

# kanto

CREATIVE CORNERS / N° TWO 2016

Restart.

## LENS

Norwegian photographer  
*Robin Johannessen's* minimal  
portraits of everyday life

Chicagoan *Kevin Poglitsch's*  
dark and atmospheric visions  
of the Windy City

The hustle and bustle  
of metropolitan Manila through  
the lens of *Mike Peralta*

**ANGLES** Carlos Almeida celebrates the beauty of architectural detail / Patrick Kasingsing visits the San Sebastian Basilica in Quiapo, Manila / God is in the details for photographer Aaron Quinto  
**CANVAS** Making funny faces with Mencer Marcelo / Camille Chua gets curious and curiouser in her fantastical artworks **QUILL** Mia Lauengco on the beauty and lyricism of poetry in Filipino  
Joanna Parungao's short story, 'The Choice' **COMPASS** The idyllic shores of Liwliwa, as experienced by Sibyl Layag **RUMINATIONS** Emarrah Sarreal calls for a celebration of life in the new year



**Cover photography**  
Robin Johannessen  
@robinjohannessen

# kanto

*[kánto] A Filipino word for corner,  
cornerstone, angle.*

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A F E W  
W O R D S

## During the production of this journal, a series of brutal terrorist attacks captured the world's attention.

Multiple shootings tore through a silent night in Paris, France. Bodies upon bodies of students, piled up in school buildings in Kenya. The bombings in Lebanon and the fallout from the Allied retaliation in Syria have extinguished the promise of tomorrow for many innocent civilians. These were the news items that flashed on screens, and I'm sure there are many more stories, just as frightening, just as painful, that weren't even documented. I felt scared, helpless and angry. These incidents brought to light the fleeting nature of Life, and I've never felt so vulnerable, even if miles separated me from these ground zeroes. I was angry at how little value Life was given, how it has been cheapened by those responsible; of how each man, woman, and child amount to just mere figures on a casualty board. What's even worse for me is I feel powerless to stop it.

I remember entering the last year with an air of optimism and hope, and had all but lost it on its tail end, what with all the tragedies, both global and personal, that have seared its painful mark on my memory. But I tell myself, I have to walk on. Fear and hatred gained from such atrocities are precisely what the perpetrators want to promote, and this in turn, rewards us with more violence, resulting in a bloody spiral, where both cause and effect are now blurred beyond recognition.

And so, with this journal, I dare to hope again. This issue's theme functions not just as a means to cope with feelings of sadness and world-weariness, but also to help share the promise of a new, hopefully brighter, tomorrow. It is true that we musn't forget, but we also musn't fully surrender ourselves to pain and sadness. This new year, it's time we brush our knees from the fall, to stand, and to walk on again.

It is with excitement that we now share these new collection of stories and images by creative individuals who've all contributed in their own little way to making the world a better place. Some layout tweaks for a cleaner look, as well as the introduction of a general photography section, *Lens* are just some of the changes in this latest issue that we hope you'd like! Also, allow me to introduce my co-pilot for this issue, writer-adventurer Sibyl Layag, who'll now be the editor of the *Compass* section.

We invite you dear readers to share the hope for a better year. Let's all be harbingers of good change through creativity. Cheers and have an awesome 2016! ●

