

Puppies Puppies (Jade Guanaro Kuriki-Olivo): Nothing New

By Cassie Packard



Installation view: Puppies Puppies (Jade Guanaro Kuriki-Olivo): Nothing New, New Museum, New York, 2023. Courtesy New Museum. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

Perhaps you, like me, know Jade Guanaro Kuriki-Olivo better as Puppies Puppies, the pseudonym-cum-persona that the artist crafted in 2010. Puppies Puppies has historically ventriloquized, masked, and absented herself, both in the context of white-cube installations and performances and in the durational performance of being Puppies Puppies. Troubling systems of meaning and value that seem to feed on artists' identities, she has operated via proxies who conduct studio visits and take interviews on her behalf. Her performances have found her (or paid actors posing as her) playing the part of a living sculpture in readymade costumes, giving uncanny undercurrents to iconic figures like Gollum and Lady Liberty. As Puppies Puppies underwent a gender transition, overt references to her embodied identity began to materialize in her work: from a show in which she slept in the gallery with her then-partner, taping her estrogen pills to the wall before leaving in the morning, to an installation featuring a headstone for her deadname and an epistolary press release signed with her new name, Jade. "It meant something very different to hide as a trans woman," Kuriki-Olivo, who is of Taino and Japanese descent, said in a 2021 interview.

For Nothing New, her current exhibition at the New Museum, Kuriki-Olivo recreated her bedroom in the institution's glass-walled lobby gallery. (She is living between the gallery and her nearby apartment for the show's three-month run.) The artist can be observed in the museum display—though she can activate a temporary glass-fogging mechanism when desired—or via a nearby four-quadrant security monitor that livestreams her activities in both locales. Nothing New explores competing desires for visibility and concealment at a time when everyone—the camgirl, the social media poster, the Googler—is, to some extent, being surveilled in their bedroom. It foregrounds the reality that trans people in particular are closely monitored and discursively obsessed-over, mired in a painful paradox in which trans visibility and representation