]** For another work in *For E.H.*, untitled in the Chabet Archive, Chabet adapted the method used in *Pink Painting*—the methodical and incremental piercing of everyday fragments into a grid configuration—to pieces of slashed rubber inner tube. While delicate and supple pieces of nylons droop downwards due to gravitational pull, maintaining the small aisles between the columns of the grid, the buoyant rubber pieces splay away from their hooks in all directions, blending the columns and the rows together. Yet, the grid and its distinct units remain discernable, particularly towards the bottom of the composition where the rubber pieces seem to flare out less than the ones at the top. Since the opacity of the black rubber obstructs the view of the hooks to which they are attached, its resemblance to *Pink Painting*, made from transparent materials, permits the viewer to extrapolate this work’s construction. The bouncy rubber lends the composition an all-over tactile texture that feels almost plush, like a thick rug or a bathmat mistakenly mounted on a wall. Hung upright, the work juts out towards the viewer, enticing her to pet or pull at the protruding rubber parts—a gesture reminiscent of the artist’s initial tactile experience of pulling the pieces taut across the row of hooks to make the composition.

Lippard adapts the “psychological term ‘body ego’ or Bachelard’s ‘muscular consciousness’” to refer to “such mindless, near-visceral identification with form” that she identifies in works she describes as “eccentric abstraction.”[[80]](#footnote-80) She further explains, “Body ego can be experienced in two ways: first through appeal, the desire to caress, to be caught up in the feel and rhythms of a work; second through repulsion and immediate reaction against certain forms and surfaces.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Chabet’s rubber grid might arouse the “desire to caress” the sumptuous accumulation of springy black rubber, just as his nylon one, with its semblance to stretched skin—skin flayed from the fleshy body—might cause repulsion.

While the somatic appears within the rubber grid through its sensuous appearance and the invocation to be caressed—that is to conjoin its body with viewer—*Pink Painting* impresses the physical fragility of the spectator’s own flesh. Touch *Pink Painting* and your hand, like the peach-colored nylons, might be pricked by the sharp metal hooks too. That was the risk—albeit a minor one—that Chabet took as he pulled nylon and rubber across each succession of metal hooks, again and again. The potential of punctured skin further draws attention to the presence of the artist’s body and its labor within the methodical construction of these grids. Chabet’s grids call attention to somatic gesture within the prescribed space of the “flattened...antinatural, antimimetic, antireal” grid.[[82]](#footnote-82)

**[fig. 2.30]** In brief discussion of Hesse’s *No Title* (1967), a sheet of gridded paper in which Hesse has inscribed small circles, Margaret Iversen, referencing Benjamin Buchloh, notes, “For Buchloh, Hesse adopted the diagrammatic mode in order to register her sense of impossibility of any spontaneous, unmediated gesture under the coercive and instrumentalizing regime of capitalism, while at the same time subtly subverting that regime.”[[83]](#footnote-83) Iversen suggests that “Buchloh’s critical model…sets in opposition a coercive and alienating schema and a residual somatic mark,” which establishes “Hesse’s drawings on graph paper figure both an acknowledgment of the alienating structures of capitalism and her struggle to oppose them.”[[84]](#footnote-84) In its place, Iversen proposes, “Yet, what if one argued instead, that her small circular gestures do not struggle against, but rather willingly accommodate themselves to the grid while putting pressure on its fixity? A given structural matrix, like language or artistic convention, would then be understood as animated or disturbed by an insistent bodily perturbation.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

Like the artist he was paying homage to, Chabet also put “pressure on…fixity.”[[86]](#footnote-86) While the Marcoses attempted to wield artistic production, particularly abstraction, for nation-building and diplomacy, Chabet’s works in *For E.H.* exposed the fragility of this control. *New Works* or *For E.H.* presented a series of works that employed similar strategies of stretching and piercing in various configurations that created and drew attention to surface as an unstable construct generated between the work and the viewer. The works exhibited were not only relational in terms of the viewer, but also with one another; the individual works inform or engage with the ones around it. For example, the transparency of nylon used for *Pink Painting* betrays how Chabet has constructed similar works opaque rubber. The one frame with a single piece of rubber in *Kite Traps* helps emphasize the other *Kite Traps* as a series of iterative lines. It also highlights the wall as a significant surface, which is further affirmed by the white frames of *Sky Horizons* that seem to fade into the whiteness of the gallery walls.