**Patrick**  
@patrick\_kasingsing









**kanto**

CREATIVE CORNERS

Nº TWO 2016

# The good stuff

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
MIKE PERALTA

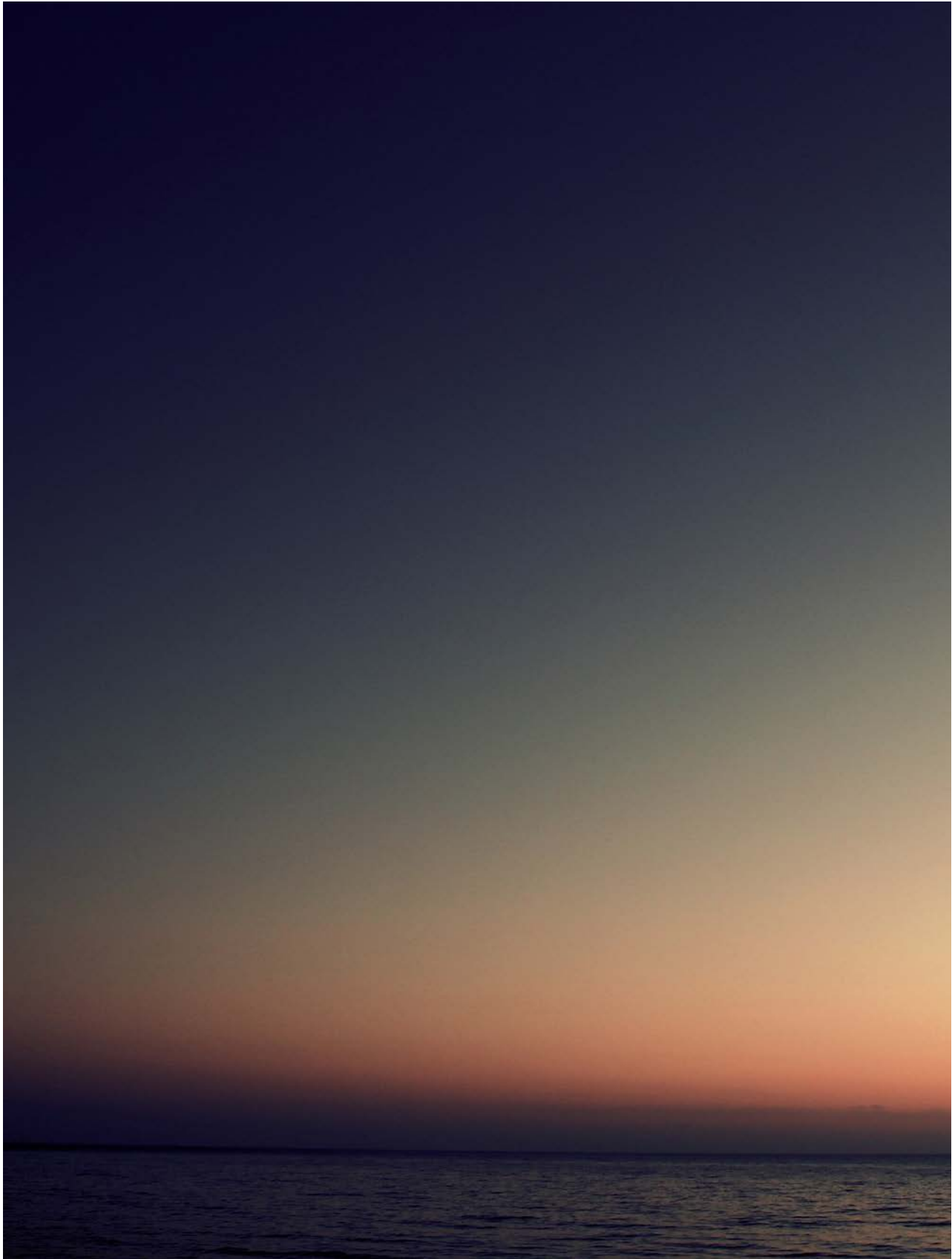


Image from unsplash.com

# Restart

*Welcoming the new year as a celebration of yet another chance at life*

Written by Emarrah Sarreal

2015. Just looking at that number on a blank document brings in so many memories, both good and bad. 2015 was the year that shattered millions, with many of the biggest stories centered on violence, terror threats or a general sense of fear.

But just like all the other years before this, 2015 also brought its fair share of good news that we can't help but want to relive again and again and again.

A mix of good and bad news has always been a main fixture for every year. Years that brought on prosperity went down the good side of history while the years that brought on unspeakable tragedy were years that humankind resolved to learn from and worked hard to never repeat. This is how the world has always been and it will always remain so.

The only thing left for us to do is to cope well. And this is where our fascination for celebrating the New Year comes in.

All throughout history, people all over the world have celebrated that one significant calendar change. New Year rituals vary but they all represent one thing: survival. And it makes sense. The unknown is so unsettling to us, we need to set aside time at the end or beginning of each year to take stock and assess what we achieved, where we are and what other things we need to do to help us get to where we want to be.

As for resolutions, turns out we need those too. This is still rooted in our fear of the unknown which we try to mitigate by controlling some parts of our lives.

But what does this make us? Does this mean we are all acting out of fear? That's not exactly "living", is it?

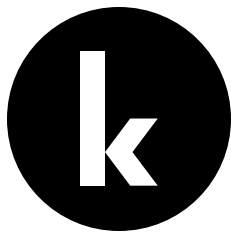
We can look at it that way but there is another, non-fear-based way: celebrate.

Let's celebrate life every single day. You could go on that trip you have been saving up for since forever. Or you can take two minutes off your busy day and just savor life, pay attention to the little things and just live in that moment.

We may have our fears and doubts that could have led us to just living in survival mode. But life is something that should be lived, not survived. So celebrate it well. ●

**Let's celebrate life every single day. You could go on that trip you have been saving up for since forever. Or you can take two minutes off your busy day and just savor life.**

Follow Emarrah's ruminations on Instagram @emarahcontessa. Her blog (which will be up soon) will be announced there.



# Awesome People

WHO MADE THIS  
JOURNAL POSSIBLE



## MIA LAUENGCO

**Morning beverage of choice?**  
Lukewarm water or a cup of hot Swiss Miss dark chocolate.

Mia graduated with a bachelor's degree in Communication Research from the University of the Philippines Diliman. Her first real stint into the writing world began as part of the editorial team of LifestyleAsia magazine. She has also attended the Linangan sa Imahen, Retorika, at Anyo (LIRA) Poetry Clinic. She now serves as the Public Relations Officer of LIRA, and writes for Clean Air Asia.



