

ARTS ARCHIVE

THE

JAPAN

FOUNDATION,

MANILA

ART

A Collection of Essays
on Philippine Contemporary
Music & Design

ART ARCHIVE 03

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The Japan Foundation, Manila
ART ARCHIVE 03

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The 18th overseas office founded in 1996, **The Japan Foundation, Manila** is active in three focused areas: Arts and Culture; Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange; and Japanese Language Education.

This book is the third volume of the **ART ARCHIVE** series, which explores the current trends and concerns in Philippine contemporary art, published also in digital format for accessibility and distribution on a global scale. This volume features sixteen contributors, putting forth a diverse set of perspectives about contemporary music and design in the country. Both genres have been drawing much attention locally and globally but there is little publication to give outline of their current states and interpret their background for the global readers.

We hope that this publication will serve as a resource for our readers thereby contributing constructively to the dialogue and promotion of contemporary art in the region. We would like to express our gratitude to the editors, Prof. José S. Buenconsejo of the Music Section and Ar. Gerry Torres and Ar. Leonido Gines Jr. of the Design Section for their curation and advice. And we thank all the contributors and the editorial team for their painstaking labor on this publication.

The year 2020 has been a challenging time for everyone. Amidst the global pandemic and socio-civic campaigns, we believe that international collaboration has much more importance in opening avenues for idea exchange in finding innovative ways to solve the adversities we are facing. Our strength is in our unity.

The Japan Foundation, Manila
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INSIGHT: Why Music Matters to the Communities

words by

JOSÉ S. BUENCONSEJO, PhD

The music section of this volume contains seven essays, each of which is devoted to a particular type of music that is fully practiced at present and therefore significant to a community. These musics—pop song, sound art, mashup, battle rap, music for theater and film, festival music, and budots dance—are all contemporary in the true meaning of the word. They were selected because we were keen in driving home the point that there is a plethora of musical practices in the Philippines, and that there is a dire need to pay attention to them as singular expressions within highly specific contexts of musical communicative use. In short, in the spirit of celebrating music diversity, we wanted to be as inclusive as we can so that the expressions are each understood in its own terms and not judged with labels that are outside of it.

As students of culture, we wanted to write a wider range of music making in the country (from highbrow to lowbrow), an act of recognizing the heterogeneity and plurality of the musical worlds one chooses in the current age when everything is entangled with other things in a globalized yet resolutely local environment. There are, of course, many other music subcultural genres—such as jazz, varieties of rock, indigenous music, heavy metal music, TV-mediated genre of singing—that beg for inclusion in this music section. But the practicality of including them all is not possible due to lack of space. The stance that we wish to do in this section is to debunk the older intellectual paradigm in which music genres are judged according to fixed elitist standards (canon) and legitimacy (what ought to be written based on that canon). The main assumption that drives this group of essays thus hinges on the concept of culture being an important process behind any music making. We deal here with a value for music as a cultural production that is materially situated within various ecologies of listening.

The contemporaneity of the genres in the music section can be gleaned at the attention that all the contributors of this section have made towards considering the recent material conditions that have impacted on recent music making. These conditions speak to the availability of sound technology and visual media, travel and tourism, affordability of electronic gadgets, and global interconnectivity via the internet. These developments were not easily available to Filipino music makers before the 1970s and, it seems to me, this decade can be a good starting point to clarify when the word “contemporary” begins, if indeed we are to construe the historical period when the major transformations of Philippine music were felt. The materiality of the decade was the enabling environment in which subsequent music genres were nurtured.

The rise of the local music industry in the 1970s is proof of this enabling musical environment that led to the growth of Original Pilipino Music (OPM). In her essay, Krina Cayabyab argues that this production has been renewed recently, albeit with a sense of dynamism as evident in its aesthetics as well as in the shift to new, alternative, and independent ways of producing and distributing records that began in the first decade of this millennium.

Indeed, the affordability of audio equipment and the availability of resources that one can tap on the internet have been a part of these changes in material reality that pushed creative and imaginative individuals to innovate and create something new. A good example of this is the emerging form “sound art” that is one of the signs of the times. Agnes Manalo describes this fusion of music technology with media arts among four practitioners in Manila whose works bleed the boundaries separating academic new music with the contemporary world of media arts and sound design. Their edgy artworks are intellectual yet within the grasp of anyone (beyond face-to-face formal music learning) who is networked to various others and who is inquisitive enough to explore possibilities. The imaginative faculty remains the more important sufficient condition, beyond the necessary technology, for someone to produce an intermedia creation that innovates on things meant for futurity.

But what about the Filipino working class who are not exposed to such avant garde ideas?

This question is addressed by José Buenconsejo who talks about the ways of the musically non-literate Filipino musicians who mainly experience music through their ears (aurality). As one sound artist said, music is really not

about notations that render the experience into abstract terms but in the body, which has the faculty of memory and imagination that can generate new creations. Buenconsejo details the major musical processes in a wide variety of mashups that reveal remarkable musicalities among the people who are grounded in an acoustic ecology that is filled with recorded sounds emitted from videoke screens and YouTube. Mashups could not have come about had not the music oozing from the screens triggered the artistic impulses of the viewers who then transformed their sound experiences into new ones.

The phenomenon of experiencing physical and virtual images is also manifested in the sensational FlipTop “battle rap” that Lara Mendoza writes about. From the point of view of the MCs who get to show off their skills in rhymed rapping in the series of agonistic and sport-like spectacle from the beginning of the year to its end, FlipTop gives voice and visibility to the participants and this is immeasurable. No wonder it is followed by millions of millennials, thanks to Anygma, who sees his mediations as a means for their popularity and success.

This brings the issue to the importance of musical media in the everyday lives of contemporary Filipinos. The availability and saturation of sounds and images in the media of the present-day world is bewildering. Aileen dela Cruz talks about some of the recent stage and film productions that reveal constant recycling of prior representations that are combined in new ways. This results in an originality that is not quite “authentic.” The availability of existing works is recasted to create a postmodern aesthetic in which old works are conflated with new ones. This disrupts the sense of discreteness of time as a sequence. It evoked nostalgia in a recent film adaptation of a pre-1970s novel as well as pastiches in the many jukebox musicals that were in vogue in recent years. The recorded sound (a technological product) and the memory that went with its consumption were so important in stirring these postmodern creations.

Media is indeed power. As a textual representation of reality, its power is seen in two divergent uses of the kitsch dance budots, a topic that Desiree Peralejo discusses in her essay. She suggests the embeddedness of arts in social reality by arguing that budots—being a dance appreciated by the masses—can enable trust between the dancer and the spectator because images of the performance invokes the shared world of *pakikisama* (value for being together) between dancer and watcher.

This bonding creates a moment of forgetfulness of the true material conditions. Peralejo argues that this worked in the case of the politician who danced his way to winning in 2016, even if there was the seething evidence of corruption. This forgetfulness of the present can also apply to an art choreography in which the human rights of the poor people are trampled, leading to disappearance and mass murder.

Outside of this sad note, recent decades have seen the rise of urban, non-governmental, entrepreneurial festivals where global pop and fusion musics are celebrated. Tusa Montes discusses the outlook of the organizers and sponsors of these recent events that attract international travelers, who have—through their openness to other peoples’ cultures—acquired the attitude of cosmopolitanism. This is another sign of the times, and it is attached to the commerce of tourism which, pertinent to the Philippines, has rendered the music and its music as “of the tropics.”

From these seven essays, Philippine music is definitely seen not as a museum piece but a living one that is ecologically situated in an environment that has been enabled by the materialities of technology and media. The genres and forms presented in the section are seen by the seven authors as co-evolving within the various concrete social networks of makers and listeners. By paying attention to the dynamic relationships between listeners who listen to the diverse sound idioms specific to their environments, we get a better understanding of why music matters to the communities. We therefore hope this issue paves a way to that kind of insight. ■

words by
KRINA CAYABYAB



Fig. 1

On March 27, 2019, during the open forum following the launch of the film documentary *Sa Madaling Salita, OPM: Ang Himig Pilipino Sa Dekada Sitenta* (In Other Words, OPM: Song of the Filipino in the 1970s), a lingering comment from at least two audience members was raised: if the 1970s was truly the Golden Age of OPM, why can't the music of today capture that same glory?

This extolling but quite dichotomizing view was then reinforced by some of the film's informants – key players of the music scene during that decade. They spoke sentimental truths and of their meaningful memories that plea for further discourse. This hovered above the audience of a motley crew: artists, professors, graduate and college students, friends and family of the informants, and individuals in their youth during the '70s and the '80s. But a discussion did not take place, partly because there was a lack of time, and partly (more crucially) because no one was prepared to elucidate an argument and to follow through substantially. Yet, there is nothing to disregard about the people, institutions, and moments that have made the music recording world of the 1970s. It was in this period when the marketing of Filipino-made records in stores as OPM – Original Pilipino Music – became a reality.

And so OPM became a powerful tool; a sign of the rich popular music culture of the 1970s. Consequently, it became a signifier for many associations: the brand of Manila Sound, the disco of VST & Co., and The Boyfriends,

the winning songs of the Metropop Festival (including the chart-topping hit, "Anak" (Child), the Tagalog translations of English covers, the cultural policies surrounding radio airtime, the hits of Rico J. Puno, the popularity of *Jingle Chordbook Magazine*, folk recordings arranged in jazz, Vicor vs. OctoArts vs. JEM record companies, payola being raised in the Senate, not to mention the martial law regime and the protest songs that came along with it.

More connotations continue to link the term with things further in the past, highlighting those *disruptions* that buttressed significant changes in the '70s. From "Tagalog syndrome" (when songs/films in Tagalog seemed hard to sell) to "Tagalogmania" (when colloquial Tagalog became the trend), from "plakang-plaka" (exact cover versions) to new compositions and arrangements, and from four-track recording to eight- or 16-track standards. These have stacked up a myth that captures an ideology of nationalism in recorded sounds. OPM has become a metaphor for differentiation, an identity, a community, and to some extent, ethnocentricity. It was subjected to the process when, for example, a song is composed and recorded by Filipino artists, and aired over various media, it becomes 'normally, self-evidently, timelessly, and obviously' an OPM. Comments such as the one just mentioned have become an "incontestable" judgment. OPM grew into a dominant cultural value in local music history.

OPM AS A MYTH

Now four decades down, the acronym continues to bulge with multiple meanings and complex interpretations. Indeed, OPM as a myth has helped “us to make sense of our experiences within”¹ a Filipino culture. In the past ten years, newspaper and online articles sought to evaluate the various new meanings. Writers tackled the question of what it consists of, while discussing issues related to power systems. Dualisms of local vs. foreign, or mainstream vs. independent, or recording vs. live scenes are also taken side by side. And, of course, the maturity-decline approach persists, dealing with economic or aesthetic values and comparisons from one point in time to another. Titles along these veins include “OPM is dead, so sue me” (Claudio, 2012), “OUR Pinoy Music” (Poblete, 2012), “Who Killed OPM?” (Replente, 2017), “Now and Then: Is OPM Going Extinct?” (Santos, 2012), “Original Pilipino Music in Crisis” (Ballaran, 2012), “OPM Fighting for Survival” (Bercasio, 2016), “Original Pilipino Music (OPM) is Still Vital Today” (Lirios, 2017), “The Fall and Rise of Philippine Music” (bworldonline, 2018), “Louder for the people in the back: indie vs. Popular Filipino Music” (Canto, 2019), and most recently, “OPM: Rising Thru Streaming” (*Business Mirror*, 2019). There is also the implicit and explicit resistance of the sign – “No to the Term OPM! Yes to Filipino Music” (Manitoba Filipino Journal, 2015) and, “Long Live Local Music!” (Katigbak, 2012).

It seems that the myth of OPM remains in the effective struggle to be positioned in the everyday at the moment. Its naturalized power has brought about movements and support for its sustainability and relevance/irrelevance in society. In the 21st century, are the new layers of signs that recontextualize, if not enervate, OPM? Various kinds of intermediations have become added meanings in today's OPM world. Just to name a hotchpotch of where the term is celebrated: local music festivals, television singing competitions and variety shows, radio music shows, live concerts, bar gigs, movie and teleserye themes, jukebox musical theatre, songwriting competitions, songwriting camps, YouTube music-related videos, music licensing and publishing regulations, songs and artists that target socio-political issues, music and the advertising world, punk, alternative, rock, jazz, hip-hop, and comedy songs, popular music scenes beyond Metro Manila, especially in Visayas and Mindanao, academic institutions with music production courses, recording studios, individual listening experiences, and individual choices of creating music.

The next sections will discuss meanings brought about by digital media, indie and mainstream; the heritage of covers and jukebox musical theatre; and reflections on songwriting competitions, camps, and the apparent creative movements of Filipinos from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE OPM INDIExMAINSTREAM

In this section, we try to make sense of the terms “mainstream” and “indie” and their relationship with digital media at present. David Hesmondhalgh (2013) and Daniel Nordgård (2016) talk about the “digital divide” where, despite the internet's quirk of enabling “emancipatory, democratizing and liberating effects of digitalization,” there is the inequality of accessibility and the diverse levels of skills that users can't or can only acquire. It is also significant to consider questions of class structure, income and education when analyzing the media reception of a group. In September 2018, it has been reported that 47% of Filipinos use the internet, the rest of the 53% do not.² Despite being declared as the leading country worldwide for internet usage in 2018 by We Are Social and Hootsuite,³ more than half of Filipinos access traditional media such as the television and the radio. Nielsen's TV Audience Measurement results show that from 2013 to 2015, while Filipinos still steadily absorb information and enjoy entertainment through television, “digital viewership has grown six-fold” during these years. This engagement of viewing multiple screens simultaneously increases the probabilities for audience receptivity and information retention.

“Mainstream” is described by Alison Huber (2013) as a “conceptual tool that illuminates the ways in which certain kinds of music come to temporarily dominate everyday life at certain times and in certain places.” By this definition, the distinction between mainstream and indie can become null. Any form of musical product blown up on the cloud that disrupts and floods search feeds momentarily will garner a range of participative levels from different groups of people. When the numbers reach million hits and followers, it becomes an imagined mainstreamity.

The oft mentioned descriptions of the term “indie” may be classified according to three categories whose conventional meanings periodically transform: (1) practice; (2) sound; and (3) position in the industry. Practice is grounded in the do-it-yourself (DIY) ideology. With new music economies, terms and relationships such as aggregator, metadata, and streaming are added in the vocabulary of the indie practice with digital media.

Saying “That sounds so indie,” implies that a style has locked down an abstract sonic idea of the term in a particular place and time of a culture. Nitsuh Abebe (2009) describes a trending global female vocal sound of the decade as “quiet, wry, quaint, imaginative, thoughtful, nice... po-faced, insular, lacking in passion... polite, predictable, timid...” From 2013 onwards, since the popularity of the McDonald's commercial and hook “Hooray for Today,” Moira Dela Torre has become

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the mainstream representation and source of what has become associated with the “indie voice.” Five years after her introduction to the media, Moira was hailed as the number one streamed local artist on Spotify in 2018 and the following year, she sat as one of the judges on the singing competition franchise *Idol Philippines*. Just four years ago, she was a finalist at *The Voice Philippines*. Her presence in other forms has made her more resounding, just as how her song “Malaya” (Free) became identified with the film *Camp Sawi* (Camp Unfortunate). Alongside these constant mainstream appearances in traditional media, Moira is, of course, not left behind in digital media.

If Moira's voice has become the sound bite for the mainstream indie voice in recent years, more than ten years ago, it was “Armi.” Without overlooking other factors for their music's recurrence, Up Dharma Down's aesthetics transgressed the practice definitions of “indie” and “mainstream.” They began as a band during the steep decline of local physical album sales, during the notoriousness of peer-to-peer network sharing, and when

legal conditions were still in transition. It was 2004 when the band started playing in bar gigs, coming up with their first album in 2006 produced by an indie label. Throughout the singles, albums and music videos released, live concerts performed in the PH and outside the country, with citations made by *Time Magazine* and BBC in 2007, having their album put on sale by Tower Records in Japan in 2018, Up Dharma Down has claimed the reputation of being the leading “indie band” of the country. All these were attained through the fabrication of mainstream industry traditions and indie practices. While taking hold of their creative work, efforts toward commercial popularity led them to having their songs in the soundtracks of mainstream films, performing for ad campaigns and even being brand ambassadors, opening for popular foreign acts in large stages in the country, topping local radio and music television stations, and eventually, accepting awards of recognition for Best New Artist (2006), Album of the Year (2009) and Vocalist of the Year (2009).



Fig. 2

'INDIE FOLK POP'

This ties up to another definition of indie as perceived through these three acts who have chosen to brand their sound as “indie folk pop.” Indie here has become an industry-based genre (Negus, 1998), whose conventions include “simplicity, austerity, technophobia, and nostalgia” (Fonarow, 2006). Furthermore, instrumentations usually include acoustic guitars, multiple voices and harmonies, egalitarian stage setups, the downplaying of musical virtuosity and soloing, and the use of metaphor and polysemy in language (van Poecke, 2017). Overall, it operates in the “participatory culture” framework of music-making, aesthetics and production.

Ransom Collective is a six-piece band from the University of the Philippines that came together in 2014. They independently released their EP and album on Spotify. After joining and winning the band competition at the first Wanderland Music Festival in the country (which is similar to the Coachella Festival of the US), the band became the vogue of indie. The band consciously manages and creates tactics to get a constant media presence to especially publicize their lifestyle, gigs, and activities that instantly shape their iconic appeal. They have also performed in music festivals in Singapore and in India, where they represented the country at the ASEAN-India Music Festival. They have become even more known in media through their partnerships with the popular bag and gear shop, BratPack. Despite all these, the members of the band have their own day jobs.

On the other hand, the members of another indie folk band Ben&Ben consider themselves as full time band members who focus on the production, creation and performance of their music. Ben&Ben joined the Philpop Songwriting Competition in 2016, winning third place.

Considering the competition's characteristic of being commercially produced, the audience reach of the band has spilled out from digital media. After 2016, the band has been producing stand-alone concerts, with a following that has reached more than 2 million monthly listeners on Spotify. The group was eventually named as one of only two local artists in the top ten Spotify charts in the past year. Testifying to their superior audience reach are their mall concerts, where the audience of about a thousand would boisterously sing along with their songs, and the vivacity in the entire mall would be very overwhelming. With the number of covers of their songs uploaded on YouTube, and being on top of the listenership of local Spotify, Ben&Ben has achieved ample audience approval. In the context of the term indie as more of a genre rather than a practice, Ben&Ben is aided by talent management Sindikato, while their music is distributed by record label Sony Music Philippines. Despite being managed, Ben&Ben's musical and creative choices in writing and producing their songs result from the collective agency of the band's members. This is an example of a current “alternative mainstream” practice or platform in the industry where bottom-up production and top-down distribution converge (van Poecke).

Going beyond this audience approval is the audience's exertion in providing their support for the artist. Audience action has since been extraordinarily experienced by Reese Lansangan, an all-around artist who has transitioned from being a fashion designer and graphic artist to a singer-songwriter. She used to assert the practice of independence by getting everything done herself. But later on, aside from managing her own independent company and obtaining her own indie managers, she welcomed a team of creative fans who worked on her productions for free. Eventually, they called themselves “Reese Kids,” including key people such as the sound engineer, road manager, and merchandise manager.

All these artists have been very active over social networks and digital media. Towards the end of the second decade of this 21st century, when a Filipino musician with popular genre conventions comes with an objective of being heard and known, online presence is extremely necessary. This online presence has also become advantageous for the current music influencers. Because of them, the sonic past has become more omnipresent. A song from the past can function differently at present. It can brew up new meanings and memories for individuals and groups of people. And eventually, it can be subjected to a renewed position in the music scene. The song achieves a more popular and amplified resonance among listeners.

RECYCLING PAST OPM IN THE PRESENT

There are implications of making cover songs of OPM. For example, a song's impact in the past can instantly be an effective tool to shape and affect a product's popularity. “Di Na Muli” (Never Again), composed by Jazz Nicholas and Wally Acolola in 2016, intersected and intruded various media. It received its first prominence as the grand prize winner of the PhilPop Songwriting Competition in 2016. Its recall was soon revived in 2018 with the production of a music video where the band Itchyworms performed around the main theatre of the Cultural Center of the Philippines against a lighting design in remembrance of Teddy Hilado. It was further exhilarated by the modern dance choreography and performance of Carissa Adea. In the same year, the film *Sid and Aya: Not A Love Story* starring Anne Curtis and Dingdong Dantes utilized the song as its OST. This version sung by Janine Teñoso had amassed millions of views and streamings across all media platforms. On top of this interpretation, many other covers swamped the YouTube-verse. These occurrences have validated the value of each product and creator (the song, the movie, the artist, the music video, the artists that have collaborated in all the art forms, etc.) in the music scene.

Another common instance of making cover versions is producing a compilation of an artist's (or more commonly of a band's) hit songs which are arranged and interpreted by current artists. In 2005, the compilation of the revisited songs of the 1990s popular alternative band Eraserheads was produced by then Sony BMG Music Philippines Inc. with the title *Ultraelectromagneticjam: The Music of the Eraserheads*. The following year, Universal Philippines commissioned artists for a similar revival collection of 1970s hit trio, APO Hiking Society. The album's title is *Kami nAPO Muna* and was followed up the next year by a second compilation entitled *Kami nAPO Muna Ulit*. This production direction of commemorating artists of the past reinstates their popular position, renovating constructions about the country's popular music culture. Overall, the inherited industry and sonic power of the two groups were made even more resilient.

Speaking of Eraserheads and APO Hiking Society, in 2018, their music faced a parallel popularization – this time through the musical theatre idiom. The jukebox musical was not new in the local industry, even more so in the American industry where Elvis Presley hits became the genre's first material in the 1950s through *Rock Around the Clock* (1956). The target audience was the youth, and the purpose then was to support the consumerism of rock 'n roll, the popular genre of the time. In the context of the two jukebox musicals *Ang Huling El Bimbo* (Eraserheads songs) and *Eto Na! Musical nAPO!* (APO Hiking Society songs),

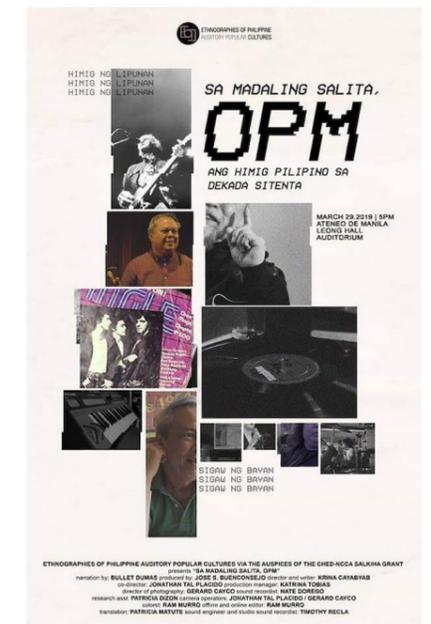


Fig. 3

the target audiences were the age groups that spent their youth relating to the songs and the spirit of the 1970s (APO) and the 1990s (Eraserheads). This strategy of relating an age group's identity with a decade's radio and record hits also aligned with the purchasing power of each musical's viewers.

But more than this economic factor, the producers of the two shows knew the sense memories that the songs of each band can effectively provide. And as a convention of popular culture, this venture of producing song revivals in a different artistic format incited curiosity and excitement, especially for the markets of both OPM and theatre. True enough, both productions had reruns and revamps in 2019, with a reimagined interpretation of the artist catalogues' texts, melodies and signified sonic experiences. Both carried out the intention of mounting narratives with past socio-political themes made relevant to the present (in the case of the APO Musicales, relating to martial law). One had generally more reconstructed arrangements of the songs, and the other adhered closer to the original formats.

Another significant musical of this jukebox genre was Philippine Educational Theater Association's *Rak of Aegis*. The material had its world premiere in 2014 and continued to have restagings until 2019, having produced more than 400 shows since then. Besides the songs that were used and how they were utilized, a jukebox musical's success crosses all the elements of theatre productions including artistic direction, production and stage management, the players onstage, and, of course, the script. More in-depth interdisciplinary and musicological analyses are yet to be made to further understand the art world of jukebox musicals in the Philippine context. Significantly, OPM's penchant

Towards the end of the second decade of this 21st century, when a Pinoy musician comes with an objective of being heard and known, online presence is extremely compulsory.

for icon-making, stardom and artist legacy are well-situated in the world of musical theatre. This has affected an OPM song's and artist's perpetuity and heritage value. Other significant events that allowed this return to the past involved TV networks' music programs. Leading this format is ABS-CBN's *Tawag Ng Tanghalan* singing competition, which was first aired in 2016 (the original show had its first run in 1953 until 1972) and continues to top noontime TV ratings as of this writing. Other singing competitions that have recently relaunched past OPM hits include *The Voice Philippines*, *Idol Philippines*, *The Clash* and *Pilipinas Got Talent*.

ADVOCATING OPM ACROSS MUSIC SCENES AND GENRES

When it comes to songwriting training and exposure, the encouragement to churn out and exercise musical creativity with a Filipino sensibility has continued to be addressed in the 2010s. Among other avenues, social and training environments such as the Elements, PhilPop, and FILSCAP Songwriting Camps have become centers of exploration, inspiration and collaboration among individuals who craft their meanings of passion and music inventiveness through interactions with fellow artists and followers. Mentors who have been active in the scene and mentees who are navigating their music take part in a creative exchange. Facilitators of these settings include Ryan Cayabyab, Jay Durias, Jungee Marcelo, Jonathan Manalo, Ebe Dancel, Jim Paredes and Gabby Alipe, just to name a few of the camps' very long list of songwriting confidantes. With the vision of bringing in the next nurturers of Pinoy-made songs in the country's ever-developing music ecosystem, camps such as these are conducted beyond Metro Manila.

The connotation of OPM had been referred to recorded music made in Metro Manila, and broadcasted all over the country. A radio listener from Ilocos, Cebu or Davao would be aware of the top artists and songs that become hits in Manila. But it was not until this 21st century when pop hits from Visayas and Mindanao became more noticeably aired on Manila's radio stations, not to mention online. This cross-border transmission and media flow do not come unaccompanied by the urgency of Southern Philippines' local music communities to have their pop music expressions heard in a larger scale. As one songwriting participant of PhilPop wrote in 2018, "It means so much for me to be able to tell my own story in my own language because there are some things that I cannot say in Filipino or English but can really express in my own language."

Nevertheless, BisRock or Bisaya rock has been around since the 1980s, widely considered as a subgenre of Pinoy rock in the Cebuano music scene. It is the lack of national representation that became the primary motivator for a movement like this. Before becoming an accepted label for a campaign and an advocacy, VisPop was a competition in 2012 as conceptualized by Jude Gitamondoc in 2009. Visayan Pop Music Festival was not only a competition, but also a workshop to flesh out new songs of mainstream appeal, current writing and music production practices. Years and disputes later, the term VisPop became a genre reference that denotes mainstream Visayan pop music. Similar to this mission is that of MinPop, described by its creators as a collective term that refers to the pop music

created by Mindanaoans through its annual songwriting competition that began in 2019. VisMinPop and BisRock include songs such as "Ha-Ha-Ha Hasula" (Ha-Ha-Ha Hassle) by Kurt Fick, "Sa Akong Heart" (In My Heart) by Von Saw, "Lame" (Sarap) by Midnasty, "Cebuana" by Karencitta, "Bisan Pa" (Kahit Na) by WetSlipperz, and "Duyog" (Accompanied) by Jewel Villaflores.

Songwriting competitions of a nationwide scope have swung a cradle of artistic intentions aimed at signifying newness, nationalism, and inclusiveness. A song clearly becomes an object of the industry, subject to evaluation according to marketability. Back in the 1970s, the urge to strengthen and propagate the Filipino identity and artistic uniqueness through popular music served as an underlying objective of the Metropop Songwriting Competition. As an effect of songwriters aiming for their songs to have a novel quality recalled by listeners, and of the competition to upheave the most effective songs for impacting national consciousness, the arrangements of the competition's song entries reflected this nature of engaging musical prowess. The songs of the first few years of Metropop took up forms, melodic contours, harmonic progressions and expansive ranges that favored a dynamic development of expressing drama, climax, radiance and bravura. The four songs recognized as the winning compositions of 1978 demonstrated this pompous symphonic, "to win it" rousing quality of instrumentation. These are "Kay Ganda Ng Ating Musika" (How Beautiful Our Music Is) composed by Ryan Cayabyab and interpreted by Hajji Alejandro; "Pagdating Mo" (When You Arrive) composed by Nonoy Gallardo and interpreted by Celeste Legaspi; "Narito Ako Umiibig" (Here I Am, Loving) composed by Nonong Pederro and interpreted by Maricris Bermont; and "Ibig Kong Ibig Ka" (I Would Love to Love You) music by Vic Villafuerte, lyrics by Rolando Tinio, and interpreted by Anthony Castelo. Against this template was "Anak" (Child) by Freddie Aguilar, who immediately achieved international distinction post factum. The Metropop ceased to continue by the year 1985, but was restored by GMA Network from 1996 until 2003.

In the 21st century, competitions supplanted this opportunity for the music recording industry to get its ecological wheel moving. Besides the song arrangements' influence to make a song's simplest format activate listenership, the PhilPop Music Festival (2012-2018, with a gap in 2017), the Himig Handog Songwriting Competition (2000-2003, 2013-2019), the Visayan Pop Music Festival (2013-2017, 2019), and the Mindanao Popular Music Festival (2019-2020) exhausted all possible mediations to exponentially expand their songs' reception. Before

the finals, the songs are sent off to penetrate radio shows, social media networks like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Spotify playlists, and YouTube via music or lyric videos. From these formats, the songs' over-all appeal and audience reach are surveyed up until Finals' Night. Both the star quality and singing skill of the interpreters of the songs are inevitably crucial to a song's success to place in the competition, and significantly, success to take part in the everyday lives of the Filipino listening market.

The most recent winners of the first two competitions, which have achieved a sustained recurrence in the OPM pop market, include PhilPop's "Dati" (Before) composed by Thyro Alfaro and Yumi Lacsamana, and interpreted by Sam Concepcion and Tippy Dos Santos; and "Di Na Muli" (Never Again) composed by Jazz Nicholas and Wally Alcolola and interpreted by Itchyworms. From Himig Handog, there is "Kung Ako Na Lang Sana" (If It Were Me Instead) composed by Soc Villanueva and interpreted by Bituin Escalante; "Titibo-tibo" (Acting Lesbian) composed by Libertine Amistoso and interpreted by Moira Dela Torre; and "Mabagal" (Slow) composed by Dan Martel Simon Tañedo, interpreted by Daniel Padilla and Moira Dela Torre.

The choice of melodies, lyrics, harmonic progressions, rhythmic structure, genres, styles, and instrumentation used in the arrangement contribute to the song's overall aesthetics. Take the case of Himig Handog 2019's grand winner, "Mabagal", which combined novelty and ear worm (song retention in memory), among other factors. Juxtaposed with the recurring chorus melody and text, the composer used a ten-piece band that consisted of a six-horn section, a double bass, electric keys and drums. Popular in the field of writing jazz arrangements and directing the AMP Big Band, the leading jazz collective for professional musicians, Mel Villena utilized the swing rhythm, the improvisatory nuances on the saxophone and the keyboard, and the extended chord progressions idiomatic of jazz harmony. The proficiency of the arranger in this convention and his experienced intuition of using the jazz style in the genre of pop may be one of the effective elements of the song's audience receptivity. Yet again, the cumulative contribution of every marketing element, the song's easy relatability and novelty, and the audience's diverse and diffusive reactions help establish the pop value of the song.

In the pre-digital era, one would have to really explore music beyond what radio stations and accessible record bars were publicizing. This is probably why OPM was usually



Fig. 4

And then as all of these can possibly be transmitted and intermediated through online media, the visual and sonic signifiers of OPM are ever-present.

associated with the latest production of records, whatever the genre was. Musical spaces such as bars, hidden venues, informal stages for bands and singer-songwriters to splurge their penned stuff portray how original Pilipino music can happen elsewhere, too. Now with practices such as originals-only nights, busking in the streets, performance collaborations, rapping and sing-speaking with backing tracks, vocal performance with turntable scrubbing, production gig nights with a variety of genres, and live music-cultures can also be OPM. And then all of these can possibly be transmitted and intermediated through online media. The visual and sonic signifiers of OPM are ever-present.

Over digital media, OPM artists can be influencers. Take the case of Bullet Dumas. Aside from being distinguished for his attractively unrefined natural voice, choices of guitar playing styles and brazen out musical themes and texts, Dumas places his personification and translates his performativity over social networks. He sets his online third wall on Twitter with idiomatic statements of subtle relevance and clever thoughts, keeping his followers engaged. He demonstrates his agape aesthetic and mindfulness as he stirs up his feeds fashionably, making his intimate performance space into a rather digital coliseum, and consummately interpreting the world for his Filipino audience.

WHAT REALLY IS OPM IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

In 2017, Coca Cola Philippines launched a music project that aspired to recognize the heritage of OPM. The Coke Studio PH program selected and matched current and past hit artists of various music genres to make a cover. The performances were aired over television and on the company's YouTube channel. The songs were also recorded and compiled as a playlist on Spotify. For example, during its third season in 2019, This Band covered Sarah

Geronimo's "Kilometro" (Kilometer), while Geronimo rendered This Band's "Kahit Ayaw Mo Na" (Even If You Do Not Like Anymore). Just Hush and December Avenue made a version of Up Dharma Down's "Tadhana" (Destiny), while the latter band covered Just Hush's "Maikee's Letters." These artists imprinted the musical style they are known for in the songs they covered. The music program has become a venue for a dynamic reproduction and sonic imaginings of newer OPM.

An event such as this that consciously uses OPM is evidence that it still is any form and style of musical work by a Filipino in any popular music culture. It still is sustained by participations and collaborations of different media, bodies, and art forms. It still is an interplay of power dynamics and socio-cultural urgencies. It still is an assortment of belief systems, ideas and aesthetics. It still continues to be in transition, seeping through people's sonic quotidian experiences, online, offline, and in retrospect. It still is a sign of multiple-layered associations in the world of Philippine music. OPM will continue to be a construct for people whose nationhood and identity matter.

Fig. 1 Ben&Ben during soundcheck at the Fort BGC, August 2018.

Fig. 2 Bullet Dumas at Conspiracy Cafe, February 2020

Fig. 3 Sa Madaling Salita, OPM Documentary poster, March 2019

Fig. 4 VisPop Finals Night, 2017

¹ Chandler, Daniel. In "Denotation, Connotation and Myth" <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem06.html?LMCL=oydrD0>. Accessed on October 21, 2019.

² Pulse Asia. "September 2018 Nationwide Survey on Social Media Use". <http://www.pulseasia.ph/september-2018-nationwide-survey-on-social-media-use/>. Accessed on October 21, 2019.

³ "Filipinos Spend Most Time Online, On Social Media Worldwide". <https://www.rappler.com/technology/news/222407-philippines-online-use-2019-hootsuite-we-are-social-report>. Accessed on October 21, 2019.

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ART ARCHIVE 03



Fig. 1

Music and sound are two distinct aural forms that have now emerged as one in various music genre and media. Music, as we know, is intrinsic in all cultures, each culture having its own set of musical instruments, social functions and usages in their communities. Through the evolution of its musical systems over the last thousand years, the universally accepted norms and practices of western music idiom (music of common practice) are currently in use and have become the basis and standard for popular music creation. On the other hand, the awareness of sound and its technologies commenced a few decades after the discovery of electricity, at the onset of the invention of the wax cylinder. Later on, it progressed towards the invention of the phonograph, the initial platform for music recording and playback. In the early 1900s, sound technologies advanced and were used in the early film sound production. The sound technicians' work primarily ensured that sound technical requirements, as dictated by its medium, are met, whether it be for music recording or for the creation of sound for film. As the sound technologies progressed into developing tools that aided the creation, production and dissemination of music, the idea of using the concepts of the sound technologies, inspired from 20th century serious music composers, led to the exploration, experimentation and creation

of sound as an art form by itself. This new art form is now recognized as sound art.

SOUND ART

In the Philippines, Filipino sound artists, both experimental enthusiasts and serious creators, have embraced the world of sound art. They have exerted effort in its propagation in communities and collectives. Not to be left behind in the world's trends in technological and artistic innovations, the movement started out in spurts, deriving ideas and inspirations from serious composer proponents such as Dr. Jose M. Maceda (1917-2004), a renowned Filipino pianist, a pioneering composer and ethnomusicologist. His works showcased experimental compositions on space, technology and its effects on people. In 2017, MACEDA 100 was an event that showcased his legacy in music and its related fields in commemoration of his 100th birth anniversary. *Attitude of the Mind* was the exhibit component of the MACEDA 100. This was curated by Dayang Yraola¹ and included sound artists such as Tad Ermitaño and Malek Lopez. Along with Tengal Drilon, founder of WSK,² an arts and technology festival, they are the key people in the proliferation of sound art in the Philippines. Taken from recent personal interviews, their insights on their beginnings, journeys, individual practices and musings on sound art are revealed.

Dayang theorizes that the sound art movement in Manila, or sound practice, for that matter, came from three logical threads. One is from music, another thread is from the visual arts and the third path came from media.

SYNERGY OF THE ARTS

Dayang Yraola's love affair with music and the arts started when she entered the undergraduate program of the University of the Philippines College of Arts and Letters in 1993 as a Philippine Studies double major in Art Studies and Creative Writing. In 1995,³ she found herself working with visual artists and the theater practitioners. Since her mother, Marialita Tamano-Yraola, was an anthropologist who closely worked with Jose Maceda at the UP College of Music,⁴ she kept coming back to the Abelardo Hall (UP CMU) and felt at home there. She pursued a Master of Arts degree in Museum Studies (now known as Curatorial Studies). She thought of herself as a moving educator, teaching part time at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde School of Design and Arts' Arts Management program, Multimedia Arts program and, at one time, the Music Production program.

After graduation in 2005, she worked as a research assistant at the UP Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs but felt the inclination to be with an art community. Luckily, at the UP College of Music, after the passing of Maceda, the digitization of the Jose Maceda Collection was being planned and implemented. Since she had prior experience in arts management and a background in art, she was taken in by Ramon P. Santos,⁵ former dean of the UP College of Music and one of the proponents of the UP Center for Ethnomusicology. She managed the digitization program from 2007-2014. This fueled her interest and she

began reading about topics on Listening Culture and Acoustic Ecology. In 2012, she worked with other media arts projects that opened her world, meeting noise musicians, electronic musicians, and sound artists. She was introduced to Tad Ermitaño through Mark Laccay, one of her consultants in the Maceda Digitization Project. Her association with these artists brought out her first output project (MACEDA 100) in which she interfaced her curatorial experience with media arts. With her background in archiving, she proceeded with making a congruent gallery, in which the artists responded to the digitized sound of the Maceda Collection. Since then, she has figured herself in various sound art projects both here and abroad, collaborating with international sound artists, including a project on environment and performance and performative sound work.

In 2015, Dayang left Manila to pursue her doctoral studies in Cultural Studies at the Lingnan University of Hong Kong. She proposed initially a dissertation on sound art, but through further refinement, she focused instead on the conditions for the enablement of sound practice both in Manila and Hong Kong. According to Dayang, in Manila, there is not a clear delineation between sound art and experimental popular music. An explanation on how the movement formed and propagated itself is attempted through her interviews and studies.



Fig. 2

THREE LOGICAL THREADS OF SOUND PRACTICE

Dayang theorizes that the sound art movement in Manila, or sound practice, came from three logical threads. One is from music, from the followers of Jose Maceda and Lucrecia Kasilag.⁶ Another thread came from the visual artists such as Agnes Arellano⁷ and Caesar Syjuco⁸. In the 1980s, it was at Pinaglabanan Gallery where artists would cross practice with visual arts, literature, and music. This place birthed the idea, triggering the concept of artists performing music along with their visual art creations. The third path came from media, such as experimental film and video. This started also in the late 1980s, particularly cultivated in the bar culture. But in all of these threads, it was from the visual arts, doing contextual art installations coupled with music such as folk rock, that a strong art community was built.

One of her discoveries traces the earliest recorded public usage of the term "sound art" in Manila. This was in May 1990 in a sound art festival in Angono, Rizal by pioneer Wire Tuazon, a visual artist and the founder of the art collective Surrounded by Water. Dayang traces the development of this community and its followers, i.e., how they have accommodated experimental art with intermedia practice.

For the curation of MACEDA 100 in 2017,⁹ Dayang put together contemporary artists for the exhibit such as Ramon P. Santos, composer and ethnomusicologist; Leo Abaya, a multi-disciplinary artist; Chris Brown, a pianist/composer, electronic musician; Ringo Bunoan, an artist, researcher and curator; Ricky Francisco, a freelance curator who worked on multi-disciplinary collaborations fusing visual, culinary, and performance arts; Mark Laccay, a multi-awarded audio engineer and sound designer; Arvin Noguerras, a sound and visual artist; Malek Lopez, an award-winning composer/producer and live electronic musician; and Tad Ermitaño, participating with his creation of circuits, programs and the physical machinery in performance and installations.

SYNTHESIS OF MUSIC AND SOUND

Malek Lopez is an electronic musician,¹⁰ a synthesis, and an award-winning Filipino film scorer. His most recent work, the indie film *Fisting: Never Tear Us Apart*, with partners Erwin Romulo and Juan Miguel Sobrepeña, garnered a FAMAS¹¹ 2019 Outstanding Achievement in Musical Score award. He likewise won a Gawad Urian 2019 Best Music award,¹² also with Erwin Romulo, for the Filipino mainstream movie, *Buy Bust*.

Malek's¹³ academic music background began with his studies in classical guitar at the University of Santo Tomas, and film composition at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. In film scoring, he got fascinated with the idea of inducing reactions from the audience, having access to their emotions and making them feel a certain way upon hearing a cue. But as he furthered his studies, he realized that the reasons why certain timbre make people feel a certain way is that we, the listeners, have been pre-programmed to feel these emotions because of traditions that have been passed on to us. It was because of this that Malek found music synthesis exciting, creating sound from scratch, transforming simple tones, or even noise, into something else. To Malek, dealing with synthesis was something magical, almost like dealing with sorcery. Armed with his knowledge in music synthesis, he went back to Manila and became one of the pioneers of electronic music in 1998 and formed the pop electronica duo, Rubber Inc, along with Noel De Brakinghe.¹⁴ They started playing in street parties in the early 2000s, composing and performing music on the fly, with sets lasting from two to four hours, until the wee hours of the morning. They would play in warehouse parties and in bigger events, at product launchings. They also became opening acts for famous visiting foreign DJs.

Malek's movement towards creating sound art started with working on a dance project at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 2001. First, his group rendered their own electronica version of "Ave Maria" with a male dancer playing a female role. Then, they created an electronica version of "Pagdating ng Panahon" (When the Time Comes), a Filipino pop music ballad. Finally, they made music which was physically triggered by the dancers. He described this as resembling the video game Dance Revolution, in which actions on the screen require stepping on certain parts of the mat. In this project, they pre-sequenced music and assigned it to the triggers that the dancers were to step on. As the dancers stepped on the trigger planks, it set the music along.

When Electronica Manila, a collective of electronic music producers and enthusiasts came about in May 2001, Malek and his collaborators started to do their own thing.

They had a place called Chemistry in Nakpil Street (Malate, Manila) which, at the time, was the center of the party scene in Manila. It was here that they were able to do a lot of experimentation with technology for dance music, using delays, sampling, and programs that were available in the market such as Cakewalk and Cubase. They were doing music mostly on a spontaneous manner, as DJs do, performing music instinctively. There were days when they had a good flow and days when they did not. Eventually, Malek had a falling out with the people he was working with. They wanted to go out and explore different artistic directions in support of their inclinations. He moved from the club scene and went into the theater setting. He also worked in the studio.

Personally, Malek wanted to do more work in recording. With his partner Noel, they produced the Filipino rock band Greyhoundz, then the alternative band Up Dharma Down, and the solo pop act of Paolo Santos. They built their own recording studio with the intention of producing indie bands, and even went as far as making their own mastering room. They had a lot of challenges running the studio, from rates pricing to sourcing more sustainable projects. The use of the music software technologies also led to changes that affected their workflow. As the original MIDI sequencing softwares,¹⁵ plug ins, samplers and computer hardware were quite costly, they resorted to looking for crack versions that gave unauthorized access to the softwares. When his PC crashed, he reverted to using the Apple Mac and discovered and used Logic as his MIDI sequencer software. He went into band performance with his band Drip but later moved on to collaborate with Caliph8 doing independent film scores.¹⁶ As a film scorer, he was able to use his knowledge in music synthesis.

Asked about his contribution to sound art, he responds, "Actually, I don't really consider myself a sound artist... I mean, produce. I like playing sound, incorporating them in music. Other than supporting it and being around and spreading it ... and even, let's say, infusing this with mainstream. I don't think I had really figured out what it is to be a sound artist. I'm more conscious on what I do as a film composer. Even that, up until now, given my love-hate relationship with film music, I still feel how I'm perceived and also what I do, is something I look after."