Art—particularly painting in the case of *For E.H.*—depended on the viewer to imagine and fill in the surface on which the artist creates, purporting the viewer’s experience as one that is uncontrollable and fluctuating with meaning that never seems to coalesce. Within Chabet’s works are the “bodily perturbations”—ones that remind the viewer of her own body and its potential—that disturbed the system of order and control so desired of the Marcoses’ authoritarianism. Furthermore, Chabet’s floppy grids and tattered lines suggest that one cannot take the universalism of modernism for granted; the struggle of the upright grid—usually free from the ills of time and place—seemed emblematic of the Philippines’ own struggle for autonomy, artistic and otherwise. Unlike social realist artists of the period, Chabet chose not to push back but, like Hesse’s circles, exert pressure on the existing paradigm while successfully “wielding” the tools of its existing order.[[87]](#footnote-87)

**Drawing at the Door: *Bakawan***

**[fig. 2.31]** Intended to be viewed only through the large glass pane of Small Gallery’s locked door, *Bakawan*, an installation of hanging *bakawan* (mangrove) segments, continued Chabet’s exploration of drawing with mundane materials in 1974.Made from nearly uniform pieces of mangrove hanging equidistant from one another in measured rows, *Bakawan*, like many of Chabet’s works in *For E.H.*, features the grid as its primary ordering structure. Although they appear identical in size and shape, the *bakawan* branches maintain individual characteristics such as slight variations in curvature. According to Albano’s notes from the exhibition,Chabet had purchased the mangrove pieces, commonly used as inexpensive firewood in Manila, in “bundles and large piles” from Divisoria, a cheap goods shopping center in Manila.[[88]](#footnote-88) Chabet had intended the installation to be exhibited as the solitary work within the Small Gallery behind a closed (and locked) glass door that only permitted the viewer to “peep through a perspective of rough lines.”[[89]](#footnote-89)

In his notes on the exhibition, Albano describes *Bakawan* as Chabet’s “tri-dimensional drawing of lines.”[[90]](#footnote-90) As part of the installation, Chabet had chosen to paint everything in the Small Gallery besides the wood, including the hooks on the ceiling, a “stark white” to “give maximum contrast between line and ground.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Albano designates the white wall of the gallery as the drawing’s “ground” and the mangrove pieces as its “rough lines.” Similar to *Kite Traps*, which also employed the ready-made line, Chabet gives special attention to the white wall as a significant part of his work’s surface. Like *Kite Traps*, *Bakawan* activates the wall as ground for drawing through the installation of lines made not from ink or paint, but objects. In lieu of flexible, horizontally stretched rubber tires, however, *Bakawan* comprises vertically oriented segments of wood. While gravitational pull in *Kite Traps* push its horizontal lines downwards, forcing them to droop and betray the struggles of maintaining a straight line, *Bakawan* depends on gravity as the vertical lines result from the weight of the suspended wood. Chabet’s exploration of line demonstrated natural forces, like gravity, to be both burden and benefit to the exploration of drawing.

Chabet placed great importance on the verticality of the lines in *Bakawan.* Albano’s exhibition notes indicate that Chabet had removed the handle of the door to the Small Gallery to prevent the inclusion of superfluous horizontal lines in the installation’s viewing experience. This also prevented the viewer’s access into the room, retaining separation between the viewer and the public. The viewer would stand on one side of the Small Gallery’s glass door and peer into the room at the hanging *bakawan*. No spotlights were used; the white cube gallery was lit with four florescent lights placed on the ground to create an even light. Depending on the viewer’s position and distance from the door, the mangroves, hung in a grid of 7 by 8 rows at a “certain height decided by the artist,” might resemble a row of vertical lines as the segments closest to the door conceal the ones behind it. A shift in the viewer’s position to left or right, or even slightly farther away, could reveal the dimensionality of the rows of mangroves extending towards the back wall. While the recession of the mangroves feels flattened because the viewer experiences it through the barrier of a locked glass door, if we imagine the white wall to be ground and the mangroves to be line, the bodily shift of the viewer causes these lines—vulnerable to the viewer’s placement—to flicker on the white ground of the gallery.

As *Bakawan* is subject to the viewer’s placement, so is the viewer to the work. Whereas *Sky Horizons*, another one of Chabet’s early hanging installations,responded to painting as a perspectival window onto the world by rendering that premise into three-dimensions around which viewers could circumambulate, situated behind the locked door of the Small Gallery, *Bakawan*’s installationprevents that same kind of physical access. As Bunoan suggests in her recent essay on Chabet, “The frustration brought on by the physical separation of the closed glass door heightens our desire to see the work; more than just viewers, we are turned into voyeurs.”[[92]](#footnote-92) Distinct from viewers, voyeurs connote intrusion: they were visual intruders that can only look at, but never fully participate in, a space that does not welcome those present. Bunoan further suggests that, “by framing and restricting our view of the work, Chabet essentially collapsed the dimensions into a flat picture plane, creating a window into something else.…In *Bakawan…*the window represents a kind of distant nature that is made further inaccessible to viewers.” [[93]](#footnote-93) That “distant world”—international modernism as represented by the CCP—feels closed off to the local audience, who operated as voyeurs in this practice.