## SIBYL LAYAG

**Morning beverage of choice?**  
Any natural fruit juice, but most often orange, pineapple-orange or four seasons. An occasional apple or berry juice is my idea of a breakfast treat.

Sibyl is a bookworm and a traveler, an animal lover and a beach enthusiast. Although now a straight-edge business news reporter, her first love is writing features, and so sometimes her verbosity cannot be helped. She was formerly the assistant editor of BluPrint magazine, an architecture and design magazine.



## MENEER MARCELO

**Morning beverage of choice?**  
Coffee.

Meneer is a renowned illustrator and caricaturist whose works have graced the pages of Rogue magazine. He currently teaches drawing in Mapua University, and is a part-time lecturer at the Fine Arts program of the Ateneo de Manila University.



## CARLOS ALMEIDA

**Morning beverage of choice?**  
Milk, fat-free. The best drink, and the healthiest. I cannot take coffee, not even decaf.

Carlos Almeida loves sketching, painting and photography—a passion strengthened by a desire to understand light, shade and form. He recently had photography published through GSE Books. His watercolors are part of the private collections of Horta Museum and the Azorean Ministry of Culture (Portugal). His favorite architects are Alvaro Siza and Louis Kahn.



## AARON QUINTO

**Morning beverage of choice?**  
Hot coffee

Aaron Quinto is an architecture major, an amateur photographer, and city chaser on the side. His works were recently included in Herschel's *City Limitless* campaign. He is fascinated with patterns and spaces within the urban fabric.





### JOANNA PARUNGAO

Joanna graduated from the University of Sto. Tomas with a degree in Literature, and from the University of the Philippines Diliman with an MA in English Studies, major in Creative Writing. She is an established and awarded shortfiction writer with several published works to her name. She was nominated in the Pushcart Prize, and won Best Paper in the La Salle National Arts Congress. She worked as an instructor at UST as well as a freelance writer and editor before joining SNL Financial as a business news editor.



### CAMILLE CHUA

**Morning beverage of choice?** Water. But Kirin milktea or a cup of coffee are needed to sustain me in the afternoon.

Camille's lineart has been published in the recent "Hue Can Do It" adult coloring books of Summit Media, while some of her illustrations have been featured in the 4th Instant Doodles Exhibit in Cevio Art Haus, as well as in the recent Asia Pop Comic Con 2015 where she sold her wares on postcards, prints and stickers. She loves milk tea, dragons and fantasy novels.



### EMARRAH SARREAL

**Morning beverage of choice?** Definitely coffee!

Emarrah works as a writer in a PR company. When she's not churning out story plans and press releases, she tries to understand why people do what they do.



### MIKE PERALTA

**Morning beverage of choice?** Chocolate milkshake topped with thick whipped cream (no cherries, please)

Mike's architectural photos have been featured in BluPrint magazine's Instagram page. He is also an intern at The Nightsource. Presently on his 2nd year in De La Salle-College of St. Benilde as a Multimedia Arts student. He likes designer sneakers, the color pink, and is still a momma's boy.



### ROBIN JOHANNESSEN

**Morning beverage of choice?** Freshly pressed orange juice!

Robin is a 26 year-old guy from Oslo, Norway currently studying to become a construction engineer; A few years ago, he read a book about composing photos and discovered interest in photography. Since then, he has taken photos in various genres and have now embarked on a more minimalist style of photography, for viewing on his Instagram account @robinjohannessen.



### KEVIN POGLITSCH

**Morning beverage of choice?** Water. Always water.

Photography enthusiast Kevin has been roaming the streets with his camera ever since he got his hands on one two years ago. He is currently based in the Windy City itself, Chicago.



### AISNE TRINIDAD

**Morning beverage of choice?** My default beverage in the morning would be coffee since it always does the trick to get me all warmed up.

Aisne is a Communication graduate of Saint Louis University who had her first job in a magazine company, where she worked for more than three years. She was the former editorial assistant and stylist of MyHome magazine. Aisne is currently exploring the nooks and crannies of her new home, Hong Kong, and the stories that come with it.



### POLYMAT

**Morning beverage of choice?** Answer would have been coffee but it'll now have to be water for health reasons.

Polymat is a one-man design studio specializing in branding, architectural visualization and illustration. More works coming soon.

# Got all the right angles?

We'd love to share them! Send us your story  
and photography at [kanto.journal@gmail.com](mailto:kanto.journal@gmail.com)

Join us in our celebration of creativity.

