Curatorial Development Workshop: Proto/Para

The 2020 edition of the Curatorial Development Workshop supported by the Japan Foundation, Manila (JFM) and the Philippine Contemporary Art Network (PCAN) seeks to reflect on the relationship between the social context of the public health crisis brought about by the Covid pandemic and the kind of curatorial mode that is responsive to the ecology of production. This production has been disrupted because of the restrictions on basic mobility; domestic and international travel; physical interaction; and general everyday activity. This situation, coupled with uncertainty and unpredictability, has affected the economic and emotional well-being of everyone all over the world and rendered daily life and the imagination of the future precarious even as various forms of violence have heightened.

The Workshop should speak to this context: to explain and propose ways of understanding the complex and delicate condition and to translate these strategies into a curatorial mode or instinct.

Two aspects that have been upset in curatorial production in light of the pandemic are sequence of processes and situation of engagements. Instead of exclusively migrating these aspects to the digital environment, curatorial work may instead rethink the sequence and the situation so that the most recognizable culmination of the curatorial endeavor ceases to be the “exhibition” as organized by the curator who relies on a previous status quo of the so-called supply chain or life cycle of works for presentation. As a tactical recourse, the curator can foreground at this point in pandemic time the prehistory and the afterlife of the recognizable exhibitionary, and therefore curatorial, form.

The curator thus curates the process of “research” and the “remediation” of whatever is produced. “Production,” is in itself, part of the investigation and the experiment. It is not imagined in terms of an object, completed and fulsome. It is a “project” that mutates and iterates in time.

It is in this light that the Curatorial Development Workshop can focus not on the stable nouns or categories like “exhibition” or “work of art,” but on prefixes, which are: proto and para – precursor and extension.