Justification for Chabet’s somewhat puzzling installation occurred due to pressure for quick development in the Philippines. Public education at the CCP depended on mediated exchange between artists, museum administrators, and the audience in which the audience would rely on museum workers, such as Albano, to explain or curate comprehensible exhibitions that pushed public understanding of art. In “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” Albano connects the Cultural Center of the Philippines with the beginning of “developmental art” and notes that “‘developmental’ was an operative word given by our government and press to government projects for fast implementation.…The implication of a fast-action learning method is similar to that of developmental art.”[[94]](#footnote-94) Albano further notes, “As works of new artists become more complex, the Museum’s curatorial staff had to organize exhibits that would elicit response and establish a healthy rapport. The intricate trafficking of information and response had to be maintained at a high pace.”[[95]](#footnote-95) When asked why the CCP promoted “experimental art” given that, as a state-sponsored institution, they “should be concerned with established art,” Albano responds that the “Museum has adopted a policy of giving priority to contemporary experiences so as to develop a stable of present-day artists who can be ahead of the international front.”[[96]](#footnote-96)

Yet, while *Bakawan* physically closed off its premises to the viewer, it permits another form of access through its materiality. Made from pre-cut segments of *bakawan* often used as local firewood, it represents a shift from the manufactured materials—nylons and rubber inner tubes—that Chabet manipulated in *For E.H.* to organic materials subject to rot and decay. And, unlike *Kite Traps* or *Pink Painting*, the materials in *Bakawan* are left legible to the local audience as pieces of firewood purchasable from the market. Though Chabet had purchased his readymade lines in bundles at the market, these lines still exemplified the unsteady hand of art making. By procuring his materials from nature (via Divisoria), *Bakawan*’s lines were imprecise and retained minor differences. **[fig. 2.32]** A photograph of a lone segment against a white ground shows a gnarled and imperfect line. In fact, taken as a single unit, it almost does not resemble a line at all, betraying how one understands the way objects produce meaning in tandem with one another. Yet, from a distance the mangrove segments look nearly identical; their ordered configuration and repetition serve to obscure and mitigate their minor idiosyncrasies. The grid functions as a method of flattening difference. Upon closer and more prolonged observation, the viewer discerns irregularities in curvature, width, and color of the mangroves reminiscent of an instable flow of ink from a pen. While the grid as an ordering mechanism might temporarily conceal difference, it does not obliterate it.

Chabet employed *Bakawan*’s rigid grid-like format—one that rendered its individual components nearly uniform—to encourage the viewer towards a deeper and more prolonged engagement with the world. The grid fails to obscure the differences between the mangrove segments when one actively observes rather than passively consumes it as identical pieces. Chabet planned a corresponding book to *Bakawan* that also encouraged the viewer’s sustained engagement. In private notes on the exhibition, Dayrit recorded that Chabet was planning a 1000-page book filled with black and white photographs to highlight the differences among the mangrove segments. In contrast to his installation in the Small Gallery, the book highlighted individual mangrove segments, with each page comprising one mangrove photograph.

Instead of including 1000 distinct mangroves—each mangrove represented by a single photograph—Chabet wanted to feature 999 mangroves. One mangrove would be included twice. The artist believed the double inclusion would encourage the reader to carefully examine each photograph (and the differences among them) to look for the repeated mangrove. In the part of her notes designated as “between Bobby (Chabet) and me,” Dayrit also noted the book’s emphasis on sustained examination. She wrote, “‘Reading’ the book can be meditative. Turning the pages one by one, looking at each *bakawan* different from one another, looking for a *bakawan* repeated.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Dayrit and Chabet both imagined the reader—like the viewer of *Bakawan*—to be one defined by his capacity to methodically look.

Reading a book as a repetitive and meditative practice might recall Chabet’s actions in *Tearing to Pieces.* In the performance, Chabet makes the meditative process of reading visible through physical exertion—his yogic inversions. He rifles through Duldulao’s book as he pretends to read it, and then repeatedly and methodically tears out its pages. And Chabet does conceptualize his own *Bakawan* tome as comparable to Duldulao’s. He echoed Duldulao’s insistence towards international circulation; Dayrit noted that only 100 copies of the book would be made to be “sold to major libraries and museums outside the Philippines.”[[98]](#footnote-98) In fact, only two copies were to be left in the Philippines: one for Chabet and one for Manuel Duldulao, the author of *Contemporary Philippine Art*. According to Dayrit’s private notes, Duldulao’s copy would “be given to him by the artist (with an ax).”

