



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abby Frohne, Director of Marketing  
[afrohne@cocastl.org](mailto:afrohne@cocastl.org), 314.561.4876

## **MGA KUWENTO NAMIN BY FILIPINO ARTIST RIA UNSON OPENING IN THE MILLSTONE GALLERY AT COCA**

**ST. LOUIS (March 20, 2023)**—Filipino American artist Ria Unson’s new exhibition, [Mga kuwento namin \(Stories we tell\)](#), opens in the Millstone Gallery at COCA on Friday, March 24 at 6:00 p.m. Unson portrays personal and historical representations of Filipinos within frames used by colonial powers—from Western Literature to World Fairs—to challenge the origin and scope of the stories spectators use to shape their identities. The exhibition runs March 24–May 3, 2023.

**WHAT:** In *Mga kuwento namin*, Unson delves into what it looks like to reclaim our narratives, whether it is by painting family portraits on Western books or creating composite imagery from present-day portraits of Filipino women and projected photos from the Philippine Exhibit at the 1904 World’s Fair. *Mga kuwento namin* also includes a soundtrack that features stories from the women subjects, spoken in their historically suppressed mother tongues—a way of commemorating the Philippine pre-colonial oral history tradition.

**WHEN:** Exhibition is free and open to the public March 24–May 3, 2023, during COCA’s regularly scheduled business hours.

Exhibition Opening Night Reception is Friday, March 24 from 6:00–8:00 p.m.

COCA will also host a gallery talk on April 21 from 6:30–8:00 p.m. for Unson to share her artistic inspiration and research journey behind this exhibition. The gallery talk is free to the public; Recommended for ages 12+.

**WHERE:** Millstone Gallery at COCA  
6880 Washington Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63130

**AVAILABLE INTERVIEWS:** **Ria Unson**  
Unson is a Filipino American artist. She was born in Manila and emigrated to the U.S. at age 13, eventually settling in the Midwest. Unbeknownst to her, her great-grandfather was assigned to the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis, following the American colonization of the Philippines. By sheer coincidence (or destiny), she moved to the historic neighborhood that once housed the Philippine Village at the Fair. It is still the occupied territory of the Osage Nation, the Missouri, and the Illini Confederacy. Her art practice centers the narrative of a mixed race, post-colonial Filipino American.

**EVENT WEBSITE:** [cocastl.org/calendar/stories-we-tell/](https://cocastl.org/calendar/stories-we-tell/)

**SPONSORS:** The Millstone Gallery is made possible by The Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation, Bernoudy Foundation, and The Millstone Foundation.

###

## **ABOUT COCA**

COCA's mission is to *enrich lives and build community through the arts*. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves more than 50,000 students, audience members, artists, and families from more than 200 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of more than 200 artists at the heart of their work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and onsite at its campus in University City.