Lately, their film scores such as *Buy Bust* have done away with the MIDI sequencing of the music score. They have resorted to working with a band, to set the mood of the film. Their approach was to make songs with inspirations coming from the movie itself, not necessarily putting tunes into the movie. Non-musical sounds were incorporated in the scores such as the sound of the footsteps that turn into

I don't really call what
I do music ever even
though it's organized
sound. It becomes
music if I edit it and
then put it on tape
or in a digital file
and play it, but that
is repeatable and
structured.

Fig. 1 Electronic Gong by Tad Ermitaño

Fig. 2 Malek Lopez in his current studio

Fig. 3 Feedback Table mount by Tad Ermitaño

Fig. 4 Keys of the Feedback Table by Tad Ermitaño

little marimbas played against a "running pulse like techno¹⁷ but not." They created this loop through delays on repeats for an interlocking texture. They also created effects for a voice that uses the reversed reverb tail from the sound of the voice, getting the reflection, which sounds like the passage of time. Using the Haas effect (also known as the Precedence effect)¹⁸ a lot, Malek also pays attention to phase and likes to use very basic tones, pitching it 2 hertz down to see the difference and the effect. Currently, Malek is into a fairly recent technology, granular interface or granular synthesis, and sees this as another way of looking at sound, breaking down music into its sound components, suspended in time.

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND SOUND ART

Tad Ermitaño, a philosophy major and a lover of science fiction, is one of the proponents of experimental sound art in the Philippines.¹⁹ Tad graduated in 1981 from the Philippine Science High School in Quezon City, a public national high school that offers scholarships to students gifted in the sciences and mathematics. He took up biology at the University of the Philippines and, midway, found himself applying for the Monbusho Scholarship in Japan. He continued his undergraduate studies in biology in Hiroshima. However, because of his waning interest in laboratory work, he went back to Manila and finished

Indeed, like a true philosopher, Tad Ermitaño has his ideas about music and sound art that stem from his critiques of traditions in music, and of the study of music from the conservatory. To him, "conservatories do not teach music, they teach notation and by their existence, defines music as that which can be notated. What is notated is music and the corollary of that is that what you can't notate is not music." And this is, according to Tad, why classically trained musicians have a problem with jazz music. It is due to the fact that jazz is not notated but rather improvised. And this is currently what is happening with the performance of electronic music today.

Electronic music performances are mostly spontaneous and are not notated. They cannot be notated according to the current practices based on the western classical music idiom that all adhere to. For Tad, this



Fig. 3

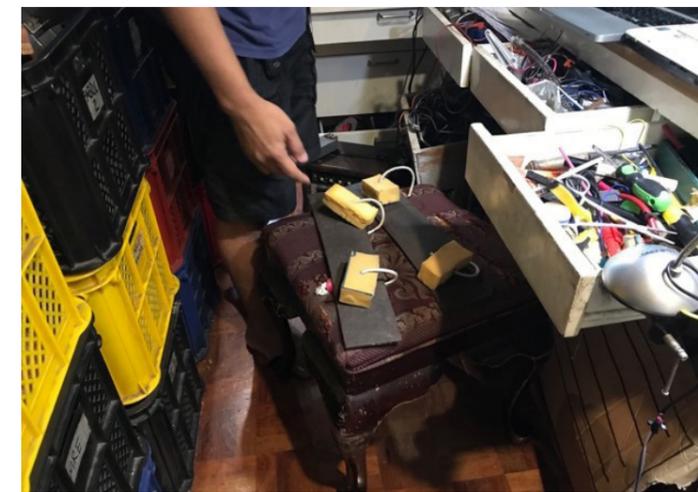


Fig. 4

a degree in philosophy instead, still at the University of the Philippines. He got involved with the experimental film world through Mowelfund.²⁰ This is where he discovered that his talent for science and leanings for the technicals in film scoring came hand in hand with his creative ideas, i.e., using his right brain and left brain at the same time, so to speak. His immersion in music was in his band called Children of Cathode Ray, a noise band along with Jing Garcia, manager and producer of Color It Red and Tikbalang. Tad does not really think of himself a musician except that he uses his electronic creations to create sound, not music. According to Tad, "I don't really call what I do music ever even though it's organized sound. It becomes music if I edit it and then put it on tape or in a digital file and play it, but that is repeatable and structured." He follows Brian Eno,²¹ who says that electronic music enabled composing music empirically, and this paved the way to the new art form. Even when using the very same musical instruments, what matters is the way one listens to it, the way it is created and dealt with, completely making it into a different art form, distinct from the traditional way of appreciating music.

is where the idea of music and its definition has trouble. According to his observations, *musique concrete* has basically overtaken the world; everything that we hear on record has been created without notation. He cites the Beatles who spectacularly barely wrote down their music, as in the practice of the mainstream bands of the popular music idiom. Tad explains, "Notation was a technology for getting people to play together, the same thing over and over. And now because of the technologies of recording, a lot of playing something over and over can be done by cutting and pasting, a metaphor for an obsolete technology."

Tad calls himself a convergent media artist, based on the idea originating from the 1980s and 1990s that media would converge in the computer, video, and sound. He dabbles with video and other stuff that involves hardware and sculpture. He has a laboratory where he does basic carpentry. Reacting to working too much in the digital



Fig. 5

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domain, he made a highly physically produced artwork called Belle. This is basically a room-size plate reverb, a 10-foot diameter cylinder, made out of metal, suspended from the ceiling. Using an electromagnet to physically vibrate the steel, a hum with the harmonics is created when the electromagnet is plugged either to a 220 or 110 volts outlet. He set it up twice in Singapore and around five times in Malaysia. He also set it up in De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde's SDA Blackbox.

As an artist, Tad's creative inclination proceeds to having more of an introspective or solo approach. His creative ideas and interests at heart revolve around brass material, the indigenous instrument gong. Currently, he is in the process of creating a feedback²² machine, a table that could change the resonance of an object parked on it, making it create interesting forms of sounds from its own feedback. He is currently experimenting on the ways of also making the gong feedback. Inspired by the Balinese instrument, the Gong Pulo, the feedback table has two keys, slightly detuned and suspended. They are hit by a gong mallet, imitating a gong sound, the keys resonating without swinging, through the use of a pickup and a reconfigured guitar amplifier.

His fascination with the concept of feedback goes way back when he was first working on films for Mowelfund. At that time, he experimented with video feedback, having a live camera fixed on a TV, which could create patterns and abstract designs. It is this concept that he has now applied to sound art. On hindsight, he likens the feedback concept to philosophy, particularly in the way philosophers think about what other people think about.

Another one of his feedback-based inventions is his own version of a stand-alone delay box. In this instrument,

one can have two settings of delay which can be used at the same time, switching delays back and forth between them. It has a pickup and various control parameters that pertain to the delay time and its feedback, and a tone generator. By just touching the pickup, grounding noises can be created, triggering its delay and controlling its feedback. As demonstrated by Tad, he was able to make the delay box sound like a musical instrument that produces a simulation of an electronic dance loop, along with an oscillator that can create a semblance of a sine melodic lead.

Furthermore, Tad shows his work on the electric hegalong, a two-string instrument of the T'boli tribe from the southern Philippines. Taking the science of its original physical structure, he rebuilt it so it can sound like an electric instrument, now with standard steel guitar strings and an aluminum neck, along with a pickup attached to the instrument. He basically created a plucked string instrument with an amplification similar to the electric guitar.

When asked about having his inventions patented, Tad says he has not thought about it. He explains that the process for patent registry can get very tedious and extensive, doing a lot of research to prove that no one else has done anything like it. It could also get very expensive to hire a lawyer for legal documentation. He is aware that there are people in the sound art community who are already making a living out of the craft, selling boutique instruments to noise artists in Europe. As he is trained in the sciences, his creations are mainly done as discoveries and experiments. As soon as he has realized a goal, he moves on to do something else. Commercializing his creations and inventions—from the exploration phase, coming up with a product and going through the process of mass production that could take about 10 years—is, to him, unappealing.

MUSIC TO INTERACTIVE ARTS AND FESTIVALS

Tengal Drilon²³ is an award winning composer, sound designer, and music producer. He has over a dozen international awards from film festivals as a composer/sound designer in the past decade. Nowadays, he considers himself a curator of sound art that has evolved into the vast field of media arts, an exhibition or performances of the combination of different media of sound and visual, afforded by computers and the internet. His background involves undergraduate music studies for two years at the UP College of Music in the early 2000s, taking different majors such as percussion and winds. He also had instruction classes on piano, saxophone, and composition, and played bass and drums for his jazz friends at the college. He played a lot of instruments but essentially recognizes the computer as his main instrument. This led him to go into media arts. According to Tengal, admittedly, the term media arts is very unstable as the medium itself is in flux. It is not a traditional cultural art form, such as painting, dance, theater or music.

He used to work a lot with film makers, being a film maker himself. He also got into sound design and enjoyed putting music or sound in images and moving images. He used to do film scoring but eventually got out of it because of the system of making movies where scorers are given very tough deadlines. It was truly a liberating experience for him working on a documentary about the tattooed indigenous Pintados of Negros. The film's Italian director gave him free reign on the music with a month's deadline.

He was given the freedom of making music for whatever images that he saw. It became a collaborative work with the sound designer from LA, integrating sound with the music. He has since shifted from sound designing to composing the sonic background to other things such as exhibitions, and interactive work for corporations.

Interactive art involves sound installations with an element of interaction with the audience. But it is essentially an artwork. An example would be an interactive drum, in an octagon polygon shape, that emits a sound once it is struck, and a light from the part where it is hit. In one of the previous interactive work done in collaboration with Tad Ermitaño, a video component was included. In the video, people would draw a pen and scribble a line. They would create worm-like figures and loops. Each loop, when drawn, will trigger a MIDI sound from a library, e.g., the sound of a flute. The concept eventually makes the audience feel like they are drawing the sound. Interactive art works in a museum or it can be used for commercial purposes. It expands experiences for people as they encounter complex technologically-channelled media, giving them a visceral participation in the art.

When Tengal was 19 years old, he got accepted to the Berlinale Talents in the Berlinale Festival.²⁴ Out of 500 talents, he was selected as one of the participants to attend the Summit programme of around 35 sessions that focus on different topics and on art in a variety of formats.

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He attributes
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towards a new field.
This has spurred
a movement,
a community, hence,
the festival.



Fig. 6

He submitted his soundtrack for a sound design. Having an interest and influenced by avant garde music, he considers his composition an accident, which combined a musical score with sound design. He used a lot of field-recorded ambient sounds and transformed them into a sound design. Taking this as a professional pathway, executing his creations in sound design, Tengal says he was not mentored nor did he veer towards the direction of a specific school of thought. Through the course of the Berlinale and attending other festivals for experimental music, travelling and meeting people, getting to know their music in Europe and Southeast Asia, seeing what other people are doing and piecing them all together, Tengal has established himself with the pioneering role as a sound designer. He attributes this further to being an “immigrant” of the internet, being able to access information from elsewhere that has taught him towards a new field. This has spurred a movement, a community, hence, the festival.

Tengal runs WSK, a collective of artists working in the field of sound art or media art that has been running for the past 10 years, doing international collaborations and exhibitions. The WSK X festival in 2019, entitled *WSK Festival of the Recently Possible*, is a collaborative project that showcased and represented sound art movements in different countries such as the Yes No Klub in Yogyakarta, Playfreely in Singapore and CTM Festival in Berlin. It is through the festival that the awareness for the new field was spawned. And it was because of this that Tengal has gained a reputation in the international region as a proponent for sound art. He recently set up his own company, Generator, a cultural organization that bridges cultures, facilitates exchanges within the region, and assists people to professionalize. WSK 2019 is the last time that Tengal is curating the event. He hopes to pass it on to the younger generation in order to help sustain and inspire the community he started. Hopefully he will be able to move on to further advance his craft.

Fig. 5 Electronic Hegalong by Tad Ermitaño

Fig. 6 WSK X's Special Program: SHAPESHIFTERS: HACKLAB 2019 at Dulo, Poblacion, Makati. Photo by Carlos Ortiz

THE ART BEYOND

As art in general is deemed an expression with its own aesthetic, the sound art practice in Manila, as described by the four proponents above, is a reactionary expression to the existing norms in music and in the visual and moving arts. Inspired by practices of music in the 20th century and the current practices in sound technologies, its existence and practice in Manila is a divergence from the traditional and conventional creative outputs stemming from the fields of music, sound, and the visual arts. It is still a growing community, established by individuals out of their curiosities and passion for the explorations on sound and its medium. It is aided by the curation of various art exhibits and installations and the pioneering efforts of mounting music and arts festivals in the country. It is an avenue for thinkers who bring about an immersive experience, enabling an awareness and a deeper understanding and appreciation of the facets of sound as a medium.

And just like the art itself, both the creators and its audience are volatile and fluid, whose voices have yet to be fully discovered in this new platform by those who are on the other end of the spectrum, the audiences practicing the traditional arts. It is ironic that the practitioners themselves remain elusive when confronted with the question of labeling themselves, defining and identifying their art form. Perhaps the attitude has grown out of a critical contemplation on the philosophy behind its intention, freedom from rules clearly defined by a set of parameters, a liberation from preconceived thoughts and false understanding. And this is that which differentiates it from the traditional arts, which are equated with the idea of discipline, a conceptually restrictive notion.

Sound art is a collaborative art form that does not exist by itself alone and that has the flexibility of adapting to another art form and even inventing its own aesthetic. And this is the liberating aspect that appeals to its practitioners that translates to its audience. Through its interactivity and structures of currently available technologies, it seeks to entice an inquisitive social culture accepting of new directions in the media arts. This is indeed a gateway to a future of a more progressive and dynamic ideation vital to a struggling nation as it seeks an identity that uplifts the spirit and enlivens its humanity. Think it and it shall become. ■

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² WSK Festival of the Recently Possible. <https://www.facebook.com/WSK.io/> (accessed July 30, 2019).

³ Yraola, Dayang. Interview by author. Quezon City, August 10, 2019.

⁴ UP Center for Ethnomusicology. "Jose Maceda". <http://upethnom.com/jmcollection/index.php/josemaceda>. (accessed October 20, 2019)

⁵ Strings of Unity. "Dr. Ramon P. Santos-National Artist". [https://stringsofunity.org/about/dr-santos-the-visionary/#:~:targetText=Ramon%20P.,\(with%20distinction\)%20and%20Ph.](https://stringsofunity.org/about/dr-santos-the-visionary/#:~:targetText=Ramon%20P.,(with%20distinction)%20and%20Ph.) (accessed October 20, 2019).

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⁷ Arellano, Agnes. <http://www.agnesarellano.com/about/> (accessed October 20, 2019)

⁸ Wikipedia. "Cesare Syjuco". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesare_Syjuco (accessed October 20, 2019).

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¹⁰ IMDb. "Malek Lopez Biography". <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1954371/bio> (accessed October 20, 2019).

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¹⁵ MIDI Association. "Tutorial". <https://www.midi.org/articles-old/about-midi-part-1-overview> (accessed October 21, 2019).

¹⁶ Kemur, Priscilla. "Variations in Sound: Part 6- Caliph8". <https://www.globetrottermag.com/news-features/nusasonic-caliph8-from-manilla-philippines#:~:targetText=Arvin%20Noqueras%2C%20who%20goes%20bywas%20still%20very%20left%2Dfield.> (accessed October 21, 2019).

¹⁷ Wikipedia. "Techno". <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Techno>. (accessed October 21, 2019).

¹⁸ Wikipedia. "Precedence effect". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precedence_effect

¹⁹ Ermitaño, Tad. Interview by author. San Juan, September 7, 2019.

²⁰ Mowelfund. "About Mowelfund". <https://mowelfund.com/>. (accessed October 21, 2019).

²¹ Edge. "Brian Eno". https://www.edge.org/memberbio/brian_eno. (accessed September 7, 2019).

²² Wikipedia. "Audio Feedback". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_feedback (accessed on October 21, 2019).

²³ Wikipedia. "Audio Feedback". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audio_feedback (accessed on October 21, 2019).

²⁴ Drilon, Tengal. Interview by author. Pasig City, July 30, 2019.

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words by
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Fig. 1

Mashup is a musical borrowing, an art of quotation, in which recognizable melodies and rhythms of preexistent music or commercially available recorded sounds are creatively combined to create a new work or mixed to produce a new “derivative” versioning. This technique is, however, an old practice, particularly in oral cultures. Examples are manifest in *contrafacta* in which new words are set to a preexisting tune, in borrowing of rhythm patterns, which then become the basis of a new composition, or of harmonic ones in pop music or jazz improvisation. The concept of combining songs also happen in the old practice of *quodlibet*, in which a new melody is generated from an existing tune or of the medley in which the resemblance of a song recalls another tune that may or may not seamlessly sequence to it. Of course, the art of mixing and DJing, in which the grooves and rhythms of previously recorded music—either analog or digital format—mesh to fire dancing bodies, is also a mashup, but this topic will not be discussed in the essay.

At present, the proliferation of recorded songs in the auditory space of online platforms has resurrected music orality (i.e., transmission of music by ear), inspiring long distance listeners, and amateurs of all kinds, to create this art that they then post on user-generated

social media websites. Unlike music literacy where production is tied to the authority of a notated music, a mashup, as understood here, uses a recorded sound as its fundamental source or material, encouraging amateurs to cite this “remembered music” as a means of participation of anyone who cares to listen, thus democratizing music making.

This essay explores varieties of Filipino song mashups. It traces the initial attempts to incorporate recorded sounds such as the Tagalog translations (*contrafacta*) of Anglo-American pop ballads in the 1970s. Then it discusses Del Horest’s “Matud Mo” (As You Said), which is a *quodlibet* to Zubiri’s “Matud Nila” (According to Them) in the 1980s, and segues to the concept of the layering of familiar music in love song rap in 2010s. The last section deals with the mashup song medleys that are available in YouTube at present.

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Scholars of popular music that are not of and in the Philippines have written on the orality of music transmission via music recordings, particularly with regards to the long historical development of jazz and deejaying in hip-hop culture. However, there exists no parallel studies that are pertinent to Philippine popular

music. This essay presents an initial step towards understanding the music cultural processes involved in can be conveniently subsumed under the umbrella term mashups. These have circulated among those who own music technological gadgets, but which affordability later spread to Filipino youths whose families belong to the working class.

The “mashed-up” Philippine music repertoires discussed herewith are “musical quotations.” They *cite* previous works into one’s own, hence musical borrowing in a broad sense. Citational “musical quotation” differs in degree (*not in kind*) from digital sampling, which involves computer synthesis (Katz, 147-149). The latter is not the subject of this essay since I particularly focus here on the works of musicians who have borrowed *sound snatches of recorded music made (by others) by ear*. In the 1970s, musicians primarily used the physical medium of analog vinyl records. Beginning in the 1990s, they heard digitalized sounds channeled principally through karaoke, videoke machines, and gradually via computers wired through the internet. Their act of borrowing, however, is *citational* simply because the musicians discussed here have used their embodied memories of melodies and rhythms that have been collectively experienced their soundscapes and not as borrowed sounds in the form of computer data (i.e., as in digital mashups that are more common elsewhere).

In the show bands of the 1970s and 1980s, music was listened to *as a whole* and the “citational” music quotation was complete, “covering” or parodying them with new, often humorous, texts. Later, in disco houses, DJs controlled the dance floors and remixed prerecorded music to suit the taste of the DJs and the dancing clients. Turntabling was also a common practice in hip-hop parties that became a vogue in the Philippines sometime in the 1990s. But this and the mashups of remixed dance music, which involve manipulation of analog and digital sounds, will not be discussed here. To reiterate, I am more concerned with the orality-aurality of song experience. The spread of videoke machines and the affordability of recording gadgets would affect how existing musics are to be cited. The online distribution of these musics via playforms Spotify and iTunes today has functioned as another channel for citing them.

To understand the current Philippine mashups, it is illuminating to see them known in old procedures. The rest of the essay describes what these techniques are and the performance contexts to which they have been cultivated by professional musicians, amateurs, and fans.

‘CONTRAFACTA’: SETTING NEWLY COMPOSED TEXTS

From the outputs of Philippine music industry, the technique of setting newly composed texts to preexisting tune is no surprise; there have been hundreds of examples of *contrafacta* in which the original lyrics are erased via a translation of the foreign into the native languages Tagalog and Cebuano. Rico J. Puno’s rendition of Barbra Streisand’s “Memory” in the 1970s was a perfect example of this, which popularity owed to the local *hugot* (emotional) feel of the vernacular and message concerning a generalized memory of a place for lovers who cannot afford going to a more luxurious venue for their romantic dates. The Tagalog translation and the adaptation of remembering the local scene of the lover’s stroll in Luneta became a “novelty” of sorts because the English language *alternated* with the Tagalog language, thus creating, in effect, a mashup of songtexts.

One can also appreciate the consistent translational or citational works of Pete Lacaba’s Salinawit that are sung, after being recorded, by literati singers such as Susan Fernandez *et al.* in the fringe bar Conspiracy in Visayas Avenue. Pete Lacaba’s project is, however, different from Rico J’s. Pete Lacaba has set Tagalog texts with a poetic sensitivity that edges the original songs’ messages. The layering of Pete’s words thus pays homage to the foreign but, at the same time, contests it by erasing linguistic hierarchy.

A different impulse is manifest in the *contrafacta* of Anglo-American hits in order to deliver funny themes. This subtype is intended to elicit laughter due to the incongruity of images depicted in the songs. These comical expressions, more familiar as “novelty songs” as the local music industry calls them, are parodies that have various intended effects. Examples are Fred Panopio’s “Kawawang Cowboy” (“Pitiable Cowboy,” sourced from Glen Cambell’s country music “Rhinestone Cowboy”) and Big Three Sullivan’s “May Pulis sa Ilalim ng Tulay” (There’s a Policeman Under the Bridge), which mocks the corrupt policeman who has been extorting money from the residents. In social media, the latest of this *contrafacta* is, of course, the parody “Manok na Pula” (Red Rooster) by Vic Desucatan whose funny messages and avatar have created a stir.

Not all *contrafacta* in the “novelty song” style are mocking in intent. Yoyoy Villame’s “Butsekik” from Dee Dee Sharp’s “Baby Cakes” is just a tickle to the listener’s bodies, layering nonsensical, Chinese sounding lyrics to the original Black American expression, hence eclipsing it. While Villame mashed up Dee Dee Sharp’s

Pop songs...
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song heard as recorded sound, Max Surban’s famous “Baleleng” *contrafacta* was learned in person during his concert tour to the Southern islands. This song was a hit among the masses and was so popular in the early 1980s that it spawned many further *contrafacta* renditions. What all these show is the ubiquity of *contrafacta* in which the lyrics are mixed with someone else’s melodies. All these are evident of the oral-aural transmission of music.

‘QUODLIBET’: HOMAGE TO POPULARITY

Another technique in which preexisting works have become a source of a consequent creativity is the *quodlibet*. The Harvard Concise Dictionary defines this in general terms, i.e., “a humorous type of music in which well-known melodies or texts are combined in an intentionally incongruous manner.” There are subtypes of the technique (140). Because the definition is similar to the term “parody,” I refrain from using this unspecified definition. Instead, I employ a particular meaning to it. Although *quodlibet* technique may have humor as an unintended effect (as in the Harvard Dictionary), my use of the term here refers to a new work based on an explicit *citational* reference to a source that has served as its model. Since emulation is part of citing, it can then carry the message of being homage-like to its source. The new and the old are not simultaneously sung in an actual performance, although one can do it comfortably because the inter-song template is one and the same.

Like the *contrafacta* examples above, *quodlibet* is also learned in an embodied way through constant exposure to amplified sounds in the environment. It is fundamentally heard as recorded sound that then impels the hearer to pattern a new one based on the memory of that bodily-mediated source song. The spread of home stereo sets in the 1970s meant that recorded sounds had played an enabling factor in this development.

Because composing a new melody over a harmonic pattern is not obvious to a non-musician, *quodlibet* can be difficult to detect to the unskilled ear. In general, pop music is formulaic in structure (verse-chorus) and this trait is obviously seen in the cyclicity of the songs’ chord progressions or patterns. Despite this formulaicness, no two songs are quite similar due to the practically limitless number of other musical choices (from lyrics to arrangement) that a songwriter grapples with in the process of composing. Yet, there are songs that are so similar to each other in structure and other details that the consequent is deemed a *quodlibet* to its predecessor.

An exemplary of this is the song, “Matud Mo,” which was done collaboratively between singer Del Horest and recording studio arranger Emil Loseñada, both Cebuano pop musicians of the previous generation. This song is a newly composed melody that followed closely the form and expression of Ben Zubiri’s “Matud Nila.” The source song was composed in the 1940s, i.e., prior to the saturation of stereos in domestic spaces across a wide social class strata

Matud Nila excerpt (mm. 13-20)
Composed by Ben Zubiri (arr. by Esther B. Hanviriyapunt)

Matud Mo excerpt (13-20)
Composed by Del Horest and Emil Losenada (arr. by Esther B. Hanviriyapunt)

Figure showing similarity between Matud Nila and Matud Mo

during the 1970s. But its continued popularity into the 1970s owed to its radio dissemination, which channeled Ben Zubiri (aka “Iyo Karpo”), a famous host in an amateur hour where singing was the radio’s main attraction. The song was later covered in various vinyl records labels by many iconic singers in the 1970s such as Eddie Peregrina, Pilita Corrales, Max Surban, and Dulce, to name a few. The repetition of the same recorded song is a proof of consumer demand for it in the 1970s as the electronic hardware of home stereos, jukeboxes became an everyday object in the cultural landscape.¹ Thus the song became so famous that any Visayan-Cebuano musician cannot fail to recognize it as a part of one’s social identity. It was obviously the song’s achievement that inspired Horest and Loseñada to team up and compose “Matud Mo” in the early 1980s. To appreciate the inter-song referencing will require me to show a bit of structural similarities between them.

Zubiri’s “Matud Nila” is structured, with a slight change, on one of the most popular Anglo-American 32-bar forms: AABA. “Matud Nila” is AABB, i.e., a modified 32-bar because the A section does not return after B. In contrast, Del Horest’s “Matud Mo” version strictly sticks to the standard 32-bar. Because of the sectional repetitions (i.e., AABB), Zubiri’s song form can be taken to be binary and thus points to an older source,

this time in the traditional Philippine folk *harana* style, from which the Tagalog *kundiman* and *danza* Filipina (e.g., “Dahil sa Iyo” as an example) are based. In addition, two more features link “Matud Nila” to Filipino music tradition despite its hybridity with the Anglo-American form. First there is a parallel modulation (minor to major key) in the song, which is found in many Filipino folksongs and composed music (e.g., “Jocelynang Baliuag” and “Bayan Ko” [My Country]). Second, the melody contains many sighing gestures (i.e., descending melodic pattern) in phrase endings, which we also find in the old sentimental Filipino musical idioms.

From the title alone, one can easily infer that Del Horest’s “Matud Mo” did render homage to “Matud Nila” by citing it. However, “Matud Mo” is an entirely new composition. Wittily, it inverts the interlocutor of the songs’ protagonists from “you” to “them.” There is also a change in perspective: “Matud Nila” is a tragic cry of unrequited love, whereas “Matud Mo” has a brightly resolute mood as it is an affirmation of love by a Beloved, an act of remembrance that leads to a sustained devotion to it. Thus, “Matud Mo” is a definitely citational mashup. In terms of melodic flows, one can analyze the inter-song *quodlibet* referencing. The copy of the phrase shown above speaks for itself.

“Namimis Kita” (circa 2011) by Jhomajikero (aka Joffrey Valerio Ortañez). Trans by Pat Dizon

“Namimiss Kita” (2019) sung by Justin Vasquez (produced for ABS-CBN). Trans by Pat Dizon

Pop songs, even of the old variety such as “Matud Nila,” primarily get their appeal from the songs’ messages that listeners can identify as theirs. For this reason, we know how important the theme of love is in pop songs, which can indicate, on the part of their auditors, a thousand shades of their individual emotions that arise from day-to-day interpersonal relations and other vicissitudes in life.

Jumping to the present, we notice this appeal in JhoMajikero’s (aka Joffrey Valerio Ortañez in real life) hit song in social media “Namimiss Kita,” which has garnered some 10.5 million hits in one of YouTube fan’s collection posted since 2011. The popularity of the song was phenomenal, prompting Joffrey’s live TV appearance in *Unang Hirit* in 2013.²

Its come-on owes to the simple, sincere, bittersweet, quite fragile-sounding vocal persona of the song’s protagonist. Most teenagers, I suppose, easily identified with Joffrey’s adolescent male voice. The lives of millions of young Filipinos (mostly teenagers or young adults) were resonant of that emotional message of longing that is in the song’s lyrics. The form of the song, which belongs to the repertory of “love song rap,” is rudimentary; it is, common to the genre or to most pop songs, based on the four-phrase stanza structure (i.e., two eight-bar musical phrases). The internal repetition of these phrases within the structure produces a sing-song quality, thus, is easy to follow. JhoMajikero’s song is a string of litany-like phrases that gravitate between the melodic interval of a fifth. The pendulum-like string of phrases creates a higher level structure consisting of verse (4 bars 4+4+4+4), chorus (4+4), bridge (4+4), repeat of verse (4+4+4+4), repeat of chorus (4+4), bridge (4+4), rap (in half time of previous beat), bridge (4+4), repeat of chorus (4+4), bridge (4+4) and coda (with sudden change in vocal color to machine voice).

Because pop song production is built on the desire for popularity, it is common for songs to trend by counting record sales or of followers-listeners.

This is the reason why there is a tendency in the creative industry to use titles of tried-and-tested themes and standardized musical forms. One can see the popularity of JhoMajikero’s song in the recently minted “Namimiss Kita” sung by Justin Vasquez. The latter is a hidden *quodlibet* to JhoMajikero’s work. Note the use of the same song title. Unlike Joffrey who is a local from a working class family and part of a group called Mandaluyong rappers, Justin is a transnational Filipino. Justin’s speech is evident in his Anglophone accent in articulating Tagalog words. His middle class background cannot be denied. He sings his “Namimiss Kita” in RnB style, which entails ornamented melodic inflections.³ Parallel to the “Matud Mo,” which is intertextually related to an older model (“Matud Nila”),

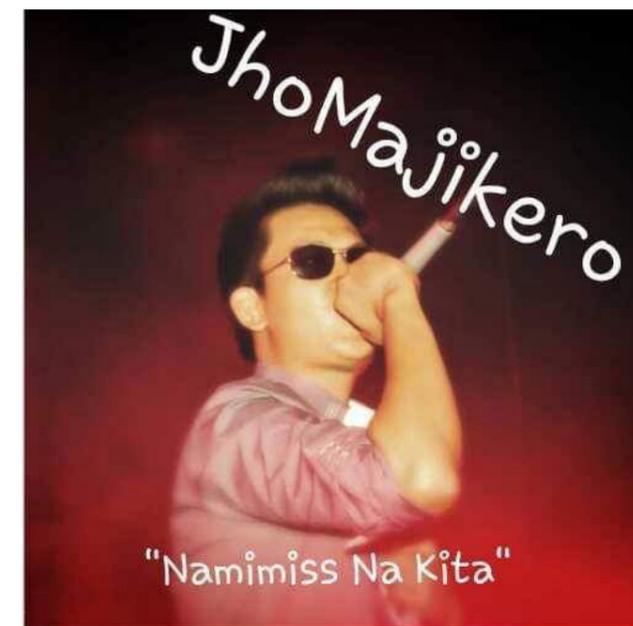


Fig. 2

Fig. 1 Tama na by Xcrew Screenshot from YouTube

Fig. 2 Photo courtesy of JhoMajikero

REMIX AND RAPPING: FANHOOD AMONG MUSICAL AMATEURS

As hip-hop style grew in strength in the 1990s with rappers such as Francis M, Andrew E, and (to a certain extent) Michael V, the mixing of rhythmic beats on drum set and the layerings of background music, patterned speech, and sound of records scratching, were born. This became the common procedure for the new sound aesthetic of the consequent genre of rap songs about love in the early days of YouTube in the Philippines, i.e., circa 2007. Back in 1990 when Andrew E released his rapping “Huwag Kang Gamol” (Don’t Be Gamol), web browsing was barely felt by most Filipinos. Steadily, soundtripping (listening to music) via the same communicative channel became a “hip” or “in” thing to do for the Filipino youth. It was not until 2007 or thereabouts that a new form of rap mashups would emerge when the Filipino youth began to share their own lyrics with the music of others as a background,⁴ along with the aggressive thumping “beats” that are played by the synthesizer, the drum machine. Later on, these same amateur listeners created their own original ones as JhoMajikero did with his song “Namimiss Kita.”⁵

There were both continuity and discontinuity of music expression. To understand its transformation from recorded vinyl of 1990s to digitally-aided music in 2007, it is important to realize that a huge material cultural change happened between 1990 and 2007. In 1990, the rap songs of Francis M and Andre E were produced by Viva Entertainment, a well-capitalized enterprise (although rap music was everywhere in live performances of partying that featured breakdancing, deejaying, emceeing, and turntabling). In 2007, it was no longer the major company that dominated music production but, partly, the music amateurs themselves also did their share, producing their own mixes. Because the normal music socialization of these amateurs was through home karaoke or videoke singing, the quality of the sounds they made would be basically the same to that of videoke music arrangements. However, with rapping and loud drum beats as new features, there was a difference as well in the repetition of the videoke sound.

In addition, the amateurs who made their own mashups in 2007 were not formally schooled in music. This did not mean, however, that they were “low” in the social hierarchy (contra Bourdieu), particularly in terms of popularity. They simply belonged to the masses. The soundscape that they grew up with was part of the habitus of listening to pop ballads that afforded their way to amateur music making. In the absence

TABLE OF FAMOUS RAP SONGS

TITLE OF SONG	DIY CREATOR	BORROWED MELODIC MATERIAL	STYLE	INSTANCE OF UPLOADER OR FAN
Banyo Queen (uploaded 2010)	Andrew E.	Ben E. King's "Stand by Me" (1961)	MC-ing in intro; rock	AKJR (28 million views as of 20 Oct 2019)
High School Life (2009)	Republikan	Sharon Cuneta's OPM "High School Life" (produced by VIVA Records)	pop ballad	sweetirene29 (11 million views as of 20 Oct 2019)
Kabet	Gagong Rapper	Richard Marx "Right Here Waiting"	pop rock	Richard Marx (258 million)

of high-end gadgets of the recording companies, their tools were minimal and cheap and thus they made crude homemade rap songs, mashing up the familiar melodies from the videoke commodities with newly minted lyrics that were then put on screen in YouTube. Overall, these representations were melodious, about love relationships, and alternated in delivery with rap in patter speech style. They were underscored by cheesy cited melodies on electric keyboard and raw loud drum patterns on a machine. Fans continually downloaded them from the internet. They were then heard in makeshift stalls selling pirated discs and played inside driver-owned jeepneys and tricycles. These songs even became a background sound in home parties where often, as in the case of “freestyle rap sessions,” they were further layered with new improvised rap lyrics. To sum up, most of these aural experiences were inspired by the trends that Francis M and Andrew E set in the 1990s: their phrases stay within four measures. Today in 2019, listeners of these rap songs fondly remember the music of their younger years with nostalgia.

A typical mashup love song rap from a decade ago is titled “Tama Na” (That’s Enough). It is a dialogue between a boy and girl, the former pleading to the latter that he loves her. The girl adamantly refuses to recognize the sentiment, thus highlighting the power of women in most Philippine communities. This was performed and recorded by X-Crew, a group that does not have names in YouTube fan uploads because the main interest is in what the songs’ messages can do to the listeners as they process their own individual emotions. Though quite popular in terms of YouTube views, the creators in the early days of rap songs were also not often credited by fans. Again, the aesthesis is in the listeners, many of who post comments about listening to the uploads. This was the age when black-clad emo youth groups were on the rise.

The music of “Tama Na” utilized the David Gates song “If” as background, played raw on an electronic keyboard as it is a DIY. The song inserted between the dialogue, partially in ordinary speech style

and some in rhymed speech rap, is a *contrafacta* in Tagalog. Despite the naivety of the work, it is very popular and I can just imagine the song was used as a referent to the listeners’ diverse managements of their emotions in their individual love relationships. As such, it is as if the listeners are acoustically “absorbing” the adolescent voices of X-crew singers as theirs.

X-Crew’s song above, which is a dialogue, is not so common. What is more normative is the type of “confessional of love,” a good example of which Gagong Rapper’s “Bakit Kung Sino Pa” (Why, Who are You) made in 2008. The mashed-up music is Richard Marx’s “I’ll be Right Here Waiting for You.” The melody of this source is not borrowed in its entirety but reworked. This brings again the notion of it being citational and not digital mashing up as has been common in Anglo-America.

An interesting rap song on love, which assumes a cynical treatment, is the famous “Stupid Love” by Salbakuta. Here, the background music is Barbra Streisand’s song “Evergreen” played on a tiny sounding electronic organ. The sampled voice of the crowd shouting “stupid!” at the end of the phrases is clearly a rock music convention. This projects a stoic renouncement of emo sentiments that must have been gaining ground then. The harsh rhythmic beats underscoring the whole expression reinforce the anti-sentimentalism.

As pointed out above, it is clear that the creators of these mashups deeply experienced karaoke/videoke singing at home or in places elsewhere, thus influencing the kind of materials they would cite for their DIY projects. As their expertise developed, so would they create original compositions. In their first works, they would utilize the formulaic conventions of style started in 1990s as JhoMajikero did for his song discussed in the previous section. He did it in a home studio called Lhiriko Family Productions (LFP) in Mandaluyong, which also opened its doors to eke out a living with outside bookings for a fee. (See screenshot of the ad in LFP website on Fig. 3)

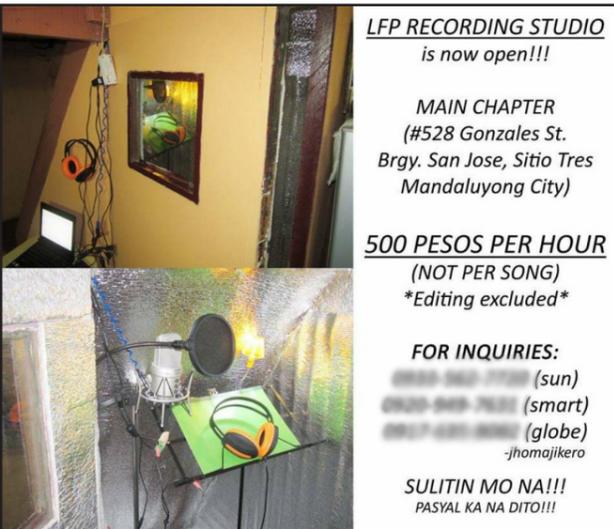


Fig. 3

Fig. 3 Screenshot courtesy of JhoMajikero

Justin’s song, although an entirely new work, is also a *quodlibet* – i.e., a sonic shadow – of JhoMajikero’s work. One cannot miss the “writing-over-technique” in the form of the song, the latter almost perfectly copying the formula. In Justin’s song, the chorus is eight bars less and his bridge is made of vocables “ah ah ah,” since song style is RnB, not rap as it was in JhoMajikero’s. The parallelism is indeed a remarkable emulation. While JhoMajikero motions his melody up with ascending melodic fifth in most of his phrases, Justin gestures do the reverse, going down, but with the same interval. While it seems to hide its intention to hide its prototype, it leaks out, nonetheless, in the passage as shown in the notation on page 37. The art of citation rings with clarion tones.

LFP is also one of the many home studios which catered to the demands of DIY YouTube uploaders who wanted to gain “popularity” by counting their followers in social media. Besides, they also wished to acquire some residual income from their uploaded hits. Below are three more love song rap mashups from 2008 to around 2014. Notice that they all cite pop music, which again is the only staple in the videoke repertory.

The introduction of video streaming in the internet sometime in 2014 would mark a change in the aesthetic of old rap song (post-2014 style will not be discussed here) and the emergence of other mashups that can, in fact, be more accurately termed as “acoustic song medley.”

SONG MEDLEY MASHUPS

The last type of mashup is the song medley in which the singer makes a surprising twist in the melody in performance, conjoining the tune of one song to another via a note that serves as a pivot in the turn. This creates a disruption in the listeners’ ears because the expectation of the notes in the memory of the melody is arrested. For the singer, however, the act of twisting the melodic direction is intentional and thus comes with some kind of a flaunting attitude of his or her mastery of song repertoires. It is as if the singer pits his skill with that of the listeners’ knowledge of songs. The unexpected jolt in one’s memory of a song draws in laughter on the part of the listeners because their memory of the song is disoriented, “jumping” from one song to the next. The effect is incongruous but it usually brings in admiration and awe as well because the singer can display his or her ability to string together the possible melodic connections. The clever “medleyings” are possible because both singer and listeners are already quite familiar with a comparatively vast repertory of pop songs. These have saturated the day-to-day cultural soundscapes, thanks to electronic gadgets such as the karaoke machines, computers, smartphones, etc.

The conventional association of laughter and fun in song medley mashups seems to be a distinctive contemporary Filipino media popular culture because song mashups, as this is known elsewhere, are not necessarily created for hilarity. The case of the Philippines reveals that the comedic song mashup has been popularized in TV programs as an entertainment gimmick, particularly in the performances of the “Nora Aunor” impersonator cross dresser comedian “Ate Gay”

(Gil Morales in real life) and, later, by the golden-haired ABS-CBN TV host Vice Ganda (Jose Marie Borja Vicerál).

The earliest prototype of song medley (cum comedy) mashup in TV is the 2005 segment “Name the Tone.” It was embedded in the gag show “Quizon Avenue,” which was produced by ABS-CBN.⁶ In the three episodes posted by PapaLem TV (with 20K subscribers at the moment), it is claimed that the local Pinoy TV segments are a parody of the American ABC’s “Name that Tune.” In the original trivia game, two adult contestants take turns spinning the roulette to win a prize by naming tunes that a live orchestra would play in 30 seconds. In Quizon Avenue’s “Name the Tone,” two contestants brag on who can name the tune in the least number of notes played by pianist “Brian Cayugyug” (obviously a spoof of Ryan Cayabyab’s name) and then interpreted by a guest singer. The contestant would then name the title of the song. However (and this where the local TV programming concept is faulty), the singer conspires with the pianist in twisting the song so that in the end the excitement that often comes in experiencing a game is lost, i.e., it is often the norm that a game is satisfying because the spectators are brought into a game situation in which the chance or indeterminable element—either winning or losing—the game is put forth. Nonetheless, the element of spoof in “Name the Tone” would continue with the performative antics of Ate Gay whose influence among TV viewers is enormous.

As TV producers pressed its brand of gag song medley mashups, the viewing amateurs on the other side of the communicative setting would reinvent what is given to them by the computer screens. These viewers would create a song medley that is quite different from the comedy type as streamed from the corporations’ servers. With a simple guitar and raw teenage voices, amateurs with acceptable musicianships such as Angelica Feliciano (aka ICA) of Sampalok Manila, had self-uploaded her “acoustic” song medleys recorded from a room in her house. These were viewed thousands of times, even millions, and thus her rise to fame. She later accepted TV appearances and road shows as the Mashup Princess. Similar to Angelica’s independent initiatives are those of her Gen Z millennial colleagues such as Donalynn Bartolome, who has since become a young celebrity actress; Rovy Romerosa, who remains an indie (often hiding her face from the camera); and Sevenjc, whose voice sounds like that

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of JhoMajikero and who now has a number of mashups with ICA that recycled nostalgic love song rap a decade ago. Of course, one cannot miss the more recent, kitty-voiced Pipah Pancho from Bulacan who is often paired with RnB-voiced Neil Enriquez.

Meanwhile, professional pop singers whose fame rested on winning ABS-CBN’s Tawag ng Tanghalan song competition such as Froilan Canlas and Sam



Segment 1: "Narda" by Kamikazee (sung by Vice Ganda)



Segment 2: "Kulang Ako Kung Wala Ka" by Erik Santos (sung by Zephanie)



Segment 3: "Nasa Puso" by Janie Berdin (sung by Elha)



Segment 4: "Ikaw at Ako" by Moira de la Torre and Jason Marvin (sung by Janine) (Transcribed by Pat Dizon)

Mangubat would also, from time to time, do mashups in their road shows, adding glitter to the opening of retail outlets (Dizon) and other events. Many of their recent YouTube uploads of song mashups also serve as promotional teasers, like the movie trailers, that would entice viewers to purchase the complete versions of songs in their Spotify or iTunes accounts. What is common to their performances, unlike that of Ate Gay and Vice Ganda, is that these independently-initiated mashups do not highlight gag humor (though surprise in twisting a song always draws a smile in the listener) but their skills in stringing together songs in a pleasant manner. It is not far-fetched, therefore, to interpret that mashup creations like this type are a way for them to refuse the meaning of the dominant TV programming code, which trivializes musical abilities as these are sidelined by gimmicks. Nonetheless, TV programmers and hosts continue to entertain audiences with mashups, testing the guests’ memory of music trivia as in the recent segment when Vice Ganda tested four aspiring singers on their knowledge of pop music.

The human body that listens to the patterned sounds did not evolve biologically from the 1970s to the present but the means of producing and experiencing these was totally not determined by technology and media.