By suggesting that the author receive the book alongside a destructive tool, Chabet directly refers back his own performance with Duldulao’s text in *Tearing to Pieces* at the *Exhibition of Objects* a year prior. The inclusion of the ax encourages Duldulao to mount his own pernicious performance or action with Chabet’s massive volume of *Bakawan* and thus elevate its visibility through hearsay and intrigue—similar to what had occurred with *Contemporary Philippine Art* after *Tearing to Pieces*. Chabet’s adaptability and humor regarding how *Tearing to Pieces* resulted in greater success for the book he had been criticizing demonstrated how he understood his work as ongoing, reciprocal processes between the past and present, the artist and his materials, and the artist and the viewer uncontrolled by artist intention or individuality. While Chabet tried to control certain viewing experiences of *Bakawan* with the closed door, stark painted walls, and all over fluorescent lights, it was always subject to the viewer’s position outside the door.

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Of her mentor, Bunoan argues, “Chabet’s patently unmonumental works are responses to the Modernism that was in place in the Philippines in the 1960s, when he first entered the art scene. As a kind of breach accompanied by both fear and beauty, modernity for Chabet is ‘the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent.’ It always exists in the present and each generation would have its own moment of modernity.”[[99]](#footnote-99) *Bakawan* exemplified a work in the present. In 2012, the curatorial team struggled to re-install *Bakawan* in a tribute exhibition to Chabet titled *To Be Continued* at the CCP. Ma. Victoria T. Herrera, then Museum Director of the CCP, writes that “*Bakawan*...underscored the concept of the ephemeral, not only in form, but also in the objects used.…Thirty-eight years since it was first mounted in the Small Gallery, the conditions to re-fabricate *Bakawan* had been altered not by the manufacturers but by ecological concerns.”[[100]](#footnote-100) Herrera continues to explain how while Chabet “worked on the premise that this material was ubiquitous to the Filipino’s daily life,” the “decline of mangroves in the Philippines” during the 1990s contributed to “a law that bands cutting and prohibits private ownership.”[[101]](#footnote-101) The result was that the re-installation of *Bakawan* in *To Be Continued* was sourced from limited options outside of Metro Manila of branches that were not as varied in character as the ones originally used for *Bakawan* in 1974. Chabet’s choice of material was not only a marker of place, but also of his specific time as terrain has changed in the Philippines.

In a profile with Marge Enriquez in *Business World* in the late 1980s, Chabet remarked that his artworks were “not paintings in the sense that they are not oils on canvas…[But] I always feel that my works, even if they are three-dimensional, are involved with issues of painting. It’s my way of defining what painting is or what it could be.”[[102]](#footnote-102) According to the article, even “martial law failed to dampen his exuberance, nor his penchant for experimental art.”[[103]](#footnote-103) In fact, the years following Ferdinand Marcos’ declaration of martial law seemed to be some of his most productive: he had recently returned from his Rockefeller Grant and the recently inaugurated CCP provided a major international venue in which he could experiment and exhibit his installations. Yet, to understand Chabet as an esoteric artist who catered to Imelda Marcos’ interests would ignore how his work attempted to redefine painting for the Philippines. His performance of *Tearing to Pieces* in the CCP’s atrium demonstrated his own understanding of how his work attempted to operate outside the institution, but was simultaneously surrounded (and supported) by it.

Chabet experimented with the possibility of what painting could be in the Philippines and created works that relied heavily on the viewer’s movement and perception to create momentary surfaces for his compositions. His works in *New Works* and *Bakawan* explore how drawing and painting operated as a series of procedures that ultimately depended on the viewer to continually affirm its surface or support. Their unsteady surfaces create a sense of reciprocity between the viewer and Chabet’s work, stabilizing only temporarily with the viewer’s consent. In employing abstraction that seemed to bleed into the everyday surroundings—such as pieces of purchased wood that used wall as surface—Chabet proposed that the world as similarly precarious.

While the Marcoses might attempt to wield artistic production and culture for nation-building purposes, Chabet’s work exposed the instability of this control. His employment of found objects and everyday materials, while not the primary focus of his experiments, reflected the physical realities of his locality. Chabet used things such as free tires or cheap firewood and attempted to order them into modernist grids that sag, spring, droop and flop, revealing the difficulties of maintaining an upright grid with the resources readily available to him. These grids functioned as structures deeply entangled in modernism that Chabet could use to demonstrate his struggle with modernism’s uncomfortable asymmetrical development—one that insisted that the Philippines had to catch up.

1. During the 1970s, Maceda composed two performances specifically sited at the CCP—*Cassettes 100* and *Udlot-Udlot*—which were performed in 1975 in the parking lot of the CCP as part of the *Third Asian Composers’ League Conference* in Manila.*Udlot-Udlot* required participants to play simple instruments to create three distinct sound groups: the drone, mixed sounds, and voices, which somewhat limited participants based on ability. Chabet collaborated with Maceda *Udlot-Udlot* by designing location plan that went with the music, which consisted of placing ten groups in ten 4 x 4 meters squares arranged in a large circle in the large parking lot of the CCP.