**kanto**

CREATIVE CORNERS



PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
CARLOS ALMEIDA



# ANGLES

ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY

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PROFILE

## BACK TO BASICS

Portuguese-American architect Carlos Almeida's photography glorifies simplicity and architectural detail

Photography by Carlos Almeida  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

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PROFILE

## GRAPHIC DETAIL

Geometry and detail reign supreme in architecture student Aaron Quinto's photography

Photography by Aaron Quinto  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

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ESSAY

## MANILA GOTHIC

A visual essay on the fragile beauty of the San Sebastian Basilica, Asia's remaining all-metal church

Written and photographed  
by Patrick Kasingsing

A N G L E S  
P R O F I L E

# BACK TO BASICS

*Carlos Almeida on the balance between  
telling more while showing less in  
architectural photography*

**Photography**

Carlos Almeida

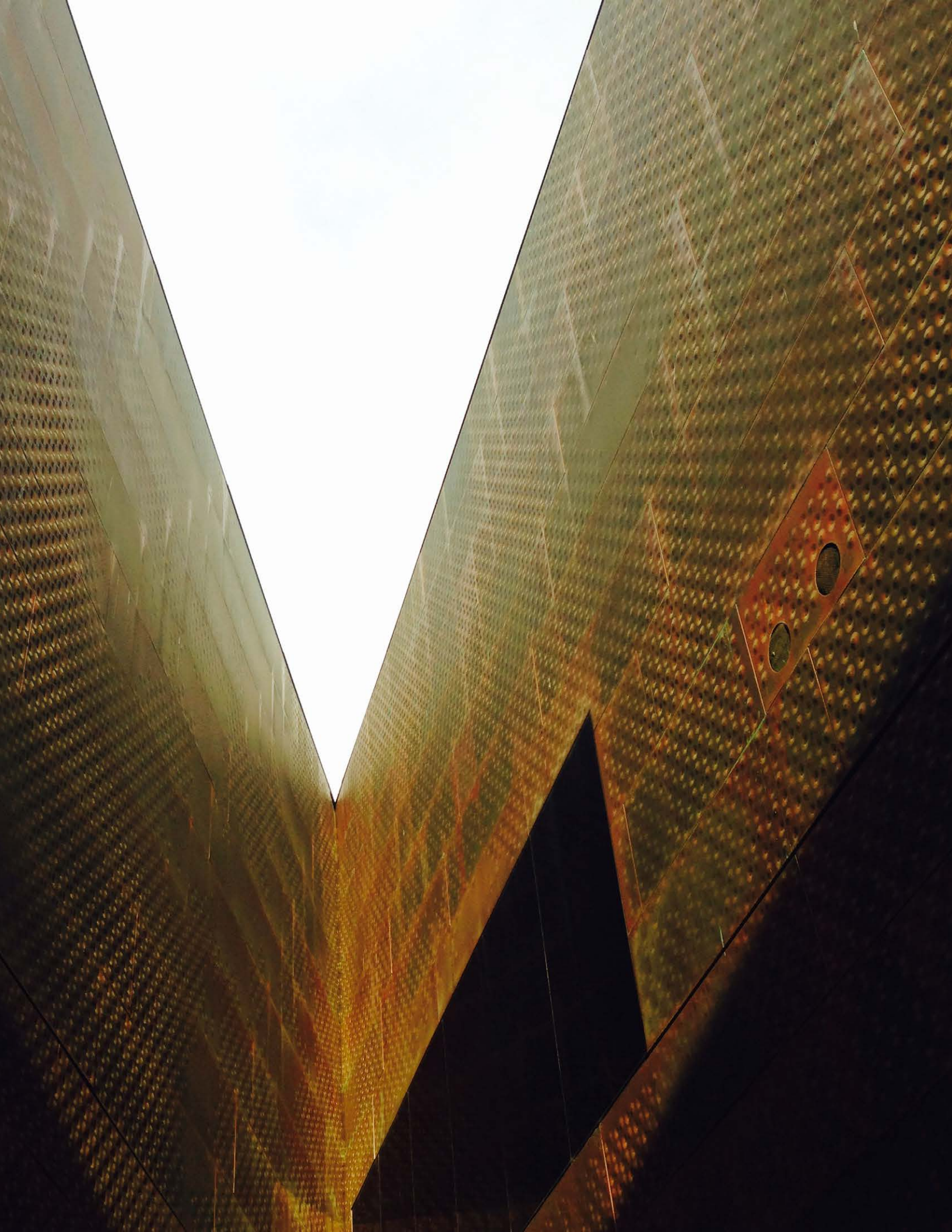
**Interview**

Patrick Kasingsing

**Opposite page** De Young Museum,  
San Francisco, California, by Herzog and De Meuron











**Opposite page** The Jewish Museum of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, California, by Daniel Libeskind

## **Kindly introduce yourself: What is your day job, and what pushed you to go into architectural photography?**

I'm a Portuguese-American architect, born in Lisbon, Portugal. For me, photography is among the many means of expression that increase understanding of light, shade, texture and form. Most of the photos I take are detached from context and are geometric details, inspired by a passion for geometry (I taught Descriptive Geometry). Contrast is also part of my visual vocabulary in photography, stemming from an admiration of Michelangelo Merisi (Il Caravaggio) and his application of chiaroscuro.

### **Does being an architect make it easier to capture great architectural photos?**

Being an architect certainly helps a lot in capturing the right details, as well as understanding the angle and lighting. An architect has a better understanding of proportions, contrast, forms and other elements that are fundamental to 'read' and 'see' in an architectural work.

