

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

BROOKLYN RAIL

ART BOOKS | DEC/JAN 2024–25

The Best Art Books of 2024

Here's a list of the Rail's top art books from 2024 (plus a few others from years past we couldn't resist adding).

Stephanie Syjuco's *The Unruly Archive*

(Radius Books, 2024)

Most of us who work in and around the archive have come to know that it is organized by an imperial eye, however objective it may feign to be. In her monograph, *The Unruly Archive*, Stephanie Syjuco simulates this learning and re-learning of the archive as a colonial tool. She depicts a fractured image of the

Philippines as told through the American record. Pulling fragments, photographs, and documents from national collections using variations (and even misspellings) of keywords “Filipino” and “the Philippines,” the Manila-born, Oakland-based

artist searches for visions of a whole people within the confines of an institution never built to hold them. Physically, the book mirrors her research process: collages of low-resolution, overly cropped photographs unfold across layers of unevenly sized pages, evoking the material overwhelm of looking for these histories in the margins. Syjuco's monograph beams brightly against a landscape generally overwrought with archival jargon, sharply modeling how we might “talk back” to the historical record. “I do not make work about Filipino identity,” writes Syjuco in her introduction, “I make work about the white gaze, and those are two totally different things.”

-Zoe Roden