   See “‘Futurist’ Composer Presents ‘Udlot Udlot,’” in *Business Day*, October 16, 1975,19; “Maceda’s ‘Udlot-Udlot’ today at CCP Grounds,” in *Daily Express*, October 16, 1975, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Leonidas V. Benesa, “Chabet: Art As a Happening,” *Philippine Daily Express*, circa 1970s, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marge Enriquez, “Fine Arts’ Nutty Professor,” *Business World*, May 18, 1988. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This, as discussed later, largely backfired against Chabet, as his performance gave critical attention and controversy to *Contemporary Philippine Art* that generated public interest and intrigue. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Roberto Chabet, interview by Ringo Bunoan, June 14, 2008, Ortigas, transcript pg. 2, Chabet Archive, Lopez Museum Library and Archives, Manila, Philippines. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cid Reyes, “Roberto Chabet,” in *Conversations on Philippine Art* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1989), 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Manuel D. Duldulao, *Contemporary Philippine Art* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1972), 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, “The Eligibles,” *Philippine Panorama,* February 10, 1974, 10-11;Paul Stephen Lim, “Chabet,” *Chronicle Magazine*, June 27, 1964.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1974), 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A stand-alone art museum in the original CCP complex plans that—as noted in the first chapter—was never realized. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Rockefeller Grant was another prime example of American support for the Cultural Center of the Philippines. In January 1967, Imelda met with Porter A. McCray, who was the visiting director of the John D. Rockefeller III Fund in New York—a fund that Imelda knew supported the performing arts. The JDR III Fund awarded two grants to support staff development at the CCP: one to Chabet to “study museum procedures and organization in the United States, including administration, installation, handling registration, publications, and educational services”; the other to Alejandrino Hufana to study Art Librarianship at Columbia University to become the Chief Librarian at the CCP Art and Music Library. During an earlier visit to the United States in 1966, Imelda Marcos was also able to convince President Lyndon B. Johnson to provide U.S. Support for the CCP, which resulted in a $28-million Special Fund for Education--$3.5 million of it was allotted to the CCP. See Pedro R Nervasa, “The Cultural Center of the Philippines–Asia’s Mecca of the Arts.” *Business Chronicle*, May 31, 1970, 16–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Roberto Chabet, Shop 6 interviews by Francesca Enriquez, 1990s, Chabet Archive, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. In this interview, Chabet explained, “Another thing that’s important, you see, was I was in New York in New York in ’67-’68. This was the height of Pop Art, Minimal Art and Conceptual Art, so I got to see a lot of these. I was exposed to this…But before that I was doing more conventional types of works. The trip I took sort of opened my eyes to these things and when I got home this is what I wanted to do.” (transcript pg. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For more about his Rockefeller Grant travels and agenda, see Asia Art Archive’s digital Chabet Archive under Cultural Center of the Philippines 🡪 1967–1968 John D. Rockefeller Grant. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1884 under press release, pg. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Chabet interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Chabet interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Joy Dayrit Journals, December 9, 1970. Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings (ALIWW), Envelope 1.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Dayrit, *Joy Dayrit Journals*, Envelope 1.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In an article titled “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” Albano connects the Cultural Center of the Philippines with the beginning of “developmental art” and notes that “ ‘developmental’ was an operative word given by our government and press to government projects for fast implementation. Activities that had the nature of being under fast-action plans.…The implication of a fast-action learning method is similar to that of developmental art.” Albano notes that there were “three elements involved: the artists’ group, the audience and the CCP museum.…As works of new artists become more complex, the Museum’s curatorial staff had to organize exhibits that would elicit response and establish a healthy rapport. The intricate trafficking of information and response had to be maintained at a high pace.” See Raymundo Albano, “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” *Philippine Supplement* 2, no. 4 (Jul–Aug 1981): 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Judy Sibayan (artist), in discussion with author, March 2015, expressed that Chabet emphatically did not like including painting at the CCP and that the best way to enter the CCP was by doing anything but painting. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Exhibition notes for *Illumination*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Main and Small Gallery (1970), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Chabet, interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 22. In this interview, Chabet—referring to the members of Shop 6—stated, “…we wanted to…match the activities in the CCP. It (Shop 6) was an alternative to the CCP.