### **What about a building stops you in your tracks and makes you whip up your camera to snap a photo? Any funny or memorable stories?**

Usually, I'm not that quick to press the shutter. What I do first is walk around and get a feel of the place and the building. Sometimes, I just sit there to absorb the sounds, smells, the environment, etc. Then, when I could finally establish a 'dialogue' with the place, I start to walk around and study the angles, light, forms of the building, openings and walls and so on. Only then do I start to shoot. I had situations where no photos were taken simply because I did not connect with the building. That was not the day... maybe another there'll come a time when a 'conversation' can be made. As for a funny story, here's one: I made a visit to Washington D.C. to see the Hirshhorn Museum by noted SOM architect Gordon Bunshaft. When I entered the museum to see the exhibition on show, the security person at the door asked whether I was the architect of the building because he saw a photo of Bunshaft and I looked like him.



### **What for you makes good architectural photography? What characteristics/elements do you think make for a good architectural portrait?**

A great architectural photo has to clearly convey its message with simplicity. I'm a minimalist by professional background, one that still believes that less is really more.

**What is your camera of choice?**

I'm a Nikon fanatic. My first camera was actually a Ricoh but I soon bought my Nikon F401 35mm film, the very first designed by the Italian design firm Pininfarina. I currently have three Nikon cameras. I often use my Nikon D50 SLR ID, though my iPhone 6 Plus has been quite a PLUS when it comes to taking photos.

**You seem to be a well-traveled person. What places have you been to do you think have great architecture?**

It is difficult to categorize the best place. Great architecture can be found anywhere, especially when it represents the cultural, social, economic and contextual value of its site. When I was in China, I like Steven Holl's Horizontal Skyscraper, and the Beijing Opera House by Paul Andreu. I'm also a big fan of the Lisbon Expo '98 Portuguese Pavilion by Alvaro Siza (I'm a huge admirer of his work in general).

**Favorite building that you photographed? Why?**

The Salk Institute by Louis Kahn. For some reason, the buildings exerted some spiritual influence on me. I had goose bumps, which happens when I hear Pavarotti's voice or any Beethoven symphony. What I experienced was something really out of this world.

**“Great architecture can be found anywhere, especially when it represents the cultural, social, economic and contextual value of its site.”**

**How has architectural photography shaped/enhanced or affected your appreciation of architecture?**

Because I don't rush to take the shots, I am more aware of the building and its design purpose. As a result, my eyes are more trained, and I have a better understanding of the building from a general perspective down to its details, though I prefer to capture more detail photos.

**Any tips/advice to budding architectural photographers reading this?**

Look around. Do not rush to press the shutter. Understand first; register after.

**Other hobbies that you indulge in?**

As mentioned, I like to sketch a lot. It's another medium where I can register moments, details and light-shade contrasts. I love watercolors as well, but usually with a two-tone approach, coming from my being partial to black and white photography. ●

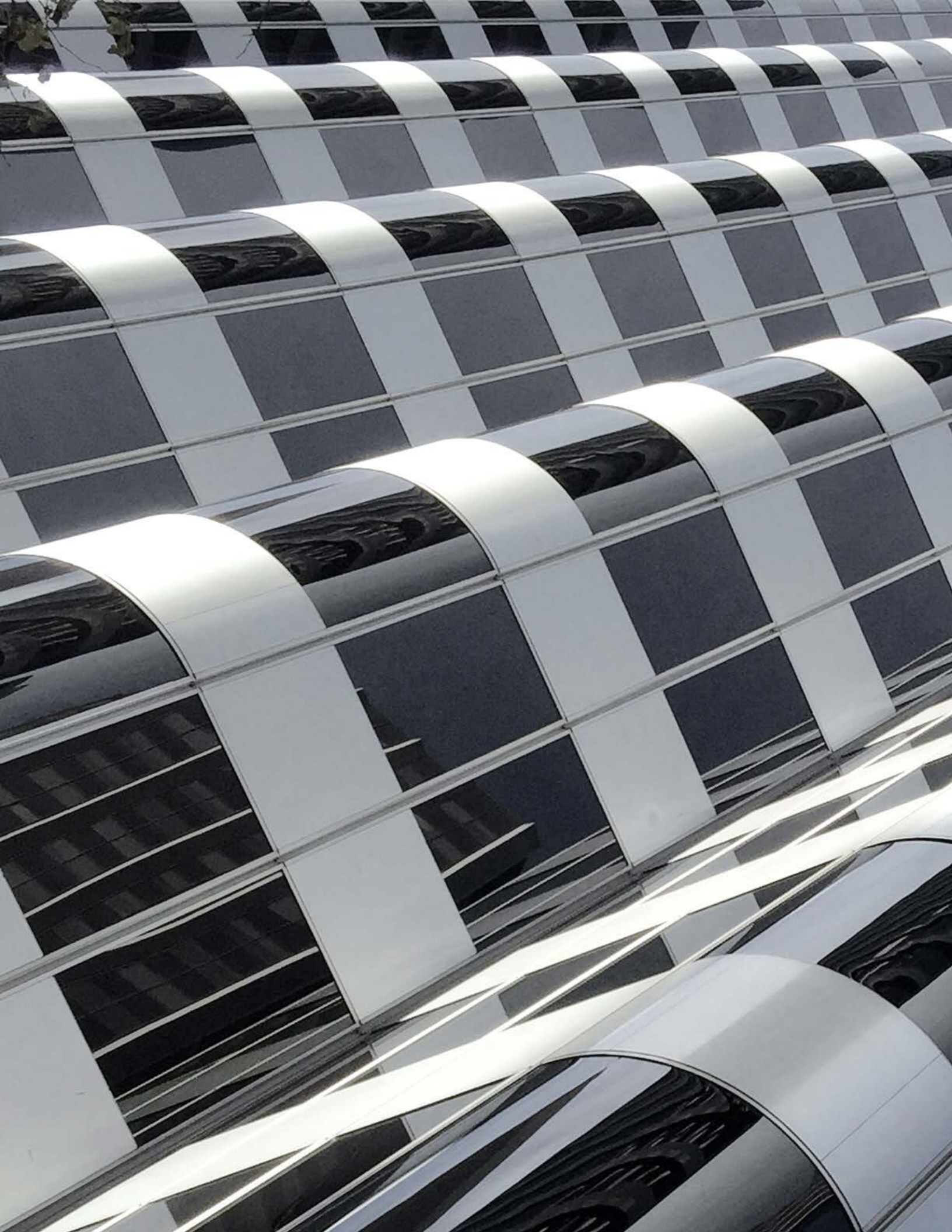
San Jose City Hall, San Jose, California, by Richard Meier and Steinberg