To sum up, being challenged to connect related melodies seems to be the primary motivation behind the amateurs who risk displaying themselves in YouTube channels or in those posted by their fans. The display of the act requires a strong familiarity of recorded sounds in the cultural environment. It is as if their ears and mouths have already become a media for the intruding melodies of others, thus constituting some kind of song ventriloquism in their own bodies.

This essay presented mashup as an art of quotation that relies principally on memory work of electronically mediated preexisting works – aka commercially recorded sounds – and hence depart radically from musical practices involving written and printed music notation. As hinted above, the art of quotation – or song citation to be more precise – deals primarily with aurality (by ear), a practical skill that most Filipino musicians are noted for and that has been partly a result of no access to printed music (i.e., it is especially relevant to musicians who do not have the means for formal music education).

In the 1970s and 1980s, gig musicians in popular music scenes in urban Philippines such as nightclubs and hotel lounges largely depended on recorded music to expand their repertoires. Printed music scores

of Anglo-American pop songs were few and musicians relied mostly on their trained ears to transcribe (*sifra*) the recorded music. The result was mostly covers, many of which faithfully rendered the originals. These covers were a response to the imperatives of entertainment needs in venues in which music as commodity earned a means of living for both venue owners and musicians. These musics, mainly mainstream, complement the ethos of happy hour in bars, glitter of clubs featuring show bands, or elegance and intimacy in hotel lounges.

An important point that this essay has argued is that the orality of contemporary popular musical practices varied in contexts and aesthetics because of technological mediation and circulation. To put this in the biggest perspective possible, it can be said that the human body that listens to the patterned sounds did not evolve biologically from the 1970s to the present but the means of producing and experiencing these was totally not determined by technology and media. Orality in music means learning to replicate the music heard without memory aids like a score, the sounds' representation. It is remembering music patterns by way of a schema—the formula—that governs how the music as a citational process flows.

Familiarity with recorded sounds in an oral culture often results in the creative *contrafacta* by individuals who mix their newly minted words in the vernacular to preexisting sounds heard in one's auditory culture. By the 1980s, a few hit songs, the "Matud Nila" being the case example, were so idolized that a *quodlibet* was written with it as framework. This technique is common in oral music cultures where songs are committed to memory and not in writing. Justin Vasquez's 2019 emulation of JhoMajikero's original song is seen in how the songwriter of the former's song has followed the latter's work. The songwriter of Justin's performance did the same *quodlibet* technique that layers, like a palimpsest, the new to the old form, without both being erased. Yet, JhoMajikero's song was also built on the principle of orality. It was then new in the context of the love song rap that mixed karaoke melodies played on the electronic keyboard with beats and rap. As a genre, love song rap can be traced all the way to the 1990s when hip-hop records gained presence in the everyday local soundscapes. But it could not

have found a "friendlier" space for its development had there been no internet that accelerated its circulation, and the emo subculture, which readily resonated its aesthetics in street corners and in malls.

The availability of videoke music did not determine the emergence of love song rap. A sufficient reason comes from the urban Filipino youth, especially those from the working class whose DIY agencies were afforded by simple home recording technology. This agency continued with the song mashups in recent years. While they were influenced by musical gags mashups from celebrity comedian-hosts on TV and in live performances, it was the listening audiences sharing each other's creativities that mattered in the last instance.

To end the essay, it was indeed a "tango" dance between music technology and ICT, which afforded music expressions, and the young people who decided and acted upon the possibilities of those technologies for ends that mirrored their fragile human experiences and identities. ■

¹ The song also circulated as printed sheet music for those who owned pianos.
² However, this appearance seems to be a flop. Joffrey got out of tune due to stage fright. Joffrey continued to write original songs, a number of which was released in the album "Journey." Three songs from this album have been distributed through Spotify.
³ This expression has been so hegemonic at the present moment that one is blinded from seeing other alternative expressions.
⁴ One can still browse this type of love song rap in the internet. It is usually characterized with no visuals, just a plain screen of lyrics that is uploaded by a YouTube user and fan.
⁵ JhoMajikero does not only compose rap songs, though one time CNN Philippines voted him a place in the Top 25 Filipino rappers.
⁶ I thank Pat Dizon for pointing this out.

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ART ARCHIVE 03



Fig. 1

In 2019, two controversial events rocked the hip-hop world. The first was the arrest of Marlon “Loonie” Peroramas, popularly known as “Hari ng Tugma” (King of Rhyme), in what police authorities claimed was a buy-bust drug operation in Makati City on September 18, 2019.¹ The second was the fatal shooting of John Ross “Lil John” de los Santos on October 20, 2019, in Imus, Cavite. Both rappers established their fame via FlipTop, the short and popular term for FlipTop: First Filipino Rap Battle League, founded and established in 2010 by Alaric “Anygma” Yuson² and Kevin Vea,³ aka DJ Umph One.⁴ In the ten years of FlipTop, battle emcees who have graced its stage have gone on to carve out successful music careers, something that Anygma staunchly believes is the end-all and purpose of battle leagues. He insists that battle rap in general and FlipTop battling in particular is merely

the exhibition match that showcases the rap skills of the emcees, and the music that rappers create is considered the championship game.⁵

Loonie was incarcerated at the Makati City Jail along with four others, including his sister and manager, Idyll, on that fateful September evening. On October 27, 2019, he performed two of his most popular songs, “Bale Wala” (As if Nothing Matters) and “Tao Lang” (Only Human), before fellow inmates at the Makati City Jail.⁶ The video,⁷ taken outside the walls of the prison, shows Loonie and a fellow hype man, singing and rapping to an appreciative audience. Then Loonie, in trademark fashion, asked the crowd, “Sino dito gustong lumaya na?” (Who among you wants to be free?) Responding to the uproarious adulation, the rapper fans of FlipTop who have lovingly proclaimed him as “Hari ng Tugma,” broke into a cappella verse:

Sino dito nahihirapan na?

Meron akong tula para sa inyo, sana magustuhan 'nyo.

Kung nabasa ka sa ulan, ba't sumisilong ka pa?

Aba lusungin mo na yung baha, maligo ka na!

Nasaktan ka na rin lang, nalasap ang luhang mapait,

Siguraduhin mong ika'y may makukuhang kapalit!

Pantay-pantay tayong lahat, mayaman man, maging dukha,

Ang mahalaga marami kang butong naipunla!

Kung gusto mo nang umayaw, pakinggan mo aking tula—

At tandaan mo lang palagi kung ba't ka nagsimula.

Pagsikapang itaguyod ang sariling pundasyon,

Tigas ng ulo mo nung bata ka, gamitin mo ngayon!

Bukas ko na lang susukuan ang buhay kong kay lupit—

Tapos kinabukasan paggising, bukas na lang ulet!

Ang aking pusong umaawit, punong-puno ng galit—

Laging ganon, daming tanong, puro na lang bakit!

Malapit nang maubos ang lubid ko, subalit

Maaari ko pa ring buhulin ang dulo at kumapit!

Kapit lang, kosa.⁸

Translation:

Who here is suffering?

I wrote a poem for you that I hope you like.

If you've been wet from the rain, why seek shelter?

Why, dive into the flood and bathe!

You've already been hurt, tasting bitter tears.

Just make sure that you get something in exchange in the end!

We are all the same, whether rich or poor,

What matters is how you've sowed seeds of legacy.

If you want to give up, listen to this poem I have written –

And remember always why you started what you started

Strive to build your own foundations,

You were once a hard-headed kid, so capitalise on that now!

I will surrender to this hard life on the morrow –

And when a new day dawns, I can say that I can do this!

My heart is singing,

Overflowing with rage –

So many questions, always asking why.

My patience is a rope wearing thin, but

I can still knot the ends and hold on.

You, too, must hold on, brother.

Writing (and speaking) as one who, over the course of more than one year of fieldwork among the urban hip-hop FlipTop battle and rap event scenes in Manila, has learned to appreciate and love the work, ethos, and lifestyle of hip-hop enthusiasts and practitioners, this recent development in the ongoing saga of Loonie,

who is infamously known as being an “open book,”⁹ was an emotional turn for fans, friends, and intrepid observers of the rapper superstar. The effect and power of Loonie's lines were palpably felt in the outpouring of tearful support from Loonie's faithful in heartfelt YouTube video tributes and Facebook posts. Indeed, life can imitate fiction, and Loonie's uncanny ability to pen verses that capture the pathos of multitudes is most manifest in this moment, submerged as he is in his own living hell.

Lil John, on the other hand, was every rapper's little man in more ways than one. As part of 3GS, or 3rd Generation Supremacy, a collective of rappers who started out as battle emcees in other leagues such as TM RAPublika and Sunugan, he and his brothers¹⁰ built the reputation of 3GS, with his signature comedic style in battle rap. On October 20, 2019 while riding his motorcycle, Lil John was shot twice in the head and died on the spot. His last battle, it turned out, was on October 12 at FlipTop's Bweltang Balentong 6 event at TIU Theater in Makati City, against Cripli.¹¹ Witnessing that battle from the audience, I noticed that his usual verve and joie de vivre was replaced by a somberness;



Fig. 3



Fig. 2



Fig. 5



Fig. 4

Fig. 1 Lanzeta x Invictus with the young actors and Dulaang UP extras on the last day of the production shoot for the documentary, “Usapang Hip-Hop” on June 2, 2019 at Ateneo de Manila University

Fig. 2 Loonie last July 6, 2018 during an interview with Lara Mendoza at his home in Pasig City

Fig. 3 Official logo of FlipTop

Fig. 4 On stage at “Second Sight 7” Battle emcees watching the 7th and last battle of the night between Sak Maestro and Batas (Kevin has been videoing all events since 2010 while Anygma facilitates the battle between the combatants) on April 27, 2019, at the TIU Theater, Makati City

Fig. 5 Alaric “Anygma” Riam Yuson, founder and CEO of FlipTop, last June 13, 2019, during an interview with Lara Mendoza at the Baraks, Mandaluyong

BATTLE RAP AS A CROSSING OVER TO RAP MUSIC

When one thinks about battle rap in the Philippines, FlipTop is inarguably top-of-mind recall, so much so that FlipTop is synonymous with hip-hop and rap to outsiders and piques hip-hop insiders, as the name is bandied about as a generic reference¹⁴ for the culture itself.¹⁵ BLKD patiently explains that FlipTop is akin to the big leagues such as the PBA¹⁶ or NBA, while the other leagues and battle events are seen as the little leagues.¹⁷ FlipTop events feature aspects of hip-hop culture, such as turntablism, graffiti art, and battle emcees in exhibition and competition matches.¹⁸

Exhibition battles are put together according to how emcees' rap skills and battle style will create an ideal match-up. In the early years, Anygma shares that since there was still no precedent, match-ups were hit or miss. Over time, he got a better feel of individual styles and created match-ups that would entertain the crowd while being a showcase of fine battle skills. The seventh match-up, considered the marquee battle of the night and banners the line-up, is designed and destined to bring the house down with the flamboyant styles of the featured emcees.¹⁹

his lines were coming from a different wellspring. Combing his Facebook posts after his untimely demise revealed that prior to his battle, he and Sak Maestro,¹² another decorated and controversial battle emcee from Davao City, had an exchange on Messenger. Lil John was sober in his dealings with Sak, who, in turn, buoyed his spirits by reminding him to return to the core reason for doing what all emcees ought to do: to entertain, have fun, and make some money, too.¹³

Posthumously, such posts and the memory of his last battle leave a gaping hole in the hearts of those who had considered him as brother, cousin, buddy, and friend. His death was a loss felt by the entire hip-hop community.

The abrupt hacks to hip-hop's soul, as it were, have been swift and spaced closely with each other in light of the two incidents mentioned above. From incarceration to death, the stories of Loonie and Lil John capture what heartaches are borne by not just one hip-hop enthusiast but by an entire community. The contributions of both emcees to hip-hop have been significant, and no other stage has been as noticed and given much attention as FlipTop.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

The first battle of FlipTop took place at Quantum Café, Makati City, on February 6, 2010, featuring five battles: Batas versus Abra, Datu versus Cameltoe, Protégé versus Fuego (English), Apoc versus JedLi (English), and NothingElse versus RBTO.²⁰ There were also performances by Loonie, Nimbus9ne, Skarm, Schizophrenia, and Caliph8. Dante Romero estimates crowd attendance to have numbered no more than 100 that evening, a far cry from what FlipTop events are today, where fans are packed shoulder to shoulder, vying for choice spots nearest the stage and the battle emcees.²¹

Competition battles simulate sports league structuring: elimination rounds take place in the first half of the year, spread out across different FlipTop events, and culminate in the grand championship battle or finale in December to determine the champion for the year. In FlipTop, the competition rounds or matches are part of the Isabuhay Tournament with 16 emcees vying for the grand prize of Php100,000 and the title of Isabuhay Champion during Ahon, the last FlipTop event for the year. In 2019, the finalists who bested their sides of the bracket were Apezk²² and Sixth Threat.²³ As of December 14, 2019, Day 2 of Ahon 10, Sixth Threat emerged as the Isabuhay 2020 Champion in what Apezk described as the “battle of the year” in a tweet days after the event.

While on one hand Anygma insists that battle rap is merely a platform for the exhibition of an emcee’s rap skills in the hopes of fans crossing over to following the music of emcees, Dizaster throws out a cautionary tale in saying otherwise as seen in a Tweet posted October 24, 2019²⁴ (see Fig. 7). This essay will put emphasis on battle rap,

as it is this particular sub-genre of hip-hop style that has placed the Philippines on the map of rapping, with FlipTop Battle League as the most-watched (online) league in the world.²⁵ This singular statistic is quite peculiar considering the relative infancy of the Philippines in the area of battle rapping, and yet it is this unique popularity, surpassing older leagues with more seasoned battle emcees,²⁶ that is, in and of itself, the gift and legacy of Pinoy rap to the world.

It is worthwhile to discuss the significance of rap music and why Dizaster,²⁷ considered by Loonie as the best battle emcee and Eminem’s favourite,²⁸ touches on the tension between battle rap and rap music.

BLKD, one of FlipTop’s Top 30 most viewed emcees, earned his battle credentials by changing the way fans could view, appreciate, and learn about hip-hop. He introduced esoteric lyricism in his bars and also carefully broke down the merits (or lack thereof) of battle techniques and styles in post-battle adjudications. He speaks of the tension in Pinoy hip-hop between underground and mainstream as emblematic of the dichotomy that Dizaster presents from his own North American perspective and hence, the reference to Hollywood in the comments. For BLKD, this tension paints the particularities of the Pinoy hip-hop scene and why the need for mainstream recognition of the creative impetus²⁹ of the underground is fraught with misunderstanding between the larger society and the smaller hip-hop community. This deep and unfortunate divide, at its core, is a matter of perception of what hip-hop is and its importance and value, either to the individual – artist or non-hip-hop head – or the larger society as a whole.

When one thinks about battle rap in the Philippines, FlipTop is inarguably top-of-mind recall, so much so that FlipTop is synonymous with hip-hop and rap to outsiders and piques hip-hop insiders, as the name is bandied about as a generic reference for the culture itself.

PERCEPTIONS OF PINOY RAP: FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

It is no secret that hip-hop culture and its music expressions – deejaying, rapping and break dancing – get a bad ‘rap’. In terms of “street cred,” hip-hop culture, hands down, is considered a culture of the streets, born, bred, and cultivated in and off the streets by the street-smartest of gangsters, thugs, and everything else in between. M Zhayt,³⁰ FlipTop emcee, emphatically declares that hip-hop is street, and you cannot say that you are hip-hop unless you understand that hip-hop is of the streets.³¹ The history of hip-hop,

traced back to its origins in the ghettos and inner cities of New York City in the 1970s, has been defined by rage and resistance. In daily urban existence, it is the economically-disadvantaged who bear the back-breaking burden of basic survival, if at all. Cramped dwellings, crippling traffic conditions coupled with the dearth of transportation options, and inequitable employment opportunities are among the factors that drive those who occupy the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder to the brink of despair, hopelessness, and madness. Just as the immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa turned to pulsating percussions and syncopated rhythms that defied entrenched and acceptable musics of mainstream society, so have Filipino emcees, deejays, break dancers, and graffiti artists done thus, finding in rap and broken rhythms the heartbeats that punctuate and emphasise their own stories of anguish and resistance.

Derided for their hypebeast clothing, or knock off branded wear that are bought at local *tiangges* and Divisoria at a fifth of the original price, hip-hop artists find themselves fighting back by writing 16-line verses to represent what Anygma refers to as their “slice of life.”³² The official music video of Jheyzee³³ entitled, “Inaano Ka Ba Ng Tattoo Ko,”³⁴ captures the sentiment of many hip-hop artists. The message in this video is emphatic and reads like a hash tag movement in the 21st century of woke branding: Stop Tattoo Discrimination. More strikingly, the text narrates an oft-repeated lament by rappers from the underground who have committed themselves to the entire lifestyle and ethos of hip-hop, as seen in the following lines:

*Porke't may tattoo maligalig ang tingin
Bakit di mo kaya i-try tumingin sa salamin
Bakit porke't may tattoo adik na kaagad at magnanakaw
Mga artists kami na sobrang adik sa art
Hindi ko alam kung anong problema niyo sa mga may mga tattoo
Yung iba nga dyan, e, pala-simba, malilinis ang balat
Pero sila ang tunay na mapanghusga³⁵*

Translation:
*Sporting a tattoo attracts malicious perceptions
Why don't you look at your own reflection in the mirror?
Why is it that someone having a tattoo leads to the conclusion that he's an addict and a thief?
We are artists who are addicted to art
I don't know what your beef is with people who sport tattoos
Those who go to church may have smooth skin
But are, ironically, the judgmental and condescending ones.*

**This deep and unfortunate divide, at its core,
is a matter of perception of what hip-hop is and its
importance and value, either to the individual – artist or
non-hip-hop head – or the larger society as a whole.**

While choice of clothing, tattoos, and other such physical accoutrements are stitched into the DNA of a hip-hop artist, beyond such considerations lie the cultural and lifestyle ethos of hip-hop that will remain elusive to those who cop out on the enterprise of immersing one's self in the culture, and learning to appreciate and respect the choices of hip-hop heads and practitioners to live, breathe, and perform hip-hop with passion and alacrity. There truly is a basic starter pack for those who consider themselves hip-hop, as local parlance goes, and yes, loose pants or below-the-knees shorts, loose statement tee-shirts (that are produced by rappers themselves, either in support of another rapper or *ka-tropa*,³⁶ or as distributed by themselves with their own clothing line business)³⁷, bulky jackets, hardboard caps, tattoos, and bling are part of the packaging. But there are more things or

assets one must possess or be willing to acquire if one is to be considered as hip-hop and accepted by the gatekeepers of the culture. In hip-hop, the influential artists are those who are universally understood and accepted as having contributed heavily to the propagation, development, and evolution of the culture, art, and everything in between. Before we can talk about the music in general and battle rap in particular, it is helpful to take into consideration what defines the push-back nature of hip-hop as it is played out in gangsterism and beef culture.

Fig. 6 Event poster of Grain Assault 1, the first FlipTop event held on February 6, 2010

Fig. 7 Screenshot of Dizaster's tweet (dated October 24, 2019) on doing battle rap as superior to joining the music industry

Fig. 8 Pricetag and CLR at Hype Jam last March 20, 2019 at FEU-Diliman in Quezon City



Fig. 8

OF GANGSTERS AND BEEF

Original Gangsters (OGs): K-leb and Pricetag

In a rap battle, possessing street cred as a legitimate gangster lends power to one's prowess and image. While it is clear that one slugs it out with punch lines in battle rap,³⁸ drawing on one's actual experiences as a thug on the streets puts the emcee on ascendant ground. BLKD shares that "beef", or conflict in hip-hop jargon, is a fundamental element in hip-hop.³⁹ Extending that analogy to battle rap, it is the hunt for "beef" juicy enough to use against your opponent that can spell the difference between a Win or a Loss. For what is hip-hop, BLKD asks quietly, smilingly, patiently, if there is no beef or conflict? The very nature of hip-hop is confrontational and adversarial, and nowhere is this more manifest than in a rap battle.

Pricetag⁴⁰ and K-leb^{41,42} provide a cogent embodiment of the OG life. K-leb grew up idolising West coast rappers like Tupac Shakur and Snoop Doggy Dogg, best known for their hard-hitting lyrics. Pricetag doesn't hide his participation in the Crips versus Bloods gang wars of his yesteryears (he was with Crips), and his zero-loss record in FlipTop is built on his reputation for spitting gun bars. Both rappers share their experiences of gangs, violence, and guns. Conflicts would arise from perceived differences, as with social classes in a classic rich gang (the Levi's 501 rock band members) versus poor gang (scruffy rappers) arc in K-leb's Nueva Ecija childhood, and Price's tumultuous Bloods versus Crips gang wars in La Union and Manila. The "beef" between individuals would become the fight of the entire gang of which they were part, and many brawls, drive-by shootings, and unfortunate casualties resulted from this. Both artists are exemplars of hip-hop heads who have survived the turbulence of the early years (from the 1990s until around 2010⁴³). Pricetag's hit single in 2019, "Kontrabida" (Villain), featuring CLR,⁴⁴ a young, prodigious hip-hop artist whose pen game is eclipsed by his soaring vocals, is a symbolic partnership between the older hip-hop head and the young, aspiring artist. K-leb, formerly part of the collective, Rekta sa Kalye, maintains a vlog for aspiring hip-hop heads while also being active in another collective, Lokalidad, mentoring younger artists such as Mel Rhyme,⁴⁵ Bulek,⁴⁶ and R1CH.⁴⁷

Running with the Wolves: Lhipkram, Don Pao, Flict-G, and Dello

There are also those hip-hop heads who were kids on the sidelines during gang conflicts, serving as runners or weapon bearers. Don Pao⁴⁸ and Lhipkram⁴⁹

narrate how, at ten years of age (circa late 1990s and early 2000s), they witnessed actual clashes of OG's for turf supremacy. Don Pao reminisces about the simpler days of hip-hop when his older brothers (*mga kuya*⁵⁰) would set up loud speakers and play radio music out of the trunk of a car or the back side of a pick-up truck.⁵¹ This made for quicker and easier get-aways when gangs would attack from the neighbouring *barangays*.⁵² It was also easier to evade police raids. Lhipkram narrates how, when the going got tough, he would hand over stones, sticks, or any other such weapon to his OG *kuya*;⁵³ both he and Don Pao were then always told to run away to avoid getting hurt.

Don Pao and Lhipkram found their release in the world of hip-hop and both are battle emcees. Don Pao defeated Lhipkram in the championship round of Bahay Katay in 2017. Lhipkram shares that rap battling is not for all emcees but that he prefers it over composing songs.

Dello and Flict-G were aware that the world of hip-hop had its dark side but never took part in any of it. Dello had his own band and loved listening to the radio and cannot fathom why he ended up being a rapper.⁵⁴ Flict-G knew that his friends were involved in underworld activities but immersed himself in video games. When he wasn't whiling away idle time in a computer shop, he was happy listening to the rap music of his idols such as Conflick and Gloc-9 of Death Threat, the local rap group in the 1990s that gained fame for their hard-hitting bars and speed rapping, and it was from the names of his two idols that he derived his rap handle, Flict-G.⁵⁵ Sometimes, both share, you don't need to experience the violence to know how to dish out gun bars, diss an opponent with personals, and deliver the knockout blow with resounding haymakers, punch lines, and rhythmic agility.

In the world of FlipTop, Dello gained the moniker as "King of Rebuttal" after making an impressive debut in Second Sight, the second event in 2010. His ability to do free style and turn the offense of his opponents into ammunition against them gained otherworldly status to the point that his fans wanted him to focus only on battling instead of making music. Dello says, *wait a minute. If you can't support my music and then expect me to keep battling in FlipTop, which does not earn me a fixed, adequate income to sustain my family, then you aren't showing the right support for the emcees.*⁵⁶ Anygma acknowledges that FlipTop hasn't achieved the level of financial clout that can sustain the careers

**The Founder of FlipTop Rap Battle League:
Alaric “Anygma” Yuson**

of emcees, and thus enjoins emcees in FlipTop to keep making music. For Dello, it’s music that gasses the art. In other words, music is what emcees sell so that they can hone their artistry and craft further in battle rap.

Flict-G established FlipTop fame with Flict-G bars, which he describes as playing with the given beats and rhythms of the poetic line. In his music and his battle rap style, Flict displays the penchant for syncopated delivery and emphasis on the second and fourth beats, defying the normal cadence of the spoken line. In FlipTop, Flict’s aura is one of childlike wonder that seeks ludic pleasure in upending established norms. This, for him, is how rap is like art. He and Price agree with Dello that music is the gas that fans and audiences need to support. Most, if not all, FlipTop emcees share the tacit understanding that battle rap is a platform for the serious honing of rap skills, that include, apart from audience impact and delivery, the use of word play, multisyllabic rhyme, metaphors, references to current trends and events, and personals to be used against the opponent.⁵⁷

Anygma earned an AB Philosophy degree from Ateneo de Manila University and during his graduating year, incorporated the papers for the foundation of FlipTop. He was able to establish his company and secure his employment stability before graduating from university. Anygma represented the Philippines in international English battle leagues such as King of the Dot (Canada) and 1Outs (OneOuts/Australia)⁵⁸ and laments that his contributions to the local battle rap scene are undervalued.

“I unfortunately feel underappreciated by majority of the Filipino crowd. You can even go as far as to check most of my battles online. The most often used comments or most popular comments on my battles would be, “Wala akong naintindihan,” (‘I didn’t understand anything’) and “Nosebleed,” and blah blah blah. So despite all my efforts and despite recognition on a global, international level, unfortunately my countrymen would rather be proud to say that they don’t understand anything (chuckles). So, there’s that.”⁵⁹

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Fig. 9 Lhipkram on 26 April 2018; photo taken from his Facebook Account <https://www.facebook.com/lhipkram.dominguez>

Fig. 10 Crazy Mix, Flict-G, Curse One, and Dello on September 4, 2019, performing “Nakakamiss” during the launch of Lara Mendoza’s documentary “Usapang Hip-Hop: Ambagan sa Eksena at Kultura” at Leong Hall Auditorium, Ateneo de Manila University

Fig. 11 Apekz on March 29, 2018 during an interview with Lara Mendoza at Our Lady of Assumption Scholasticate (OMI) in Quezon City

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In spite of such sentiments, however, Anygma has, apart from FlipTop, also started an artist management and production house, Uprising, which he and Juss Rye⁶⁰ established.⁶¹ When Uprising was established in 2013,⁶² the popularity of FlipTop had skyrocketed exponentially since 2010, and both Anygma and Juss Rye⁶⁰ were planning for the eventuality of a life post-FlipTop. BLKD describes this as Anygma’s “passion project,” and while he acknowledges this to be the case, he also explains that in spite of his own “militant background” in hip-hop, his vision for Uprising is that it functions as a platform for upending the status quo of hip-hop music.

Uprising is a passion project, it’s a labor of love; but so is FlipTop... if the distinction really is that where do I make money more, then in that sense, yeah, FlipTop isn’t a passion project because we make our money there. But, other than that, it still is a labor of love, really... With my background, I could’ve been a doctor or a lawyer or whatever, or so. So if it was about making money, I could’ve gone and done that and made more money. But no, I chose to do this because it is my passion, it is really what I enjoy. And then Uprising just doesn’t happen to make us much money, so... (chuckles). But the efforts with Uprising would be a lot more particular. So, in FlipTop, with my role as... the organizer and all of that, as the head, as the overall... kuya...I definitely have to be more open to everything else. And I say that because... my hip-hop background was very militant... So... I grew out of it or... grew away from it but... with Uprising... the vision of it is really good Filipino hip-hop music the way I... want it to be appreciated.⁶³

BLKD, in his earlier years of FlipTop battling, took great pains to explain the different criteria by which he judged a battle in the hopes of gradually educating all fans to the point that there would be no need for judges.⁶⁴ Of the wealth of talent that explodes continually in the underground scene of hip-hop, Anygma staunchly believes that the underground is awash with talent that needs to be mined⁶⁵ and much can be gleaned and learned from keeping one’s self open to a myriad of possibilities.

[So much has evolved in hip-hop]: different styles, different standards, creative directions, aesthetics... [In] Filipino hip-hop... there’s so [much happening]... I, of course, will side and champion the underground more than the mainstream. Because for one thing, they [mainstream music industry artists] don’t need my help anymore, whereas the underground does... I’m of the firm sentiment [that] it’s fine if you like this mainstream thing, but why does that mean you cannot appreciate [the underground, too], you know?... But a lot of people don’t. [In] Filipino hip-hop, there’s so many gems, and... it’s so cliché to say [that] a lot of the gems are underground... Really, like, so many insanely talented, insanely deserving, insanely forward, modern-thinking and all that. Galing, galing talaga, galing. (Awesome, awesome, awesome, awesome)⁶⁶



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

FLIPTOP BATTLE LEAGUE: HANDOG NG PILIPINO SA MUNDO

Anygma certainly did not predict that FlipTop would become the most-watched battle league in the world, outdistancing older leagues such as Versus Battle,⁶⁷ Ultimate Rap League,⁶⁸ and King of the Dot,⁶⁹ where their emcees have been doing battle rap far longer than FlipTop emcees. Fliect-G shares that, when the popularity of the battles exploded on YouTube in 2010, the emcees had a tacit understanding amongst themselves that this was a platform that they could collectively nurture and grow as a source of unforeseen windfall blessings that also provided them with the space to develop their pen game and delivery skills.⁷⁰

BLKD states that Anygma, who is also one of them, understands more succinctly what kind of support rappers in the underground, “the small guys” without any corporate backing or signed up with record labels, need. Anygma affirms this in sober tones.

I've long accepted my calling to be the guy that has to do the grassroots work, because nobody else is gonna do it. Like, before me, nobody did it the way I did it... But, the level of passion, the level of sincerity, the level of genuine appreciation for the artistic side and all of that, they can't match it. So, you know, I'm here for them, for the rappers. The league was, again, by rappers, for rappers. I'm here for them at the end of the day.⁷¹

And the rappers who stepped onto the FlipTop stage cemented their legacies in the hearts of millions of fans worldwide. The battle between Loonie and Zaito (part 1) on May 15, 2010 to date has garnered 16.3 million views as of February 11, 2020, and its viewership will continue to grow. Loonie in 2010 was a strapping twenty-something year old, looking every inch like the “stick figga” he was,⁷² and he came to this battle event prepared with written lines that he had memorised. Zaito, of the “old school” mould, relied on freestyling bars to a deejay-generated beat. While Loonie eventually won the battle by a vote of 3-2 on the strength of his lyricism and preparedness, and the simple fact that his style hooved more closely to the modern format championed by FlipTop, the effectivity of Zaito's style resided in the good-natured humour of basic looks shaming and light banter. As some of the commenters in 2019 noted, they miss the ribald banter “of old.”

The most-viewed battle on FlipTop remains the Dos Por Dos Semifinals battle between the duos of Loonie-Abra and Smugglaz-Shehyee⁷³ on July 6, 2012.⁷⁴

Abra and Shehyee, with their posh real names that scream middle class – Abracosa and Ongkiko – were sharing the stage with the famous Hari ng Tugma (Loonie) and the hardened gangster, Smugglaz, the peerless speed rapper of 187 Mobstaz and gutsy OG from Tondo.⁷⁵ That battle had everything: the tension between upper class and lower class in the ribbing of Smugglaz and Abra, Loonie and Shehyee; the personals against Loonie's drug use, Shehyee's infamous girlfriend Ann Mateo who was the butt of slut-shaming, and Abra's perceived “wack”-ness in rap; sick rap skills in Smugglaz' mellifluous and rapid-fire speed rap, Loonie's signature multisyllabic rhymes and word play, Shehyee's dramatic delivery, and Abra's abrasive yet incisive spitting of bars; and humourous, flamboyant punchlines and haymakers that drove the B-Side faithful wild with glee.

There would be many, many more emcees who would step onto the FlipTop stage who innovated the art form, such as Shernan, who brought multiple costume gimmicks to unparalleled heights, and this was showcased in the marquee battle between him and Hazky, another costumed emcee, in Bwelta Balentong 6 on October 12, 2019 at the TIU Theater. The two emcees brought the house down as they emerged from backstage in full makeup, wigs, and fashionista couture, wherein Shernan essayed the role of the pregnant wife of Anygma while Hazky was the sultry and seductive mistress. Choked with laughter, Anygma could barely go through the motions of heralding the start of the battle with the iconic battle cry, “FlipTop, *mag-ingay!*” (‘Let's make some noise!’). The crowd chanted, “Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!” tittering and hooting for Anygma to give in, and Anygma, true to form, flipped his middle finger at Shernan who was clinging to his arm with possessive jealousy. If there is anything that this battle highlighted, it was the pure and unadulterated love and respect that emcees and fans have for the founder, Anygma, who, known for his sternness and being a stickler for the rules, seemingly cracked when the two emcees titillated the crowd into showing their full appreciation for the hard-working host and organizer. The assembled emcees on stage was a conglomeration of Who's Who stars in the hip-hop firmament: Pricetag, Fliect-G, Abra, Apezk, Smugglaz, Mike Swift, BLKD. And many more luminaries were there, alongside the obviously well-loved Georgy Porgy, Kevin aka DJ Umph, Supreme Fist, and mainstays in the tough bouncers and events photographer Niña Sandejas. This was also the last



Fig. 12

battle that Lil John fought, as this event happened a week and a day before his violent and shocking demise. Anygma recounts that back in 2010 and 2011, a Fortune 500 company offered FlipTop a deal that he felt underchanged and undervalued them. When he voiced his rejection of the offer in firm, diplomatic tones, he was told,

“Sayang naman (‘what a pity’) if you don’t take this. Where are you gonna be? You’re gonna be gone in a year.’ And... I really took that personal. And, unfortunately, their product is gone.”⁷⁶

The marketability and popularity of FlipTop remain high. The league has already branched out beyond Manila and fulfilled the vision of going nationwide; FlipTop has divisions in Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Cebu, and Davao, and it isn't stopping. In Ahon 2019, the Isabuhay Finals pitted two incredibly talented, lyrical rappers in Apezk and Sixth Threat. Of the two, Apezk is a FlipTop veteran at the wizened age of 27 – seemingly ancient in the youth-orientated hip-hop world – while Sixth Threat is the rising star wunderkind from Davao. Sixth Threat was crowned the deserving champion in a battle that was heralded as one of the best finals in FlipTop history by emcees and fans.

Even on days that Anygma feels that he can retire from FlipTop, he is hounded by the prospect of who can keep the intensity and passion alive for the betterment not only of the league but for the entire hip-hop community. It's a charge that Anygma has laid squarely on his shoulders and whatever it is that makes FlipTop continue to be beloved of fans and emcees alike lies in his hands-on intensity and searing brilliance and foresight. His militant gatekeeping is par



Fig. 13

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Fig. 12 Battle Rap Champions Mhot (FlipTop Isabuhay 2017) and Sur Henyo (Sunugan Nike Battle Force Manila 2018) during an interview with Patricia Alpay on March 22, 2019 in Arkipelago Bar, Makati City

Fig. 13 Screenshot from the YouTube video featuring the battle of Loonie vs. Zaito during Ahon on May 15, 2010 at Guerilla Radio, Pasig City while a much younger Anygma (white shirt and inverted cap) and Abra (red shirt) look on.

for the course, as he rails against “culture vultures,” or bandwagon fans. One day it could be rock, Anygma says, and then K-pop, then hip-hop. But when the lights fade, will these same people stay loyal to hip-hop?⁷⁷

In FlipTop, Anygma has built a world where emcees have a voice that millennials listen to. Anygma zealously guards this world, where emcees can explore different techniques, hone their rap skills, and cultivate a unique identity in the hip-hop firmament. He unwittingly gave young Filipinos something to be proud of and the world a window into which they could view, appreciate, laugh and cry along with Pinoy emcees. FlipTop has become his legacy to the world.

I have to focus on the MCs. You guys [e.g. culture vultures, corporate vultures] don't care about the MCs, you don't care about the lineup, you don't care about the matchup, you don't care about the MC and his lack of funds in paying the bills for his family. You don't care about the MC having to enroll his 4-plus children, you don't care about any of that. And I have to. So I cannot waste my time trying to accept every meeting from every random guy who thinks they can tell me what to do. 'Di ba? It's like that, and so I've become more and more jaded and bitter, but also focused on what we do.”⁷⁸

Postscript: This essay was written in late 2019 and while the writer is cognisant of significant recent events in 2020, this could no longer be included in this article. In particular, I refer to the resounding success of the FlipTop Festival, marking the tenth year of FlipTop, held on February 7 and 8, 2020 at the Aseana Concert Grounds. Many of the big names in the hip-hop firmament graced this event, dubbed by Anygma as the biggest hip-hop festival in the country and markedly different from festivals of other genres. One significant highlight of the festival was the video tribute to Loonie, met with the tearful and joyful cheers of the fans when Loonie himself stepped onto the stage and performed his beloved songs with an adoring, swooning crowd fervently singing along. There was not one camera that was not held aloft to capture Loonie's first public appearance since his release on January 24, 2020, after he posted a bond of two million pesos.⁷⁹ ■

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¹ "FlipTop Rapper Loonie Nabbed by Makati Cops in Buy-Bust".

² According to several interviews published online, Anygma is widely recognised as the founder and CEO of FlipTop, where he acknowledges this to be the case, but he also mentions that it was he and Kevin Vea (aka DJ Umph of Mighty Miscellaneous) who co-founded FlipTop. See the following footnote for the article.

³ "Alaric Riam Yuson: The Father of Fliptop (First of Four Parts)".

⁴ Enriquez, 'UMPH Is Also a Filmmaker. He Is the Video Department of FlipTop.'

⁵ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁶ Constantino, 'Loonie Entertains Fellow Inmates at Makati City Jail'.

⁷ Loonie LIVE Performance in Makati City Jail (credits to original owners of the video: Jeffrey Parido Pallan and Zhenre Zei).

⁸ Loonie LIVE Performance in Makati City Jail (credits to original owners of the video: Jeffrey Parido Pallan and Zhenre Zei). Peroramas, 'OFFICIAL STATEMENT RE Loonie's SITUATION'.

⁹ Some terms of brotherhood are "bayaw (brother in law)," "insan (cousin)," "tol (sibling)," and other such terms to indicate filial and intimate respect for each other. Real name: Arbheal Mancilla

¹⁰ Real name: Hansel Cabo

¹¹ Delos Santos, 'Salamat Sak Maestro'.

¹² Real name: Arbheal Mancilla

¹³ Real name: Hansel Cabo

¹⁴ This practice parallels how Colgate refer sto all toothpastes or Xerox refers to all photocopying machines in regular daily speak.

¹⁵ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#1).

¹⁶ Real name of BLKD: Allen Demetrio

¹⁷ BLKD explained this to me the first time I met him at Astá last June 2018, which was a rap battle event held in a small bar, Catch272, in Quezon City. That was also the first rap battle that I witnessed live. There were three

battles that evening, the third one being the marquee match featuring an up-and-coming emcee, Sir Deo, from Bataan.

¹⁸ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#1).

¹⁹ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

²⁰ In the event poster, the fifth battl e was headlined in the event poster as being between Apocryphal versus Mr. E, which was later replaced by Apoc versus JedLi, as evidenced in the write-up of Dante Romero about that historic first-ever FlipTop event in 2010. Read: Let's Take It Back: Grain Assault 1 at <https://www.fliptop.com.ph/article/let-s-take-it-back-grain-assault-1>.

²¹ Romero, 'Let's Take It Back: Grain Assault 1'.

²² Real name: Mark Anthony Cadiente

²³ Real name: Fluvert Floy Cagampang

²⁴ 'Laban To!: Ang 2019 Isabuhay Tournament Bracket'.

²⁵ Yagami, 'Dizaster Music Industry Tweet'.

²⁶ 'FlipTop: The Story Of The Philippines' Most Successful Rap Battle League | FHM Ph'.

²⁷ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#2).

²⁸ Real name: Bashir Yagami

²⁹ Real name: Marshall Mathers

³⁰ Real name: Marshall Mathers Klumcee (aka Paul Lester Vaño) and Abra (aka Raymond Abracosa) have shared as much with me in our conversations in February 2019 and July 2018, respectively. While Abra contends that the discussion of an underground-mainstream binary is no longer much of an issue as it was before, he also declares that it is the underground ethos of hip-hop, knitted into its very DNA, as it were, that makes rap his music of choice because, according to him, he can pretty much say anything he wants against the establishment. In particular, he referred to speaking against the government and getting away with it (Abracosa, Interview with Raymond 'ABRA' Abracosa.) As we saw with what happened to Shanti Dope and Klumcee's "Amatz," the climate in 2019 seemed decidedly different as PDEA clamped down on the airing of the song over radio airwaves and being performed on television. And yet Klumcee does maintain that it is from the underground that the gems of creativity are most pure, saying that such jewels are under-ground, and that no hip-hop insider can ever turn their back on that, because it's where each artist owes his or her ultimate success. (Vaño, Interview with Paul Lester 'Klumcee' Vaño.)

³¹ Real name: Christian Paolo Gabriola

³² Gabriola, Interview with M Zhayt.

³³ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

³⁴ Real name: Juan Carlos de la Cruz

³⁵ Released October 27, 2019

³⁶ Inaano ka ng Tattoo ko (Official Music Video).

³⁷ Literally, of the same troop. To be ka-tropa is to be considered part of the pack or in hip-hop parlance, the collective.

³⁸ Setting up an alternative business such as a clothing line, vape business, or production house would be considered par for the course for emcees who are cognisant that hip-hop music or battle rap is not forever. Hip-hop is subconsciously recognised as a culture that is of the young, and as emcees get older, settle down with families, land regular day jobs, they realise that they can't keep up with the nocturnal rhythms of the hip-hop scene. See also the interview transcripts during Won Minutes last March 22, 2019, at Arkipelago Bar in Makati City, particularly with M Zhayt, Mhot, and Sur Henyo, who indicated that in ten years' time, they see themselves as having their own businesses, particularly in the clothing line business. (Mayacyac and Merino, Interview with Mhot and Sur Henyo; Gabriola, Interview with M Zhayt.)

³⁹ Lao, Interview with Don Pao.

⁴⁰ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#2).

⁴¹ Real name: Jomari Espiritu

⁴² Real name Rodel Ramirez

⁴³ Ramirez, Taguniar, and Visaya, K-leb, Mel Rhyme, Bulek.

⁴⁴ For K-leb, he thinks that "unity" in Pinoy hip-hop was confirmed only around 2015; my reference to 2010 as being the approximate time that a semblance of unity was established among Pinoy rappers point to what Fliect-G (real name Raymond Buensuceso) has described as a rallying point, timeline-wise, with the entry of

FlipTop into Pinoy hip-hop consciousness.

⁴⁵ CLR is also Cebu's Lyrical Rapper; real name: Chester Lalinjaman Romo

⁴⁶ Real name: John Edmel Taguniar

⁴⁷ Real name: Lestat Visaya

⁴⁸ Real name: Richard Bryan

⁴⁹ Real name: Paolo Lao

⁵⁰ Real name: Phil Mark Dominguez

⁵¹ Literally 'older brothers,' but used in the figurative sense

⁵² Lao, Interview with Don Pao.

⁵³ Syting, de la Cruz, and Navarro III, Proj4 OGS.

⁵⁴ Dominguez, Lhipkram June 11.

⁵⁵ de Guzman Gatmaitan, Buensuceso, and Espiritu, Interview with Fliect-G, Dello, and Price Tagg.

⁵⁶ Rivera, Interview with Fliect-G.

⁵⁷ Original quote: "Dahil buong hip-hop- ang battle, part ng hip-hop, ang music, part ng hip-hop, hindi mo sila pwede paghiwalayin at hindi mo pwedeng bitawan. O sabihin, "Eh, sa battle ka lang magaling, eh." Hindi naman sinasabing ano, hindi naman sinasabing, pagtiyagaan niyo; i-share niyo man lang dahil kung ayaw mo nung kanta, baka mayroon kang friends na gusto 'yung kanta, hindi lang makaabot sa kanya dahil hindi niya alam. Kung i-she-share mo, baka makita. At least. 'di ba? Kung gan'un lang na give and take. At 'yun 'yung gas namin, eh. Hindi kami pwede mag-FlipTop lagi dahil may binubuhay- ako, may binubuhay akong pamilya. At ang FlipTop once every other month, so hindi siya consistent ang makukuha mo. Makakakuha ka ng 50 sa isang buwan, next month walang battle, so yung 50 mo divided by 2, 25. Para ka lang ding empleyado. Ayun pa tapos, 'yung music ang magiging gas, eh." (de Guzman Gatmaitan, Buensuceso, and Espiritu, Interview with Fliect-G, Dello, and Price Tagg.)

⁵⁸ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#1).

⁵⁹ 'Anygma'.

⁶⁰ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁶¹ Real name: Ryan Armamento

⁶² Dionisio and Armamento, Interview with KJah and Juss Rye.

⁶³ '[WATCH] Rappler Live Jam: Uprising Collective'.

⁶⁴ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁶⁵ Demetrio, Interview with BLKD (#2).

⁶⁶ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁶⁷ Yuson.

⁶⁸ Russia

⁶⁹ US

⁷⁰ Canada

⁷¹ Rivera, Interview with Fliect-G.

⁷² Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁷³ This is in reference to the popular rap group, Stick Figgas, of which Loonie is part.

⁷⁴ Real name: Bryan Lao

⁷⁵ Real name: Christopher Ongkiko

⁷⁶ Perhaps one of their most famous hits was the anthemic song, "We Don't Die, We Multiply," that featured the entire collective rapping sick bars one after the other, inundating the hip-hop fan with the who's who of their time.

⁷⁷ Yuson, Interview with Anygma.

⁷⁸ Yuson.

⁷⁹ Rapper Loonie Released on P2-M Bail.



Fig. 1

Long before theater was established, music was already an integral part of early cultures. It accompanied rituals and ceremonies as practiced by groups in small-scale communities from around the world. In Africa, call and response chanting and dancing to the beat of the drums abound in tribal rituals. The Philippines' *babaylan* (folk healer) performs chants and prayers and several types of body movements in a healing ritual. Music was used in theater by the ancient Greeks with the use of *aulos* (flute) and percussive instruments accompanying the recitation of their choral odes in tragedies that date back from the late 6th century BCE. In the east, music in the form of chanting, accompanied by *kotsuzumi* (hip drum), *otsuzumi* (shoulder drum), *fue* or *nohkan* (flute), is incorporated in traditional theater forms of Japan such as the *noh*

(chanted drama originating from the 14th century) and *kabuki* (dance-drama originating from the 17th century). In *kabuki*, the *shamisen* (three-stringed traditional instrument of Japan) is added to the *hayashi* ensemble. The Chinese Peking opera, which flourished in the 17th century, incorporates music and vocal performance, dancing, mime, and acrobatics. From then on, music became an indispensable aspect of theater and is evident in several theatrical genres, which developed both in the East and the West. In the next centuries, western theatrical performances with music came in a variety of forms. These theatrical genres include operas, operettas, melodrama, minstrel shows, vaudeville acts, musical comedy, musical revues, and the musical theater, also simply known as "musicals."

THE RISE OF MUSICAL THEATER IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE SPANISH COLONIAL PERIOD

In the Philippines, the first form of western musical theater was introduced in Manila in 1878. This was the Spanish zarzuela. This theatrical form was developed and indigenized by local librettists and composers according to the socio-political and cultural needs of the time. It became highly popular in urban areas. The music composed for the *sarswela* (indigenized zarzuela) at that time referenced the foreign influences on musical genres that were utilized to cater to and fit in certain scenes in the play. The *sarswela*'s framework for plot structure and music genres paved the way for the creation of modern *sarswelas* in the 1970s to the 1980s but utilizing music characterized as freer in style and sometimes incorporating fusion of traditional and newer musical genres.

Aside from *sarswelas*, Filipino librettists and composers created local operas such as *Sandugong Panaginip* (The Dreamed Alliance) by Ladislao Bonus, considered as the first Filipino opera and *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not) with music by Felipe de Leon Sr. The latter is described as the first full length Filipino opera in Tagalog language with "music composed in the Western operatic tradition."

ORIGINAL FILIPINO MUSICALS

Fast forward to several decades later, a number of recent original Filipino musicals were created with newly composed music. One of these is *Care Divas*, written by Liza Magtoto, and music by Vince De Jesus; the musical tells about the struggles of five Filipino gay caregivers in Israel. It was first staged in February 2011 by the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) in its venue in New Manila. Another popular recent musical is *Kung Paano Ako Naging Leading Lady* (How I Became a Leading Lady), created and written by Carlo Vergara, with music and lyrics by Vince De Jesus. This musical debuted in May 2015 as part of the 9th Virgin Labfest, a festival of untried and untested plays organized by Tanghalang Pilipino and The Writers' Block, Inc. It revolves around the story of Mely and Viva, two sisters, and the struggle of the former to find her place in a world where superheroes and supervillains exist. *Mula Sa Buwan* (From the Moon), an adaptation of E. Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with concept, direction and book by Pat Valera (also one of the lyricist), with music and lyrics by William Manzano, premiered at the Henry Lee Irwin Theater at Ateneo de Manila University in December

Popular jukebox musicals, which make use of existing hit songs by an artist, is common in the musical theater scene in the west.

2016. The musical is set in the 1940s and inspired by a young group of college students who became guerillas and fought for freedom. The creators of the musical decided to retain the character's names: Cyrano, Roxane and Christian from the original work. *Binondo, A Tsinoy Musical*, written by Ricky Lee with music by Von De Guzman, had its world premiere in July 2018 at the Theater at Solaire. Inspired by a real-life story, the musical tells about the love story of Lily, a Filipina night club singer, and Ah Tiong, a Chinese scholar who met and fell in love during the pre-martial law era.

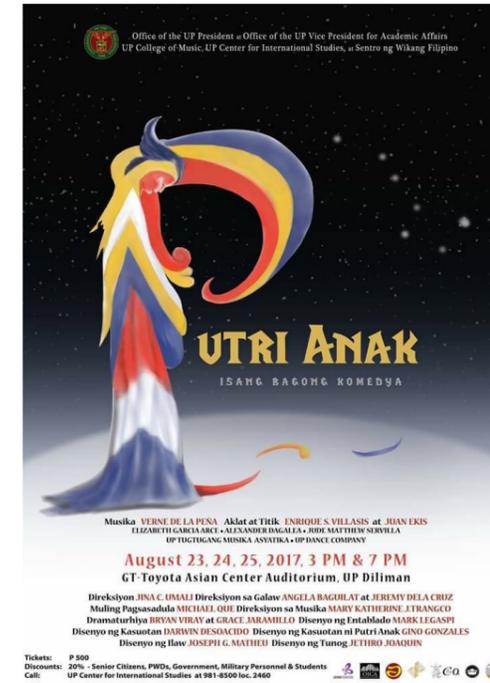


Fig. 2

Popular jukebox musicals, which make use of existing hit songs by an artist, is common in the musical theater scene in the West. In this type of musicals, the story can be built around the themes and emotions expressed in the songs of the artist such as in *Mamma Mia*, which features the songs of Abba, a popular group in the 1970s. Likewise, the songs can also be used to tell the story of the artists such as in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.

The Philippines also has its own version of popular jukebox musicals such as: *Sa Wakas* (At Last), a new Pinoy rock musical featuring the songs of Sugarfree. This premiered in April 2013 and tells about the breakdown of a long-term romantic relationship between Topper, a professional photographer, and his fiancée Lexi, a neuro-surgeon, which involves a third party named Gabbi; PETA's *Rak of Aegis* (featuring the songs of Aegis), which premiered on January 31, 2014, a work not totally related to the popular foreign jukebox musical *Rock of Ages*, but is about the story of Aileen, a young lady with a big golden voice who dreams of becoming a viral sensation on YouTube and appearing in *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*; and *Ang Huling El Bimbo: The Musical* (The Last El Bimbo) with songs by the Eraserheads, which opened in July 2018, and the story revolving around the friendship of Hector, Emman, and Anthony who drift apart and are reunited by fate to confront their troubled past.

RECENT TRENDS IN CONCEPT MUSICALS

Putri Anak

Concept musicals were also produced in recent years. *Putri Anak*, with script by Enrique S. Villasis and Juan Eki, and music by Verne de la Peña, is described as a new *komedya* (from the Spanish *comedia*) and inspired by the celestial maiden narratives in South East Asian countries. It was staged by the University of the Philippines College of Music on April 9, 2017, with two shows at the Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It had another successful restaging in August 2017 at GT-Toyota Asian Center Auditorium in UP Diliman (UPD) to celebrate Buwan ng Wika (Language Month). The play is produced as part of the college's centennial celebration with the theme "Sandaang Taon ng Himig at Tinig: Pagpupugay ng UP Kolehiyo ng Musika" (One Hundred Years of Music and Voice: Offering from the UP College of Music), and was co-produced by the UP Center for International Studies. Professor Amparo Adelina "Jina" Umali III of UPD CIS directed the play and Enrique Villasis collaborated with Christian "Juan Eki" Vallez on the libretto. *Putri Anak* is about a celestial maiden who lost her wings after bathing in the stream with her sisters. Left on earth without her wings and unable to reunite with her sisters, she helps two arrogant feuding warriors, Sultan Magnaye and Rajah Sulaymon, beat the mythical serpent Bakunawa.

Komedya, also known as *moro-moro*, was derived from the Spanish *comedia de capa y espada*. A cloak and dagger play, it originated from the 17th century Spanish plays on upper middle class manners and intrigue. But the Philippine-adapted *komedya* performances shows Christians defeating the Muslim Moors. *Putri Anak* as a recontextualized *komedya* still retained some elements present in the older *komedya* forms such as the sing-song delivery of the lines in verses known as *diccio* or *dicho*, and the *gran batalya* or the battle scenes. In addition, the *loa* (homage) was also retained along with other music styles such as *marcha* (march), *pasodoble* (music in duple meter), and *laban* (music for fighting). They also incorporated the *sintahan* (romantic love scene) as part of the plot of the story.

Since *komedya* has its roots in the Spanish form and was later adapted in the Philippines, de la Peña, composer of *Putri Anak*, tried to build a hybrid work. The music is described as shifting more toward the Southeast Asian sound. The music was performed live during performances by the UP Tugtugang Musika Asyatika (TUGMA) using gongs and drums, typical instruments comprising the musical ensembles found



Fig. 3

Fig. 1 Pepe and the ensemble performing "Ang Mga Binusabos." A scene from *Mabining Mandirigma*

Fig. 2 *Putri Anak*'s poster

Fig. 3 Theater-in-the-round staging showing the battle scene between Rajah Sulaymon and Sultan Magnaye. A scene from *Putri Anak*

Fig. 4 Poster of *Mabining Mandirigma*

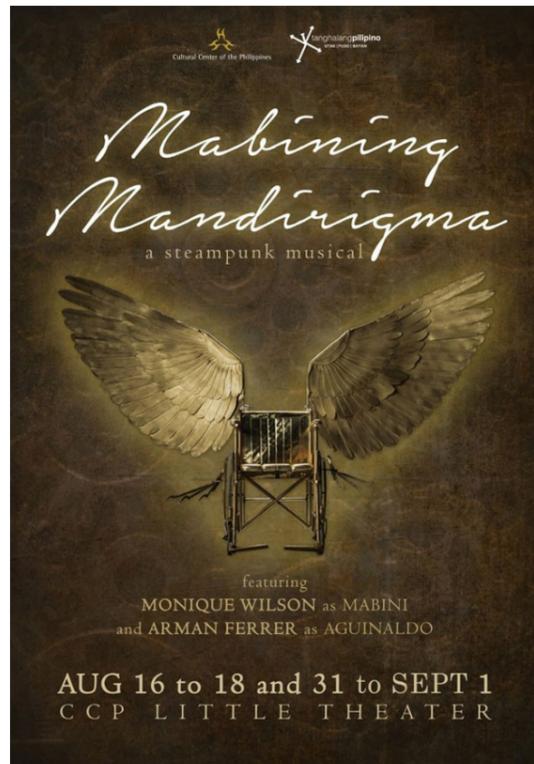


Fig. 4

in some Southeast Asian countries (like the *gamelan* of Indonesia, *gulingtangan* of Brunei and the *piphat* of Thailand). According to Verne de la Peña, "the Philippine *kulintang* serves as a springboard of the music of the play" and references musical styles present in Asian theater forms such as the *randai* (with its theater-in-the-round convention of staging, this folk theater tradition of the *Minangkabau* ethnic group in Malaysia incorporates music, singing, dance, drama and the martial art of *silat*), *norah* (also known as *menora* and *manora*, a type of dance drama originating in Southern Thailand; practiced mainly in the northern states of Malaysia and southern provinces of Thailand), *makyong* (a traditional form of dance-drama from Northern Malaysia). *Kulintang* refers to a set of six to eight pieces of small graduated bossed gongs suspended on a wooden frame and played with two wooden beaters.

Aside from the indigenous instruments such as gongs, *kulintang* (gongs in a row), and drums, de la Peña also tried to retain the "traditional *komedya* brass band sonority" by including woodwind instruments such as the flute, clarinet and saxophone, and the snare and bass drum. *Banduria*, a local Hispanic plucked lute with a body shaped like an onion was also added to the instrumental ensemble to reflect lowland folk music traditions. These instruments were

mixed with indigenous instruments such as gongs, *kulintang* and drums. They produced music that was diverse and interesting, some with dance movements borrowed from neighboring countries.

The play also incorporated rituals and ceremonies such as the *cañao* (from the indigenous groups of Northern Luzon) and the *sinulog* (Cebu's ritual-prayer dance honoring Señor Santo Niño or the Child Jesus). Even the fight scenes and choreographies of battle scenes in the play utilized a variety of different Asian martial art forms and dances: the use of the *arnis*, the Maguindanao and Maranao war dance called *sagayan*, a martial art common to Southeast Asia called the *pencak silat*, as well as India's *Bharata Natyam* and Indonesia's *Tari Java*, a Javanese court dance.

Putri Anak's music borrowed local indigenous music and layered these with rhythms from Southeast Asian tonal modalities. It used "punctuative and cyclical, repeated structures commonly used in the regions."

In the original form of the *komedya*, singing is not present but this innovation was added to *Putri Anak*. In the play, the characters burst into songs whenever they need to express emotions and sentiments. Chorus of women are also utilized in the play as the chorus of celestial maidens led by the seer Kadunong.

Mabining Mandirigma

Another concept musical worth mentioning is *Mabining Mandirigma* (Mabini, the Warrior), with libretto by Nicanor Tiongson, and music and composition by Joed Balsamo. The play was presented by Tanghalang Pilipino, the resident theater company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It was originally staged in July 2015. The musical won 12 Gawad Buhay (Life Award) awards including Outstanding Musical (Original Translation/Adaptation) and Outstanding Ensemble Performance for a Musical.

The play is a "steampunk musical" highlighting the political events in the life of the Sublime Paralytic, Apolinario Mabini, and his intellectual heroism during the time of the Philippine Revolution in late 19th century. Apolinario Mabini was the legal and constitutional adviser to the Philippine Revolutionary Government led by General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898. Mabini later became the first Prime Minister of the Philippines following the establishment of the First Philippine Republic in 1899.

According to Joed Balsamo, the composer of the musical *Mabini*, the idea of staging a steampunk musical came from the director of the musical, Chris Millado, who is also the vice-president and artistic director of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

As a trend, *steampunk* started in literature. It subsequently influenced films, musical plays, fashion and even video and computer games. It pertains to a sub-genre of science fiction and science fantasy incorporating technology and aesthetic designs, which took inspiration from 19th century industrial steam-powered machines. The genre has something to do with the 19th century Victorian era's mechanical technologies. Steam power, clockwork and even electricity are just some of the objects depicted in the steampunk's visual aesthetics. It could be best described by this statement: "What the past would look like if the future had happened sooner."

Composer Joed Balsamo described steam punk as belonging to "a certain period of time (in the past that) is happening at the present time." He also added that it resembled "the punk aesthetics but tends to lean more on the twisted side of it." And true to the description of the genre, set designer Toym Imao's design of the Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino's stage had an image that resembled a clock with large kinetic gears, accompanied by sounds of engines and moving gears as smoke comes out from all directions of the stage. The costumes of some characters also reflected steampunk-cum-Gothic fashion. *Ilustrados* (educated

persons) wore black stylized tuxedos or suits with metallic accessories like chains hanging in front of their attire. Chorus members wore stylized costumes in black with studs and boots. Even the characters' makeup and hairstyles indicated steam punk looks.

Mabining Mandirigma is a type of musical that is almost sung-through, with very minimal dialogues delivered by the characters. When asked about the type of songs he composed for this musical, Balsamo shared that the songs start closest to the original (i.e., traditional) forms. As the work continues, this shifts to the new styles.

An audience familiar with the musical convention of operas and *sarswelas* can discern the use of recitatives, a speech-inflected style of singing in short dialogues that segues to a more rhythmically stable and melodious song. *Concertantes* are also evident in the songs that showed different viewpoints such as the scene between General Aguinaldo, Apolinario Mabini, and the *ilustrados*. These characters were from the middle class, and some have gone to Spain to study and were exposed to Spanish liberal and European nationalist ideals of the time.

While watching the play, one can notice that some of the songs' verses had a lot of rhyming words at the end of each line. Balsamo referenced the *balagtasan* (i.e., the poetic style of Francisco Balagtas, a prominent Filipino poet who is considered as one of the greatest literary laureates in the field of early 19th century Filipino poetry) style of rhyming and word syllabication in the lyrics of the songs in the musical. Other musical styles used include marches for songs with patriotic sentiments such as the rousing "Viva la Republica y Mabini" (Long Live the Republic and Mabini) sung by General Emilio Aguinaldo and the ensemble. Hints of vaudeville music can also be heard in portions of the play, in which American political figures were introduced, i.e., referencing the early 20th century American popular light entertainment.

"Pag-aalay" (Offering) is a beautiful melodious duet between Pule (the young Mabini) and his older self, which expressed the young lad's dream to study and become a priest, and the older Mabini's sentiments about what matters most: the compassion for fellowmen and the world, and love for country. The song segues to contrapuntal singing by the two characters expressing their own sentiments about their aspirations.

The musical number that provided the best comic relief was performed by Pepe, Mabini's assistant,

mentee and sort of an adopted son, along with the characters of the chorus. Entitled “Ang Mga Binusabos” (Those Oppressed), the song makes fun of the *ilustrados*’ snobbery and elitism. This is one of the highlights in the musical reflecting the postmodern treatment of the theme. It showed the fusion of two contrasting musical forms, the old and the new, as in the ragtime piano music and the rap sequence in a single musical number.

Another musical number that created an impact is the song entitled “La Creme de la Creme.” A comical take on the socio-political status of the *ilustrados*, this musical number used a slow march time music and incorporated stage gestures and movements by the characters imitating the mechanism of the wheels of a train. In addition, the musical number is enhanced by sounds of a train’s bells, drums, steam and whistle that punctuated certain words for emphasis.

The Chorus (both referring to the ensemble of characters and the theatrical device from Greek theater) was used in this musical to elicit reactions and commentaries on the actions of the play.

One unique innovation conceptualized in *Mabining Mandirigma* was that the main character, Apolinario Mabini, was portrayed by a woman. Delphine Buencamino essayed the role of Mabini in the musical’s world premiere in July 2015. On the second restaging, Repertory Philippines’ newly appointed artistic director, Liesl Batucan, took on the lead role in February 2016, with Hazel Maranan alternating as Mabini. Monique Wilson played the role of Mabini in the latest restaging of the musical in August 2019, also with Maranan as the alternate.

Chris Millado, the show’s director, said the role of Mabini began as a technical problem since the artistic team wanted the main character’s voice to be unique from the rest of the cast. It was actually resolved by casting a female actor to play the lead role. Another reason for Mabini being portrayed as a woman had to do with the intent to symbolize power. As Liesl Batucan explained in a collaborative interview by AXL Powerhouse and Evo Contravida, the decision was based on the need to hear the voices of the marginalized, the weak, in the midst of the more powerful and the more influential political figures. Similar to a marginalized woman, Mabini is weak, a paralytic who needs to let his voice be heard by the generals and the society’s educated class, the *ilustrados*. In the fourth rerun of the musical, different American characters, such as Mark Twain,

William Howard Taft, James Franklin Bell and General Douglas MacArthur, were also unconventionally portrayed by women. Although strong from the point of view of the colonialists, the music reversed the power relationship.

Nonetheless, the casting of female actors to portray male characters was not a recent innovation of that production. Both foreign and local productions of *Peter Pan*, for example, already cast female actors to portray the title role. In one Philippine production of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, director Anton Juan cast the Repertory Philippines founder, Zenaida Amador, as the titular character in 2001. Another example was a local presentation of excerpts of *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Andrew Lloyd Webber in April 2009 at the TAuMBAYAN, a bar located in Kamuning, Quezon City. The roles of Jesus and his disciples were portrayed by women. In this presentation, Filipino singers Agot Isidro portrayed Jesus, Bituin Escalante played Judas, while Aiza Seguerra essayed the role of both Magdalene and Caiaphas. The all-female cast of this pre-Lenten presentation wore an all-white attire.

Steampunk is a new trend that started in literature and later influenced films, musical plays, fashion and even video and computer games. It pertains to a sub-genre of science fiction and science fantasy incorporating technology and aesthetic design, which took inspiration from 19th century industrial steam-powered machines.

Ang Larawan: The Musical

Ang Larawan: The Musical (The Portrait: The Musical) is a film adaptation of the stage play of the same title. Produced by Culturtain Musicat Productions, the film was directed by Loy Arcenas. The screenplay was based on the libretto by Rolando Tinio while the music was composed by Ryan Cayabyab. The stage play was produced in 1997 by Musical Theater Philippines and presented at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. The musical play was, in turn, based on a 1950 play *The Portrait of the Artist as a Filipino* written by Nick Joaquin.

The play is set in pre-war Intramuros, Manila in 1941. The story revolved around two unmarried sisters, Candida and Paula Marasigan, and their struggles to make ends meet after their painter father became ill, stopped producing artworks, and was unable to support them anymore. Adding to the conflict was the dilemma whether to hold on or to let go of the portrait, a painting by their father, which could be a means for them to live comfortably if sold for a hefty sum.

The songs of *Ang Larawan* used arias and recitative singing. “Kay Sarap ng Buhay nu’ng Araw” (Life is Sweeter in the Past) is an aria sung by Paula and Candida. “Ikinalulungkot Ko, Miss Paula” (It Saddens Me, Ms. Paula), an aria sung by Tony and Paula, has a hauntingly beautiful melody interspersed with recitatives in between. “Hindi Simple ang Buhay” (Life is not Simple) is another aria sung by Don Perico, with a melody that brings to mind the song “Gus, the Theater Cat” from the musical *Cats* by Andrew Lloyd Weber. In “Muebles” (Furniture), recitative singing is heard between Manolo and Pepang, Candida and Paula’s brother and sister, as they talk about things they can inherit from their father.

“Ang Pianista at Taga Piano” (The Pianist and Piano Player) sung by Tony, a *bodabil* (local term for vaudeville) pianist, and “A Tisket A Tasket” sung by Susan and Violet, both *bodabilista* (vaudeville performers), used vaudeville show tunes which were very appropriate since the theatrical genre was one of the popular entertainments during the pre-war era in which the play is set.



Fig. 5

Putri Anak, Mabining Mandirigma and Ang Larawan produced music that has cultural, social and political contexts framed within the plot of the musical's story.

Fig. 5 *Ang Larawan: The Musical* Film Poster

Fig. 6 The conga sequence performed by Patsy, Elsa, Donya Loleng and Manolo, from *Ang Larawan: The Musical*

Conga music is heard in the songs “Hindi Pa Kami Matandang Dalaga” (We are not yet Spinsters) by Candida and Paula, and in “Conga,” performed by Elsa and Patsy. In lilting triple time, *balse* (waltz) rhythm can be discerned in the song “Ang Mga Tertulia” (The Tertulias) performed by Tony and Paula. The song started first with recitative singing before segueing to *balse*. *Tertulia* is a term used to refer to social gatherings usually done in the early afternoon during the late Spanish colonial period in the Philippines. *Tertulia* consists of literary and artistic performances by family members, neighbors, relatives and close family friends.

With slight dramatic tension building in the conversation between Candida and Paula, another *balse* rhythm is put to great use in the musical number “Walang Ilaw” (There’s is no Light). The song depicts the characters’ fear about their electricity being cut off, due to non-payment of the utility bill, only to find out that they forgot about the announcement in the *periodico* (newspaper) that there will be a drill in preparation for the war, hence, the reason for the brownout.



Fig. 6

Following the tradition of Disney’s original soundtrack of animated films, *Ang Larawan: The Musical* (film version) released a pop version of “Kay Sarap ng Buhay Noong Araw” performed by Yeng Constantino. Another pop version of this song was performed by the two lead characters, Candida and Paula, portrayed by Joanna Ampil and Rachel Alejandro, respectively.

Another surprising addition to the playlist of *Ang Larawan* is the song “Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas” (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow), a duet performed by Rachel Alejandro and Ebe Dancel, former front man of the band Sugarfree. The song serves as the theme song of the film.

In 2017, the book *Ang Larawan From Stage to Screen* was published by Anvil Publishing, Inc. It included the script of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Filipino* by Nick Joaquin and the libretto and screenplay by Rolando Tinio.

The film received 12 nominations in the 2017 Metro Manila Film Festival and won five awards, namely, Best Picture, Best Director for Loy Arcenas, Best Actress in a Leading Role for Joanna Ampil, the Gatpuno Antonio J. Villegas Cultural Award, Best Musical Score, and Best Production Design.

The musicals *Mabining Mandirigma* and *Ang Larawan* still utilized the older singing conventions

such as arias and recitative singing, which started in European operas from the 17th century up until the present. To summarize, *Mabining Mandirigma* used marches, ragtime piano music, rap sequences and vaudeville show tunes, while *Ang Larawan* utilized *balse*, salsa, and cha-cha rhythms, to name a few.

With these, we can conclude that even though there has been a tendency in recent years for original local theatrical productions that lean towards an experimental approach by incorporating new sounds using music software programs to manipulate and combine musical styles or doing fusion of old and new genres, there has also been a tendency for musicals to revert to the old musical forms, styles and conventions such as the aria and recitative singing. This clearly shows the influence of postmodernism in music. Used in local musical theater productions, one could see the manner in which boundaries from the past and present musical styles are erased and these different styles were utilized to “meet as one” in a single musical number. Despite the conflicting musical trajectories, *Putri Anak*, *Mabining Mandirigma*, and *Ang Larawan* are works that have important cultural, social, and political values framed within the plots of the musicals’ narratives. ■

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Fig. 1

Budots dance, originally from Camus Street in Davao City and popularized back in 2006, has become a household name among the Filipino masses. The dance craze is associated with the local slang word *tambay*, meaning a person without a permanent job or who has a lot of free time. The term budots was given to the dance popularized by the local *tambay* folks of Davao City¹ known as the CamuzBoys. It is a free dance so to speak, which originated from the Sama di Laut² (Badjao) dances, that combined the Visayan word *bistik*, “bis,” meaning *bisaya* (from the Visayas), and technorock (Tan 2019). The budots music mix was created by Sherwin Calumpang Tuna, more popularly known as DJ Love or Lablab (Celera 2019). It is also said that the budots dance was created before the budots music. This was revealed by filmmakers Jay Rosas and Mark Limbaga’s short documentary entitled “*Budots: The Craze*, which premiered in August at the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival” (Celera 2019).

The footwork is simple and basic. On bended knees (demi-plié), execute either a step-close-step-close (usually done by the males) or the clam action of open and close movement while the legs are slightly apart (usually done by the females). The torso moves smoothly in a wave-like motion with carefree use of the arms (usually rolling action upward or downward) and the head (nodding along to the beat of the music). The clam action and the wave-like motion of the budots dance can also be seen as a reflection of the water where the Sama

di Laut (Badjao) are from. This essay will investigate how a dance, such as the budots, reflects Filipino culture and society. Why is the budots popular among the Filipino masses? What messages does the budots dance communicate to its performers and viewers?

Dance critic and historian Sally Banes points out that there are two ways of understanding the purpose of dance. It is reflective of culture, meaning that dance “is a mirror of microcosms where the workings of culture, everyday life, and even government are actively registered from above on passive bodies below; and second, it has the potential to effect change” (Banes, 44). Deborah Jowitt writes that “dancing and dancers reflect intellectual and material trends in other spheres of human activity” (as quoted in Banes, 43). Paul Wolfram in his essay *Singing Spirits and the Dancing Dead* describes that dancing among the Lak people of Papua New Guinea “...is an essential nature to the nataka (spirits)... and that it is an activity that fundamentally reveals things as they are” (Wolfram, 2011, p. 181). Dance thus acts as a form of representation of one’s culture, where emotions of the people are revealed through their movements and accompaniment. Whether life is good or bad, the people echo their experience through movement. As a “product of culture” (Jowitt), it manifests how the people interpret their life and cultural experience. From these thoughts, everyday life is rendered through dance and music, and dance and music become indicative of one’s culture.

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To analyze dance movements as culture, one must be grammatically fluent in the language of dance (Kaepler, 199). Signs and symbols in any combination thereof, convey various information in many contexts. In this essay, I will relate movements to its communicative value, asking how the budots dance was used to spread a message by a politician, who eventually won a seat in the Senate in the 2016 political campaign. The campaign took advantage of a common language *tambay* or being carefree, that is resonant in the lives of the masses. The message was directly injected to his desired target, the mass voters. If a dance such as the budots has the potential to effect change, then it obviously has influence on society. The following argues that the roots of this communicative efficacy is in the social values.

‘PAKIKIPAG-KAPWA’ AND ‘PAKIKISAMA’

Filipinos easily recognize the ideology of *pakikipag-kapwa* and *pakikisama*. It is a group-centered value where acceptance and unity are desired. *Pakikipag-kapwa* may be practiced in different activities such as singing, dancing, eating and playing together. The thought and recognition of being united as a group, and doing the same activities develop an understanding that members are amongst equals, and that they are “one-of-us” (Enriquez 1992). *Pakikipag-kapwa* is a Filipino mentality where the self is blended within a group. *Kapwa* means the “shared inner self” and/or a “shared identity” with others. It stresses that one is not different from the rest and therefore is part of the group (Enriquez 1992). Practicing *pakikipag-kapwa* may also indicate that social hierarchy does not exist among them and that everybody is an equal. *Pakikipag-kapwa* is closely associated with *pakikisama*. *Pakikisama* “is [the] yielding to the leader or majority; companionship; esteem; ‘alter-fellow,’ it is a level of adjusting” in interpersonal interactions with other people (Enriquez 1992).

In my opinion, the Filipino values of *pakikipag-kapwa* and *pakikisama*, deeply familiar among the people, are what made budots popular. When used as a media campaign tool, it garnered votes among the Filipino masses for the candidate who was “acquitted of plunder charges by the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan in December” of 2018 (Coconuts Manila 2019). Netizens were outraged by his dancing the budots in his media campaign as it became a form of mockery of the justice system. His minimal exertion in dancing, a very short less-than-a-minute dance, did not deter his intention. The negative turned into a positive as the candidate convinced the Filipino voters through the effects of *pakikipag-kapwa* and *pakikisama*. Viewers gained confidence and assurance that he is one of them. Dancing the budots was a familiar powerful move and sound among the people, young and old. The targeted viewers could easily relate to the idea of being carefree and of being a *tambay*. The message of the campaign connected to the viewers easily. After all, they had shared a common activity –the budots.

The campaign was well thought of. It was simple, short, and easy to remember. Most importantly, it had underlying messages. Not only did the candidate express his equality using the budots music and dance, the candidate also persuaded the people that he is a new person by using the color white against a white background. This helped boost his campaign because the color white represents being “pure, clean and innocent.” It may also impress a clean slate or a new beginning. Seeing the color white

may encourage a sense of “peace and comfort,” but also “isolation and emptiness.” In many cases, it can also mean a “new beginning” (Scott-Kemmis 2018).

In addition, the campaign video used red to display the candidate’s electoral number. Red means “strong and powerful,” “masculine energy,” “leadership and ambition,” “revenge and anger” and “good luck” (Bourn 2019). The juxtaposition of being innocent, clean, and turning a new leaf, with the strong and powerful red, was effective. The campaign material was short yet irritating, but it was also direct and entertaining. Most importantly, the use of the Filipino values for *pakikipag-kapwa* and *pakikisama* was what conditioned the Filipino masses that this candidate was one with them, the people. This brings us to the issue of the social function of dance in society.

DANCE FOR POLITICS AND IDENTITY

Dance is a functional art form. It is related to rituals of harvest, marriage, birth, death, war, worship as well as political advancements. For example, going back to the development of ballet in sixteenth century France, dance was used as a form of entertainment to appease the people because of the political situation of the time. “Sixteenth-century France was beset with intractable and savage civil and religious conflicts: The French kings, drawing on a deep tradition of Italian Renaissance... thought of spectacle as a way to soothe passions and calm sectarian violence” where the French monarch “hoped that theatrical events might be an important tool, assuaging tensions and pacifying warring parties” (Homans 2010, 4-5).

Dance is also used to identify groups of people. Dance movements and forms are quickly identified according to their culture and region. Specific movements are associated with certain groups of people that give them cultural identity. In Toronto Canada, dance scholar Patrick Alcedo mentioned in an interview (TFC 2017) that “identity is not only through labor, or other professions but also through performance.” The project, entitled “Luzviminda: The Philippines Dances for Canada 150,” was a celebration of “Filipino-Canadians and the embodiment and expression of their diasporic identities” (*Philippine Canadian Inquirer*, 2017). Through dance, people can identify regions and ethnicities, and gain a sense of bond and relationship. Dance has the ability to characterize groups of people and their positions.

Another example of showing their identity through dance is the Lak people in Papua New Guinea who “literally perform their social relationships, showing onlookers who they are by dancing in a group that is made up of their active exchange partners and relations” (Wolffram 2011).

‘BAHALA NA SI BATHALA’ (LEAVE IT UP TO GOD)

Dancing the budots has this connotation of dancing one’s problems away. As used in the senatorial campaign video, one YouTuber commented, “*Isayaw na lang natin ang kalungkutan sa Pilipinas*” (Let us just dance our sorrows away in the Philippines) (PaoLul 2019). In reality, the carefree attitude of the spectacle has truth in it. Not only did the campaign gave the message of *pakikisama* or being one with the group, but it also projected being unconcerned at the outcome of a situation or problem. This is another Filipino trait, the *bahala na* attitude.

Bahala na mentality is said to be “one of the Filipino’s most important cultural values” (Enriquez 1992). There are two paradoxical meanings of the *bahala na* attitude. One refers to where and when Filipinos submit all their worries, troubles and anxieties to a higher Being as we often hear the phrase “*Bahala na si Lord*” or “*Diyos na ang bahala*” (It is now up to the Lord) during a crisis. The second meaning is where one is encouraged to practice their abilities or “own capacity to change the present problematic condition” (Enriquez 1992). The first behavioral effect of the *bahala na* is being submissive to the consequences and to God’s will as there is a sense of acceptance of whatever lies ahead. Ironically, the second effect is where the person is challenged to be resourceful and therefore tests her/his ‘*abilidad*’ (ability) to do things from scratch. The remainder of the essay explores a contemporary rendition of the budots dance on stage.

BUDOTS AS A CONTEMPORARY DANCE ON STAGE

Filipino values for *pakikipag-kapwa*, *pakikisama* and *bahala na* are embodied in Erl Sorilla’s choreography entitled ‘Budots’ in August 2017. This was performed at the first Koryolab at the CCP Tanghalang Huseng Batute. The Koryolab (choreographic laboratory) is an outlet for aspiring Filipino choreographers. It is a space where emerging choreographers are given the opportunity to explore, research and experiment with their choreographic ideas and abilities guided by senior and well-established dance pioneers Denisa Reyes and Myra Beltran. This platform began in 2017 as part of the CCP Choreographers Series, “a three-part platform that addresses three levels of choreographers in contemporary dance: WifiBody.ph, a competition for emerging choreographers; Koryolab, a presentation of short but completed dance pieces by mid-career choreographers; and Neo Filipino, a venue for established choreographers to create and stage major works...where all three have become the prime mover in the contemporary expression of the Filipino soul” (CCP Choreographers Series 2019). Erl Sorilla is from Iloilo city

and was chosen to be a dance scholar at the Philippine High School for the Arts. He then entered the University of the Philippines Dance Program in 2011 and became a company member of the UP Dance Company. He joined Ballet Philippines as an apprentice for two years and is now a company member. As a choreographer, Sorilla, now 26 years old, is interested in Filipino values such as how Filipinos have fun together even if they have problems. Filipinos “dance together over poverty and problems” and the first meaning of “bahala na si Bathala (It is all up to God)” (Sorilla 2019) mentality is the reason for this. Sorilla embodied this in his choreographic work on the budots dance. He said, “All of my pieces are voicings out of Filipino attitude and impediments. Now that the budots (music and dance) is trending, I became more curious with it” (Sorilla 2019).

CHOREOGRAPHER’S DEFINITION OF THE BUDOTS

Sorilla defines budots as “freestyle, *baduy* (kitsch), primitive, *tambay*, and drugs, sex and violence” (Sorilla 2019). Budots as freestyle, according to Sorilla, is about ‘letting go’ and ‘feeling good.’ “People are doing it because it makes them feel honey. It is liberating. It is pleasurable” (Sorilla 2019). *Baduy* has a number of meanings. It can mean out-of-date, un-cool, or low class (Tagalog Lang 2019). Sorilla’s idea of *baduy* in budots is a combination of being un-cool and low class. Sorilla describes budots as *baduy* because it “originated from the slums” (i.e., from a marginalized community) and that the music and movements of the budots dance is “retro and techno,” which makes it un-cool or un-hip from the point of view of Sorilla. Because the budots originated from the slums, it is associated with the word *tambay* because people from the underclass are often unemployed. The movements of the budots dance is also described by Sorilla as primitive. The steps are grounded, and it is strong on the downbeat. In addition, based on Sorilla’s research, the “people who dance the budots are usually high on drugs,” and “there is also a sexual connotation to dancing the budots” (Sorilla 2019), while it trended back in 2017. Budots was also popular at the height of the extrajudicial killings, or EJK. According to Sorilla (2019) “*Eto yung times na namamatay yung mga bata*” (This was the time when the children were killed). To create his work, Sorilla gathered all information about it. His work is a reflection of the current situation.

CHOREOGRAPHIC INFLUENCE

As a dancer, Sorilla has worked with different choreographers who “left an imprint” on who he is at present: a dancer, a dance artist and a choreographer (Sorilla 2019). He was greatly influenced while working with choreographers such as Agnes Locsin, Elena Laniog, Myra Beltran, and Denisa Reyes. He explained that “it is a touch of their work that makes me who I am as a dancer and artist and how I see and use my own vocabulary in dance” (Sorilla 2019). As a dancer, Sorilla is still young and has a lot of years of dance performance ahead. He is currently dancing as a company member of Ballet Philippines, the resident company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. At the same time, he constantly creates something new from his movement experiences. Sorilla reflects, “It is important for me to still move and know my body more to create more,” although sometimes he is torn “between being a performer and a choreographer” (Sorilla 2019). Nonetheless, he is open to different ways, methods and processes of creating. This is because he is exposed to working with different choreographers and artists. He embraces the idea of increasing his movement



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

vocabulary to develop his own process in creating new choreographies. He said “I am still young, and I still want to dance. There is a compromising balance between dancing and choreographing... I am still learning, and my process is still developing and changing” (Sorilla 2019).

Another influencing factor in Sorilla’s choreography of ‘Budots’ is YouTube. Type in the words “budots music and dance” in the search engine, and you can get more than thirty thousand results. Even on Spotify, several budots dance, budots remix, budots volumes and episodes have been uploaded and downloaded. The availability of the budots music and dance on the internet has made it viral. The dance steps as well as the music are determined to be as one where it is easily accessible to learn and listen to.

In the 1980s, a similar platform was used in spreading popular music and dance. This was the MTV (Music Television). The 1980s music and dance such as Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” and The Bangles’ “Walk Like an Egyptian” were quickly identified and performed by the masses due to the visibility of their music and dance moves on television. In the 1990s boybands and girl groups such as The New Kids on the Block, Backstreet Boys, NSYNC, Spice Girls, and Destiny’s Child also increased their popularity because of MTV. The use of media television increases the popularity of song and dance movements of the time. Now, with the internet, the availability and accessibility of music and dance are amplified a hundred times more.

CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS

As regards the choreographic process, Erl Sorilla first isolates his thoughts of who his dancers are portraying

and the roles they play in society. He isolates or “breaks free, dislocates,” and when needed “distorts” their identities so that they can dance the characters (Sorilla 2019). Sorilla explained that it took time for him to “break” his dancers away from their usual movement vocabulary, which is classical ballet.

“The body is a very malleable thing and I feed them information that they can absorb, to actually internalize and go through it. They feel the truth in what they do. That is the basis of the technique. We looked for the groove. The pleasure of dancing it (budots) and not thinking of technique as ballet dancers. They were not conscious when doing it. It was raw. The intention was clear. Take away the refinement of classical ballet and move in a certain way” (Sorilla 2019).

To help his dancers to feel and internalize as well as experience the groove of the budots dance, Sorilla took his dancers to a cheap night club in Malate where the budots (music and dance) is a regular part of the club’s nightly program. The choreographer and the dancers observed as well as joined in dancing the budots. “*Masaya s’ya*” (It is fun) dancing the budots, “it was an experience for them,” to drink, get tipsy, and dance the budots (Sorilla 2019). In the process of creating the movements for the piece, one of Sorilla’s processes was their immersive experience at a night club. For example, for a step such as jumping or chugging, Sorilla inserted the idea and recalled the memory of being drunk saying, “*Walwal ka na sa alak* (you are drunk or wasted from alcohol), then you are finding your balance. You are intoxicated and you do not have any control but you still want to be in the beat and you are forcing yourself to still be happy” (Sorilla 2019). Sorilla made his dancers drink to loosen up

Dance thus acts as a form
of representation
of one's culture, where emotions
of the people are revealed
through their movements and
accompaniment. Whether life is good
or bad, the people echo their
experience through movement.

and recall the experience of being drunk, dancing the budots and having fun, to be able to replicate the moment for the piece.

For the budots music, Sorilla “studied it even if it was awkward. ‘I wanted the dancers to be on the beat’” (Sorilla 2019). The music intensifies and interweaves from flowy and the techno beat. The flow of the Sama di Laut (Badjao) music reflects the movement of the water or the waves where the Sama di Laut Badjao comes from. It can also mean being laidback, careless, or relaxed. The techno-music that is superimposed on the flow depicts the “here-ness” of society, a new and a faster way of life.

THE BUDOTS DANCE BY ERL SORILLA

There are three parts in Sorilla's ‘Budots.’ The first part presents a group of friends from the slum areas in Manila. Sorilla used Ballet Philippines dancers Jessa Tangalin, Ramona Yusay, Mark Balucay, Luigie Barrera, Bryan Abañó, and Justine Orande. He chose these dancers because they looked young as they had to portray

the teenage sector. The boys played the roles of being a bastard, an addict, a robber, and the rest represented the children of the Philippines. They wore worn-out clothes, projected that they were *tambay* and squatters. The six friends danced in silence, reflecting that they were in a very tight space, living in the slums. It was dirty, dark, and had lots of mosquitoes for the dancers kept slapping and scratching themselves. They squirmed and pushed against each other while covering their noses to show that their surrounding was stinking or had a foul smell. There was a sense of lightness with their comedic gestures and comments such as “Sino umutot? Umamin ka na!” (Who farted? Admit it!). There were laughter and a sense of family among the friends, a sense of belonging and comfortability as well as the Filipino relationship and respect among friends in being a “kuya” (big brother) and “ate” (big sister). The six friends were intrigued and mesmerized by a light strongly shining from stage right. They slowly walked towards the light.



Fig. 4

Then they danced the budots together with the techno music, their legs opened and closed while their upper body was freely released with the use of their arms. Visually interesting was the use of lights by Katsch Katoy. “It was a visual pleasure from the audience’s viewpoint,” commented Angela Baguilat during the Q & A part of the choreographic performance (Baguilat 2017). The light focused on each of the dancers frozen movement, which quickly changed when the light was focused on another dancer. Watching on video the dancers appearing and disappearing while dancing their interpretation of the budots was interesting and exciting. There was a sense of nostalgia, a moment of reminiscing and flashback. There was a sense of thrill and curiosity to see who appeared next and what movement was being done. The girls now adapted the roles of being a mother (Jessa Tangalin) and the daughter (Ramona Yusay) where they are drugged. In a daze, they appeared to have no life (Sorilla 2019). The daughter represented the young girls dancing in the red light district while the mother is pained and drugged.

The second part of the piece was most interesting as the choreographer wittingly chose and edited multiple news clippings and media reports of the extrajudicial killings, drugs, rape and murder from YouTube. The choreographer stitched the news recordings together as the accompaniment and music to the dancers. In this part, the movements became intense, serious and a sense of terror for their life was evident due to what was happening in society.

The final part of the piece was tragic. The background music became a collection of Rodrigo Duterte's cursing and vulgar language. The clippings were edited together with the movements of pain and fear of the six friends. One of the edited news recordings showed the audience of Rodrigo Duterte enjoying his cursing and laughing with him. The choreographer here reminded his audience about the kind of people in today's society. In the end the children are raided by the police and one of them died. Then the lights slowly faded.

A CHOREOGRAPHER'S CHALLENGE

Initially, Sorilla did not plan his piece ('Budots') to be political. However, with the guidance and advice of his mentors (Reyes and Beltran), "he was pushed to dig in and learn what is more with the budots, to lay it out and be literal" (Sorilla 2019). The biggest challenge for Sorilla was to have the courage to expose and let it out. Another trial for Sorilla was the reaction of some of his audience who disagreed on how the budots dance was reflected. "Some people said that it is not budots. So I asked them, 'What is budots?' This is how I want to dance budots. It is free style. Why can't I be free? Some like it, some don't" (Sorilla 2019).