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. While the Marcoses were careful to control circulation of information through radio, press, assembly and other means, abstraction—and its open-endedness of form and meaning—seemed to antithetical to their desire for control. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In Chabet’s 1990s interview with Enriquez, in a response to her question about “Filipinism,” Chabet remarked “We took for granted that we were doing “Filipino art” in the context of where we were working…See, we were indifferent to all these issues because we knew we were Filipinos, local boyscouts.” In the same interview, he stated, “We were not trying to compete with the international art scene but we certainly find a great inspiration from international art” (transcript pg. 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Jonathan Beller, “From Social Realism to the Specter of Abstraction: Conceptualizing the Visual Practices of H.R. Ocampo,” *Kritika Kultura* 5 (2004): 18–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Beller, “From Social Realism,” 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Cid Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” *Shopping and Entertainment Guide*, March 9, 1973, 3. The article reviews Chabet’s *New Works* exhibition at Luz Gallery in 1973, referring to the works as “eccentric abstraction” after Lucy Lippard’s coinage of the term to refer to what would later be called post-minimalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Or *Tearing into Pieces* depending on the source. While it was called *Tearing to Pieces* in exhibition notes, subsequent publications, such as Enriquez’s “Nutty Professor” article from 1988 refers to it as *Tearing into Pieces*. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Chabet’s use of the CCP’s atrium was not exceptional during the early 1970s. Artists such as Joe Bautista and Allan Rivera also used the atrium as an exhibition space. Bautista exhibited his sand and canvas installation on the ground of the atrium in the 1972 *Thirteen Artists* exhibition; Rivera also used the atrium when he expanded his initial installation—*Bedroom—*from the same *Thirteen Artists* exhibition in a solo exhibition in 1974. The exhibition, called *INSTALLATIONS by Allen Rivera*, consisted of large expanses of colored vinyl laid across the lawn. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Chabet, interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 21. In this interview Chabet remarked, “I took Ray in. And then when I quit, I thought he’d also quit. But Ray also needed a steady job.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Exhibitions such as *Black,* *White* and the *Exhibition of* *Objects* in the Small Gallery of the CCP received attention for being centered around issues of art-making that included perception, materiality and space. They all took place in the Small Gallery. According to the CCP exhibition files, *Black*, for example, explored “the use of black as pigment or non-color” and was meant to “further the gap and to establish what a non-commercial gallery can do.” The exhibition notes marked that the “Small Gallery Guest Book became colorful. Wild reactions offset calm expectation.” In hiscuratorial notes for *Objects*, Albano describes the “objects” in the exhibition as “diversions of painters and sculptors” and “extensions of their visual preoccupation.” Objects operated at the periphery of established forms of art in the Philippines, which, at the time, was primarily painting and sculpture (but particularly painting). Albano further notes that objects operated in the realm of the senses—that their resemblance to the everyday created the potential for its viewer to feel sensations, tactile and otherwise, that matched with those that existed beyond the gallery walls. These objects, Albano also observes, were “sculptural, but unlike sculpture they create no environment nor exceed their height to monumental proportions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Exhibition notes for *Exhibition of Objects*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Small Gallery (1973), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cid Reyes, “Manuel Duldulao,” in *Conversations on Philippine Art* (Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1989), 127-134. In his interview with Duldulao, Reyes noted that *Contemporary Philippine Art* had been criticized for not being “scholarly enough.” (128) He called *Tearing to Pieces* “not a very flattering review” of Duldulao’s book. (129). See also Leonidas V. Benesa, “A Review of Duldulao’s *Philippine Contemporary Art*,” FOCUS Philippines, February 3, 1973, 18–21. Benesa criticizes Duldulao’s use of “secondary sources…without direct acknowledgement” (20). He further acknowledges, “With the proper footnotes, the book would have gained the added distinction of being a work of solid and serious scholarship. But then this would have clashed with the tone of other sections of the book in which Duldulao purveys artistic gossip in unabashed journalese.” (21) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Benesa, “A Review of Duldulao’s *Philippine Contemporary Art*,” 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Benesa, “A Review of Duldulao’s *Philippine Contemporary Art*,” 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Chabet, interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 24. Yet, during Duldulao’s interview with Reyes in *Conversations on Philippine Art*, Duldulao claimed, “I never missed a major exhibition” (128). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Reyes, “Manuel Duldulao,” 128. Benesa also derisively criticizes Duldulao’s aspirations for international circulation in his review. Benesa expresses that the book suffers from “careless editing, if not careless writing,” which he considers embarrassing because “the book has been obviously packaged to suit international tastes and would therefore reflect on writing as a whole in this country” (18). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Reyes, “Manuel Duldulao,” 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. He conceived the manuscript after his exposure to several art books—including one on Japanese art—from the United States. Duldulao remarked, “This [Japanese] book made me quite anxious. Imagine, here I was reading about the art of other countries in the world, while the rest of the world had no idea at all that the Philippines is creating probably the most exciting art in the Far East!” In Reyes, “Manuel Duldulao,” 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Duldulao, *Contemporary Philippine Art*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See Tom Walsh, “Martial Law in the Philippines: A Research Guide and Working Bibliography,” *Southeast Asia Paper No. 4* from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies School Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1973 for more information on restraint put on periodicals and publications available under Marcos’ martial law. Several major daily broadsheets, such as the Manila Times, the Manila Chronicle, Philippine Free Press and others stopped publication during the period. Manila Times and Manila Chronicle resumed shortly after Cory Aquino took over as president. Upon reinstatement, Manila Chronicle ran a two-part article (see Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, “The Manila Chronicle Story,” *Manila Chronicle*, June 12, 1986, 7; Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, “The Manila Chronicle Story,” *Manila Chronicle*, June 13, 1986.) that discussed the seizure of their offices under martial law. Chabet’s claim is a bit facetious though, as Benesa was able to write a rather critical review of the book.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. There are two Chabet archives: one at Lopez Museum Library and Archives in Manila, Philippines and another at Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong. Much of the Chabet Archive at Asia Art Archive has been digitized, including Laudico’s photographs of *Tearing to Pieces* found under the *Objects* folder in *Group Exhibitions.* At the time of this writing, however, the digital Chabet Archive appears to be down for updates. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. A gesture that is not lost to Benesa, as he observes in “Chabet: Art As a Happening” that an exhibition of collages “should recall [Chabet’s] book-tearing act somewhat.” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. List of Objects for *Exhibition of Objects*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Small Gallery (1973), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. The list enumerates Joy Dayrit, Roberto Chabet, and Yolanda Laudico (who photographed the performance) as collaborators for *Tearing to Pieces.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. During Chabet’s 2008 interview in Ortigas, Chabet noted that he was changing into “a Crispa shirt. You know, the original Crispa shirts. I was choosing that because I would get that free from Crispa” (transcript p. 28). I have often wondered whether Chabet’s decision to wear the three primary colors during *Tearing to Pieces* was a reference to Aleksandr Rodchenko’s *Pure Red Color*, *Pure Yellow Color*, *Pure Blue Color* (1921). Rodchenko writes, “I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue, and yellow. I affirmed: it’s all over.” In 1984, Chabet held an exhibition entitled *Russian Paintings* at Luz Gallery, referencing Vladimir Tatlin and other Russian Constructivists, so he did incorporate Russian constructivism in his artworks later. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Manuel Duldulao, *The Philippine Art Scene* (Manila: Maber, 1977), 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The list of objects for the exhibition omitted the author of the book. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Reyes, “Manuel Duldulao,” 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997) for more information on destruction in modern art history. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Duldulao, *Contemporary Philippine Art*, 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Duldulao, *The Philippine Art Scene*, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. In an interview in the 2000s, while discussing *Tearing to Pieces*, Chabet exclaims, “Shucks! I tore it up! And then you know [Duldulao] took advantage of the situation. I did him a favor…So when his books came out, you know there was a picture of that event. It was very funny.” Chabet, Interview, Ortigas, 2008, transcript pg. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Covered in many interviews with Chabet, including Enriquez’s “Nutty Professor” and Bunoan’s Ortigas interview in 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. In *Contemporary Philippine Art*, Imelda Marcos states to writer Nick Joaquin, “I like modern art. I like the abstract…I like them because they get me to thinking…I like things that I do not understand because they make me curious” (88). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Lucy Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction,” in *Changing in Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1971): Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Joy Dayrit Journals, June 1, 1970, Joy Dayrit Archives, Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings (ALIWW), Envelope 1.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Liwayway Scrapbook, Joy Dayrit Archives, Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings (ALIWW).