Follow Carlos' travels through sketches on Instagram at @sketchviews













One Front Tower, San Francisco,  
California, by SOM

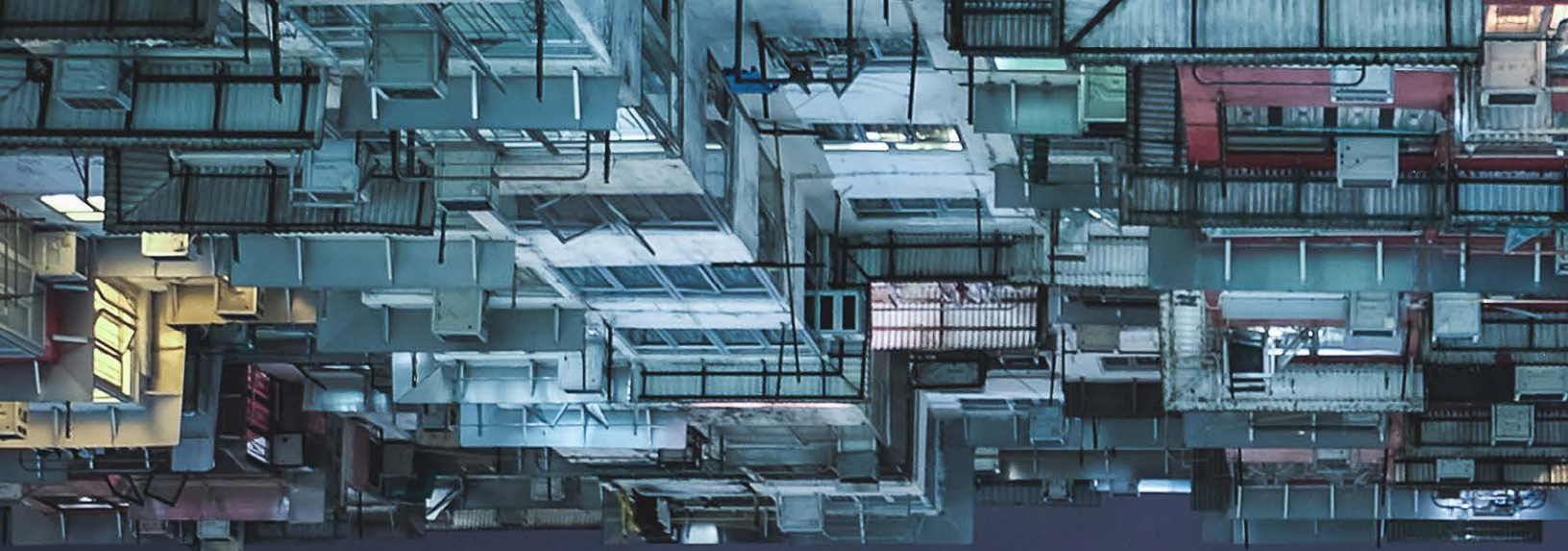






Cathedral of Light, Oakland, California, by SOM  
**Opposite page** The Capelinhos Volcano Interpretation Center,  
Azores, Portugal, by Nuno Ribero Lopes






A N G L E S  
P R O F I L E

# GRAPHIC DETAIL







*The beauty of details and patterns  
take center stage in the architectural  
photography of Aaron Quinto*

**Photography**  
Aaron Quinto  
**Interview**  
Patrick Kasingsing









## Kindly introduce yourself.

I'm a 23-year old graduating architecture major who loves walking and taking photos of spaces and places.