A CHOREOGRAPHER'S REFLECTION

"What is budots? 'Budots' is about humanity. I was just mirroring the time. It is a reflection of reality and it hurts because we are Filipinos. We are lovable and we are being killed. It is about humanity and compassion. 'Budots' is very personal for me. I find it interesting because of it being *wasak* (broken). It is broken but it is also beautiful. There are times that you find that temporary happiness in having quick pleasures. Then you go back and ask yourself, what happiness really is? I realized that it is just an escape. It is just an escape. We (Filipinos) are trying to look for temporary happiness, an escape from the reality of things. It is merely a band-aid solution" (Sorilla 2019).

Making sense of a dance such as the budots goes beyond the simple description of the movement. The word budots has different implications, meanings, impact and memory to different sectors in Philippine society. The budots may have different functions depending on where or when it is performed. The budots can be seen and heard on numerous social media channels, television, and radio, used as a political campaign, in private homes, night clubs and even on stage. More 'freestyle' dancing and the combination of the Sama di Laut and electronic music, the budots is also a reflection of the current society. It is about the people who dance the budots, how the budots make them happy and forget their current anxieties. It is about the present problems and how the budots dance elevates their worries to a higher Being (*Bahala na si Bathala*). It is about finding quick solutions and happiness in spite of the depressing reality. It is about the family and being united as a group when they dance together despite material deprivation. ■

We (Filipinos)
are trying
to look
for temporary
happiness,
an escape
from the reality
of things.
It is merely
a band-aid
solution.

.....
Fig. 1 Asukarap Tiktok Budots Budodts Dance Best of Team Camus 7. Uploaded on YouTube. Thumbnail courtesy of Sherwin Calumpang Tuna

Fig. 2-5 Koryolab 2017 *Budots* choreographed by Erl Sorilla. Photo courtesy of Marveen Lozano

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¹ "Barangay Camus in Davao is a small quiet town until the techno music plays that signals the whole town folks to get out of their houses to dance Budots" (Pepper 2012)

² Sama di Laut (People of the Sea) are one of the ethnic groups of Southeast Asia known as the 'Sea Gypsies.' The Badjao are a subgroup of the Sama that are renowned worldwide as the sea nomads of Southeast Asia. (Kauman Sama Online 2020)

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Fig. 5



Fig. 1

For a musician like me, performing at a music festival here or anywhere in the world is the stuff of bucket lists. To be invited to perform at a music festival is, more often than not, considered an honor. The festivals offer opportunities for the musicians to experience a different kind of gig, one that is memorable, musically satisfying, and enjoyable. In a festival, musicians get to showcase their music and expand their network both locally and globally, enjoying and appreciating others' music, while gaining support from them. At the same time, accepting an invitation to perform at a festival greatly benefits the festival organizers as well. The musician-artist who gets invited plays a significant role in influencing the festival's desired marketability, image and reputation. The quality of these music festivals is greatly defined by the roster of talents that they present. Thus, in any ideal music festival, performing musicians are expected to be treated and featured fairly as "artists," unlike the mundane "racket" and *harang* (paid gig) where a musician is usually regarded as an unnamed and unrecognized talent.

The music festivals in the Philippines are some of the most important, interesting musical phenomena in the country. They capture and embody the Filipino's passion for the arts, keen sense of identity, and lively celebration of community. Furthermore, most of the music festivals in the Philippines offer a full range of music: as audience or production crew or performer, attending and participating in them allows one a peek into the current music scene, with its diversity of styles and eclectic blend of musicians and artists. One gets to witness, appreciate and enjoy the Philippines' local musical culture, while at the same time providing opportunities to watch live top and distinguished international talents who travel all the way to the islands. This essay deals with contemporary transnational festivals initiated by non-governmental organizations with significant participation and support from expatriates and local government units.

THE MUSIC FESTIVAL AS CULTURAL, TOURIST AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Every music festival has their own traits that identify and distinguish them from each other. Important factors such as venue, concept, musicians/artist lineup, genre, and social/cultural context provide the festival's unique features that are definitive proof that not all music festivals here are the same. In the Philippines, some festivals are genre-specific, like the Philippine International Jazz Festival,¹ the Wanderland festival featuring indie artists and rock bands² and the Philippine hip-hop music festival called "The Liptop Festival."³ However, in spite of the distinct qualities of some festivals, most of the music festivals in the Philippines have shared similar traits. As an industry, the music festivals in the Philippines are regarded as cultural, tourist and aesthetic experiences that, in spite of their differences, tend to highlight the country's attractive qualities as both tropical and cosmopolitan.

In this essay, I discuss three music festivals in the Philippines to provide some insight on the Philippines' music festival industry. They consist of two festivals in the Philippines' capital of Manila, namely, the local Fete de la Musique and the Brasilipinas Festival, and one festival outside Manila, the Malasimbo Music and Arts Festival in Puerto Galera, Mindoro. These three festivals display valuable traits that are, locally and globally, culturally relevant and meaningful. They have been around long enough to influence the Philippine music landscape and yet, at the same time, they have become tourist attractions that foreigners attend. I examine their impact on the Philippine music scene as tropicalized, i.e., conceptually rendered local, and cosmopolitan representations of Philippine culture. As one who has participated in these festivals both as fan and performer, I argue that these music festivals are significant community events that celebrate Philippine popular music culture.

COSMOPOLITANISM IN THE TROPICS

"What has all this got to do with coconuts and rice?"⁴ The late composer and Philippine musicology pioneer Jose Maceda asked himself this question, contemplating on (his) Filipino music identity while he was living in Europe and performing piano recitals there in the 1940s.⁵ "Coconuts and rice," Maceda's metaphor to describe the Philippines, conjures images of tropical island life.

As a tropical country in Asia, the Philippines' tropical qualities that are seen and felt in its physical aspects like food, climate, and environs can never be overstated. The country's tourism campaigns tend to highlight the Philippines as a "tropical paradise": the 7,100 islands, the beach life and fine white sand, the coconut trees,

the mangoes, etc. I argue, however, that to understand deeply the country's tropicality, one needs to go beyond the physical qualities. Historian David Arnold, in his book *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, stated that tropicality can be understood as a "conceptual, and not just physical, space."⁶ In Philippine context, further exploration and discourse can be done on tropicality as a conventionally perceived cultural trait of the Filipino.

It is in the music festivals in the Philippines where one can discover and appreciate this. In varying degrees, the physical qualities of tropicality seen in these festivals provide significant value. What is fascinating, though, is how tropicality is heightened from an aesthetic, cultural and musical perspective. As community gatherings, these festivals show where the tropical and the cosmopolitan experience intertwine and mingle. In the music festivals in the Philippines, this mingling is an inevitable experience.

FETE DE LA MUSIQUE: 25 YEARS CELEBRATING THE LOCAL FILIPINO

The well-known music festival in France, the Fete de la Musique, which is now held in many parts of the world, is celebrated in the Philippines in a spectacular way. Starting out as a small, intimate street party in Malate, Manila in 1994,⁷ Fete de la Musique, now in its 25th year in the Philippines, has grown into a very big music festival, a full-scale production with corporate sponsors, organized by Alliance Francaise de Manille, the French Embassy in Manila, and a local production outfit called B-Side Productions.⁸ It now has an app that one can download to access all the necessary information about the Fete in the Philippines: a guide and map that shows the pocket stages, schedules at the main stages as well as music playlists of the artists performing in 2019.

While this particular festival highlights French culture and music,⁹ this is the one annual music festival in the Philippines where almost every Filipino musician shows up to perform. The Fete de la Musique is a big deal for the local music scene—it has become an annual celebration of Philippine music. I argue that the local Fete de la Musique is a large community event that supports and showcases Filipino music and culture in ways no other music festival could.

At 25 years, Fete de la Musique in 2019 did not hold back in making the event a massive Philippine music festival. There were nine main stages spread out in different parts of the country, in Manila, Baguio, Pampanga and Palawan.¹⁰ In Manila alone, there were over 50 pocket stages—mostly bars and clubs in the city of Makati—that featured every



Fig. 2

possible genre available.¹¹ Every single one of these pocket stages was fully packed. Throughout the years, Fete de la Musique always draws a big crowd. For a couple of nights, Fete de la Musique magnifies ten times over the country's lively music scene.

One other addition was a 25-minute multi-genre musical montage titled "#GlobeFete" that was created to commemorate the 25 years of Fete de la Musique in the Philippines. The montage was a medley of assorted Filipino popular songs from the 1970s to the present. "#GlobeFete" was a tribute in honor of those who made a significant impact on OPM (Original Pilipino Music). This part of the production consisted of Filipino popular singers and musicians such as singer Bituin Escalante, world music icons Joey Ayala and Bayang Barrios, rapper Abra and acoustic singer Cookie Chua.

I became part of "#GlobeFete" as one of the percussionists of the band, playing the Philippine indigenous gong instrument called *kulintang* in the World Music segment of the montage. It is not everyday that this type of meaningful, grand musical number, a coming together of some of the best in the local scene, is mounted. Through "#GlobeFete," one gets to experience, watch and perform the history of Philippine popular music.

Fete de la Musique in the Philippines has certainly come a long way from the time it started 25 years ago. However, time has not diminished the true spirit behind the festival. Started in 1982 in France by Minister of Culture Jack Lang and Director of Music and Dance Maurice Fleuret, Fete de la Musique was a response to Fleuret's vision of the French musical landscape and practice: "the music everywhere and the concert nowhere."¹² Surveys indicated how there were many young people in France who can play musical instruments and yet only a handful get to perform in the musical events there.¹³ In order to encourage more musicians to perform and express themselves, the first ever Fete de la Musique was launched

on June 21, 1982, the first day of the summer solstice, wherein any musician, professional or amateur, can make music outdoors.¹⁴ The event was free and open to the public. For Fleuret, Fete de la Musique was to be a kind of "revolution" in the field of music, which tends to make all music meet—without any hierarchy of genre or origin...¹⁵ Since then, Fete de la Musique has been held in more than 120 countries.¹⁶

I have performed at the Fete de la Musique in the Philippines a number of times since my first Fete gig in 2003. My performances at the Fete have been usually at the World Stage and a couple of times at the Main Stage, either with the Afro-Brazilian percussion ensemble "Brigada," or with my world pop fusion band "Anahata." Throughout the years, I have seen and observed the growth of Fete de la Musique here. Venues have changed, until the past few years, when the Fete was always held in Makati. The diversity in the musical acts and genres, the extensive venues and numerous pocket stages, reflect the strong cosmopolitan nature of the local music scene.

On the other hand, I have also seen firsthand how the Fete here has not changed in its intended vibe, atmosphere, and character. The festival is held at around the same time every year, as it is in France, in the month of June, and it is free and open to the public, thus giving many people the chance to enjoy and discover what the local music scene is live, beyond the confines of TV, the radio, or the internet. It is moving to see the streets of Makati full of people barhopping, trying to get from one stage to the next to experience different kinds of music. For the musicians, the Fete has become a form of *panata* (devotion), an event one tries not to miss, whether or not one is performing. Those who do get to perform also have a knack of keeping track of how many stages they will perform in each year. In its 25 years of existence in the Philippines, Fete de la Musique, albeit with French origins, has become a localized music festival that is embedded in Filipino music culture.



Fig. 3

THE TROPICALITY OF THE MALASIMBO MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

Anyone who has been to the Malasimbo Festival will always talk about the “#MalasimboMagic” and how the experience of being there makes one see the value of this festival as an exciting musical and cultural phenomenon. Started in 2011,¹⁷ the Malasimbo Music and Arts Festival is an international festival held annually in the early part of the Philippines’ summer season, around late February to the first weekend of March.

The festival is known for its beautiful and inspiring venue, an outdoor natural grass-terraced amphitheatre in the foothills of Mt. Malasimbo, Puerto Galera, in Oriental Mindoro, an island south of Manila. To get there from Manila entails taking a two-hour road trip to a port, then riding a ferryboat to get to Mindoro island. The element of traveling by boat to an island, the outdoor amphitheater with its tall coconut trees, the beaches that the island is known for—these are the reasons why the Malasimbo Festival truly inspires and embodies tropicality.

Tropicality, in fact, is what defines the festival’s branding and gives it its edge. Basically, it is all in the details. Aside from the venue, the environs and the means of travel, there are also the poster art, the coconut drinks they sell along with the beer and alcohol, and the outdoor art installations surrounding the amphitheatre. While the location of the festival is close to a number of hotels and beach resorts, festival-goers can also camp out on the festival grounds. Indeed, Malasimbo’s tropical quality enables the festival to become one of the forerunners of Philippine eco-tourism.

Aside from tropical qualities, there is also Malasimbo’s cultural significance as a local festival in Mindoro. The venue

is located at a private property owned by the d’Abovilles, a French-Filipino family who set up a foundation that started the Malasimbo Festival.¹⁸ The d’Abovilles envisioned a music festival that promoted not only good music and the arts but also advocated for the environment and cultural preservation.¹⁹ Mindoro is known as the home of one of the Philippines’ indigenous tribe called the Mangyan. Thus, one of the festival’s supposed aim is to support and promote Mangyan livelihood and culture by including them in the festival events, selling some of their local crafts and other Mangyan art at the festival, at the Mangyan village replica that was built on the festival grounds.²⁰ The food that is available at the Malasimbo Festival are local Filipino dishes that have become staples of the festival. Besides the coconut drinks, some famous dishes are the “dabo-dobo,” a rice meal with chicken adobo, mushroom and garlic chips, and their “kesong puti pandesal,” a mini sandwich with locally-made, herbed carabao cheese and olive oil. These Filipino dishes add to the festival’s island tourist experience.

While all of these contribute significantly to the so-called “#MalasimboMagic,” at the heart of it though, is the music. From the very beginning, the Malasimbo Festival has been known for its unique, eclectic, hard core artists’ lineup. Throughout its nine-year run, the festival managed to build a track record of bringing in a diverse, good quality roster of musicians and bands from both the local and international scene. Foreign acts such as renowned Japanese DJ Krush, British Jazz pianist/singer Jacob Collier, RnB singer Joss Stone, Bobby McFerrin’s son Taylor McFerrin, French-Canadian

pianist Anomalie, Jordan Rakei, Robert Glasper, and Hiatus Kaiyote have all made their way to Mindoro Island. Cynthia Alexander, Joey Ayala, Grace Nono, Bob Aves, Radioactive Sago Project, IV of Spades, Nyko Maca, Apartel, Sino Sikat, Brass Pas Pas Pas Pas are some of the most sought-after, iconic, top-of-the-line local acts that legitimately represent the best of Filipino music.

Indeed, speaking as one who has been to the Malasimbo Festival more than once, to be able to watch and enjoy the music of this cosmopolitan artist lineup that Malasimbo has become known for, in a scenic outdoor tropical environment, is a thrilling experience and a feast for the senses. For Miro Grgic, a Croatian producer/DJ who is also the festival’s music director, the dynamic mix of local and foreign artists in the festival’s lineup also “keeps the festival’s musical integrity.”²¹ Grgic also believes that while the international acts greatly impact the musical and tourist value of the festival, the local acts are equally important in the festival’s holistic vision, as well as “keeping the local economy in circulation.”²²

Grgic admits though that the music the festival has curated so far tends to have a genre bias.²³ In a CNN Philippines online article, Grgic mentioned that the music of the Malasimbo Festival is more of a “niche thing”²⁴—soul, jazz, and world are mostly the kinds of music that one enjoys in Malasimbo, and for Grgic, there is not much rock music.²⁵ On the other hand, according to writer Alyana Cabral, there is still diversity that can be seen and heard “...not just in the artists’ mixed bag of native origins, but in musical perspectives.”²⁶

I believe that, along with the cosmopolitan mindset in the festival’s music aesthetics, tropicality and identity are prevailing concepts that define the Malasimbo Festival’s music programming and repertoire. The music is about expressing in the coolest way the “tropical island vibes” that the venue inspires. It is inevitable, then, that the festival featured a lot of what has been widely regarded as “island music”—a lot of world music, and a lot of reggae. The festival’s headliner artists have more than once included leading local and international reggae acts like Jimmy Cliff, Ky-Mani Marley, who is a son of the late reggae legend Bob Marley, Big Mountain, I-Dren Artstrong and Kooii. Every year since 2011, the festival has never failed to feature both local and international world music artists such as Grace Nono, Joey Ayala, Bob Aves, Kadangyan, the Adrinkra Lumads Djembe Community, Cebuano reggae band Junior Kilat, Gongmyeong ensemble from Korea, Gocoo Taiko from Japan, Dayaw, and the Philippines’ premier Afro-Brazilian percussion ensemble Brigada.

Amidst the sense of tropicality, the numerous international acts and the musical diversity, however, the Malasimbo Festival never fails to include awesome artists that empower

The music festivals in the Philippines are some of the most important, interesting musical phenomena in the country. They capture and embody the Filipino’s passion for the arts, keen sense of identity, and lively celebration of community.

Fig. 1 Joe Bataan at Malasimbo 2012. Photo credit Brendan Goco

Fig. 2 Anahata performing at the World Stage Fete 2017

Fig. 3 Brigada at Brasilipinas 2018

What is fascinating is how tropicality is heightened from an aesthetic, cultural and musical perspective. As community gatherings, it is in these festivals where the tropical and the cosmopolitan experience intertwine and mingle.

and celebrate the Filipino identity. My first time in Malasimbo was in 2012. I was one of the percussionists for the band of Joe Bataan, the festival headliner that year. A New York-based African-American-Filipino singer who grew up in the streets of the Latin Harlem,²⁷ Bataan became known as the “King of Latin Soul”²⁸ because of his pioneering contribution to boogaloo,²⁹ latin soul fusion and the disco.³⁰ In 1976, Bataan released his song “Ordinary Guy (Afro-Filipino)” in Salsoul Records as a testament to his Filipino roots.³¹ All these years, it was not until the Malasimbo Festival that he got to visit the Philippines for the first time.³² I argue that Joe Bataan’s Philippine premiere at the Malasimbo Festival is an important moment in Philippine music history.

Another artist who empowers the Filipino is Ruby Ibarra, a female Filipino-American rapper whose album, “Circa ‘91,” contains songs that deal with issues of nationalism, female empowerment, and the life of a Filipino immigrant in America. Ibarra’s powerful performance in the 2019 Malasimbo Festival was made extra special with her band, The Balikbayans, whose members were raised by Filipino immigrant parents. At the Malasimbo, Ibarra rapped solid as she preached about being Filipino amidst the party atmosphere. Some of her songs also featured Philippine indigenous instruments incorporated in her hip-hop sound.

The Malasimbo Festival truly provides an unforgettable experience for festival-goers, artists and audiences alike. Logistically, however, it is not without its issues. As one who has attended the festival three times, twice to perform (with Joe Bataan and with Brigada) and once to watch, I have observed and experienced inconveniences with regards to disorganization, travel, and artist treatment. For a festival that celebrated its ninth year in 2019, there is definitely plenty of room to grow and improve on. Miro Grgic himself admitted that a growing festival brings with it some serious challenges, with each year becoming “a struggle to make ends meet.”³³ In fact, in 2019, the festival was not held in its iconic natural amphitheater. Due to logistical constraints,

it was moved to a private nature reserve that is nearer to White Beach of Puerto Galera.³⁴ Tropicality comes with great cost. For Malasimbo’s tenth year next year 2020, the festival’s website already announced that it will be held at the La Mesa Ecopark in Manila, featuring Hawaiian reggae artist Mike Love as one of the headliners, along with Brigada and Project Yazz as some of the local acts.³⁵ With the possibility of no longer being associated with Mindoro local culture, it is my hope that the best that the Malasimbo Festival template has to offer, that #MalasimboMagic, the unique cosmopolitanism and tropicality, the advocacy for Philippine local culture and environment, will be just as good as it was in Mindoro.

BRASILIPINAS: ONE BIG PARTY

Brasilipinas is an annual festival organized by the Capoeira school, Sempre Capoeira (formerly Escola de Brasileira de Capoeira Philippines). Described as the “cultural epicenter of all things Brazilian in the Philippines,”³⁶ Brasilipinas is a week-long Brazilian culture festival offering special workshops on Capoeira, Brazilian dance and music. It is usually held—but not strictly—around the Carnival festivities of Brazil before the beginning of the Catholic Lenten season. Started in 2007, Brasilipinas continues to be the biggest Brazilian cultural event in Manila.

The highlight of Brasilipinas is the big party on the final night. Attendees can try Brazilian/South American food and cocktails like the *Caipirinha*. The heart of the party, though, is the musical program showcasing all the Brazilian-influenced bands, musicians and ensembles in the country. In other words, Brasilipinas is where all the artists, singers, *escolas* and musicians who are active in performing and promoting Brazilian music in the Philippines converge. The musicians and bands are given the opportunity to perform and share their music in a long night of partying and dancing. EBC Capoeira/Sempre Capoeira, as founders and organizers of Brasilipinas, is the point of unity of Afro-Brazilian music culture in Manila.

For the performing bands like Brigada, Brasilipinas is a form of panata. As a member of Brigada, I have not missed a single Brasilipinas performance. We also plan and prepare carefully for it, with the goal of featuring the “Filipino” in Brasilipinas. In one Brasilipinas show, I was also able to jam with Nyko Maca on the *kulintang*. In other words, the Brasilipinas party combines fun with cultural depth. I argue that Brasilipinas is a unique party worthy of authentic musical and cultural experience. It is where tropicality and tropical cosmopolitanism in Manila is more intense and clearly manifested.

Furthermore, the Brasilipinas party is a legitimate space for the transmission of traditional Afro-Brazilian music in Manila, a valid musical field where one can combine musicological discourse with pleasure. Borrowing Richard Shain’s words to describe cafes and nightclubs in Senegal, the Brasilipinas party is an important laboratory for “incubating ideas and developing modern forms of sociality.”³⁷

Brasilipinas is the meeting of two musical cultures, the Filipinization of Brazilian musical traditions, in various spaces, from the academe to the party, from the singer to the teacher, all forming part of a tropical, cosmopolitan Manila. And as long as there are the party-lovers, the tropical island life, the samba fanatics, all things enjoyable, inspiring and pleasurable, the music continues.

MUSIC FESTIVALS, MUSICAL PHENOMENA

The Fete de la Musique, the Malasimbo Festival, and Brasilipinas are only three out of many music festivals held in the country. As tourist and musically rich experiences, music festivals have the potential to culturally and economically promote the country, given the right support, direction and attention. The music festivals are also all exciting musical phenomena that provide a broader perspective of the local music scene beyond TV and radio. Examining them provides a deeper understanding of another Philippine music culture with its cosmopolitan and tropicalized aesthetic. ■

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NARRATING SUSTAINABILITY, BY DESIGN

Stories of Responses to Sustainable Futures

words by

AR. LEONIDO GINES, JR. AND AR. GERRY TORRES

In August 2019, an exhibit called “Alon!” opened at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) School of Design and Arts. Curated by one of the editors of this volume, Ar. Gerry Torres, the show focused on the problem of plastic waste in the country. Seen through the lens of six surfing communities outside Manila, the exhibit presented the dire situation in the Philippines, a country identified in a 2015 study by the University of Georgia as the third most plastic-polluting country in the world, next only to China and Indonesia (with the authors of the report expecting this trend to be the case until 2025). As an archipelagic country, the porous borders of the islands became easy conduits for the trash to reach and pollute the oceans. The problem is compounded by relentless plastic production, systems of disposal and the increasing dependence on plastic by people.

The knowledge of the plastic problem begged us, both practicing architects and designers, to pause and reflect on its effect on ecological volatility within the broader issues of sustainability and climate change.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Surfers from six surfing communities outside of Manila pose with plastic trash picked in under five minutes from their beaches. Installed at the College of Saint Benilde during the 'Alon!' exhibition, September 2019, the exercise demonstrated the extent of marine plastic trash found in the Philippines today. All photos by Luis Manere

Fig. 1 Luke Landrigan, San Juan, La Union.

Fig. 2 Kamea Rodrigo, Baler, Quezon.

Fig. 3 Adelardo Pompa, Dulag, Leyte.

Fig. 4 Summer Puertollano, Siargao Island.

Fig. 5 Javen Laraga Gubat, Sorsogon.

Fig. 6 Juan Plaza, Mati, Davao.

As part of an informed and concerned community of designers, our professionals and their practice became suspect due to the nature of its systems of production. When the Japan Foundation, Manila approached us to collect essays for this journal, we decided that the same issues on sustainability in design practice will become the cornerstones for framing the themes of conversation and topic for this volume. We thought that investigating design production through this project would present an opportunity for us to look deeper into the role of design in creating and sustaining a healthy planet.

Both of us editors have also been academics for over two decades now.¹ In our purview as educators, the concern of the design professions affecting the environment has increasingly been included in our academic agendas. As a mentor, Ar. Jun Gines explicitly injects issues of sustainability and the volatilities in ecological change in his architecture studios and design classes, both at the University of the Philippines and at the College of Saint Benilde (CSB). Ar. Gerry Torres, the present Director of the Center for Campus Art, tasked to curate and produce exhibitions for CSB, delves on topics about the environment for his exhibits to foster awareness among the Benilde community.

The essays in this volume are part of this ongoing concern, and this collection of design narratives are in response to sustainable issues, collecting stories about how designers in the Philippines struggle to keep

a sustainable agenda in the work that they do, and how they understand sustainability issues affecting their projects. As design storytellers, they opened their own design process and learning curves to be expressed, surprisingly, as a collective with similar assumptions and principles in mind. While we intended to cover a wide set of voices from the different design disciplines, to pause for writing was a constraint, and the availability of designers between their project schedules were considered. In the short period that we had to search for contributors to this volume, we were fortunate to find seven individuals whose professional practices involve sustainability.

DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY

Storytelling and narrating can inform design, as Sudarshan Khadka and Alex Furunes contend in their essay. As a style of passing on local knowledge, traditionally learned storytelling, like epic chanting or poetry,² or, even the everyday story through daydreaming, children's drawings, and the notorious gossiping, may inspire designers. Yet the ability to communicate a design proposal is part of what design professionals do. In this volume, while not all the contributors are designers, we found the group had a collective voice. They expressed common observations and aspirations, linking Philippine local resolves (there are many and more obvious than we expect) that should let us think about our environment in a simple and practical way.

Designers do think about complexities in problem-solving, and while the design process is sometimes complicated, most of the time, design can be derived from modular templates or by synthesizing essential ideas. This is crucial to designers and thinkers alike since part of the design process is that of 'iteration,' a process of repeatedly synthesizing ideas into a working idea and 'product.' Design iteration is a tedious research-driven problem-solving chain, but often, a process disappears in form. This is one reason why we also asked a literary/"zine" writer to weigh in, as communicating design knowledge sometimes needs to come from 'outsiders.' In the topic of sustainability, unfortunately, little room

and time is left for on-site learning. Being informed by personal observations that storytelling brings, both in academic and practice-driven journals like this, proves to be an effective tool. Many believe that strategies like infographics and other propaganda-like forms may be a new way of relaying and popularizing, with speed, the story of sustainable practices.

Most design practitioners learn from experience and research through actual fieldwork. Some decide to leave corporate design practice to learn better on the ground. Some even critique design practices that are seen as haute design, perceived as extremely overpriced as it is supposedly 'sexy.' Perhaps because when one hears 'design,' the thought of the impractical and the pricey is immediate. However, as the writers in their essays tell us, design is really more about processes, materials, negotiations, content, and utility than the resultant 'form.' Few design objects become 'classic' in both style and utility.

Many designers agree that the challenge in designing sustainable products also requires popularizing this aspirational 'classic' ideal: it is usable, pretty, long-lasting as it is fashionable, and in some cases, sellable in the long term. Furthermore, even as more products are presented as 'sustainable,' this idea is still misunderstood.

Our initial assumption was that currently there is little publication by Filipino designers in the past five

years that focused on sustainability. While we are not claiming that this collection is the first or the only one, we do acknowledge that the essays here, written by designers representing a varied range of professions, narrate for the first time the struggle of having a design practice in the Philippines with a sustainable agenda. The collection is by no means complete, but those who responded to our call represent contemporary practice in key design fields today.

The term 'sustainable' is an important keyword in contemporary nomenclature and vernacular. The broad definition of sustainability offered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) focuses on 'development.' It offers a model with a set of dimensions as a framework, and we wish to express both support and advocacy for this paradigm. We want to stress, however, that understanding this idea of 'sustainability' as well as that of 'development' be limited within the limitations of this project. At the onset, we qualified the lack of collected writing by designers. While we acknowledge the importance of 'development' goals set globally to mitigate the grave effects of climate change, we wanted to focus on how designers have attempted to 'produce' knowledge on sustainable issues through their projects.

This narrative on development also sets the limitations of the goals against state and corporate-capitalist actions. It is our belief that sustainable development must also be pulled down to the level of individual responsibility (professional, advocate, personal). The narrative of sustainability must therefore be made more popular and proactive. By providing this concept, designers (as professionals and advocates, or as producers and consumers) are challenged to use UNESCO's paradigmatic framework in their work, whether it is architecture, material use and choice, consumption and disposal management, cultural practice, even information dissemination.

We felt that by letting our writers express the 'voice' of their work, and the 'vernacular' in their projects, we can learn several local "first principles" that they themselves learned along the way. The set of first (sustainability) principles include advocating (actively or subtly) for a collaborative design language in the production process; making material information and production (as well as end-of-life product awareness) widely available as part of contemporary cultural processes; or even providing ways to simplify the interface between sustainable goals,

policies, design processes and everyday life. This brings us back to storytelling as design devices. Readers will notice that each essay tells a story of design. The wide impact of the idea of sustainability must implicate the storytelling of design through process, material handling, the cultural implications of production and post-production, dissemination, disposal, and practice.

MULTIPLE MEANINGS AND FIRST PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

We see design as having multiple definitions in contemporary Philippine society. We can start with a given, that design is still essentially a problem-solving process, both scientific and heuristic, guided by the same age-old principles of stability, usability, functionality, well-being and aesthetics. Yet some of the list of sustainable design principles also challenge many of these 'age-old,' if not archaic principles. As designers from the Third World, we also include, in this constantly growing list, some principles of economy of scale, and social responsibility.

Designers understand that meaningful objects and images are more likely to communicate better through their materiality, offering clear and direct messages of what they are for, value, strength and social and economic purposes. Designers are also aware of ephemeral principles, that products as physical objects invoke and contain messages that are interpreted by the cultural values of the times. This is evident even in products that have a utilitarian function, or materials that contain symbols and signs of national aspirations or local culture.

There are historical precedents for these first principles, even as they have been widely disseminated. Axiomatic statements are important to designers, and often, 'products' from allied design professions (architecture, interior design, product and industrial design, graphic and media studies, fashion, advertising, etc.) are driven by slogans popularized within different global movements in their field. Messages like "form ever follows function" (Louis Sullivan), "architecture without architects" (Bernard Rudofsky), "the medium is the message" (Marshall McLuhan) are old adages included within the literature canons of design. They make familiar the goals of designing, as well as the process they invoke, not to mention the experiential message of the observed (modernist) movements at the time.

In this volume, the contributors add to this growing list of definitions and first principles of design, and we

see several of them in the essays as technical, localized and contemporized list of principles:

1. Design concepts are derived because of:

a. Dialogues and collaboration, by transforming the germ ideas into concepts useful for the process and the design output (product, architecture, material development, etc.);

b. Processes, whether learned from formal education or through specific problem-solving iterations, manipulating forms, or other strategic and experiential procedures;

c. Analyzing, articulating and organizing the concepts to form design contexts, programs; for sustainability and environmental responses; and

d. A local and vernacular understanding of constructive possibilities, whether they are from local practices of supportive community action (like *bayanihan*), the use of endemic or introduced raw material (bamboo or pineapple fiber), local consumption patterns (such as 'piecemeal' or *tingi*), or self-production and self-distribution (zines).

2. Material knowledge and technical skills only available locally can identify useful design languages and patterns through the local and the vernacular.

3. The local (endemic, native, introduced, adopted) is the unique design identity by itself, because some of the local materials, practices and processes are part of the locally lived experiences.

The principles above are not new, but the innovation towards sustainable design will be more evident in the stories of the writers, as we introduce them and their work. In an early interview with one of the writers, Ning Encarnacion-Tan, co-editor Jun Gines noted that living in a house made mostly of bamboo is obviously not a new practice in the Philippines, even as it is sometimes romanticized on one hand, or associated with poverty on the other. Compared to other countries though, even those with abundant bamboo populations, residing in a house fully made of bamboo is mostly a novel idea, as Ning would reiterate. Wood is still the preferred traditional material for house construction to live in for these regions, until recent trends of manufactured bamboo became more popular. In other words, while not completely unique to the Philippines, living in a bamboo house is not just traditional, but part of an everyday, if not taken-for-granted practice. This might be too obvious as an observation, but for those whose lives did not include bamboo as material, living in

and living with strong bamboo is a surprisingly unique and identifying register of the quotidian lived experience in the Philippines.

Collectively, the abovementioned list of principles is evident in the stories of sustainability and social responsiveness told by our contributors. Again, Ning Encarnacion-Tan reiterates that bamboo can outlive steel as a construction material, if treated properly. Sudarshan Khadka and Alex Furunes experienced that *bayanihan* has been and still is a sustainable and responsible way to make design production and long-term maintenance synergistic. Or as Dan Matutina and Dang Sering discovered, the way towards synergy between corporate clients and environmentally sensitive designers (a professional relationship that is normally not interdependent on their interests) is through thinking about the life cycles of the product. This product life-cycle principle is important, as Lulu Tan-Gan contends, even as she transitions from a 'foreign' market to a more inclusive local and global, with shifts in production cycles and materials. Indeed, while not a designer, Adam David adds the insight that, in the absence of necessary materials produced locally, the creative discovery of new means of production may support a crucial need, not afforded by market-driven cycles or State bureaucracies.

THE WRITING BRIEF

In finding ways on how designers should respond to the issue of sustainable design, we provided our own set of questions. Designers are used to being offered a brief, even as ours was a little complex. The wide variety of professionals we initially approached complicated this writing project. We had to acknowledge that many will be writing in the middle of their own projects.

We asked them to reflect on the following questions:³

1. How ready are the designs of our products and infrastructure, and the modes by which they are communicated or produced, for volatile change?
2. How sustainable will they be?
3. Are there paradigmatic design principles that render this concern for the social and physical environment, and the volatility associated with human interventions to it, tenable to both human adaptation and resilience? Are the communication of information (multimedia, inter-media, virtual, etc.) also designed properly for its wide dissemination?
4. How do designers respond to the increasingly popular concern for sustainability?

FRAMEWORKING DESIGN THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sustaining the stories (oral accounts and the narratives in this essay collection) of the life cycle of products and the design process is key to teaching all of us the cultural value of sustainability. This cultural value, as we editors believe, is key to providing a localized framework on the issue of sustainable design. In the essays following this editorial, we organize the views of each contributor as part of the unfolding framework.

The two architects Sudar Khadka and Alex Furunes subscribe to the belief that involving the community in the design process leads to the creation of more meaningful spaces and empowers them to respond successfully in times of natural and man-made calamities. In articulating the idea of mutual support, the architects blend two community practices of similar traditional systems of collaborative volunteerism, the Filipino *bayanihan* and the Norwegian *dugnad*, into a concept useful for mutual support, as a “structure for self-organization.” It provided them a framework both for their design process and the community’s participation in the architectural productions of projects. As they learned from the ground by working closely with individual and kin’s storytelling (expressions of experiences, poetry writing, drawing), the framework for collaboration they offered produced not just conversational principles or ideas for negotiation, but more importantly, voices from a common collaborative, meaningful and architectural language that inform the first principles for a community architecture of mutual support. The examples of their two projects in the Philippines and Vietnam were exercises in harnessing community cultural capital as a sustainable power that can operate despite economic and environmental challenges.

Not surprisingly, power is also a concern for Ning Encarnacion-Tan, one that complicates class cultures and driving development towards excessiveness and unsustainable practices. As she started exploring in her essay, power from the elite or moneyed class and the systemic force of capitalist or commercial development stifled green sustainable efforts in urban Philippines. She offers the observation that to counter unsustainable commercialization requires a wider understanding of class and cultural processes. Part of this understanding of the need for a ‘counterculture’ is offering a holistic knowledge of endemic and long-lasting materials like bamboo. Learning from the archaeological record

and forming part of a national narrative of historical, social and cultural importance, the sociological and economic considerations provide cues to solvency that bamboo can offer as a sustainable material. It is not difficult to understand this narrative as she offers her story both as an architect and an expert of bamboo construction: we can live in bamboo houses despite the classist association with poverty, bamboo is a strong construction material and a cultural symbol of sustainable power.

Sifting through design processes, hybrid materials and community empowerment, the stories of self-awareness and shifts in design focus led Lulu Tan-Gan to foray into a new direction. Distinct yet aligned to knits, a material synonymous with her brand, intends to restore the soft power of tradition of the long ignored, often exploited weaving communities in the country. Through the use of piña as a new material that can be melded with knits to come up with attractive fashion options, Lulu hopes to open new mercantile avenues that will increase demand for this extraordinary, uniquely Filipino fiber, extracted from the leaves of the red Spanish pineapple (*Ananas bracteatus*) to uplift the social and economic conditions of the weavers. Through the exploration of weaves using two distinct and dissonant materials, yarn and piña, a new textile and its subsequent typology will be designed and promoted to the global garments market. As a contrapunto to fast fashion and its profligate industries, Lulu’s hand-crafted textiles highlight the artisanal and sustainable practices of indigenous and traditional weaving communities as ways for Philippine design to move forward.

In Dan Matutina’s and Dang Sering’s essay, we see a concern for the life cycles of production-consumption-disposal, and how designers struggle to be a part of the sustainable agenda. Their industry network, through the interviews they gathered, offers a unique peek into this struggle, and while sustainability is beginning to be part of corporate conversations, the institutional plug-ins of the agenda are still malleable. Stories from practitioners in the corporate-enabled advertising, packaging and graphic design industry are filled with “we want to, but...” demonstrating their good intentions but revealing that the gap in sustainable practice is still wide.

One might need to clarify that plastics have long shelf lives, which normally end in the waters or in landfills due to the disposal habits of communities, who are also

usually poor, even if we notice that in many Philippine cities with communities around landfills, poverty drives the recycling of plastics for small profits. However, the poor who are ‘earning’ from recycling are the ones that bear the brunt of the plastic pollution blame, a narrative about their waste disposal habits propagated by big business and governments. We see this stigma despite the broader problem of plastic pollution, from its untrammelled production to the systemic gaps of disposal. (One interesting idea that came out of the interviews of other designers by Dan and Dang was the attempt to ‘ritualize’ the habits of recycling.) Through all of their examples, the new challenge of propagating sustainable habits in plastic packaging depends on the institution as well as on the individual. Within this sphere, the designer becomes the medium.

Finally, the challenge of popularizing any informative idea is always present in design, and no more is this visible than in the publishing industry. When driven by profit, product designers as well as information creators test ideas and products, usually called prototypes, with a sampling of the target population prior to actual production. This is done to predict acceptability, potential valuation and profit margins. Monetizing information must also be manifested by the ‘material’ form through the publication of newsprints, magazines, books, etc. In virtual non-printed media like radio, television and the internet, profit is collected through advertising or subsidies, depending on popular ‘viewership.’

In Adam David’s essay, the materialization of information comes in the form of what he calls “the most egalitarian expression of printed thought.” Information in this form, though, is not the normalized, authorized and public prints but the small press publication of what are called ‘zines.’ While some zine publishers turn a small profit, they usually don’t depend on it. Zines often leave controversially marked written word and visual forms through literary, propaganda or politically charged print art, as Adam reminds us. Zines are not motivated by the limitations of mainstream media concerning design, form and content. In fact, the strength of zines is in its ‘free form.’ Both fascinatingly intriguing and thought-provoking, their design and content are expressed by artists, poets and writers mostly ignored by mainstream publishing. Interestingly, even while

zines are relatively free in form and content, the popularity is wider among the ‘truth seekers’ rather than the purveyors of fake news and propaganda. Adam, in fact, expresses its potentially useful truth agenda and its dissemination for education. His suggestion to a local book fair organizer on the lack of educational materials for children written in local mother tongues was poignant, practical and self-evident: teachers could print the educational materials they wrote themselves.

CONCLUSION: RESPONSE TO SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Parentetical to the discussion of first principles in design, it might be of interest that academics start a design course with a reminder of Plato’s disavowal of the attempt to imitate nature into forms that we create. If so, any contemporary design effort will probably have no philosophical bearing (at least to those who study Platonic aesthetics). Most designers today won’t heed this archaic call to originality or abstraction. Furthermore, we often see nowadays how designers respond to challenges of natural and man-made causes by the application of ‘bio-technologies,’ or natural technologies inspired by nature. Currently, we think of them as ‘advanced’ technologies despite them being ‘bio-mimicked’ technological operations. They are often adroit human interpretations of nature, blending anthropomorphic aesthetics into the ‘natural’ operations of ecosystems.

Designers are caught in the nature-vs-culture conflict more often than we know it. Beyond the archaic Platonic-metaphysical concern and the new technological inspirations from bio-cultures, the principles of mimicry and imitation in its infancy are still somewhat problematic for design. If we are to be responsive and responsible designers and innovators of sustainable futures, we need to rethink these and offer other paradigmatic (sustainable) design principles, especially for our volatile contemporary realities. Designers must not just imitate ecology, they also need to comprehend the systemic workings of ecology and ecosystems, as our contributors will spell out.

As we were commencing this project earlier this year (January and February 2020), a new form

of volatile reality slowly unfolded before us. The threat of a pandemic, what we now know and experience as COVID-19, happened. It rapidly expanded into phenomenal proportions, literally halting almost all human activities and productions, including the publication of this monograph. While we were surprised and locked down by the health emergency with its confusion and fears, many designers quickly responded to calls for community action by providing free design and fabricating services for personal protective equipment (PPE), manufacturing makeshift medical off-site triage and producing valuable infographics. This response was sustained long enough to offset the impotence of governments and political leaderships in responding to the emergency. Was this a sign of the readiness of the designers' sustainability resolve? Far from it, as the gaps were also revealed. Nonetheless it was evident that designers possess the conceptual tools that can be tapped to respond to disastrous events.

We have seen Philippine cities and local governments temporarily halt regulations that were initiated for sustainable development. Quezon City halted its plastic ban regulation to address the need for emergency supplies or food take-outs, mostly made of or requiring plastics. The retraction becomes a setback for sustainable agendas. On the other hand, we see images that show clearer skies and cleaner streets as vehicles and pollutant public and private transport were indefinitely halted. For the several communities of climate activists, the call for climate change mitigation became louder, even though these are drowned out by the regular health advisories. Collecting new stories about this health emergency, while already preceded by similar cases (e.g., the 1918 flu pandemic or previous viral epidemics) will be daunting as we unravel its myriad implications to people's (and designers') lives. Integral to these investigations and the discourse that would ideally follow are questions of sustainability. That, too, remains to be retooled and retold by global experts, industry executives, end-users, and, yes, local designers.

We find in this volume of essays that the problem of sustainability is local and global. Ecology and ecosystems have no cultural borders but local production and consumption challenges disrupt them beyond the administrative borders of nations. Through the stories and narrativization

of the designers-contributors, the contention is clear that the vernacular, the local, the endemic, and the hybrid may be the avenues that can show us the way forward to expressing stories of responses to sustainable futures, and one that can naturally be achieved 'by design.' ■

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¹ Architects Gerry Torres and Leonido (Jun) Gines, Jr. have been teaching design, art and architecture courses at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde. Jun also joined the architecture faculty of the University of the Philippines Diliman-College of Architecture in 2019.

² Co-editor Jun Gines' own involvement in a museum project (Rizal Shrine in Talisay, Dapitan in Zamboanga del Norte) over a couple of decades back recalls his company fabricating a template outdoor exhibition element about the 'narrative' of Philippine National Hero Jose Rizal's private life, expressed as exhibit text signage along the long concrete boardwalk, in which part of the text was literally taken from his poem, 'Mi Retiro.'

³ The full brief given to the designer-writers was as follows:

This volume collects different essays about how the design professions and their allied practice are responding to questions and issues of sustainability in the context of socio-economic conditions in the Philippines today and in the future. The connections between social responsiveness and responsibility, and the physical production of sustainable products are now increasingly tight. It is often the designer-as-thinker, and designer-as-producer who create not just the products but also the discourse for consumers of information, media, objects, habitats, even culture and the environment as a whole.

These questions include the following:

1. How ready are the designs of our products and infrastructure, and the modes by which they are communicated or produced, for volatile change?
2. How sustainable will they be? (you can site your practice here)
3. Are there paradigmatic design principles that render this concern for the social and physical environment, and the volatility associated with human interventions to it, tenable to both human adaptation and resilience? Are the communication of information (multimedia, inter-media, virtual, etc) also designed properly for its wide dissemination?
4. How do designers respond to the increasingly popular concern for sustainability?