    [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Liwayway Scrapbook, Joy Dayrit Archives, Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings (ALIWW). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Alfredo R. Roces, “CB Curbs on Artists,” *The Times Journal*, May 18, 1969. In this edition of his *Light and Shadow* column, painter Alfredo R. Roces noted that “artist’s and student’s colors now fall under NEC 533-0301 Central Bank Commodity Classification so that the time deposit required is 150 percent. We believe that these items should be regarded as raw materials which artists transform into works of art, and merit tax exemption.” He further suggests that the new Cultural Center could import paint for local artists at cost price. He argues, “Providing artists with the diversity of modern art materials is one such essential step. Art materials should be made available to local artists as cheaply as possible.” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Liwayway Scrapbook, Joy Dayrit Archives, Ateneo Library of Women’s Writings (ALIWW). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Exhibition notes for *Illumination*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Main and Small Gallery (1970), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Floor plan of *Illumination*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Main and Small Gallery (1970), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Exhibition notes for *Illumination*. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Chabet had been involved with Dayrit’s Print Gallery since he returned from his Rockefeller grant. In a 1990s interview with Francesca Enriquez, Chabet noted that one of the starts of experimental art occurred in Joy Dayrit’s Print Gallery in 1969, “where artists got writings from writers” (transcript pg. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Benjamin Buchloh, “Hesse’s Endgame: Facing the Diagram,” in *Eva Hesse Drawing* edited by Catherine d Zegher (New York: The Drawing Center/Yale University Press, 2006), 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Reyes, “Solving the Riddle of Chabet’s Sphinx,” 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ringo Bunoan, “Seeing and Unseeing: The Works of Roberto Chabet,” in *Roberto Chabet* edited by Ringo Bunoan (Manila: King Kong Art Projects Unlimited, 2015), 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Roberto Chabet and Joy Dayrit, interview by Ringo Bunoan, July 3, 2008, Dayrit’s house, transcript pg. 7, Chabet Archive, Lopez Museum Library and Archives, Manila, Philippines. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Ray Albano, “Installations: A Case for Hangings,” *Philippine Supplement*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Jan–Feb 1981, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Albano, “Installations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Albano, “Installations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Briony Fer, “Eva Hesse and Color,” *October* 119 (2007): 22. Fer notes that Lippard referred to the pink in *Oomamaboomba* as a “whiplash of color” (25). Of the pink, Fer explains, “This is a color whose brightness can grate, as if it has a heightened pitch.” Fer also argues that Hesse’s “patches of pink” in her 1964 drawings and collages “reverberate with echoes of the pink fleshiness of de Kooning’s nudes” (26). These patches, however, “are themselves fairly starkly cut from the context and set to work in a new network of connections” (26). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* 9 (1979): 52. Krauss writes, “There are two ways in which the grid functions to declare the modernity of modern art. One is spatial; the other is temporal. In the spatial sense, the grid states the autonomy of the realm of art…In the temporal dimension, the grid is an emblem of modernity by being just that: the form that is ubiquitous in the art of *our* century, while appearing nowhere, nowhere at all, in the art of the last one…By “discovering” the grid, cubism, de Stijl, Mondrian, Malevich…landed in a place that was out of reach of everything that went before. Which is to day, they landed in the present, and everything else was declared to be the past” (50, 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” 50. Later in the article, Krauss verifies that the grid as “flattened” or “anti-real” as a conceit. She writes, “The grid’s mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction)” (54). She cites how the structuralists use grid-like formations to arrange the “sequential features of a story” (55). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Krauss, “Grids,” 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Lucy Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction,” in *Changing in Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1971), 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Lippard, “Eccentric Abstraction,” 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” 50. Later in the article, Krauss verifies that the grid as “flattened” or “anti-real” as a conceit. She writes, “The grid’s mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction)” (54). She cites how the structuralists use grid-like formations to arrange the “sequential features of a story” (55). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Margaret Iversen, “Desire and the Diagrammatic,” *Oxford Art Journal* 30.1, 2016, 5–6. In his first footnote in “Hesse’s Endgame,” Buchloh, suggests, as a “first elementary definition of the diagrammatic…to be the one variety of abstraction that recognizes externally existing and pre-given systems of spatio-temporal quantification or schemata of the statistical collection of data as necessarily and primarily determining a chosen pictorial order.” Buchloh, “Hesse’s Endgame: Facing the Diagram,” 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Iversen, “Desire and the Diagrammatic,” 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Iversen, “Desire and the Diagrammatic,” 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Iversen, “Desire and the Diagrammatic,” 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Iversen, “Desire and the Diagrammatic,” 10. Iversen writes, “I reconsider the diagrammatic as a paradigm of drawing that acknowledges our existence as hybrid creatures both caught up in and *wielding* our language, science, prosthetic machines, social institutions—not constrained, alienated and nearly powerless in the face of them.” [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Exhibition notes Notes for *Bakawan*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Small Gallery (Jul-Dec 1974), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Joy Dayrit’s unpublished notes for *Bakawan*, Chabet Archive, Asia Art Archive. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Dayrit, unpublished notes for *Bakawan*. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Exhibition Notes for *Bakawan*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Small Gallery (Jul-Dec 1974), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Ringo Bunoan, “Seeing and Unseeing: The Works of Roberto Chabet,” 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Bunoan, “Seeing and Unseeing: The Works of Roberto Chabet,” 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Raymundo Albano, “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” *Philippine Supplement*, Vol. 2, No. 4, July–August 1981, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Albano, “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Albano, “Developmental Art of the Philippines,” 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Dayrit, unpublished notes for *Bakawan*. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Dayrit, unpublished notes for *Bakawan*. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ringo Bunoan, “Seeing and Unseeing: The Works of Roberto Chabet,” 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ma. Victoria T. Herrera, “Preserving Memory and the Ephemeral, Reconciling Conservation and Conceptual Art Practice: The Case of Roberto Chabet,” in *Roberto Chabet* edited by Ringo Bunoan (Manila: King Kong Art Projects Unlimited, 2015), 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Herrera, “Preserving Memory and the Ephemeral,” 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Marge Enriquez, “Fine Arts’ Nutty Professor,” *Business World*, May 18, 1988.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Enriquez, “Fine Arts’ Nutty Professor.” [↑](#footnote-ref-103)