**Your Instagram gallery is a beautiful collection of mainly architectural photos. What attracted you to pursue architectural photography? Do you shoot architecture as a hobby or are you planning to pursue a career in this field?**

It all started when I eventually got tired of shooting random subjects, such as landscape and people. I told myself that I should focus on one subject. When I got my first smartphone in 2013, I started to take photos of buildings and structures more seriously. I wanted to capture the monumentality and precision of the built environment through my photography. Right now, I just shoot for fun, but eventually I would like to make a career out of it.

**What is it about a building that stops you in your tracks and make you whip up your camera to snap a photo?**

Patterns and details. If a building has an interesting form, it makes me want to capture it from different vantage points in order to bring out interesting perspectives.



**Your photos have a sort of cinematic quality about them, particularly in color, framing and mood. How much post-production goes into your photos and how do they enhance and convey the stories you want to tell?**

Just a few sharpening and adjustment on the curves, brightness and contrast. Light plays a critical role in making or breaking your images. My style usually involves toning down the saturation and increasing the cool tones.







## **“It’s the small details that make the building.”**

### **What is your camera of choice?**

Mirrorless. It’s light but packs a mean punch when it comes to taking sharp images.

### **What’s the craziest thing you did to capture that ONE shot?**

Standing in the middle of an intersection while the green light is on. I remember I almost got hit by a car. I also trespass sometimes.

### **Your photographs show a love for detail and textures. Why is that? What stories do you think architectural detail shots can tell that establishing shots cannot?**

People tend to overlook details and the intricate processes and methodologies behind it. I want to capture those details so its beauty won’t go unappreciated. It’s those small details that make up the grand profile of a certain building.

### **How has architectural photography sharpened and honed your eye in terms of developing a personal aesthetic?**

My mentor once told me that the buildings we design should also be photogenic. I held onto that guiding principle when taking architectural photos. I realized that, if a building isn’t photogenic, I should take it upon myself to make it look beautiful through photography. This helped a lot in developing my personal aesthetic; it’s something that I absorbed and incorporated heavily into my design process. I constantly check my field of views and vantage points when designing to make sure what I’m designing looks nice from different angles.

### **You seem to be a well-traveled person. Name a favorite building or landmark that you shot, and why.**

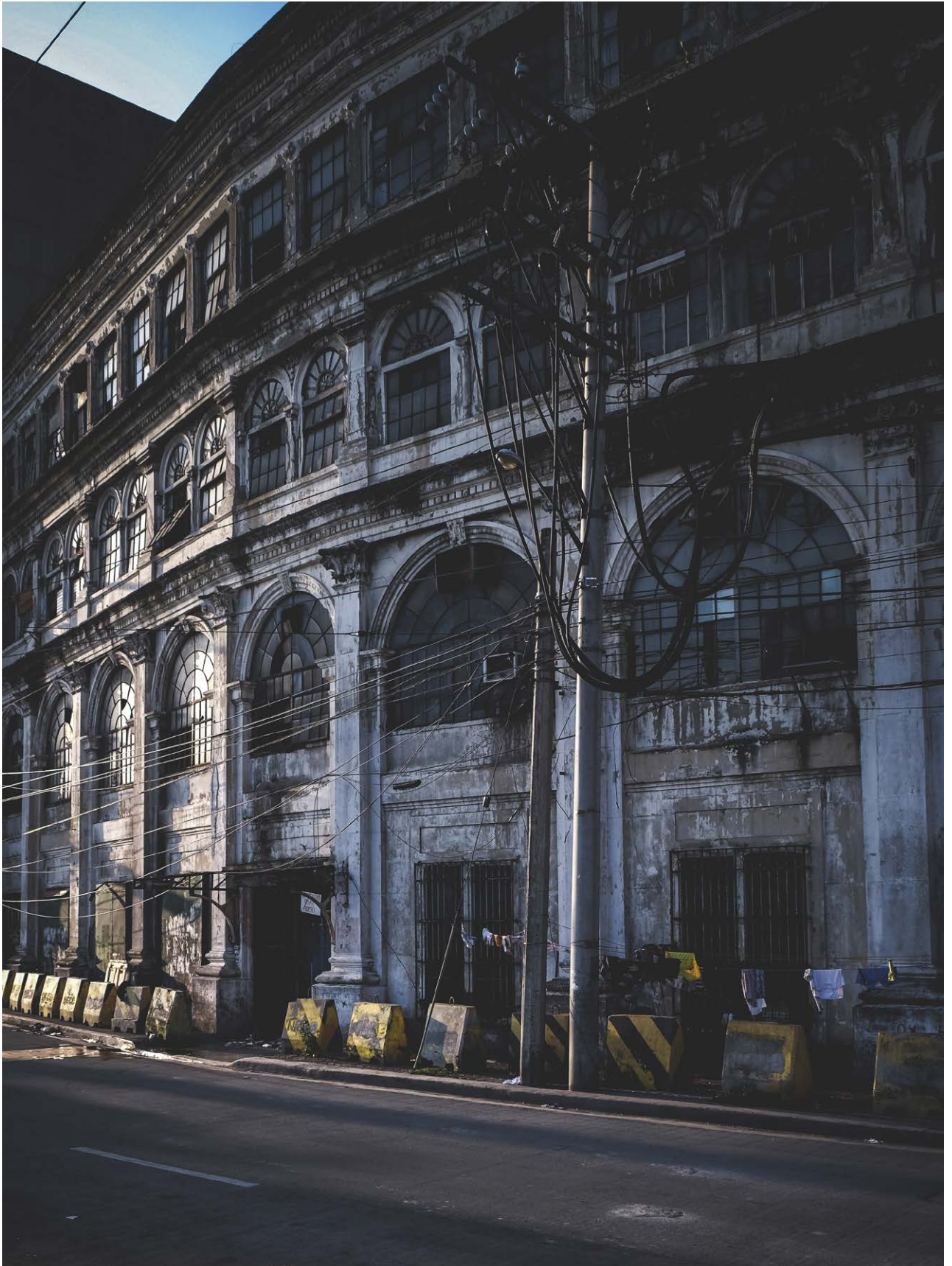
The Church of Light in Ibaraki, Osaka by Tadao Ando. I’ve always admired Ando and his poetic architecture, and my personal encounter with his Church of Light was surreal. It was sublime and I had the honor of taking a photo of it.