The questions above point to the value being placed on innovations and practicality of design production and product industry as well as the communicative power of design itself. This 'design industry' in the Philippines faces many challenges that are not just about aesthetics, but also practicality and long-term sustainability. In this current period of cultural, social and ecological uncertainty, design is no longer just about formal agendas of beauty or functionality but also about responsibility and solvency. But have designers provided the agenda for these innovations and productions that will also pave the way for the synergy of the aesthetic, the practical and the responsive? This proposed collection of essays attempts to provide wide conversations and visions to these issues.

UNDERSTANDING MUTUAL SUPPORT: Creating More Meaningful Spaces

words by
SUDARSHAN
V. KHADKA, JR. &
ALEXANDER
ERIKSSON FURUNES

ART ARCHIVE 03



Fig. 1

Over the past decade there has been an increase in the intensity of natural and man-made disasters around the globe. Architecture is built on natural and human resources. Power lies in the capacity to decide how, where, who, and for what purpose structures are built. The currency of this power is financial capital, but this has not always been the case. Largely, in the rural parts of the world, collaborative traditions have offered a different perspective on the exercise of this power and the decisions related to it.

One such structure for self-organization is called mutual support; it exists in many forms around the world and has been a means to support each other through different seasons, natural disasters and conflicts. These traditions are fading away in our modern-day society, where the currency of wealth is measured by money rather than the relationships we build around us.

The Norwegian *Dugnad* is called for in moments of restoration, maintenance or management of organizations. Historically, it has contributed in shaping Norway's modern-day labor unions and the reconstruction efforts after WWII. The Filipino *bayanihan* is mainly practiced within the villages whenever local communities need a collective effort to build schools, host weddings and funerals, among other things.

There are five core principles of mutual support systems, namely: common goal, collective work, social event, reciprocity, time specific. When it is required, people come together for collective work to achieve a common goal. It is a process that builds social relationships and community cohesion through a series of time-constrained events founded on reciprocity.

STREETLIGHT, NGO FOR CHILDREN IN TACLOBAN

Ten years ago, we designed and built a Study Center for the NGO Streetlight and their community in downtown Tacloban. Streetlight provides health care and educational support for children from the informal settlement. They also provide homes for those living on the streets. We worked closely with the children and their parents through the designing and building process of the Study Center. They later described this process using the Filipino term *bayanihan*, referring to the tradition where a group of people come together to achieve a common goal. For the community, the Study Center is not just a building. It became a symbol of the relationships built on the design process and the parents' efforts for their children.

On November 8, 2013, super typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest typhoons to ever hit land, destroyed more than four million households and claimed thousands of lives in Tacloban. The staff and children of Streetlight survived by climbing onto a nearby roof where they saw the waves caused by the typhoon flattening the informal settlement and the Study Center.

The process of designing the Study Center before the typhoon provided a platform for the families to come together again after the disaster to rebuild their own houses as well as a makeshift study center.

After the disaster, the city government decided to relocate the coastal settlements 16 km north to Tagpuro. Due to the urgency of the situation, the communities were not given a voice in the decisions that directly affected them. People lost their sense of belonging and struggled to fit into the new community they were placed in. The site of the new Streetlight buildings is located near the main relocation zone in Tagpuro.

Construction on the new site was an opportunity to involve the community in deciding what was needed. What we learned from the concept of *bayanihan* was that our role as architects was to provide a framework for collaboration. More than 100 workshops were organized to program, conceptualize and design the new buildings. Through drawings, models and full-scale mockups, the community developed a common language to express and negotiate ideas and solutions that mattered to them as a group.

We used the existing alignment of trees as the primary circulation axis and divided the site between private and public zones: the private zone consists of an orphanage, playground and study center, while the public zone consists of a sports ground, office and a vocational training center for the community. The decision to place the buildings along the east-west axis

was made to minimize heat and gain benefit from the shade provided by the existing trees.

The brutal power of the winds and waves caused by the typhoon highlighted, for the group, the importance of the two dual concepts of "open and light" and "closed and safe." The heavy concrete volumes were designed to provide refuge during typhoons, while the light and ventilated timber structures gave natural ventilation to allow strong winds to pass through the buildings.

Once we determined the activities, qualities and sequencing of each space, we focused on the design of the detailed building elements. The children made drawings and poems to show what a window and a door meant to them. They described how they used windows to look out at stars or a place where they would serenade the girls they liked. The fathers used these poems and drawings as a reference to find windows in their neighborhood, which they presented to one another. They then made new designs and created mockups using various materials.

The chosen construction methods were deliberately simple in order to enable the local community to gain ownership of the entire project from design to construction and beyond. The architecture explores the values of honest materiality, craftsmanship, expressive tectonics, and vernacular sensitivity.



Fig. 2



Fig. 4

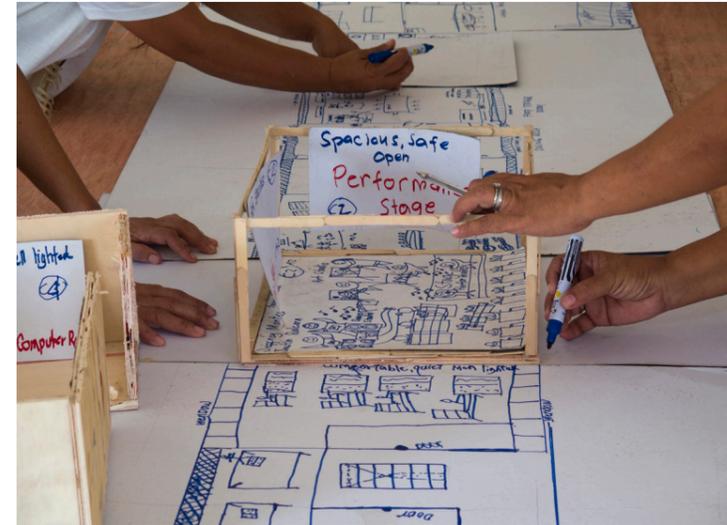


Fig. 3

- Fig. 1 Laying the tiles of the mockup structure together
- Fig. 2 Workshop with the community to translate their model into drawing
- Fig. 3 Model-making workshop
- Fig. 4 The doors of the open area can be closed when needed

are located in between the open areas. The study center houses the teachers' offices, music room, library, kitchen and bathrooms in the heavy volumes; in between are classrooms with activity areas for song, dance and theater. At times, the building also functions as a vocational training center serving as the public face of Streetlight that connects them with the larger community of Tagpuro.

The internal garden is enclosed by the buildings and trees around the site, serving as a safe space for the children to play in. Streetlight utilizes the garden for private events such as graduations or, in this case, the opening ceremony of the center.

It took three years and a hundred workshops to plan, design and build back what was lost. We aimed to create architecture that embodies the values of authenticity and sensitivity to context, and to represent the community's shared meanings through their architecture.

When put together, the various elements of the building form a cohesive framework that the community can inhabit. The main living room of the orphanage has a loft space for the bedrooms, and service spaces located inside the concrete block of the ground floor. The large screened doors and windows can be opened to form a naturally ventilated recreational space. The office consists of three heavy volumes containing meeting rooms and utility spaces. The shared workspaces



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Fig. 5 Interior of the orphanage building

Fig. 6 Model making workshop

Fig. 7 A small structure built to test construction skills and make something together

LUNG TAM TEXTILE COOPERATIVE IN VIETNAM

To break down this process further we will describe one of our ongoing projects in Vietnam. Lung Tam textile cooperative is a women's organization based in the mountainous regions of Ha Giang, Vietnam. They produce batik and hemp textiles according to Hmong customs, which are shared orally in the absence of a written language. Initiated by the textile cooperative's leader, Ms. Mai, and a handful of women sixteen years ago, the cooperative has grown to accommodate more than a hundred members from the surrounding areas. We were invited to design new facilities for the cooperative so that they can increase production capacity, improve working conditions, and showcase their design and weaving process.

Around the village, one can find modest rammed earth buildings with wooden structural frames that have low mezzanines for storing rice, corn, or farming equipment. There are also full timber buildings clad in either wood planks, split bamboo slats, or a mixture of these. By studying and learning the local context, we began to understand the way people live and how their worldview is shaped not only by the house itself, but also by the flora and fauna that surround them. Aside from learning about each house, we studied their customs, rituals, and spiritual beliefs. These actions helped us understand the root of the values they ascribe to the spaces they inhabit.

In order to understand how much space was needed for each process of their production, the workers drew the activities in the spaces where these would take place. They began to see the multifunctional and overlapping way their spaces are configured, leading them to realize the importance of maximizing synergy of their activities. Having encountered some difficulty communicating from English to Vietnamese and to Hmong,

the discussions were led by members of the community. We began evaluating the current situation in terms of the qualities of spaces they wanted, and the concept of the cooperative as a symbolic "community house" began to emerge.

With the knowledge we gained from understanding materials and available construction skills, we built a small shed that can be used for group performances, for displaying Hmong textiles, or for visitors who want to learn more about their culture. The design uses the concept of "the grid" and "the section" as a spatial ordering system, which allowed us to maintain a connection between the proposed design and its vernacular references. The importance of the grid and section was derived from stories of vernacular houses and their corresponding meanings and use over time.

Due to the planned road expansion that will remove half of the site, we had to consider a two-story building at the back of the property that would fit all the program requirements. In the meantime, a temporary, open-plan, wooden shed will be positioned in front until the road is built. We came up with two options for the plan and mocked them up on site, in full scale.

The use of a regular grid allowed us to communicate scale better and relate the drawings to the actual building. We used bamboo sticks to mark the plans on the empty lot, and put in the actual equipment on site so that we could role-play and simulate its use. We then made models to focus on detailed space planning and the design of the architectural elements like windows, walls, doors, stairs, and the roof, among others.

Mockups of the window system clarified the functional implications of our design decisions. The weavers wanted to maximize natural light because they attach the looms to the window frames when they work.

Maximizing natural light and ventilation had to be balanced with the possibility of closing-off the bottom panel as protection against strong winds during winter.

Since most traditional houses are single story, the reclaimed wooden structure will be combined with a concrete core and framing system to meet the program requirements. A few days after our last trip, unprecedented heavy rain caused landslides and flash floods around the site and the villages nearby. Mud buried several households and the textiles the community were working on got washed away. This calamity underscores the urgency of the situation and the necessity of empowering a community to take decisive action. The cooperative is now back up and running, and we are currently raising funds for the construction of the new community house. It is our hope that this process becomes a precedent for future developments in the region.

With this framework, we hoped to demonstrate how the principles of mutual support can be applied to the architectural design process. Throughout history, mutual support has been employed by local communities in times of crisis and natural disaster. In some cases, it is still the way communities organize themselves today. Its principles are rooted in empathy, care, and seeing ourselves in each other. One could go as far as to say that what was made together through a shared work process allows some of the ascribed values, memories and meanings to be embedded in the building itself. Architecture then becomes more than an object when it becomes a symbol of values, knowledge, and relationships developed in the process of its creation, and that the essence of architecture is not space but the meaning ascribed to the space. ■

FRAMEWORK

Learning from our experience in the Philippines and considering the standard phases of design of a typical project, from planning, conceptualization, design, and construction, we aimed to synthesize a method of working, which allows for a greater integration of the values, knowledge, and resources of a community at the inception of a project.

It is necessary to begin the planning stage with a mindset of humility, openness, and empathy in order to *collectively learn* about a community's culture and context. Next, we stimulate discussions that *collectively question* their values and try to find ways of clarifying intentions so that these may become shared visions. From these shared visions, we *make* an object that distills this new understanding into something tangible. The goal of these first three steps is to form a common language that becomes a framework for meaningful engagement among all members of the project team.

Architecture conceptualized in terms that directly engages a community allows for deeply shared meanings that can be ascribed to architecture, which can then reflect and reinforce a community's identity over time.

words by
ROSARIO
ENCARNACION TAN



Fig. 1

The Philippine top elite, the forty richest Filipino families comprising 0.1 percent of the population, own most of the wealth of the Philippines. Corollary to this, the commercial interests of this elite group resulted in a proliferation of damage and unsustainability in infrastructure and communication.

In a 2013 article by Julian Keenan, the collective growth of these families was calculated at 76.5 percent of the country's overall increase in GDP.¹ Most of the growth is concentrated on developing Metro Manila's skyscrapers and the emerging beach towns, such as in the island of Palawan. The wealth of these families does not trickle down. In the meantime, according to political science professor Louie Montemar at Manila's De La Salle University, tens of millions of Filipinos live in poverty.

The elite own most of the commercial malls in the urban areas of the Philippines. They proliferate at a maddening pace in most cities of Manila. According to Colliers International, in 2016, new retail space of 724,620 sq.m. was to be constructed in the country.² Using this context I would like to frame the relationship between economic class differentiation and sustainable development deployed in urban and architectural projects.

Though it may be argued that these development projects employ green practices, the overall impact of commercially driven developments in the Philippines amount to unsustainability. This is because profit rather than sustainability is the driving force of the development.

This objective encourages a myopic way of thinking: that as long as the elite is making money, awareness of the surroundings is only of secondary importance.

Secondly, unsustainability of infrastructure arises from the fact that such infrastructure only services the minority and not the majority of the population. It is true that most of the population has access to public schools and, in some urban centers, access to health, sports and cultural facilities. However, most of these facilities lack the infrastructure amenities for cultural life which account for holistic sustainable living. A majority of the population does not have access to libraries, theaters, recreational facilities, urban parks, man-made landscapes and wildlife parks. These places are easily accessible to populations of First World countries whose enjoyment of these sites feeds their souls. In the Philippines, one has to be in the top one percent of the population to enjoy culture and the arts, sports, and premium health services.

Thirdly, the waste and garbage produced by these mostly commercial developments contribute to unsustainability. For example, Metro Manila, with approximately one-tenth of the population of the country, is responsible for 25% of its trash.³ Pollution, in the many sense of the term, intensifies unsustainability. One may say that the lack of understanding or consciousness about material pollution, including materials produced by development and building construction, precedes the problem of unsustainability.



Fig. 2

THE NEED FOR A COUNTERCULTURE IN CONSCIOUSNESS

Sociologist Dr. Cynthia Bautista says that thriving cultural practices empower local communities and are important to development, particularly development based on social justice, inclusivity and sustainability. Bautista says that these cultural practices are in themselves the primary sources of knowledge and that their practitioners become the potential recipients of the development efforts as well. Bautista points out that even the United Nations recognizes that this alternative development can help achieve Sustainable Development Goals “on many levels, improving the livelihood and well-being of people.” And bamboo architecture is part of this way of life.

Dr. Eduardo Tadem further believes that the solution is to research on and adopt existing alternative practices. Adopting these practices is the most direct way to counter the Filipino elites’ “conceived market-centered and state-supported process to control the region’s natural resources and productive capacities.”⁴ He says that the elite marginalizes and disenfranchises a large portion of the country’s population. He espouses that the solution is to encourage people presently working on the ground to be in solidarity with, and work for mutual benefits and common principles of the community. Tadem says that this is the antithesis of the “cutthroat competition, the insatiable thirst for profits, narrow patriotism and chauvinism.”⁵ He also says that “culture is essential in lending a human and spiritual face to political and economic dimensions and should therefore be nurtured and developed.”⁴

This general outlook expresses the role of how society and social differentiation play into the

cultural constructs of sustainable ecosystems and the production of systems for sustainable buildings. However, this background outlook is directed towards practices that articulate how understanding a particular building material may help architects, designers, and builders become willful purveyors of environmental awareness. This essay does not delve into why there is a lack of environmental awareness and political will. Rather, it will go into examples of sustainable activities through bamboo architecture in the realm of the author’s professional experiences. The author believes that these examples produce sustainability in the infrastructure of cities and towns beyond the consciousness of commercialism. In particular, this essay shares examples of bamboo design and construction and a gleaning into the thinking of the dwellers that live in them.

This essay focuses on examples of bamboo architecture and architectural practices as a counterpoint to unsustainable commercialization. It inhabits the consciousness that designs products, structures and infrastructure and a counterculture lifestyle that bear in mind what is beneficial for the majority of the population while being sustainable.

Even with the absence of infrastructure support from the elite of the Philippines, the author sees that spirited individuals and communities can don alternative lifestyles through bamboo structures. These bamboo dwellers are aware of the environmental crisis and possess a calling or commitment, along with practices that prove their commitment to sustainability.



Fig. 3

A SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE AND ALTERNATIVE PRACTICE

Bamboo architecture may be a strong point for the Filipino’s survival, and helps effective sustainability for our environment. Bamboo can be readily harvested in just five years, and can then be constructed into structures by the people themselves, an activity long practiced in the Philippines.

The Philippines is blessed with at least 2,300 years of rich, traditional bamboo architecture.⁶ Though bamboo is a grass and seemingly non-permanent, why do we say that bamboo architecture has been practiced in our land for thousands of years? This must have been because of strong oral tradition passed on from generation to generation.

Until today, constructing with bamboo is a familiar technology in areas where these houses are present. Men, women and children can build with bamboo based on the author’s interviews with residents of Panay in the years 1980-1990. Bamboo does not grow on its own. To flourish, it has to be planted by man and this was done by our forefathers.

One anthropologist surmises that a settlement was present in archaeological sites in the Philippines where bamboo grows. For example, hundreds of years ago, people dwelt in the mountains where bamboo grew—and most of our mountains have bamboo. Our forefathers and bamboo have coexisted since hundreds of years ago.

But what is most important is to reorient Filipinos that generations ago, we had the capacity to build our own houses from bamboo materials available on the land where we lived. Back then, building with bamboo was common knowledge or a skill that could be easily learned.

Bamboo architecture is an alternative architecture. But this architecture would be given a boost once we realize that it had been around for thousands of years.

This paradigm shift will allow us to recognize the wisdom of practicing bamboo architecture as our ancestors did and to harness this knowledge to allow us to move forward into the 21st century.

Bamboo is a purely benevolent material that can provide the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. For shelter, bamboo fulfills all the criteria for sustainability.

Even on subsoil, bamboo grows quickly, and helps reforest, locks carbon, registers negative carbon footprinting, and is totally recyclable as it goes back to the earth.

On the other hand, concrete, steel, glass, and metal are all extractive materials. Collecting these materials eject carbon into the air and harm the earth.

A bamboo harvest, the ensuing treatment and processing, and the bamboo architecture itself produce income that goes straight to the local population, which, in turn, helps establish self-sustainability in communities.

.....

I cannot give a bird’s eye view of all the sustainable lifestyles generated from building with bamboo. But through almost 30 years of researching and building with bamboo, and working on 45 projects that have used bamboo, there are many lessons, a lot of them humbling, that confirm the sustainability of bamboo as a building material. Also, designing and building with bamboo has compelled me (and my husband) to take on a simplified and sustainable lifestyle.

I will also share stories from various clients and collaborations with researchers and architects. All these point to potential successes for sustainability of bamboo design and construction.

RESEARCH AND WRITING FOR FOLK ARCHITECTURE (1979-1990)

In 1979, I was an intern with Urban Designers Associates under Prof. Honorato G. Paloma. Paloma was a favorite professor of many students, including me, at the College of Architecture, University of the Philippines (UP). Paloma had an excellent grasp of design and architectural concepts, and his words were compelling. We all looked up to him.

I mentioned to him that book publisher and writer Gilda Cordero Fernando commissioned me to be the main researcher of the book, *Folk Architecture*.⁷

Paloma said that the bamboo houses of Panay should be a topic. I enthusiastically told this to Fernando, who promptly commissioned Paloma to do the second section, Panay Houses, of the book *Folk Architecture*.

Paloma, Fernando's daughter Patricia (or Wendy) and I went around the island of Panay in 1980 and discovered at least a hundred bamboo houses in its four provinces: Iloilo, Antique, Capiz and Aklan. For the most part, we took the scenic route by the sea, but we also traveled inland to the farms, especially in the province of Iloilo.

Sadly, Paloma could not turn in a text. I believe he got writer's block. After years of waiting, Fernando asked me to write the article, with her and two other editors editing my thoughts.

To this day, I still look up to Paloma, and I have a theory of what happened about his writer's block. With all the beautiful pictures of bamboo houses that he took, Paloma could not frame the lovely houses into a theory. Unlike today in the 21st century, there was nothing published in the 1980s that described Philippine concepts of vernacular architecture, folk architecture, indigenous architecture and people architecture.

Having to move on with the team of writers, I did intensive library research. I scoured Filipiniana publications in many libraries, looking for leads on houses and house implements; songs and poetry that mentioned an experience of the house. I went back to the province once to live in a town in Antique for a week, and went back in 1989 to research once more around the island. For the next nine years, I gathered many field notes, interviews, and my personal photos. Ten years later, in 1990, photographer Joseph Fortin again took hundreds of pictures.

From the field interviews, we gathered the following data: costs of the house, house rituals, age of the house, and floor plans. What is clear now is that the bamboo house also had sustainable qualities

about it. They are well ventilated, with high pitched roofs, usually surrounded by an edible garden, and stilted to avoid floods.

The ten years of experiencing the bamboo house also caused a major paradigm shift. The classic Filipino bamboo house, a Southeast Asian term called the *bahay kubo*, is a classic piece of people architecture, and it is fully sustainable. It would take another generation of scholars to buttress this realization.

RESEARCH WITH THE OXFORD CENTER FOR DISASTER STUDIES ON TYPHOON MITIGATION (1995)

It is clear that bamboo is earthquake-proof. But can bamboo withstand typhoons? There was a research that looked into this with experts from the Oxford Center for Disaster Studies (OCDS) in 1995.

Nick Hall and Roger Bellers of OCDS, UK, contracted my husband Julio "Juju" Galvez Tan and myself to help them look into bamboo houses, and determine whether these houses are typhoon-resistant.

OCDS gave the criteria for the research. The houses must have a traditional design; be located in a traditional or old town; be free of warlords; and have the presence of women leaders. We identified Igbalangao, Antique, a fourth class municipality at the delta of the Antique river. Intuitively, I knew that old civilizations happened around rivers and their deltas.

After a week of working with Josephine, the woman leader, and interviews with carpenters, Hall and Bellers asked the carpenters to demonstrate connections of bamboo. The carpenters had difficulty expressing themselves. Instead, the carpenters asked us to come back after three days. When we did come back, they had built a full house, showing all the house parts and the connections. Hall and Bellers concluded that the building system of bamboo was holistic. It could not be explained in parts but as a whole. And because of this, all the structural parts shared compressive and tensile stresses with each other. The sharing of stresses gave the bamboo structure superior strength.

This field research reaffirmed a theory that I held for 15 years. And in the next years, and through more research, it was clear that bamboo is stronger than steel in tensile strength, and stronger than concrete in compressive strength.

This essay focuses on examples of bamboo architecture and architectural practices as a counterpoint to unsustainable commercialization. It inhabits the consciousness that designs products, structures and infrastructure and a counterculture lifestyle that bears in mind what is beneficial for the majority of the population while being sustainable.

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Fig. 1 A view of the dining area and kitchen in the Three-Story Bamboo House in San Mateo, Rizal

Fig. 2 One of the best form examples of a bamboo house

Fig. 3 Panay bamboo house photographed in 1980
.....

In the succeeding years, the research buttressed the conclusion of Hall and Bellers that the bamboo houses are typhoon-resistant. And, of course, again, it can be noted that the bamboo houses are stilted, thus protected from the sudden flood.

In this case, it is the design strategy of the Southeast Asian *bahay kubo* that is ingenious. The *bahay kubo* is stilted and thus flood-free, light in structure, woven in construction, and with high-pitched roofs. During typhoons, the wind goes through the structure, and the house sways resiliently.

But what if the houses fall from the typhoon winds? The people replied to OCDS that within days after the fall, the houses could be put up again because of the small dimension and relative lightness of the bamboo houses, and with the help of the members of the community. This again is a good point for the sustainability of bamboo architecture—and demonstrates how the use of bamboo mitigates the severity of damage caused by typhoons.

CENTER FOR ECOZOIC LIVING AND LEARNING (1999-2000)

In 1999, Fr. John Leydon and Elin Mondejar initiated the vision for a Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning (CELL). Leydon and Mondejar commissioned me to build two big bamboo structures: a seminar space and a two-story dormitory, roughly 8 meters x 12 meters each in size. This was in line with their permaculture farm, eco-spiritual activities, and advocacy for sustainability.

For the first time, we constructed structural bamboo parts of posts, beams, and roof trusses. And, as usual, the floors, walls and openings were of bamboo, too. The roof was made of *anahaw*.

Another important discovery was the use of nylon twine, similar to fishing twine, as bamboo lashing.

The discovery of lashing with nylon happened when I observed that the bamboo outriggers of the bancas used this for fastening. Upon inquiry, the boatmen told me that the nylon lashings were at least 30 years old. I surmised that nylon lashings are strong because it could take salt water and the ultraviolet rays of the sun.

This was another vernacular (local) lesson learned. More importantly, I realized that the vision of Leydon and Mondejar was the wind behind the back of bamboo construction in the context of sustainability.

Fig. 4 Three-Story Bamboo House at San Mateo, Rizal

Fig. 5 Del Monte Bamboo House



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

THE HOUSE OF IPAT LUNA AND HOWIE SEVERINO (2014-2015)

Ideal clients come few and far between so it was a great boost when the owners possess a nationalistic vision and are willing to lead a sustainable lifestyle. Bamboo construction is part of the equation of this sustainable lifestyle; this, plus the owners' will, leadership, and inner power.

This happened when we built the mostly bamboo but with mixed material house of Maria Paz "Ipat" Luna and Horacio Gorospe "Howie" Severino.

First, Ipat and Howie tapped the inventive and creative potential of Nato Espiritu, foreman, artisan and inventor, who is passionate about bamboo.

Previously, Nato, on his own, built a bamboo treehouse for Ipat and Howie. It cost, P200,000.00 or roughly P32,000.00 per sq.m. Ipat and Howie presently rent it out, with 70% occupancy, via Airbnb.

We built a 10-meter spanned structure with the support of steel I-beams. We also recycled materials and, of course, built bamboo floor framing, floors, and roof framings.

Nato also learned the limits of the strength of bamboo and how to fashion long nailers, which are so much stronger than the usual wooden nailers. I taught Nato techniques and, not to be outdone, he created his own.

The four of us worked in synchronicity. Ipat and Howie's total commitment to the environment, sustainability, and an alternative lifestyle gave a totally new angle to building with bamboo—a leadership that the 21st bamboo tradition needed. We were all in a cusp of high motivation, encouragement and creativity.

Even when I was single, the concept of "Voluntary Simplicity" struck me hard. I personally resonated with it, and pursued it. I met my husband Juju who was into voluntary work with NGOs and committed to working with the people. I knew I met the right person for a life-long journey. Our journey created the next three structures.

OUR VERY OWN BAMBOO HOUSE IN DEL MONTE, QUEZON CITY (1991-1996)

In the spirit of keeping life simple, and following his calling, I asked my husband Juju if we could build a bamboo house. It immediately caught his imagination. And so in 1991, we built our first house that would be a combination of bamboo, concrete and lumber. I had the confidence in building with bamboo for the first time, from four years of intensive training in construction, plus 11 years of design experience.

When we started to build, I just employed the carpenters we would work with. There was one very good carpenter, Peralta (I only remember him by this name), who hailed from Iloilo, Panay. Peralta immediately took on to the bamboo, slatting, weaving, flattening, studding. Within two weeks, other workers took on to Peralta's technique. Bert Gallano, also from Iloilo, and who has worked with me since 1984, took to bamboo construction right away as well. It was as if we could assume that it was natural to build with bamboo.

We were able to do bamboo floors, railings and balusters, and the traditional *tadtad* walls. *Tadtad* walls, which are commonly seen in Panay island, are made by framing flattened bamboo poles into panels with vertical and horizontal weaves.

Because we were mimicking vernacular (local) finishing techniques, we had the easy confidence in building.

THE BAMBOO MODULAR HOUSE IN THE BAMBOO ADVANTAGE EXHIBIT (2000-2003)

In 2002, we upped the bar of bamboo sustainability. We created a modular bamboo house from a confluence of factors.

My husband Juju and I did not really know where we would settle next. Just about then, the owner of Pinto Gallery, Dr. Joven Cuanang, asked if I could do an exhibit on bamboo.

We then thought of a bamboo modular house. This became a 65-sq.m. house in 2m x 4m modules of bamboo.

We had a star artisan in Rudy Encinares, who led the 7-man team. Rudy and I had been working on other conventional projects, and I realized that Rudy was just not an able foreman. He was brilliant with both conventional and bamboo construction apart from the fact that he was hands-on with the work. He did neat and wonderful carpentry. By this time, too, I knew that the most talented workers that work with bamboo are the ones who had the artistic bent. Also, aside from carpenters, welders easily handle the material. Perhaps it is because these welders handle the round pipes.

Since 1991, Bert Gallano, too, remained very consistent in the quality of his bamboo carpentry. At present (2019), he is a master bamboo carpenter, producing very good bamboo work.

With our dream team, we easily assembled and disassembled the modular structure. We all worked out

the parts, the panels, and the system of connections, especially the lashing. We successfully transferred this modular bamboo structure, assembling and dismantling five times.

The first time took two weeks to assemble at the Pinto Gallery for the Bamboo Advantage Exhibit 2003. After four exhibit extensions, from two to eight months, it took only one week to disassemble the structure.

By the fourth time the house was transferred, it only took three days to disassemble and dismantle, and one week to assemble. This shows we had created a system where the construction became 50% more efficient. Throughout this operation, except for the trucking's use of diesel, the efforts were sustainable, with zero carbon footprint.

THREE-STORY BAMBOO HOUSE IN SAN MATEO (2007-ONGOING)

The dismantable bamboo house finally settled back at the border of Metro Manila, at Patiis Road, San Mateo. We purchased a 600-sq.m. land for the bamboo house. As usual, we rented one six-wheeler truck and loaded all the pieces, including the *anahaw* roofing.

With 500 more pieces of bamboo, we extended the modular house, integrating its dismantable panels into a permanent structure.

Then came the floods. Our street was flooded. The water swelled to 0.50 meter high. Higher than 0.50 meters above the road, the flood waters started flowing to the surrounding lots. A major step was to fill up the land one meter high, which meant that the ground level would be 0.50 meter higher than the road. This was done after the deep foundations of bamboo, concrete and some steel bars were planted.

After we raised the lot, we designed the bamboo house to have a *silong*, which is an open stilted ground floor area and multipurpose area.

This made it flood-proof, a concept resonating again with another sustainable criteria. From this, I also realized that flood mitigation means to integrate *silong* designs in Filipino dwellings where floods occur.

The second floor was the living space: kitchen, dining and living area with a balcony that overlooks a 1.3-hectare empty lot, and the San Mateo mountains. The third floor contained the workroom, the bedroom and a complete bathroom on bamboo slats flooring.

By now, we had taken the effort to give the whole house a lot of bamboo features. Aside from the posts, most of the other structural parts—beams, joists, nailers, slat flooring, and roof framing—were of bamboo. Walls, windows, and a *banguerahan* (a protruded shelf for drying dishes) were also of bamboo.

All these construction came from lessons from vernacular houses in Panay, done during the research in the 1980s for *Folk Architecture*. Again, the wisdom of our forefathers made bamboo construction very doable. I believe that one of the additional criteria for sustainability is to adopt traditional methods that create more economical, easily transferable and faster techniques in building.

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Again, there is a small group of people who have the vision and they go for it. In the Philippines, despite the negative effects of globalization on identity, despite neo-liberalism stemming from three centuries of colonialism, there are globally sensitive Filipinos and Filipino designers who are deeply rooted in their culture. There are also foreigners who respect the Filipino values and design in appropriateness and sustainability. They understand and appreciate our history, tradition and environmental situation. These are the game changers and leaders for true sustainability.

THE B'LAANS AND JAIME GALVEZ TAN (2018-PRESENT)

Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan is what we call a “doctor to the barrios,” or doctor to the people. Early in his profession (in the 1970s), Tan found his calling to serve the communities. He and his wife Rebecca came out with a book in the 1980s on the medicinal qualities of plants endemic to the Philippines. This book has been republished many times over. Tan says that he combines Filipino, Western and Ayurvedic treatments for his patients.

But Tan does not stop there. Currently, he is living in a bamboo house (2018-present) that the indigenous group, the B'laans, built for one-third the cost of a usual vernacular house. He challenged the community that if they build him a house, he would stay with them for a year and serve them. And that is exactly what happened.

This act of his also inspired the B'laans to realize that there is wisdom in their vernacular architecture. Currently, they were also able to build another house to rent out via Airbnb.

And while Tan lives with the B'laans, he reinforces the good living habits they already have since their forefathers' time. These are eating nutritiously and constantly stoking the community spirit that is so alive there. Tan lauds the fact that in the village, there are 32 centenarians, precisely because of the high quality of life, which is encompassed by sustainable practices in their food, attitude, and simple life.



Fig. 6

Fig. 6 The house built by B'laans in 2018

Fig. 7 The Bamboo Theater designed by Arch. Fuminori Nousaku with Arch. Rosario Encarnacion Tan

Fig. 8 Lashing anahaw roofing with nylon twine

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FUMINORI NOUSAKU AND THE BAMBOO THEATER (2017)

For Japanese architect Fuminori Nousaku, the challenge was to come out with a crossover design for the 2017 exhibition *Almost There* at Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines. He fused similarities between the cultures of Japan and the Philippines, and made sure to include the bamboo installation he called the Bamboo Theater, which would capture the imagination of Filipino culture.

Nousaku agreed to having me as co-designer because of my knowledge of designing and building with bamboo. We worked on the link on Japan's bamboo farm A-frame structures for drying produce with the now 21st century image of a 10-meter high bamboo A-Frame with very colorful Filipino rice sack designs. Nousaku commented that these colorful sacks would not work with Japanese sensibilities, but he understood the visuals as appropriate for the Philippines.

After the end of the *Almost There* exhibit, the Bamboo Theater remained standing onsite for eight more months. Two other exhibition artists, Junyee and Agnes Arellano, included the Bamboo Theater in their next installations. Thus, the Bamboo Theater lasted four times longer than initially planned, as if poetically declaring that sustainability indeed is in its ability for reuse and recreation.

Also, if an idea is ingrained deeply in culture, and happily even deeper in these two cultures, modern expressions of very traditional practices are very possible. What is further intriguing is that these traditional practices uphold sustainability as one of its values.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

PAULO G. ALCAZAREN AND THE FREEDOM MEMORIAL COMPETITION (2019)

Paulo G. Alcazaren is a heavyweight with his writings and knowledge of Philippine architecture history and culture. But Alcazaren also has the benefit of working internationally for decades in Singapore.

With his team of five, Alcazaren invested a hefty amount and joined a competition: the Freedom Memorial in July 2019. The entry made it to the finals. A ten-story-high bamboo tower took the attention of people and the judges. And this bamboo tower is a take on the future of architectural sustainability. With the current research on bamboo technology, Alcazaren argued that this could be done.

Happily, it seems that a person with Alcazaren's credentials can afford to have such vision precisely because he can put on track what Filipino architecture could and should be.

In conclusion, it is heartening to realize that a strong solution for architecture and sustainability in the Philippines is a result of a deep understanding and use of traditional knowledge and moving it on to 21st century models of architecture. It strongly suggests that the answer is definitely in the hands of the majority of the Philippine population, and not with the elite. ■

¹ *The Grim Reality Behind the Philippines' Economic Growth*, by Julian Keenan, *The Atlantic*, May 7, 2013

² *Mall Culture and Consumerism in the Philippines*, Jore-Annie Rico and Kim Robert C. de Leon, *State of Power*, 2017

³ *Metro Manila Produces a Fourth of the Philippine Garbage*, by Kristine L. Alave at *inquirer.net*. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 16, 2011

⁴ Conference on Alternatives in Southeast Asia: Keynote Speech by Eduardo Tadem, Ph.D.: October 2018 Manuscript is still unpublished. This was held in Madison 101 Hotel, Quezon City

⁵ Conference on Alternatives in Southeast Asia: Keynote Speech by Eduardo Tadem, Ph.D.: October 2018 Manuscript is still unpublished. This was held in Madison 101 Hotel, Quezon City

⁶ Zialcita, Fernando N. and Tinio, Martin I. Jr. *Philippine Ancestral Houses*. Quezon City, Philippines: GCF Books: 1980

⁷ Perez, Rodrigo D. III, Encarnacion, Rosario S., Dacanay, Julian E., Jr. *Folk Architecture*. GCF Publications: Quezon City, Philippines: 1990

8. 2018: Residence of Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan. Designed and constructed by the B'laan Community located at Sitio Amguo in Polomolok, South Cotabato

9. 2019: The Freedom Memorial: Finalist at the Competition of The Freedom Memorial. Head Designer: Paulo A. Alcazaren

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1. Research for Folk Architecture: 1980-1990 under GCF Publications led by Gilda Cordero Fernando

2. 1990-1996: Residence of Julio Galvez Tan and Rosario Encarnacion Tan, the Del Monte Bamboo House at Del Monte Avenue, Quezon City. Design by Rosario Encarnacion Tan. Construction by Rosario Encarnacion Tan with Ernesto Carino

3. 1999-2000: Center for Ecozoic Living and Learning. Located at Silang Cavite. Owners were Elin Mondejar and Fr. John Leydon. Design by Rosario Encarnacion Tan. Construction by Rosario Encarnacion Tan with Ernesto Carino

4. 2003-2007: Modular Bamboo House first exhibited at the Bamboo Advantage Exhibit, Pinto Gallery Antipolo on November 23, 2019. It traveled five times before being integrated into the Three-Story Bamboo House at Patis Street, San Mateo, Rizal. Design and Construction by Rosario Encarnacion Tan

5. 2007-2010: Three-Story Bamboo House of Mr. and Mrs. Julio Galvez Tan located at Patis Road, San Mateo Rizal. Designed and constructed by Rosario Encarnacion Tan; assisted by contractors Jose N. Nacu and Avelina G. Gabat

6. 2014-2015: Residence of Ipat Luna and Howie Severino. Kapusod Place, Bgy. Lipute, Lipa, Batangas. Design by Rosario Encarnacion Tan with Nato Espiritu. Constructed by Nato Espiritu with Rosario Encarnacion Tan

7. 2016-2017: "The Bamboo Theater" for the Exhibit of *Almost There* at Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines. Design by Fuminori Nousaku and Rosario Encarnacion Tan. Constructed by Rosario Encarnacion Tan, assisted by Avelina G. Gabat

words by
LULU TAN-GAN

ART ARCHIVE 03



Fig. 1

In the Philippine fashion scene, Lulu Tan-Gan has been synonymous with knitwear since the mid-'80s. No one would need a sweater in a tropical country, unless you live up north, like in Baguio, Mountain Province. It took some guts and the desire to create travel-friendly fashion that I would see beyond this thinking and create pieces for an unexpected market, the expatriates and tourists who came to Manila, and the jet-set Filipinos who traveled to colder destinations. (In hindsight, I spent senior high school in Baguio and the time spent there might have helped me to imagine cooler weather when I created spring and winter fashion while living in hot Manila.)

THE FASHION NEWBIE

Being the youngest in the family with ten older siblings made my parents very protective. Weekends and summer vacations were locked-down days with my big family, spent visiting relatives and family friends. When alone, I would spend a lot of my time reading American books and magazines, in particular, fashion magazines. I was always doing something or having something made; I would doodle, draw, and engage in some craftwork, like rug-making and mosaics. Needing constant visual change in my room, I would redecorate and create matching bed covers and curtains. Eventually, I designed my own clothes, buying fabric and trimmings, and had them made.

High school was liberation from home. I enjoyed moments with girlfriends different from the sports activities of four older brothers. (My elder sister and I were

born ten years apart.) School allowed me the enjoyment of learning history, geography, chemistry, art, and a subject called home economics, which enabled me to tinker with craft projects. I enjoyed working with my hands and never had to struggle with them. My last year in high school was spent in Baguio after which I pondered between Political Science and the Arts for a college degree. I chose Bachelor of Fine Arts and it became my destiny.

I was still sheltered even in college at the University of Santo Tomas. But in between classes, I would gallivant with friends or alone to downtown Manila and Ermita. Rizal Avenue was then the center of the city's commercial life, its streets lined with coffee shops, bazaars/department stores, and stand-alone movie theaters designed by prominent Filipino architects of the day like Pablo Antonio and Juan Nakpil. Both are now National Artists for Architecture. Bookstores were Alemar's, National and a specialty book shop, La Solidaridad. In the Manila area I was impressed with one church, the San Sebastian Cathedral, a Roman Catholic basilica known for its Gothic Revival architecture and as the only steel church in Asia. The arrival of the Americans at the beginning of the 20th century turned Escolta into one of Manila's most famous streets; in its premises were stand-alone department stores Heacock's, Botica Boie, La Estrella del Norte, Oceanic, Berg's, and Aguinaldo's. Mabini Street had tailoring and fashion schools that taught illustration, pattern making, and sewing. I went to Madonna's School of Fashion during my college summers.

My love for crafts, color, and texture led me to knits. Instead of buying fabrics, which everyone else was doing, I started to use yarns. It intrigued me that yarn would allow me to weave my own material. I would order them from my producer, customize the colors, weave the combinations, and fabricate textures. I was amazed with the knit loom, a hand-operated device used without electricity, allowing for an eco-friendly way of producing fabrics.

My buying trips with Tessie led me to know more about knitwear. We regularly attended the Hong Kong trade shows, when the event featured pop-up brands. Traveling with clothes that needed ironing or paying for laundry didn't sound practical so I thought of reintroducing knits. During the '70s and early '80s, knitwear came in limited forms, there were only tank tops, sweaters, and cardigans. Responding to these limitations started my career. I focused on knitwear and transformed basic clothing into fashionable pieces. I recall the repeated comments: "Knitwear? Who is going to buy knits when it is so hot in Manila?" I turned a deaf ear. I simply knew what I wanted and that was to create what was unavailable in the market. More than following trends, my path as a designer was through the innovation of products not found in the Philippine market. The knits I created attracted the expatriates and tourists who came to the country and the jet-setting Filipinos who traveled to colder destinations. More than market analysis, my business template came from innovation and intuition, practical quantitative and qualitative assessment, and the addition of fashionable elements to an essential product without sacrificing its function. The concept of the Tan-Gan line as a "travel-friendly" designer brand was born.

In 1983, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) tapped me to join a group of eight fashion designers to collaborate for the promotion and branding of Philippine fashion in the international arena. The project was headed by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Minister Roberto Ongpin, CITEM Executive Director Mina Gabor and Head of Soft Goods Director Fe Agoncillo-Reyes. Together with designers Cesar Gaupo, Danny de la Cuesta, and Pando Manipon, I joined Redson, the knitwear exporting company, known in the local market as Vonnel. I made prototypes of pullovers, 100% handcrafted, using a combination of crocheted hand-loomed knit with accents of hand weaves, pigskin, calfskin, and snakeskin. They were eco-friendly and what we now call sustainable.

During fashion weeks we traveled across Europe to attend the fashion fairs in Paris, London, Milan,

A 'TRAVEL-FRIENDLY' DESIGNER BRAND

My love for crafts, color, and texture led me to knits. Instead of buying fabrics, which everyone else was doing, I started to use yarns. It intrigued me that yarn would allow me to weave my own material. I would order them from my producer, customize the colors, weave the combinations, and fabricate textures. I was amazed with the knit loom, a hand-operated device used without electricity, allowing for an eco-friendly way of producing fabrics.

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During fashion weeks we traveled across Europe to attend the fashion fairs in Paris, London, Milan,

and Dusseldorf. We took orders at the Paris Prêt à Porter Féminin, now called What's Next, at the Portes de Versailles, Paris. We presented fashion shows in Germany, where the fair was called the Mode Woche. We did backstage tasks, helped set up shows, pulled together the lineup of models and clothes. An exposure trip to Europe in the early '80s was quite an experience; globalization had not set in yet so each country had its own food, fashion, and art. It was an exhausting, exhilarating, but fruitful first promotional sales trip for the Philippines.

When I returned from Europe, Redson was not eager to take the orders, which were too small for an exporting company that was used to significant volumes. I was disappointed and unsure of what to do with this dilemma. To learn the technical side of knitting I had invested in a knit loom, and since Redson was not accepting the European orders, I decided to take over. This decision turned into an opportunity for me to export.

During the day I was in SM, at night I worked to fulfill my export orders. I added three more looms and three knitters, worked till midnight and on weekends, outsourced hand crochet works in Carmona and weaving in Baguio, cities outside of Manila. In 1985, Tessie Sy heard about my export pullovers, sold in limited quantities from excess orders to a few enthusiasts, like socialites Chona Kasten and Mary Prieto. She offered me to be a consignor at SM Boutique Square, where I was once a buyer. I never had plans of going on my own but I trusted Tessie, who said that I was capable of doing it. My brand expanded as Shoe Mart did, through its chain of department stores. In 1989, I opened my first stand-alone store in Greenbelt 1, Ayala Mall, in Makati City. The next shop was at SM's first mall, Megamall, next to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). As SM expanded, so did our branches.

Iconic fashion brands have been defined by specific signature styles borne from the designer's derring-do to trailblaze trends that remain relevant for generations. Etched in our minds are menswear-inspired fashion and expensive simplicity pioneered by Coco Chanel, cone-bra corsets by Jean-Paul Gaultier and wrapped jersey dresses by Diane von Fürstenberg, brands that continue to inspire today's new generation of designers.

