



The Fabric Workshop
and Museum

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The Fabric Workshop and Museum Presents
Risa Puno: Group Hug

March 1–July 21, 2024

Press Preview: Thursday, February 29, 11:00 am (pre-registration required)



Risa Puno, in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia. "Group Hug," 2024. Photo credit: Carlos Avendaño.

Philadelphia, PA, December 19, 2023—The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is pleased to present *Risa Puno: Group Hug*, on view from March 1 to July 21, 2024. Puno's first museum solo exhibition will take the form of an interactive installation that explores the complex social relationships inherent in receiving and providing care. The exhibition invites the public to engage in

gameplay with unexpected incentives and outcomes. The result of a two-year residency created in collaboration with the FWM Studio, *Group Hug* is Puno's most personal work to date.

Central to *Group Hug*, and much of Puno's work, is the pre-colonial Philippine concept of *kapwa*. It represents a deeply shared identity and the belief that we have a moral imperative to care for others as we do ourselves. This is especially relevant in the context of this exhibition as it was inspired by recent events in her family's life that caused family members of varying generations to experience a shift in how they are used to giving and receiving care. Taking its name from the answer to a New York Times crossword clue—"Many-person act of support or affection"—*Group Hug* uses the language of games to weave together the themes of caregiving, cultural identity, and familial dynamics.

"We're so thrilled to present *Risa Puno: Group Hug*," says DJ Hellerman, Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Fabric Workshop and Museum. "Known for public artworks that allow her to engage with and create meaningful relationships with different communities, Risa has approached her residency and first museum solo exhibition as an opportunity to better understand herself and for visitors to reflect on their relationships with one another. We're excited to invite the public into the Workshop to experience the results and hopefully, as we have, build trust by allowing ourselves a little vulnerability with each other."

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors are asked to select one of two paths: 'Care For' or 'Cared For'. Those who choose the 'Care For' path will have the chance to play a physically interactive game—a collaborative multi-person version of Whac-A-Mole. For Puno, this game serves as a metaphor for the reactive nature of care during emerging health crises, and also offers a hands-on experience that echoes the often overwhelming and anxiety-provoking challenges of real-life caregiving. The game further emphasizes the necessity of teamwork, synchronization, and communication. As participants play the game, their actions directly affect the experience of the visitors who chose the 'Cared For' path.

'Cared For' visitors discover a grouping of geometric pods that resemble giant coconut shells, sheltering structures of green felted leaves. As 'Care For' participants diligently play Whac-A-Mole, their efforts trigger a transformation within the pods in the adjoining space. The leaf-like structures evolve into comfortable armchairs, a literal manifestation of the support derived from the work of others. The longer the 'Care For' players work effectively, the longer the 'Cared For' people can sit and relax.

At the heart of the exhibition is a *bahay kubo*, a traditional Philippine dwelling, reimagined here as a space to let visitors in on the artist's intentions and process. Traditionally a hub of family and community life, the *bahay kubo* symbolizes hospitality, openness, and the communal spirit of Filipino culture. This hexagonal, candy-colored version represents Puno's unique *halo halo* of experiences, a Tagalog term meaning 'mix mix', and reflective of her multicultural background. Her *bahay kubo* serves as an invitation from the artist, welcoming visitors into a space that houses her inner world. Inside, guests will find interpretive information about the exhibition's symbolism and a shared area for reflection. The centerpiece is a table featuring an oversized twenty-sided die (d20), approximately 14 inches in diameter, with thought-provoking questions on each face, like 'Would you rather work to care for others, or have others work to care for you?'

Group Hug is organized by Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs DJ Hellerman and Project Coordinator Franco Rodriguez in collaboration with the artist and the FWM Studio team.

About Risa Puno

Born in the US and raised in Kentucky, Risa Puno is a sculpture and installation artist who uses interactivity and play to understand how we relate to one another. Transforming recognizable pastimes and games into metaphors for complex social interactions, Puno creates unexpected points of access that allow people to tap into feelings of nostalgia, desire, competition, comfort, or frustration.

Puno has completed public art commissions for the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston (2018); NYC Department of Transportation (2013–2014), and an Art in the Parks: UNIQLO Park Expressions Grant at Rufus King Park in Queens. In 2019, Puno created the acclaimed interactive public art installation *The Privilege of Escape* as the winning artist of the inaugural Creative Time Open Call, New York. Puno has participated in group exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum (2014), Franconia Sculpture Park, MN (2014); El Museo del Barrio, New York (2013); The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (2012); The Queens Museum of Art (2010); Galerie Stefan Röpke, Cologne (2010); MMX Open Art Venue, Berlin (2010); and Socrates Sculpture Park, NY (2009).

Puno's work has been covered by *The New Yorker*, *NPR*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others. She studied art and medicine at Brown University and earned her MFA from New York University.

About The Fabric Workshop and Museum

The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art museum devoted to the creation, presentation, and preservation of innovative works of art. Its mission—Collaborating with artists, revealing new possibilities—embodies a 45-year commitment to helping artists experiment with the expressive possibilities of a broad spectrum of new materials and techniques. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence Program, FWM provides artists at all stages of their careers with the opportunity to collaborate with its studio staff and take their work in fresh and often unexpected directions. FWM presents large-scale exhibitions, installations, and performative work, utilizing innovative fiber and other media including sculpture, installation, video, painting, photography, ceramics, and architecture. Founded in 1977, FWM brings this spirit of creative investigation and discovery to an eager audience, broadening access to art and advancing its role as a catalyst for innovation and social connection.

Support

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Media Contacts

Max Kruger-Dull
Blue Medium, Inc.
Tel: +1-212-675-1800
max@bluemedium.com

Philadelphia-based inquiries:
Justin Rubich
FWM Communications
Tel: 215-561-8888 x224
jrubich@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org