POISED FOR A NEW CHALLENGE

In the Philippines, Tan-Gan has become synonymous with knitwear. Why did I decide to move after establishing the brand and go beyond the comfort zone of a successful niche now considered a fashion staple?

As an artist, I always seek growth to step beyond myself and my own expression. Being the first and only Filipino designer to date who has mastered and been recognized for a craft-based brand, I wanted to explore other possibilities without sacrificing what I have established in the past decades. Poised for a new challenge, I stepped forward to redefine all within my reach.

I saw that knits were meant for more than just clothing the Filipino in an unexpected fashion. Knits can also be the perfect material that can amalgamate with indigenous textiles, which are distinctly Filipino but have become dissonant with our everyday lives. Due to three hundred years of colonization under Spain and fifty years under America, the Philippines is quite westernized. Colonial mentality continues to persist today, even with the rise of nationalism in the 1950s through the '70s and '80s. This thinking has also been evident in fashion and merchandising.

I realized that the advocacy I was about to embrace was bigger than my art, even bigger than the fashion industry. Besides our individuality, our fashion choices define our collective cultural identity as a nation. In my search for direction, my advocacy has become a question of Filipino identity. Wearing a cultural trademark is tantamount to expressing this. I still love to work with knits, but in the second phase of my career, I believe it is time to give back.

I represented the Philippines in various international trade events for several years, as co-founder of our industry councils. Since 1992, I have played an active part in the Filipino Designers Group (FDG) and the Fashion and Design Council of the Philippines (FDCP) in organizing missions that support the industry through the continuous participation in events like the International Young Fashion Designers Competition in Paris. Together with other fashion frontliners like Josie Natori, Barge Ramos, Inno Sotto, Mike de la Rosa and Cesar Gaupo, we organized projects, partnered with the Philippine government and searched for opportunities to improve the local fashion design industry.

In 2002, the president of Alliance Francaise de Manille (AFM), Aurelio "Gigi" Montinola III, invited me to be a board member. I had been Philippine fashion's French connection, working to give young designers the opportunity for recognition in Parisian fashion design contests and promoting a bond between French and Filipino designers. One of our goals was to professionalize and strengthen the education of fashion designers and to reorient garment and textile manufacturers on the need for product development. Through AFM's annual



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 1 Redefining luxe in Tan Gan's "Indigenous Couture" collection

Fig. 2 Lulu Tan-Gan, August 2018

Fig. 3 2015 Salon 3 Fashion Show

BRIDGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINED LIVELIHOOD

Beyond the business of the fashion industry, my goal is to support communities of women whose skills in weaving and embroidery are endangered due to the lack of a supportive market. By imbuing my designs with their fabrics and employing their embroidery skills, I hope to identify and bridge opportunities for sustained livelihood. I want to garner the fashion industry's support towards this direction and hope that with increased demand, skill sets will be taught to the next generation of weavers and embroiderers, and preserve our cultural traditions.

Piña (*Ananas comosus*) is a traditional Philippine fiber made from pineapple leaves. The name was derived from the Spanish piña, meaning "pineapple." Cultivation of the Red Spanish pineapple,² where the fibers are extracted from, is an age-old tradition dating from the 17th century. After harvest, the piña leaves are separated from the trunk. The fibers are then manually separated from the leaves by a method of hand-scraping called decortication. This extraction process from the long, rather stiff leaves is very labor-intensive. The leaves are then scraped with a coconut husk and the fibers knotted one by one to form a continuous filament. Spun by hand, these filaments are converted into yarns. The next step, a time-consuming process, is warping and setting the piña yarns on the loom, ready for weaving. Because the piña fiber is fine and breaks easily, working with it is slow and tedious and workers are continually knotting broken threads. Frequently, piña is blended with cotton, abaca, or silk to create strength and to provide an assortment of textured fabrics that can be utilized for different purposes. Since the fabric is hand-loomed by only a few old weavers and the material is seasonal due to the monsoon seasons, piña can be difficult to source. The material therefore becomes costly.

"The Piña: Resurfaced" will identify Tan-Gan's luxury phase. When the Spanish arrived in the Philippines

in 1521, weaving cloth from silk and plant fibers was already a flourishing art, as was embellishment with embroidery, perhaps learned from the Chinese. Under Spain, Western styles of embroidery were introduced and taught to girls in convent schools. The soft, fine, flexible piña fabric has always been used for the *barong tagalog*³ of the elite *ilustrado*⁴ class, to be worn only for special occasions like weddings or as a Philippine national dress on national holidays. Contemporary designers who use the fabric employ it for haute couture, and it comes with an expensive price tag. For years, many designers tried to use the piña for regular fashion in hopes of resurfacing its relevance only to find their creations disconnected and alien to the modern Filipino lifestyle.

As a ready to wear designer, the Tan-Gan brand hopes to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary fashion by combining knits and piña. Tan-Gan will bring it to a new direction by combining the traditional fabrics with present trends, and redefine luxury. It will support community livelihood and bring back traditional weaves to the global market, using the successes of piña in the past to jumpstart the next generation of designers.

My love affair with the so-called antiquated fabric awakened me to meld the richness of the piña with the softness of our knits. Three years in the making, the experimentation of marrying knit with local hand-woven fabric started early for our team. Successfully marrying two different fabrics was a real challenge especially when the end product had to be both wearable and feasible. The challenges of combining two dissonant materials have proven to be a valuable advocacy and allow a bigger perspective for the fashion industry. The end product shows that there is promise in bringing back piña successfully and reviving the long-ignored indigenous and traditional community-based industries.

CONTRASTING KNITWEAR AND PIÑA WEAR

As a fashion brand, the challenge now begins with "combining contrasts." What has been established in the past two decades, knitwear, and what has to be innovated, piña wear, is a contrast. There is an extreme contrast from the opposite ends of these two materials, both visually different, as well as by texture. These four factors in the product development stage made the process even more challenging, like considering the construction, color, texture, and fall of the garments.

Construction:

Unlike traditional weaves, knit fabric stretches easily. It is of key importance to use the right material for the right part of the garment. To make both the knits and the piña comfortably fit and flatter the figure, we had to apply piña to areas that need to be stiff, and knits to areas that need to be fluid.

Color:

The challenge was getting the right tone of yarns to match the natural, vintage hue of old piña, and get the nostalgic feel. Matching the tones allows the indigenous material to keep its "natural" color, and dyes to come out differently depending on fiber content. We spent time experimenting on dyeing techniques to get the correct color palette.

Texture:

Getting the right texture and fall of the finished garments was a challenge. Texture-wise, knit is stronger and more tactile while the piña weaves are floaty and fragile. In order to be able to combine the knit and piña, we had to source finer gauge yarns to create knitted fabrics that will mix well with the softness of piña.

Fabric Fall:

When it comes to the fall of the fabric, piña being featherweight has the tendency to float while knits collapse. We had to sew some hidden trapezes to get the knits to float together with the piña.

Transforming a material known to be stiff, costume-like, and expensive is the design challenge that we embarked on. We softened the look and feel of piña by combining it with quality knits, a material I know best. My designs veer away from utilizing the piña traditionally, as my brand reflects a fascination in reconciling seemingly dissonant materials and techniques. This challenge is a perfect inspiration for the new phase of Tan-Gan, one that will create wearable piña relevant to the present market.

cultural program called "French Spring," I paved the way for collaborations in fashion with the FDCP and AFM. The FDCP fashion designers would take inspiration from French exhibits of French fashion photographers, architects, illustrators, perfumers and scent designers.

The collaborative events were greatly appreciated and recognized by the French Embassy in Manila and by France's Ministère de la Culture. I was conferred the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the Honorable Ambassadeur de France Renee Veyret. In the awarding ceremonies, Ambassador Veyret raised a toast to my name, stating, "Fashion design is a very special form of visual art. In France, Sonia Rykiel, Yves Saint-Laurent, Jean-Paul Gaultier are highly regarded among the great artists, painters, sculptors, writers, all brilliant stars of our civilization. Lulu, as an artist yourself, you have had tremendous success in fashion; the originality of your approach and use of fabric and materials have made you shine with the brightest stars on the catwalk, both in the Philippines and abroad."

Tan-Gan's advocacy today takes on a deeper meaning as I attempt to help move the fashion industry into new directions and make it relevant to present issues. We need to herald the best of our traditions and fibers into contemporary forms, support the fast-disappearing skills and livelihood of our small weaving communities, produce local that has potential to be global, and in the process position Filipino fashion brands in the international market.



Fig. 4

'THE PIÑA: RESURFACED'

Beautiful traditional craftsmanship is on the verge of extinction. With the proliferation of globalized production, the highly skilled craftsman has become an endangered species. More young people from the weaving, crocheting and knitting communities choose other work options or to work overseas. Though some indigenous crafts and textiles were utilized before, they were unethically sourced, minimizing the great value of the crafts and leaving the draftsman at the lowest level of the economic sector. Without sufficient financial resources, many of these small community businesses are not able to sustain their eco-friendly business models and fail to attract a new generation of skilled talent. Thus, as a designer, creating the demand for traditional crafts became my other mission.

The design of traditional craft can be stuffy and stale and often needs to be updated to attract new customers. Like any traditional craftsman whose skill is the making, innovating is not the custom. Designers must work hand in hand with the makers. They should be aware of consistent craftsmanship to produce quality work. Even if most consumers today buy fast fashion, they are still inclined to pay the price for quality. When the consumers mature in taste through awareness and exposure, they will demand quality and be willing to pay for artisanally made products.

The younger generation of craftsmen can be taught awareness of the beauty of their traditional arts and crafts and to value and be proud of their tradition. Through

proper education and exposure, more young people from these communities will appreciate their roots when they come of age and be encouraged to continue their legacy through the next generations.

A vital key for the traditional craftsman to survive in the modern world is to make their products accessible through the proper means of distribution. There are two extreme options on opposite ends of the price spectrum that consumers have today: cheap fast-fashion or the highly-styled but expensive. There should be more choices in-between: clothes that look fresh and modern, last a decent amount of time, and reasonably priced. Everything must adapt to stay relevant, including traditional craftsmanship.

Most fashion design students seem to be interested only in becoming "designers." Our culture has taught them that only the "designer" is celebrated, while those toiling behind the scenes are undervalued. Their exposure to the beauty of a perfect craft like traditional weaves will make them appreciate the technical skills and patience for learning them. Perfecting a craft takes time, dedication, and practice and cannot be achieved with speed. Awareness of other career pathways in making and manipulating fashion must be highlighted; textile design, fabric printer, fabric manipulation, fashion technician, pattern making, and construction are some examples. They can be as enjoyable and rewarding professions.

It is just a matter of time for people to value artisanal products. We get compliments when we wear Filipino



Fig. 5

designs because of its uniqueness and global appeal. It is this appreciation that continues to inspire me as a designer and to seek ways to support our beautiful indigenous arts and craft. Reflected in the new phase of Tan-Gan, which highlights the everyday luxury of the artisanal design is the "Indigenous Couture" collection. With intricate workmanship and local community spirit to our signature look of eclectic, global, bohemian sensibility, I hope to bring a culturally rooted design aesthetic. Influenced and inspired by a journey in search of my roots and identity, my efforts stem from wanting traditional textiles to be more wearable for a generation in love with traveling in an increasingly borderless world.

The readily identifiable classic Tan-Gan, full-fashion hand-knits merged with piña in the designs are embellished with exquisite embroidery and beadwork. Geometric lines and forms recall traditional woven cloths such as the *patadyong*⁵ of the Visayan island of Panay, the geometric patterns of the northern highland tribes and the *lumad*⁶ ethno-linguistic groups from the southern Philippines. The form also picks up inspiration from the elegant and sinewy *serpentina*⁷ silhouettes of the ultra-feminine ternos⁸ of the 1940s and 1950s. To each element of the past, a contemporary twist like asymmetrical cuts and layering is included, providing ease and comfort so compulsory for modern clothing. The creations are radical in execution as the traditional elements are rid of its antiquated feel and modernized with sophisticated design sensibilities inspired by the past

...our fashion choices define our collective cultural identity as a nation. In my search for direction, my advocacy has become a question of Filipino identity. Wearing a cultural trademark is tantamount to expressing this.

Fig. 4 Blouson crochet-over-knit body with hand-woven leather strip. Photo by Jun de Leon. Modelled by Gina Leviste

Fig. 5 Redefining luxe in Tan Gan's "Indigenous Couture" collection

...my goal is to support communities of women whose skills in weaving and embroidery are endangered due to the lack of a supportive market. By imbuing my designs with their fabrics and employing their embroidery skills, I hope to identify and bridge opportunities for sustained livelihood.

and enhanced by traditional design patterns, embroidery, and beadwork. The fusion of the elegant designs of the past and the edgy present successfully results in eclectic, bohemian garments that can be worn for casual or special occasions, dressed up or down, allowing the wearer the versatility to add her own personal style.

The concept of Tan-Gan is travel-friendly wear, which is most harmonious to knits. Sticking to this concept, I designed piña in such a way that it becomes easy for handling and transportable. The “Indigenous Couture” piña-knit creation is created for luxury traveling in style. The whole collection is 98 percent hand-made; hand-loomed, hand-sewn, hand-embroidered and hand-finished. After an excess of machine-made fabric, there is nothing like materials that are indigenously made,

vividly unique in look and soothing in feel. Our textiles are also good representations of the best of what we have to offer from the Philippines.

After tedious challenges of studying the techniques involved in marrying knitwear with piña, my team and I created the first-ever “Indigenous Couture,” a collection that showcases design sensibilities that marry the traditional with global sensibilities. “The Piña: Resurfaced” is tradition revived and renewed for retail and modern wear. Our aesthetic and process reflect the rich and varied Filipino culture with a design that is deeply rooted in heritage, and retells the Filipino history in a contemporary setting. ■

¹ **SM Supermalls**, owned by SM Prime Holdings, is a chain of shopping malls in the Philippines that, as of October 2019, has 74 malls located across the country and about two dozen more scheduled to open. It also has 7 malls in China, including SM Tianjin, which is the third largest in the world in terms of gross leasable area (GLA). SM Supermalls has become one of the biggest mall operators in Southeast Asia. Combined, the company has about 9.24 million square meters of gross floor area (GFA). It has 17,230 tenants in the Philippines and 1,867 tenants in China. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SM_Supermalls

² The Red Spanish Pineapple is one of the four varieties of pineapple that are being grown in the Philippines, along with Smooth Cayenne or Hawaiian, Queen or Formosa, and Cabezona. But due to the fibrous, sweet and coarse taste of its fruit, the Red Spanish Pineapple is mainly grown for its fiber. <https://businessdiary.com.ph/14710/research-to-improve-fruit-size-fiber-quality-of-red-spanish-pineappleunderway/>

³ The *barong tagalog*, more commonly known simply as *barong* (and occasionally *baro*), is an embroidered long-sleeved formal shirt for men and a national dress of the Philippines. *Barong tagalog* combines elements from both the precolonial native Filipino and colonial Spanish clothing styles. It is traditionally made with sheer textiles (*nipis*) woven from piña or abacá; although in modern times, cheaper materials like silk, ramie, or polyester are also used. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barong_tagalog

⁴ The *ilustrados* (Spanish: [ilus'traðos], “erudite”, “learned” or “enlightened ones”) constituted the Filipino educated class during the Spanish colonial period in the late 19th century. Elsewhere in New Spain (of which the Philippines were part), the term *gente de razón* carried a similar meaning. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilustrado>

⁵ The *patadyong* (pronounced *pa-tad-jóng*, also called *patadyung*, *patadjong*, *habol*, or *habul*), is an indigenous Philippine rectangular or tube-like wraparound skirt worn by both men and women of the Visayas islands and the Sulu Archipelago, similar to the *Malong*, or Sarong. It was also historically worn in parts of Luzon like Pampanga and Sorsogon. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patadyong>

⁶ The *Lumad* are a group of Austronesian indigenous people in the southern Philippines. It is a Cebuano term meaning “native” or “indigenous”. The term is short for *Katawhang Lumad* (literally, “indigenous people”), the autonym officially adopted by the delegates of the Lumad Mindanao Peoples Federation (LMPPF) founding assembly on June 26, 1986 at the Guadalupe Formation Center, Balindog, Kidapawan, Cotabato, Philippines. It is the self-ascription and collective identity of the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lumad>

⁷ Gowns that are fitted at the waist and hips before flaring out into a fishtail silhouette. <https://www.cosmo.ph/style/what-to-wear/highlight-your-curves-with-these-mermaid-wedding-gowns>

⁸ The **María Clara gown**, sometimes referred to as **Filipiniana dress** or **traje de mestiza**, is a traditional dress worn by women in the Philippines. It is an aristocratic version of the *baro't saya*. It takes its name from María Clara, the mestiza protagonist of the novel *Noli Me Tángere*, penned in 1887 by Filipino nationalist José Rizal. It is traditionally made out of piña, the same material used for the *barong tagalog*. A unified gown version of the dress with butterfly sleeves popularized in the first half of the 20th century by Philippine National Artist Ramon Valera is known as the **terno**, which also has a shorter casual and cocktail dress version known as the **balintawak**. The masculine equivalent of *baro't saya* is the *barong tagalog*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Clara_gown

words by
DAN MATUTINA
& DANG SERING



Fig. 1

It's the monsoon season and there's much to be cautious about; we brace ourselves for the snarling traffic that burdens Metro Manila and the frequent flooding of the streets that immediately follow, making the situation worse.

As it flows through the streets, the murky waters pick up trash – dirt, clear plastic bottles, cigarette butts, an assortment of sachets (and the products they contain), to name a few. Small pieces that pass through the drain grilles will surge on, snaking their way downstream to the Pasig River, and eventually into Manila Bay.

Metro Manila, a sprawling megacity of 16 cities and one municipality, is home to approximately 14 million people. In 2018, the minimum wage was PHP 500-537 or USD 9.72-10.44.¹ The country's population is 108.12 million people, with 22 million living below the poverty line or almost 1/5 of the total.²

THE WORLD'S TOP CORPORATE PLASTICS POLLUTERS

In the 2019 environmental report *Plastics Exposed: How Waste Assessments and Brand Audits are Helping Philippine Cities Fight Plastic Pollution*, the Global Alliance of Incinerators Alternative (GAIA)³ named the Philippines as one of the world's top marine plastic polluters, after China and Indonesia. The report gave Filipinos a jolt. The audit pointed to single-use plastics as forming the bulk of the trash, a staggering 60 billion sachets – packaging for commodities ranging from coffee to shampoo, used once and discarded – a year.

In the same year, another report, *Branded: Vol. II Identifying the World's Top Corporate Plastics Polluters*,⁴ by the Break Free From Plastic member organizations (of which GAIA is also member), named Coca-Cola as the number one polluter for two years in a row, with 11,732 of its branded plastics recorded in 37 countries across four continents, "more than the next three top

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global polluters combined.” Coca-Cola is followed by Nestlé (4,846 pcs. of plastics in 31 countries) and PepsiCo (3,362 pcs. of plastics in 28 countries). The top common plastic items found were plastic bags, sachets and plastic bottles. In the Philippines, Coca-Cola is also the top branded polluter, followed by Nestlé and Universal Robina.

The report presents plastic production and its negative effects on public health, its contribution to the climate crisis (the majority of its production comes from fossil fuels), and the companies’ exploitation of the global south of lower income communities. The report states: “Poverty is also often used as a justification for some of the worst forms of plastic packaging such as single-serve, multi-layered sachets. Companies claim that they are ‘pro-poor’ by allowing those on low daily incomes to purchase goods such as shampoo and soy sauce.”

In a Reuters’ article, “Slave to Sachets: How Poverty Worsens the Plastics Crisis in the Philippines,” Lisa Jorillo, 42-year old mother of four living in Manila’s Tondo slum, says, “Money is hard to come by so I only buy sachets.”⁵

These reports only reveal the bleak reality low income families face in trying to access these essential commodities in single-use sachets that are bad for the environment and have a negative impact as unmanageable plastic pollution in their communities. Since the reports were released, companies have ramped up or expanded their own initiatives in addressing these long-stated problems caused by their plastic packaging.

COMMITMENT TO PLASTICS REDUCTION

In a 2018 press release by Nestlé, CEO Mark Schneider said, “Plastic waste is one of the biggest sustainability issues the world is facing today. Tackling it requires a collective approach. We are committed to finding improved solutions to reduce, reuse and recycle. Our ambition is to achieve 100% recyclable or reusable packaging by 2025.”⁶

Unilever committed to reducing their production of virgin plastic packaging by 50% by 2025.⁷ In 2019, from March 23 to April 14, Unilever (Philippines) opened their first pop-up refilling station called “All Things Hair Refillery” in three locations around Metro Manila: Trinoma, Glorietta 3 and Alabang Town Center.⁸ The first two malls are located in the Makati Central Business District, while the third is right across a higher-income subdivision located south of Metro Manila.

The initiative allowed customers to use their own empty bottles of the same brand for refilling and pay only for the weight of the product restocked. If they didn’t have the same bottle, it was exchanged with a new 100% recyclable bottle. In their All Things Hair PH Facebook page,⁹ many lauded the initiative but wished it had a permanent setup in more locations so that it would be more accessible to other communities. Those who gave feedback also wished that in the future, the company should allow customers to use their own containers even if it isn’t of the same brand.

According to the previously mentioned Reuters’ article, the Philippine Alliance for Recycling and Materials Sustainability (PARMS), which includes Unilever, P&G and Nestlé among its members, is building a PHP 25 million (USD 475,000) facility that aims to turn sachets into plastic blocks and eco-bricks.

But will the use of eco-bricks be enough to manage the tons of plastics and sachets that are still continuously being produced and discarded? And are these bricks also good enough as alternative building materials?

THE PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM

Although individuals are encouraged more than ever to practice conscious consumerism and adopt a healthy lifestyle, any real solution to the city’s pollution problem requires a structural shift in policy and lifestyle within wider communities.

One of our clients, Charles Paw, a food and gadget retail entrepreneur, was interested in the commercial and business viability of a refillable concept store. He commissioned Curiosity, a Manila-based design research firm, to look into the possibility of applying this concept to the mainstream market.

Based on the findings of their report, “Refillable Store Concept Research,”¹⁰ Curiosity suggests that this kind of business concept is presently feasible if it targets a more affluent market: people who have the means to make environmental and health-conscious decisions and support local, artisanal and organic products for personal and household use, pet products and ready-to-cook food in eco-friendly packaging.

Apart from brick-and-mortar stores in the city that provide refillable and sustainable products, there are weekend markets that have grown popular for attracting people who are generally more aware about environmental concerns. This demographic brings their own bags when shopping in markets that mostly offer fresh produce from nearby farms and artisanal products produced by small business owners.

The report also shares insights on why single-use plastic packaging is rampant in wet markets, stating that cleanliness and weight accuracy are the reasons sachets or items in pre-packed plastic are preferred by sellers.

PROVIDING BETTER DESIGN CLOSER TO HOME

As graphic designers and visual communicators working in Metro Manila, we wanted to figure out what options were available to us in providing better design and packaging solutions for our clients and the companies we work with.

Our studio, Plus63 Design Co., usually works with packaging materials sourced in the country. As a result, designing packaging has always been a challenge since locally available biodegradable materials are hard to find. Some are expensive, which makes it hard for clients to purchase.

A client was looking for biodegradable packaging for their product and found one that fit their requirements in New Zealand. Unfortunately, that New

Zealand-based supplier needed to focus on the growing demands of their local market. In hindsight, if the order pushed through, we would have added to the carbon footprint.

Another client makes freshly roasted arabica coffee beans sourced from local farmers in the Cordilleras. They mentioned that in one of the seminars they attended with the Department of Trade (DTI), the agency recommended the use of biodegradable and sustainable packaging like kraft paper bags. But to them, it is still not 100% biodegradable since the ones that they need to use are lined with plastic or aluminum and feature a valve for releasing gas after roasting coffee beans. They mentioned that this packaging does not evoke “freshly roasted coffee” to customers. Bringing these packaged roasted coffee to events outside of the shop, and packing them in and out of containers, makes the packaging look old easily because of so much handling.

There is a need to look for more viable packaging in the country, without risking freshness, and still be able to come up with great design. The goal of good design packaging is to help products stand out in the market and communicate values to buyers, while also conveying a range of messages, from taste to benefits, health and the environment, and value for money.

LOCAL DESIGN STUDIOS ON SUSTAINABILITY

We reached out to other design studios in Metro Manila to find out what their thoughts were on the impact of the Break from Plastics report and other questions on sustainability.

BJ Abesamis, partner at And a Half, an independent branding and design studio in Mandaluyong City, says, “It’s so hard to think of sustainability when you’re thinking of sustenance. For our clients, some of them small businesses, they have to be profitable in order to pay their employees, afford overhead expenses and operational costs, and invest in the next phase of their business. With all that in mind, the question of providing and shifting to earth-friendly solutions in branding and packaging becomes of least importance. Oftentimes, these solutions are not easily available or are expensive.”

He adds, “And [these solutions] are really hard to come by from our experience. As a branding and design studio, we’re still at the level of ‘how do we

There is a need to look for more viable packaging in the country, without risking freshness and still be able to come up with great design.

make this product popular and sell? One example is La Lola Churreria – we had the idea of selling churros like donuts, and focused on its packaging and the experience of how people would carry and eat it around the mall. Hopefully, through the packaging, it will also catch people’s attention by making it recognizable even in the trash bin!”

In retrospect, the studio also worked with a company that pushed them to think about sustainable packaging. Last year, And a Half was able to work on the rebranding for Humble Market, an outfit that offers sustainable and refill shopping / grocery options: “I guess in general, also as a design studio, those are the projects that we’d like to take on. And admittedly, there’s not much budget there. We worked on it pro-bono/ex-deal. At this point as a design studio [in the Philippines], you have to pick your shots because it’s not feasible as a business to take on a lot of projects like that, sad to say,” says BJ.

We were later joined by And a Half designers Clara Cayosa and Mark Andres, who also shared the challenges they encountered in providing and advising

clients on more sustainable practices. We exchanged information on innovations in reducing waste in the design industry, such as the design of typefaces for less ink coverage, and the like.

BJ continues, “I guess in a very tangible way, as [business owners], our priorities are keeping the business running and paying your employees. Of course, we have to balance it out with one of our studio’s values, which is creating designs that positively impact society. On one hand, we are looking into more environment-friendly and general design solutions leaning towards sustainability; at the same time we also think of the sustainability of our design business.”

Rex Advincula and Jois Tai run Inksurge, a branding and design studio and one of the founding studios of Hydra Design Group. Inksurge found that more sustainable products and packaging are most feasible at the higher end of the market, with production costs driving prices up. Rex and Jois see this as a challenge on how clients respond to these perceptions and the system of product distribution.

Rex shares valuable insights from their client, an organic and biodynamic farm. “They tried to sell their fresh produce without plastic in other retail stores, but no one was buying the products in the chillers,” he says. “Apparently, consumers wanted them in plastic containers because they felt it was unhygienic without it. When they shifted to sealed plastic containers, sales started to pick up. It was a perception of freshness from the side of consumers.”

For another jewelry and collectible objects client, Inksurge proposed a one-size fits all box in order to lessen production. However, there was the challenge of packaging jewelry in one box size, since jewelry comes in various shapes and sizes. In the end, they had to design a few boxes in various sizes that can properly hold these products.

They also noticed that there are more refillable retail spaces, and they laud the efforts of Ritual, located in Makati and with a space at the Legazpi Sunday Market. “There should be more of these companies. I appreciate the efforts of Ritual in providing this service for those who want to live a more sustainable lifestyle,” says Jois.

PREMIUM = SUSTAINABLE?

Philo Chua, founder of Theo & Philo Artisan Chocolates, shares challenges encountered in his bid to shift to more sustainable packaging. The challenges began with the availability of these materials, followed by the cost and, lastly, how these should be used properly since some materials require proper storage to extend its use or shelf life.

He explains, “An example would be our pouch maker. They know these sustainable solutions, but they can’t invest in it right now because it’s too expensive for the Philippine market. As for me, I can’t afford to purchase a huge order for my products. Manufacturers of alternative plastic sell it by the ton to flexible packaging makers. But these packaging makers are also dependent on the market conditions, whether people are also willing to invest in that. So, definitely, if the big businesses will start using it, then these flexible packaging makers will stock up on all these alternative materials that they can spill over to their other clients – smaller companies like mine that can benefit from its availability in the country.”

Since he had to start somewhere, he took small steps such as removing plastic lamination from Theo & Philo chocolate packaging. In the beginning, there was a lot of trial and error on the production side with his printer,

which incurred a lot of costs. But in the end, he found it was worth it even if customers may not immediately notice this change.

There are so many companies and multinational companies that have R&D departments and are aware of the alternatives to plastic packaging. With such companies that have a huge influence on the demand for possible alternatives, smaller businesses may be able to access these if it becomes readily available and affordable in the market. Of course, the demand for the availability of these alternative materials starts at the top, if the government makes the shift in prioritizing the environment and the needs of its citizens for safe and affordable commodities.

THE WAY FORWARD TO STOP POLLUTION

The current state of sustainability in the Philippines shows that no matter how many individuals change their lifestyle, and no matter how much cities push for proper waste management practices, millions of plastics and sachets are still being produced. The poor are rarely heard or given a voice in the discussions on sustainability, but they are the ones who suffer most from the consequences of climate change and bad waste management systems. If we think of solutions that will greatly benefit their well-being and environment, we will have a healthier and thriving society.

The Greenpeace report, *Throwing Away the Future: How Companies Still Get it Wrong on Plastic Pollution Solutions*,¹¹ insists that multinational companies invest in reusable and refillable delivery systems for its customers instead of promoting so-called alternative solutions.

In the Plastics Exposed report that rang the alarm, the Global Alliance for Incinerators’ findings are adamant: “Single-use disposable plastic is the greatest obstacle to sound waste and resource management. Inadequate waste management systems and human negligence are often cited as the main contributors to plastic waste leakage into terrestrial and marine environments – but waste and brand audit data in many parts of the world are helping reveal that the unfettered production of disposable plastic is the actual problem. As long as the mass production of throwaway plastics continues unabated, cities and countries will find it harder and harder to cope. Put simply, disposable plastic is a pollution problem, and the only way to prevent it is to stop it at source.”

The poor are the most vulnerable to the climate crisis, struggling with health concerns by living near garbage dumps and engaging in the dangerous work of sifting and sorting trash.

Meanwhile, small, independent and well-meaning designers and their clients grapple with limited supply of nature-friendly packaging materials for their products. Then there is the big question of whether changing consumer attitudes will be influential enough in pushing for the adoption of anti-plastic government policies, and in forcing multinational companies in the US and Europe to act and stop the production of single-use plastics. ■

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A CHECKLIST FOR PACKAGING DESIGNERS

In designing packaging, the final design is usually a compromise of various conflicting factors. We approach the problem bearing in mind the context of living in a developing country, and hoping that this checklist will be a good start to a more sustainability-conscious packaging design in the Philippines.

WORKING WITH CLIENTS

Design is a collaborative process and it is ideal to get your clients involved in the process.

1. Talk to your clients and ask if they're open to more sustainable packaging options. It might result in a budget adjustment, experimenting with the production processes and a longer time frame. While there is no assurance of a 100% sustainable packaging solution, this is a good start.

2. Have discussions with your clients about other packaging possibilities aside from existing packaging solutions like plastic bottles, cans, etc. Knowing their preferences and constraints can help you determine alternative packaging solutions, e.g., if they prioritize freshness, using glass bottles can be an option.

FOR DESIGNERS

1. How can we improve on current packaging and what are options that consider function and sustainability?

2. Think about the amount of packaging materials for a single product. While elaborate packaging has more appeal, most of the time, it's more for aesthetics than function. Find ways to design packaging with fewer materials.

3. Packaging should keep products safe, hygienic and in good condition. Design packaging that fulfills these conditions yet minimizes product waste.

4. Try to lessen or avoid using OPP (Oriented Polypropylene) lamination for paper packaging. While it adds protection to the paper, it is unnecessary. There are available alternatives to OPP lamination, like cellogreen (<https://www.celloglas.co.uk/print-finishing/lamination/cellogreen/>).

5. Look for more alternative packaging materials. This is challenging since information is not readily available. Do research and talk to printer suppliers about these materials.

6. Use sustainable inks. Printing in production is usually petroleum-based. Soy-based ink is a good alternative, more environmentally friendly and produces better color. A new alternative is an algae-based ink called Living Ink (<https://livingink.co/>).

7. In designing packaging for FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods), think of reusability and recyclability. Since these products are bulk-produced, considering these factors will help the environment.

PACKAGING PRODUCTION

1. Engage and collaborate with your printer partners. They are knowledgeable about available materials and sustainable technologies that are available in the country.

2. Sourcing is important and close collaboration with suppliers is key to coming up with alternative packaging solutions.

3. Work with institutions doing research in this space like the Design Center of the Philippines, which recently worked on producing paper using pineapple leaves. While still in the early stage of production, engaging them early will help provide them with potential usage and application scenarios.

For more information, please read:

<https://www.fdf.org.uk/publicgeneral/Packaging-checklist.pdf>

<https://www.pac.ca/resources/graphic-packaging-sustainability-checklist-english/>

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Fig.1 Photo by Mr. Fukuoka Yoshiki

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Small, independent and well-meaning designers and their clients grapple with a limited supply of nature-friendly packaging materials for their products.

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ZINE FAST, DIY YOUNG, LEAVE A GOOD-LOOKIN 'ROX

Disruption by Design Starring the Punks, Poets,
& Poseurs of the Philippine Zine Community

words by
ADAM DAVID

ART ARCHIVE 03



Fig. 1

One of the prized zines in my collection is *Jane: Documents from Chicago's Clandestine Abortion Service 1968-1973*. Its visuals are nothing special, very perfunctory, and its writing is also very plain, nothing ambitious or colorful. This zine contains the educational material and other propaganda prepared by Jane, a group of women based in Chicago, who fought for abortion rights in the 1960s, and not having that, resorted to develop their own network of abortionists and abortion-friendly medical facilities. All of this happened before the historical decision of *Roe vs Wade* that finally gave women in America the right to choose to have an abortion without much interference from the government.

I love this zine because it reminds me how many of our rights are fought for instead of granted, how we must all constantly fight for our rights even when these rights are already on paper, how these rights have been fought for by collectives and communities, how the Philippines still has not granted its women citizens the right to choose. I love this zine for its very existence as a zine, how something so ephemeral can be so dangerous, can be so helpful, can be so historical. The collective voices of all the women who assembled the zine still resounds all these years, from these flimsy photocopied sheets of paper.

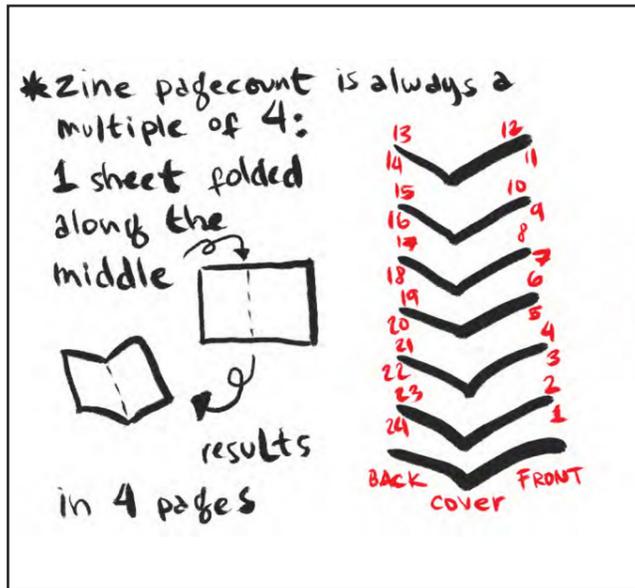


Fig. 2

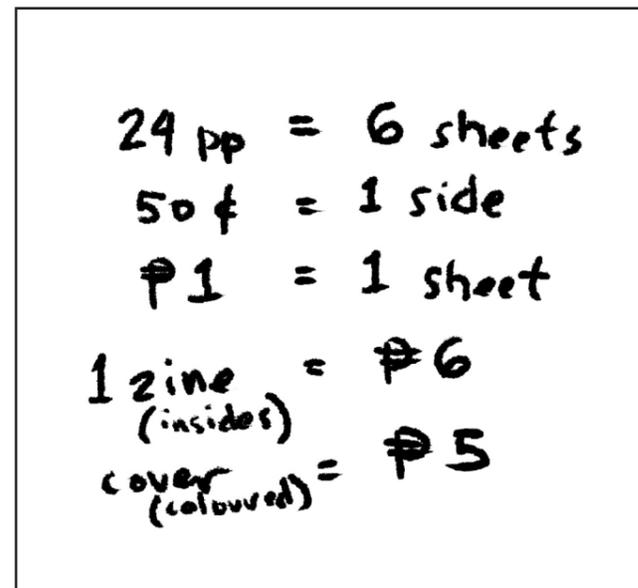


Fig. 3

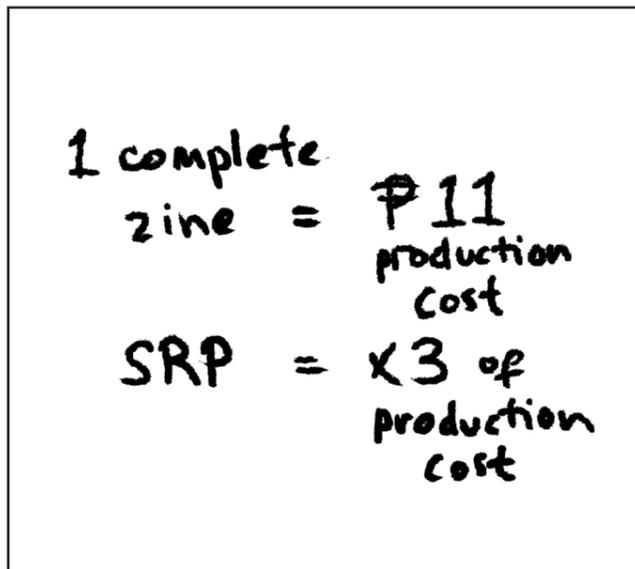


Fig. 4

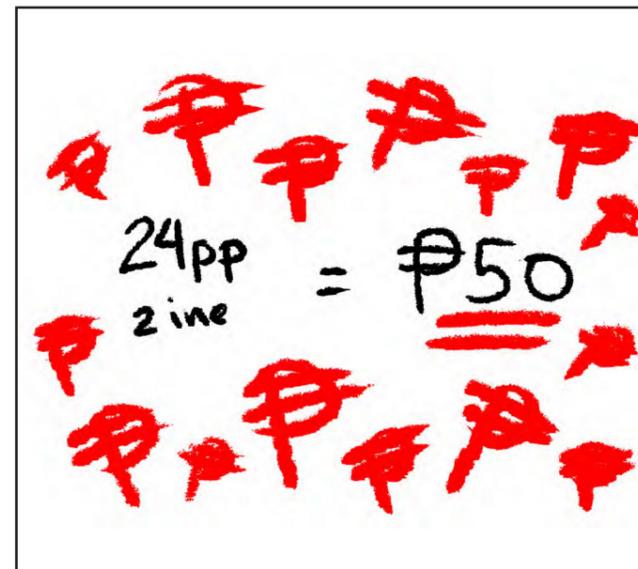


Fig. 5

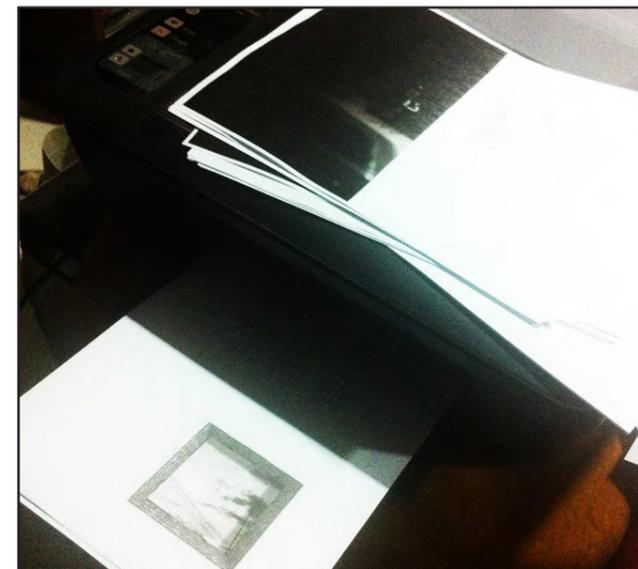


Fig. 6

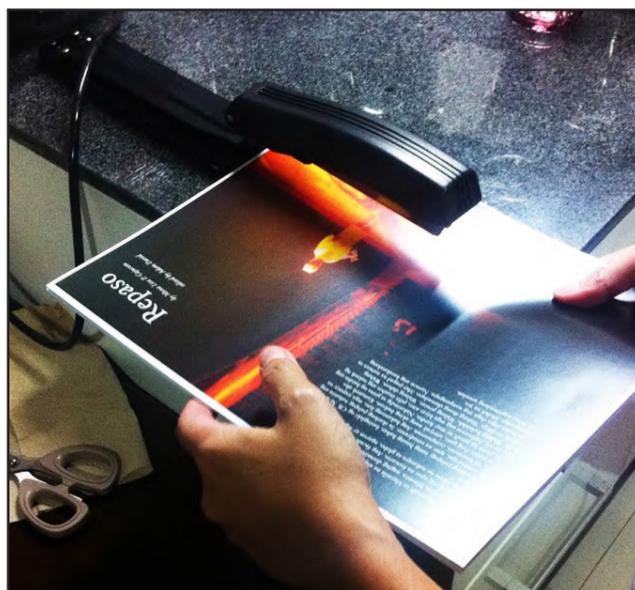


Fig. 7

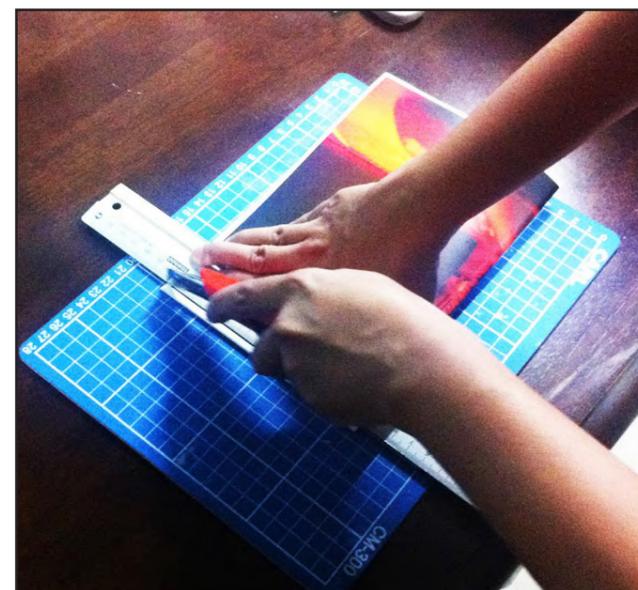


Fig. 8

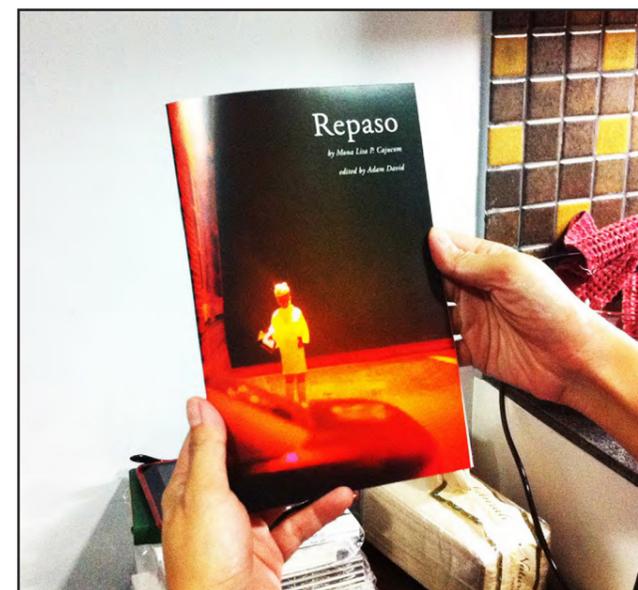


Fig. 9

Fig. 1 PERIPHERY, an accordion zine by Karize Michella Uy.
 Fig. 2-9 How to make a simple zine (slides from a lecture prepared by Adam David)

EGALITARIAN EXPRESSION OF PRINTED THOUGHT

Throughout the relatively recent history and still ongoing development of small press publishing, zines are still the most accessible, the most immediate, and the most egalitarian expression of printed thought available to all. Even in the age of ever present Wi-Fi hotspots and social media's capacity to transmit an individual's every single thought set to virtual type, zines have proven themselves relevant in their materiality. At its simplest, it is a few sheets of paper folded along the middle, its words and pictures set by hand (written or drawn or cut and pasted), its reproduction done by risograph or photocopier (as cheap as PHP 1 a sheet, sometimes cheaper), its distribution system personalized (acquired directly from the creator either online or by post). One can make a zine in the morning with a single sheet of paper and a couple of ballpens, have it reproduced 300 times in the afternoon for less than PHP 1,000, and have the whole print run sold out by evening. Depending on your overhead and pricing, you either broke even or earned enough for the next print run. In case corrections have to be made in the zine, you just need to edit the print original with correction fluid or cut and paste. You simply have the newly-edited original photocopied again before you can distribute the zine again, with its contents now updated.

It is a medium of communication that wears its material heart on its sleeve, and practically explains itself how it is made. It is this simplicity of production that makes it a powerful tool for communication—anyone can do it. It is this simplicity of production that allows the zine and the zinester who makes them to evolve through the times and adapt to the spaces they find themselves in again and again. I continue to teach zinemaking to grade school, high school, college kids, kids within the autism spectrum, Lumad kids, orphans of EJKs (extrajudicial killings), public and private school teachers, farmers, migrant workers, engineers, writers, and I have been teaching it primarily as a means of communication. It is a practical art form in the sense that its priority is to be a container of ideas first before looking aesthetically pleasing. It is in that sense that it becomes a highly adaptable form. In short, zines are cheap, zines are quick, and anybody with pen and paper and scissors and tape can make zines, and zines can be about anything.

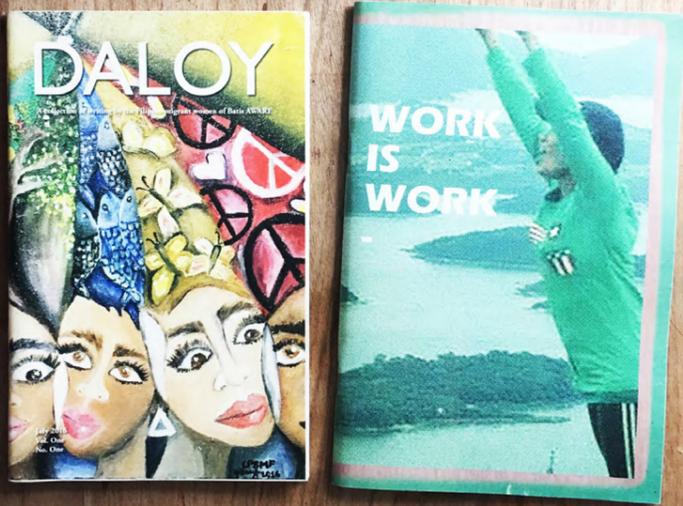


Fig. 10

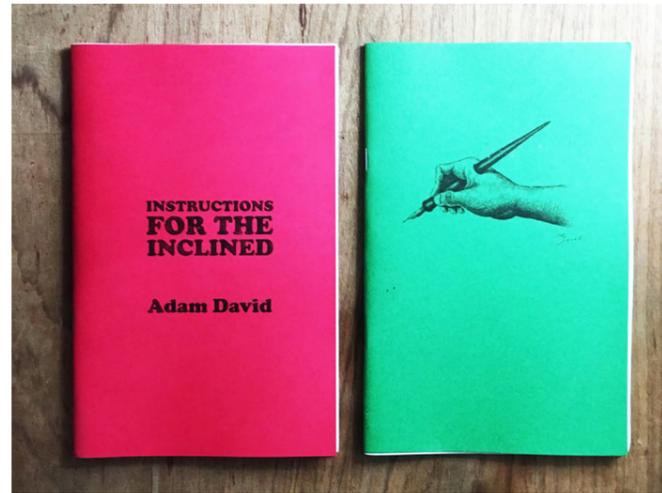


Fig. 12

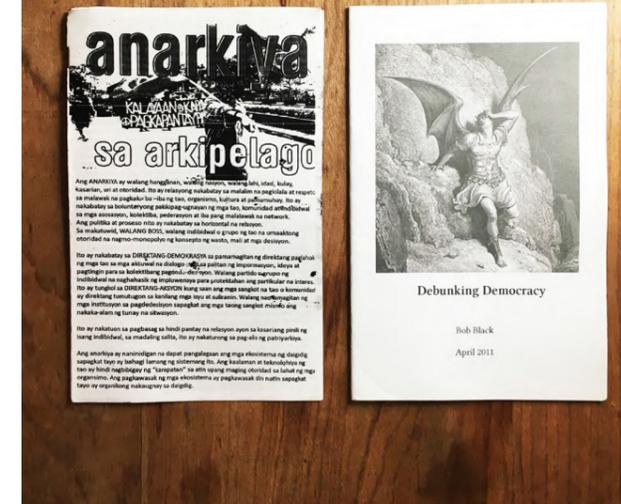


Fig. 13

THE LARGER UMBRELLA

Zines are part of the larger umbrella of the small press, along with other ephemera such as pins, buttons, stickers, fliers, posters, and slogan shirts. In the Philippines, the small press has appeared, disappeared, and reappeared under various names in the last hundred and fifty years, configuring and reconfiguring, depending on the needs of the situation: “the revolutionary press” during the Spanish colonization, “the guerilla press” during both the American and Japanese Occupations, “the underground press” and “the mosquito press” during the Martial Law years, and more recently “the alternative press” as an effort to differentiate itself from the mainstream presses co-optation of non-mainstream aesthetic. My personal preference for “the small press” is in how the term both includes with humility and excludes with conviction. It accommodates a spectrum of practices, forms, and content without losing sight of its ambition where its process is its politics: we have seized the means of production.

Zines as a form and a process have long been defined by the maxim “cut and paste,” meaning, on a literal level, anything that can be cut out of paper and pasted on to another piece of paper can be made into a zine. On a theoretical level, the form and process of zinemaking promise that anything and everything can be cut out of its original context and pasted on to a different context to communicate a new, different message, potentially containing messages that contradict the original. It is detournement in praxis, returned to its base origins. In the Philippines, the contemporary zine practice has divided itself into three main threads: the literary zines, the propaganda zines, and the gallery zines.

In essence: literary zines treat the form as a container of texts with the politics implicit, basically

treating the zine as a non-mainstream book; the propaganda zines treat the form as a container of ideas with the politics explicit, basically treating the zine as a manifesto; the gallery zines treat the form as a container of images with the politics implicit, basically treating the zine as a portable exhibit or sometimes as an art object itself. One can complicate these definitions by acknowledging that rare is the zine that merely does one thing; in fact, most zines are always a combination of any two of these three threads, sometimes a combination of all three.

There are zines that are collections of writing by women migrant and peasant workers that feature poetry, prose, and art that are autobiographical and also merely art. There are zines that are novels that play around with the design and content of the form while telling stories about the EJKs. There are zines that are photo albums of erotic photography showing unconventional body types unembellished by Photoshop; there is a zine that collects sketches from a weekend spent in a town now besieged by earthquakes, effectively turning the zine into an epitaph. There is a zine that collects recipes from a city erased from the map by war, effectively turning the zine into an obituary. There is a zine that caricatures old adverts for ephemeral paraphernalia acquired from thrift stores that sell items from a time long gone, effectively turning the zine into an interrogation of nostalgia. There are zines that are posters portraying artful anti-fascist cartoons. There are zines that are erasures of old literary textbooks. There are zines that are tips about dealing with menstruation in a more eco-friendly way. There are zines about the demolition of urban poor communities to help give way to the gentrification and monetization of public spaces, told as komix stories.



Fig. 11

Fig. 10-11 Samples of zines discussing progressive, socially-relevant topics: migrant workers and state-sponsored terrorism. (DALOY No. 1 published by the Youth & Beauty Brigade; WORK IS WORK published by Mission for Migrant Workers; MGA TUTUL A PALAPA and LAOANEN No. 1 published by Gantala Press; MA, YO KO NA published by Mako)

Fig. 12-13 Samples of zines discussing literary and sociopolitical theory (INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE INCLINED and THE PHILIPPINE AUTHOR AS PRODUCER published by the Youth & Beauty Brigade; ANARKIVA SA ARKIPELAGO and DEBUNKING DEMOCRACY published anonymously)

Fig. 14 Samples of zines produced as part of thirty-minute zine-making lectures and workshops. All content, design, and printing are done within the allotted thirty-minute time period.

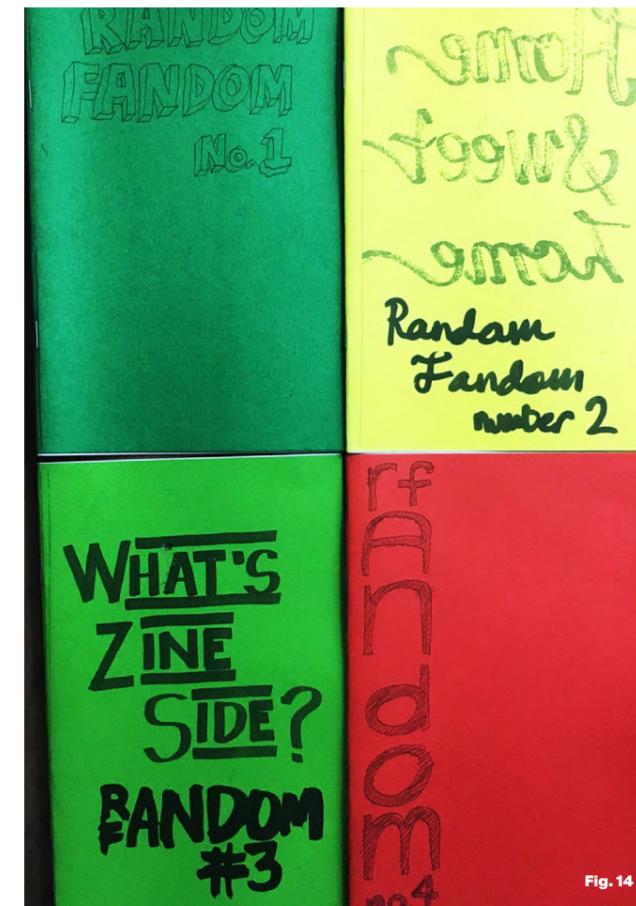


Fig. 14

Zines as a form and a process have long been defined by the maxim ‘cut and paste,’ meaning, on a literal level, anything that can be cut out of paper and pasted on to another piece of paper can be made into a zine.

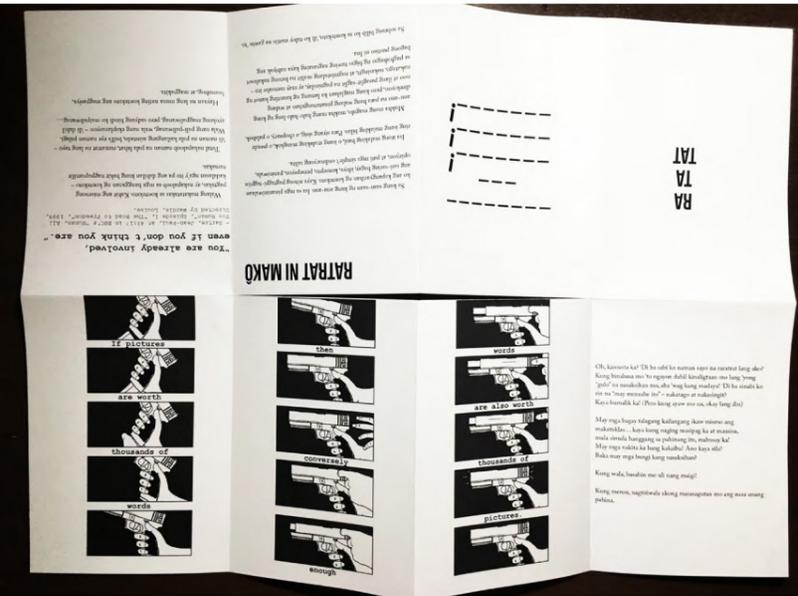


Fig. 15

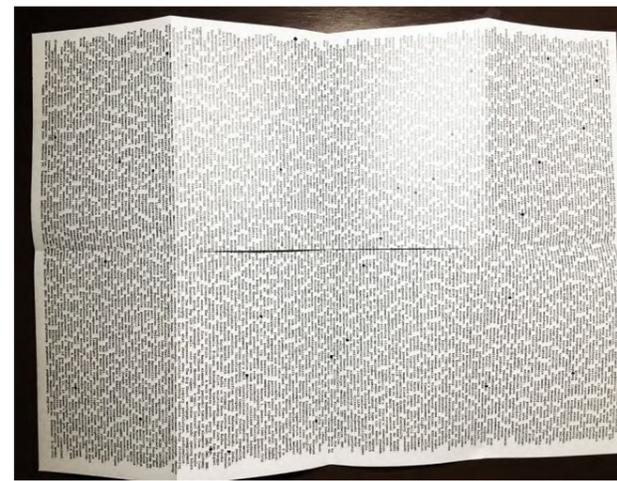


Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

MAINSTREAM: DECADES BEHIND THE CURVE

Not all zines are created equal. Some zines may be more expensive than most. Some zines use better material than most. Some zines are made by zinesters who are better-known than most. Some zines are too cheap for their size. But all share the politics of the independent creator wanting to explore spaces and topics the mainstream press deems unprofitable; all share the politicized intent of disrupting the status quo of cultural production. Mainstream publishing has been historically harsh to creators, prone to exploitation and abuse and calling it tradition and history. Copyright is often surrendered by the creator to the publisher, shared with the publisher at best; often the payment is a lump sum that is barely above minimum wage, often there are no royalties. All of these have changed in the last five years, thanks in no small part to creators who have chosen to migrate to the small press because they have found the small press to be far more accommodating of their work, regardless of genres. Mainstream presses have long ignored publishing poetry from young poets until the small press had in large part cultivated an audience for the work of these young poets. The same has happened with romance novelists. The same has happened with fantasy

and sci-fi. The same has happened with komiks. There are books in the small press that are just like the books in the mainstream, but try as they might, there are no books in the mainstream that are just like the books in the small press. Just like in all of history of cultural production, the mainstream is always decades behind the curve.

Even the means of distribution practiced and cultivated by the small press has been co-opted by the mainstream: pre-ordering, online purchasing, eBook conversions, library boxes, print-on-demand, promotional merchandise, the creators as their own marketing department. And definitely, mainstream presses have gained more from this cultural pilfering than the small press, thanks to the institutional and corporate support that mainstream presses enjoy. Some of these mainstream publishers even make community-building efforts like organizing their own conventions and expos and reading groups, with their own books always front and center beside the cashier. And therein lies the constant major weakness of the mainstream: it will always be focused on the profit motive, thus, it will not make any decision not inspired by the promise of peso signs.



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

I was once briefed by one of the organizers of a local book fair about a hypothetical situation that might have already repeated itself in real life all over the country: to accommodate the Department of Education's Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education initiative for children K to 3, schools are pressed to find educational materials written in the mother tongues of their students. This has become a problem in places where the language is largely oral and practiced by a few, which was how it is for Lumad schools with only barely fifty students at any given time, using a language not previously available in print. In this hypothetical situation, the teachers reportedly requested for educational materials to be written in their language, to no avail. They then resorted to producing their own educational materials written in their language but could not find a publisher who would invest on a book that only fifty students would use at any given time. I suggested the only logical solution to the problem: print it themselves. Make just enough copies to accommodate all students in need, pass down the copies to new incoming students, and make new copies as needed. If done right, a black and white children's book of 24 pages will only cost around PHP25 a copy if printed in any average desktop publishing service in Quezon City.

And therein lies the constant major strength of the small press: its capacity to address community-specific problems with community-specific solutions; essentially, its capacity for community-building. The small press's willful ignorance of the profit motive means it can make decisions not influenced by market forces, which means there is no need to publish only in English and Filipino. There is no need to publish only the bankable creators. There is no need to publish only the comfortable ideas. There is no need to publish only the cozy stories. This means it can make decisions for the advantage of a group of people other than itself, and that by itself is already revolutionary, even emancipatory—a true free and independent press. Imagine the potential of a true free and independent press in an age where labor leaders, the urban poor, farmers, and the indigenous are framed and killed as addicts and rebels; in an age where women and the LGBTQ+ are harassed and raped; in an age where the uneducated are made even more ignorant; in an age

where information is available to all but this information is disinformation, is fake news, is black propaganda. Imagine all the untold histories revealed, all the unsung heroes feted. All this has happened before, all this is happening right now. There have been zines about all this before, there are zines about all this right now.

This is why the small press—zines—will always be a space for the marginalized, the ignored, the weirdos, the oppressed. Zines speak a truer truth. Zines work in the grassroots, enrich the grassroots, fortify it, make it flourish. Zines are disruption by design, changing culture even before culture realizes it has already been changed. Zines are the fairy godmother of invention howling across history from the underground. ■

Fig. 15-16 *RATATAT*, a foldy zine by Mako.
 Fig. 17-19 *AS SYLVIA*, a flexogram zine by Christine V. Lao.
 Fig. 20-26 *CONSUME*, a compilation of zines featuring various methods of printing, published by Caev Press.

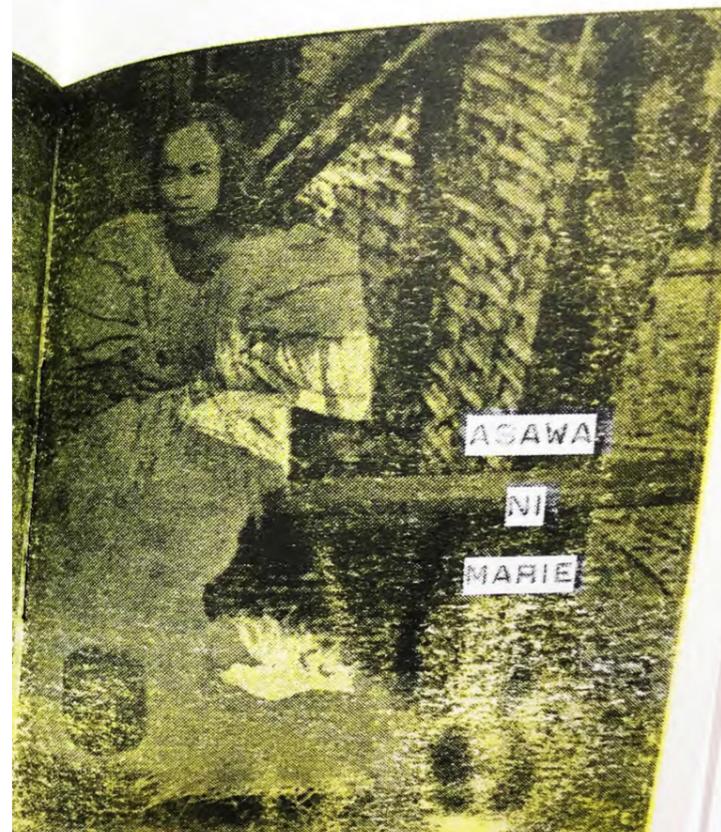


Fig. 23

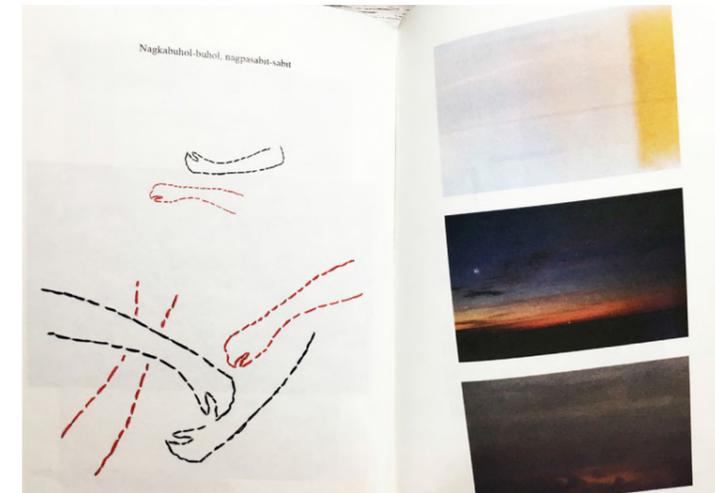


Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 22



Fig. 26

CONTRIBUTORS

JOSÉ S. BUENCONSEJO

José S. Buenconsejo studied Musicology at the University of the Philippines, the University of Hawaii and the University of Pennsylvania where he earned his PhD in 1999. Recipient of grants from the East-West Center, Asian Cultural Council, and Mellon Foundation, Dr. Buenconsejo has published a book in 2002 titled, *Songs and Gifts at the Frontier: Person and Exchange in the Agusan Manobo Possession Ritual* (New York and London: Routledge), with an accompanying documentary film *The River of Exchange*. He currently serves as liaison officer for the Philippines in the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). He also served as the music area editor of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia of Art, 2nd edition. He has taught at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Hong Kong, and the University of the Philippines where he is currently a professor at the Department of Musicology, and served as the former Dean of the College of Music. The National Book Development Board awarded the Best Book in Social Sciences category during the 37th National Book Awards to Prof. Buenconsejo's *Philippine Modernities: Music, Performing Arts, and Language, 1880 to 1941*, published by the UP Press in 2017.

KRINA CAYABYAB

Krina Cayabyab is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Musicology at the University of the Philippines. She is a researcher and writer of CHED-NCCA's Ethnographies of Philippine Auditory Popular Cultures. As a composer and arranger, she has written for various stage works and events produced by UP Diliman, Dulaang UP, CCP Choreo Series, Tanghalang Ateneo; and for works commissioned by various vocal/instrumental groups and events.

She arranges and performs with female vocal trio, Baihana. Krina finished her bachelor's degree in Choral Conducting at the UP College of Music (2010), where she also received her Master of Music in Musicology (2018).

AILEEN DELA CRUZ

Aileen dela Cruz is an Assistant Professor at the University of the Philippines Los Baños where she handles ARTS 1 (Critical Perspectives in the Arts), PHILARTS 1 (Philippine Art and Culture), THEA 101 (History of Theater), HUM 170 (Philippine Art and Society) and THEA 115 (Drama for Children) courses. She is a theater and music practitioner. She graduated Master of Arts in Theater Arts in 2010 at the University of the Philippines Diliman and a Bachelor of Music, cum laude, major in Music Education with Voice Emphasis, in 1998.

ADAM DAVID

Adam David has been making books, zines, and komix since 2000. He is the co-founder of Better Living Through Xeroxography (BLTX), a small press publishing concern that organizes lectures, discussions, and expos focused on independent publishing and art activism since 2010. Before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, he taught komixmaking and komix history at the Philippine High School for the Arts and the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and creative writing to young adults with autism.

ROSARIO ENCARNACION TAN

Rosario Encarnacion Tan is a practicing architect who graduated cum laude in 1979 from the College of Architecture, University of the Philippines. She has designed over

200 structures. She researches on Philippine culture and architecture as well as on bamboo architecture, and has been involved in about 45 structures that use bamboo.

ALEXANDER ERIKSSON FURUNES

Alexander Eriksson Furunes has spearheaded a series of collaborative projects with communities in the UK, India, Brazil, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines through his studio Eriksson Furunes. He is currently doing an Artistic PhD entitled "Learning from Bayanihan/Dugnad" (NTNU, 2016-2021) exploring the role of these traditions through his completed and ongoing collaborative design projects. Furunes and fellow architect Sudarshan Khadka worked together on the award-winning Streetlight Tagpuro, a post-disaster rebuilding project in Tacloban after super-typhoon Haiyan. Now, at the Biennale Architettura 2020 their proposal "Structures of Mutual Support," challenges the way we shape the built environment by closely examining the role of "bayanihan" and mutual support in the architectural process.

LEONIDO GINES, JR.

Architect Leonido Gines, Jr. (Jun) is founding principal of studioGINES, a design collaborative he founded in 2015. He is a Master of Arts in Anthropology graduate of the University of California Riverside and is licensed to practice architecture in the Philippines. He currently teaches architecture and allied courses at the University of the Philippines, Diliman and at the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) School of Design and Arts. He was previously a corporate partner of TAO Management Corporation, a cultural resources management company based

in Manila, from which he divested in 2006. His research on volatility and space dynamics was first introduced in an essay he authored for the Philippine Architecture at the Venice Biennale's catalogue for the exhibition titled "The City who had Two Navels," curated by Edson Cabalfin, PhD, in 2018.

SUDARSHAN V. KHADKA JR.

Sudarshan V. Khadka Jr. is the principal of i.incite architects and was a former associate at Leandro V. Locsin Partners. He was a co-curator of "Muhon: Traces of An Adolescent City" at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. He is exploring critical construction as a means to express shared meanings through architecture.

AGNES ASUNTA L. MANALO

Agnes Asunta L. Manalo is a professional recording and live sound engineer, a music production and engineering (MP&E) 1995 alumna of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, USA, and a Master in Music Technology graduate of the University of Newcastle, Australia. She is an Assistant Professor and the former Chairperson of the Music Production program at the School of Design and Arts of the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde. She is currently finishing her doctoral studies in music at the University of the Philippines College of Music.

DAN MATUTINA

Dan Matutina is a designer, illustrator, and founding partner at Plus63 Design Co. and the Hydra Design Group. He is a recipient of numerous awards, including the ADC Young Guns in 2013. Dan is currently the Vice President of the Communication Design Association of the Philippines.

CONTRIBUTORS

LARA KATRINA T. MENDOZA

Lara Katrina T. Mendoza is a faculty at the Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines, where she has been teaching courses on research writing, essay writing, poetry, fiction, and drama with the Department of English since 1996. In 2019, she joined the Development Studies Program of the same university where she is the Professor for Culture and Development. She earned her AB Humanities and MA Literature degrees from Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines. She earned an advanced master's degree in Cognitive and Functional Linguistics at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. She is currently finishing her PhD in Music from the University of the Philippines in Diliman. She was a Fellow at the Center for Popular Culture Studies at Bowling Green University in Ohio, USA from 2016-2017. Lara also studied at the UP College of Music in the Bachelor of Music program for Choral Conducting from 2001-2003. She is a member of the Ateneo College Glee Club, the Brussels Madrigal Singers, and Novo Concertante Manila, also serving as musical director of several parish choirs and music groups. Her research interests in the last several years have centered on popular music in the Philippines from the 1990s to the present, especially the alternative/indie band scenes, bar events and beer gardens in Manila, and recently, hip-hop events such as rap performances and battle rap. She is the project team leader of Ethnographies of Philippine Auditory Popular Cultures (EPAPC), and she produced, directed, researched, and wrote the documentary on Pinoy hip-hop, *Usapang Hip-Hop: Ambagan sa Eksena at Kultura*.

TUSA MONTES

Tusa Montes is a percussionist, ethnomusicologist, and educator who specializes in the musics of the Philippines, Asia, West Africa and Latin America. She graduated in 2012 with a MM Musicology degree from the University of the Philippines College of Music. She taught at the University of Santo Tomas Conservatory of Music for ten years and is currently a Senior Lecturer at the UP College of Music. She has performed in various festivals in the Philippines and abroad, with notable local and international musicians such as Edsel Gomez, Dana Leong, Joe Bataan, royal hartigan, Bob Aves, Grace Nono, and Bo Razon.

DESIREE PERALEJO

Desiree Peralejo is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Philippines, College of Music Dance program since 2007. She teaches movement notation, dance history, technique, pedagogy to dance majors and reading dance to non-dance majors. She earned her Master of Arts in Art History and her Diploma in Creative Performing Musical Arts in Dance at the University of the Philippines, and her undergraduate degree of Fine Arts Cultural Studies at York University, Canada. Desiree also took the three-year intensive Teacher Training Program at Canada's National Ballet School (NBS), and graduated in 2006. She acquired her teaching certifications with the Royal Academy of Dance (RTS), ISTD (National Associate) and Cecchetti Ballet Society of Canada (Associate) through NBS. Since she moved to the Philippines, Desiree continuously upgrades her teaching status with Cecchetti Ballet Australia and obtained both her Associate Diploma and Licentiate Diploma Part 1. She is currently working on completing her Licentiate Diploma Part 2

with Cecchetti Ballet Australia and taking her PhD in Music at the University of the Philippines.

DANG SERING

Dang Sering is a writer, graphic designer, and visual artist. She usually works on projects that highlight the work of designers and artists in the Philippines. Both Dang Sering and Dan Matutina are currently working together on a number of projects, mostly organizing platforms / projects that feature local design talent and creative exchanges.

LULU TAN-GAN

Lulu Tan-Gan has been synonymous with knitwear since the mid '80s. In a tropical country such as the Philippines, she's made travel-friendly fashion for expatriates and tourists who came to Manila, and for Filipino who travel to temperate countries. Two decades later, Lulu ventured into merging knits and piña fabric to revive traditional fabrics for daywear in the ready to wear market.

GERRY TORRES

Gerry Torres is the Principal Architect of Gerry Torres Architectural Design, established in 2010. He is a tenured professor of the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) and holds a Master in Design and Art Education from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. Gerry served as Dean of Benilde's School of Design and Arts, and founded the architecture, photography, animation, and digital film programs. He teaches architecture but is presently seconded as Benilde's Director for the Center of Campus Art (CCA,) in charge of curating exhibitions that investigate the intersections of popular culture, societal issues, national identities and the creativity of Benildeans

through art and design. He served as the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila in 2011-2012.

Music

Arts & Culture Resource Organizations

1 Ayala Museum

www.ayalamuseum.org

hello@ayalamuseum.org

+63 (2) 926 2722

Ayala Center
Makati Ave., Makati City

2 Bagong Lumad Artists' Foundation, Inc. (BLAFI)

www.facebook.com/blafi.org

joeyayala@blafi.org

3 CASA San Miguel

www.facebook.com/casa.sanmiguel.zambales

casasanmiguelbb@yahoo.com

Evangelista St., Brgy. San Miguel
San Antonio, Zambales

4 Cebuano Studies Center

www.cebuanostudiescenter.com

cebuanostudies@gmail.com

Cebuano Studies Center Library
Josef Baumgartner Learning
Resource Center
University of San Carlos Talamban Campus
Nasipit, Talamban, Cebu City

5 Cultural Center of the Philippines

www.culturalcenter.gov.ph

contact_us@culturalcenter.gov.ph

CCP Complex
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

6 Erehwon Center for the Arts

www.erehwonartcenter.com

info@erehwonartworld.com

#1 Don Francisco St.
Villa Beatriz, Quezon City

7 Jose R. Gullas Halad Museum

www.facebook.com/thejrghaladmuseum

V. Gullas cor D. Jakosalem St.
Cebu City

8 Miriam College Music Center

www.mc.edu.ph/music-center

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Miriam College
Katipunan Avenue
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9 Museo ng Kaalamang Katutubo

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10 OPM - Organisasyon ng mga Pilipinong Mang-Aawit

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11 Philippines High School for the Arts

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12 Philippine Society for Music Education

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14 Tao Music Tao Foundation for Culture and Arts

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15 Unilab Foundation, Inc.

www.unilabfoundation.org

2/F Bayanihan Center Annex
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16 University of the Philippines Center for Ethnomusicology

www.upethnom.com

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2F Jose Maceda Hall
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Diliman, Quezon City

17 UST Research Center for Culture, Arts, and Humanities

www.ust.edu.ph/research/research-center-for-culture-arts-and-humanities

University of Santo Tomas
España Blvd.
Sampaloc, Manila

Music Festivals

1 Bamboo Organ Festival

www.bamboorgan.org

International Bamboo Organ Festival is the longest continuously running music festival in the country, and the only one with its heart in baroque—particularly Spanish baroque—music. (Source: *Bamboo Organ Foundation*)

2 Cebu Reggae Festival

www.facebook.com/groups/201124380011071

Organized by Harambe Society, Inc., a cultural organization composed of reggae artists and enthusiasts, the Cebu Reggae Festival (formerly known as Bob Marley Festival) is a 2-day event held in Cebu City. The event's aim is to not only commemorate Marley's music and life, but also help in promoting reggae music and the dissemination of the core values embedded in the music and the culture that it thrives in. (Source: *Sun.Star Cebu*)

3 Coke Studio Music Festival

www.coca-cola.com.ph/en/cokestudioph

For the past three years, Coca-Cola Philippines has been celebrating Filipino music through OPM icons and rising stars alike. This celebration took on the form of Coke Studio, which is a weekly show where seasoned artists and up-and-coming stars collaborate, and where fans can watch their favorite artists at the Coke Studio Music Festival. (Source: *adobomagazine.com*)

4 Fête de la Musique PH

www.facebook.com/FetePH

In the Philippines, Fête is considered to be the most recognized French event as well as the biggest musical celebration with the most number of simultaneous stages, all absolutely free. It is usually held on the Saturday closest to the 21st of June and is co-produced by the Embassy of France, Alliance Francaise de Manille and B-Side Productions Inc. (Source: *Fête de la Musique PH*)

5 International Rondalla Festival

www.facebook.com/rondalla.festival

The 5th International Rondalla Festival Cuerdas sang Paghilusa (Strings of Unity) last November 11-13, 2018 featured concerts; outreach performances; symposium & workshop; an exhibition on rondalla and Silay, Negros' music heritage, and the plucked music traditions of the world, as well as special activities that promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of shared heritage of plucked string music all over the world. (Source: *Strings of Unity*)

6 Kumaykay River Music and Arts Festival

www.facebook.com/KRFDahilayan

Kumaykay River Music and Arts Festival is the coming together of artists in various fields from different parts of the country in a 3-day event at barangay Dahilayan's Kumaykay River. (Source: *Malaybalay Online*)

7 Luna Musikalawaig Full Moon Festival

www.facebook.com/musikalawaig

Musikalawaig is the festival for the true traveler. Every year, a tribe of people from all walks of life comes together at the Kalawaig River in Mindanao to celebrate art, music, friendships and freedom. With a limited number of guests allowed in every year in a 13 hectare jungle venue that's off the grid; the event is truly the road less traveled. (Source: *Luna Musikalawaig*)

8 Malasimbo Music and Arts Festival

www.malasimbo.com

The Malasimbo Music and Arts Festival is touted as the longest-standing, most sustainable, and perhaps one of the most successful arts festivals in the country. Held annually, the festival has been bringing together the best local artists and musicians to an international audience since 2011. (Source: *onemusic.ph*)

9 Manila Guitar Festival

www.facebook.com/ManilaGuitarFestival

The Manila Guitar Festival is a three-day festival highlighting the classical guitar and its communities. An event pushed by its proponent, the Manila Guitar Quartet, the event will be in line with the quartet's belief that the guitar can be used as a tool for social transformation and nation-building. (Source: *Manila Guitar Quartet*)

10 Mindanao Popular Music Festival (MinPop)

www.minpop.com.ph

MinPop is an annual songwriting competition designed to showcase original pop music by the people of Mindanao. The music festival aims to promote Mindanao pop music by providing an opportunity for Mindanaoan songwriters to bring their music to a wider audience. (Source: *MinPop*)

11 Philippines International Jazz Festival

The Philippine International Jazz Festival or PIJazzfest is an annual jazz festival featuring Filipino artists as well as from other countries. The event coincides with the International Jazz Day (30 April) by UNESCO in 2011.

12 Philippine Popular Music Festival (PhilPop)

www.facebook.com/philpopmusic

PhilPop is an annual songwriting competition launched in 2012 organized by the Philpop MusicFest Foundation. In the past 7 years, it has successfully run the PhilPop Songwriting Competition, inspiring Filipino songwriters to submit their entries and to make their dreams of reaching out to Filipinos through their songs a reality. (Source: *PhilPop*)

13 Rakrakan Festival

www.rakrakanfestival.com

Rakrakan Festival was launched in 2013 in order to see the best of what OPM can do. It was created for our homegrown artists and their supporters - to give the former a pedestal where they truly belong, and the latter a ballpark where they can indulge in the singular artistry of their local musicians. (Source: *Rakrakan Festival*)

14 Summer Pulp Slam

www.pulp.ph

Summer Pulp Slam is Southeast Asia's longest-running outdoor Metal festival. Held annually during the summer in Manila, the festival consists primarily of local and international rock and metal bands.

15 UP Fair

www.facebook.com/UPFair

The UP Fair is a week-long annual event usually done during the 2nd week of February at the Sunken Garden in the University of the Philippines Diliman. The event features performances from both upcoming and well-known bands, bazaars, rides, and carnival gaming booths.

16 Visayan Popular Music Festival (VisPop)

www.facebook.com/visayanpop

VisPop is an annual songwriting competition in the Visayas region aimed to introduce a more professional and competitive playlist of Cebuano songs. (Source: *VisPop*)

17 Wanderland Music and Arts Festival

www.wanderlandfestival.com

Made possible by Karpos Media, Wanderland is one of the biggest annual outdoor music and arts festivals held in Manila, Philippines. (Source: *Wanderland*)

18 WSK

www.wsk.io

WSK – a disemvoweled form of “wasak” which means “shattered” or “destroyed” in Filipino – is the first and only annual international festival dedicated to contemporary electronic, digital, and experimental art. The festival—its name derived from the Bertolt Brecht quote, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it”—was launched in 2008 as Fete dela WSK and rebranded in 2013 as WSK Festival of The Recently Possible. (Source: *WSK*)

Major Music Awards

1 National Artists of the Philippines

www.ncca.gov.ph

The Order of the National artist is the highest national recognition given to Filipino individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of Philippine arts, namely: Music, Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, Literature, Film, Broadcast Arts, and Architecture and Allied Arts. The order is jointly administered by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Cultural Center of the Philippines and conferred by the President of the Philippines upon recommendation by both institutions. (Source: *NCCA*)

2 Gawad CCP Para sa Sining (CCP Awards for the Arts)

www.culturalcenter.gov.ph

The Gawad CCP Para sa Sining is the highest award given by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Given every three years, it is awarded to artists or groups of artists who have consistently produced outstanding works, enriched the development of their art form. The award is also given to cultural workers, who through their works in research, curatorship and administration, have helped to develop and enrich Philippine art. The Tanging Parangal is given to individuals or organizations to honor their outstanding contributions to the development of the arts in the country. (Source: *CCP*)

3 Awit Awards

www.awitawards.com.ph

Awit Awards is a prestigious award-giving body, spearheaded by the Philippine Association of the Record Industry, Inc. (PARI), that gives recognition to Filipino performing artists and people behind the making of Filipino recorded music. (Source: *Awit Awards*)

4 Himig Handog Songwriting Competition

www.music.abs-cbn.com/himighandog

HIMIG HANDOG is the biggest Filipino songwriting competition organized by the ABS-CBN Network and Star Records, music subsidiary of ABS-CBN. Over the years, the competition has shaped Philippine entertainment industry; many of the songs written have gone on to be theme songs of television shows, movies, and have been used in television and radio commercials. (Source: *music.abs-cbn.com*)

5 Myx Music Awards

www.myx.abs-cbn.com

Hosted by MYX, a music channel in the Philippines, the MYX Music Awards is an annual celebration which recognizes the most popular artists in the industry and honors contributions of OPM icons. (Source: *abs-cbn.com*)

6 Wish 107.5 Music Awards

www.wish1075.com

With the Wish 107.5 Music Awards, the radio station aims to pay tribute to acts and artists who have given significant contributions in the thriving music scene. Apart from the usual award-giving repertoire, the Wish Music Awards distinguishes itself from other bodies as it incorporates the concept of wish granting. Winners of major categories are given the chance to dole out cash donations to their respective beneficiaries. (Source: *Wish FM 107.5*)

Design

Philippine Government Agencies, their Events & Awards

1 The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)

www.ncca.gov.ph

Order of National Artists

Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan or National Living Treasures Award (GAMABA)

GAMABA or the National Living Treasures Award was institutionalized through Republic Act No. 7355. The NCCA, through the GAMABA Committee and an Ad Hoc Panel of Experts, conducts the search for the finest traditional artists of the land, adopts a program that will ensure the transfer of their skills to others and undertakes measures to promote a genuine appreciation of and instill pride among our people about the genius of the Manlilikha ng Bayan.

Philippine Art at the Venice Biennale (PAVB)

PAVB is a collaborative undertaking of the NCCA and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in partnership with the office of Senator Loren Legarda. PAVB's role is to mount and support the Philippine Pavilion in the international art exhibition.

www.philartsvenicebiennale.com

2 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) - Design Center Philippines

Established in 1973, the Design Center of the Philippines pursues creating programs and improving services that emphasize the value of good design and empower Filipino Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), designers, and consumers.

www.designcenter.ph

International Design Conference

Launched in 2017, an annual event that celebrates the intersection of business and design, where breakthroughs are the norm and ideas big and bold are unleashed. Design Center, an attached agency of DTI, is the only national agency for design committed to cultivating a culture that thrives in creativity, value creation, and innovation.

www.designcenter.ph/international-design-conference

3 Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM)

CITEM is the export promotion arm of DTI.

www.citem.gov.ph

Manila FAME

The Philippines' premier design and lifestyle event, Manila FAME promotes the Philippines as a reliable sourcing destination for high-quality and design-oriented home, fashion, holiday, architectural and interior products.

www.manilafame.com

Private Design Organizations

1 United Architects of the Philippines (UAP)

www.united-architects.org

UAP, or the Integrated and Accredited Professional Organization of Architects, is the professional organization for architects in the Philippines.

2 Philippine Institute of Interior Designers (PIID)

www.piid.org.ph

PIID is the accredited institute of professional interior design practitioners committed to advancing their profession through accreditation, education, knowledge sharing, legal recognition, and public outreach.

3 The Creative Cebu Council

www.facebook.com/Creative-Cebu-Council-155491021146676

The Creative Cebu Council is an organization that aims to realize the full potential of the creative industry in Cebu City organized in 2009 by a core group of creative industry players together with DTI Cebu to harness the potential for growth via creativity as the competitive advantage.

4 Communication Design Association of the Philippines (CDAP)

www.facebook.com/CDAPdesign

CDAP is the industry organization of Filipino Communication Designers in the Philippines and around the world with a goal to elevate Communications Design for the Philippine Creative Economy, and for national progress and development.

5 Escuela Taller de Filipinas Foundation, Inc. (ETFFI)

www.escuelataller.org.ph

ETFFI is a non-profit organization established in December 2013 to ensure the sustainability of the Escuela Taller Intramuros Program, which started in 2009 as a collaborative project of the government of Spain represented by the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AECID) and the government of the Philippines represented by the NCCA.

6 Habi The Philippines Textile Council (HABI)

www.habitextilecouncil.ph

Established in 2009 after the hosting of the Second ASEAN Traditional Textile Symposium, HABI sees as its mission the preservation, promotion, and enhancement "of Philippine textiles through education, communication and research using public and private sources."

Private Design Events

1 Animahenasyon

www.animahenasyon.com

An annual animation festival and competition held in the Philippines. Organized by the Animation Council of the Philippines, Inc., the festival features the animated works of veteran and novice Filipino animators.

2 Anthology Architecture and Design Festival

www.anthologyfest.org

An annual three-day event that showcases architecture and design within the Philippines and the Southeast Asian region. The festival serves as a platform to bring together various practitioners and stakeholders to increase awareness about the relevance of architecture and design in our urban societies.

3 Graphika Manila

www.graphikamanila.com

Graphika Manila is the biggest creativity conference in Manila, Philippines and hailed as one of the most influential events on design in Asia. The event is a showcase of multidisciplinary creative approaches in identity, art direction, animation, web and designed environments, as shared by thinkers, collaborators and partners over a weekend. The conference focuses on the creative side of design rather than on technology.

4 Interior and Design Manila

www.interioranddesignmanila.com

Interior and Design Manila is the country's trade show specifically curated for interior designers. Organized by the PIID, the event is also considered as the industry's primary source for finding the latest products and services for all types of interior products.

5 Likhang Habi Market Fair

www.habitextilecouncil.ph

This event, organized by HABI, provides the venue for weavers to showcase and sell their handwoven textiles and new products. It also connects them with the international market.

Private Design Competitions

1 The Metrobank Art & Design Excellence (MADE)

www.mbfoundation.org.ph/art-design

MADE is the visual arts and design program of the Metrobank Foundation (MBFI). The MBFI launched the Metrobank Art & Design Excellence in 1984, then known as the Metrobank Annual Painting Competition, to encourage creativity, motivation, and self-discipline among the young for the country's holistic development.

2 Adobo Design Awards

www.adobodesignawards.asia

The Adobo Design Awards aims to champion the best designs and recognize the talents behind the work. Now with over 20 categories, the competition is open to all creative enthusiasts, professionals, freelancers and students.

3 The ARAW Values Advertising Award

www.adfoundationph.com

Founded by the Advertising Foundation of the Philippines, the ARAW recognizes outstanding and excellent advertising and marketing messages and/or materials for Branded Communications and Advocacy Communications that promote the ARAW 7 Cornerstone Values, a cluster of select and well-defined values for positive social changes.

4 Nippon Paint Asia Young Designers Awards (AYDA)

www.youngdesigneraward.ph

Established in 2008, the AYDA is part of Nippon Paint's vision to nurture the region's next generation of socially-conscious designers. It is the only award in Asia for young aspiring architects and designers that strives to inspire them to be future beacons of change in our society.

5 Estilo De Vida by PHILCONSTRUCT

www.philconstructevents.com/manila/estilo-de-vida

This annual interschool interior design competition serves as a platform for creative ideas that reflect innovation partnered with ingenuity, and is considered as the most prestigious interschool interior design competition in the country today.

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In line with the Japan Foundation's aim of carrying out comprehensive international cultural exchange programs throughout the world, the book is published in a digital format for accessibility and distribution on a global scale. As a primer, it is meant to serve as a resource for our readers interested in Philippine art, thereby contributing constructively to the dialogue on contemporary art in the region.

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