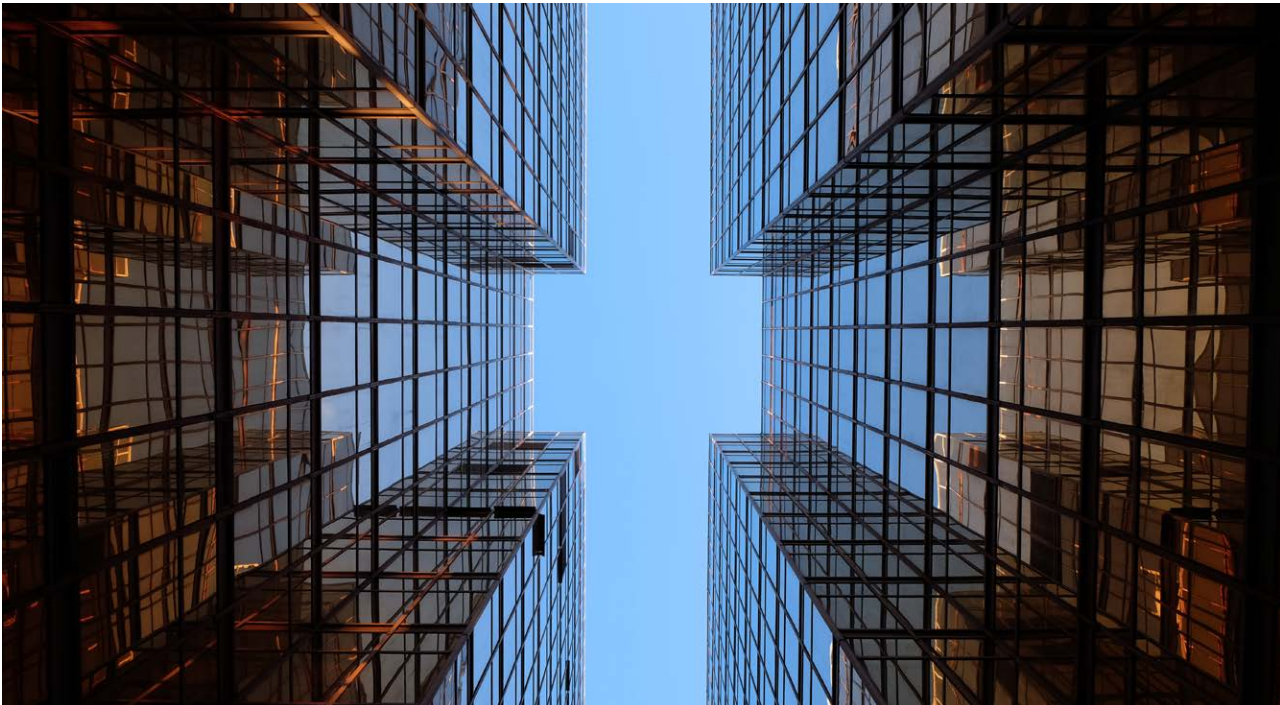
### **Other hobbies that you indulge in?**

Just photography for the meantime, and sketching! ●

Follow Aaron’s visual diary on Instagram at [@aieos](#).

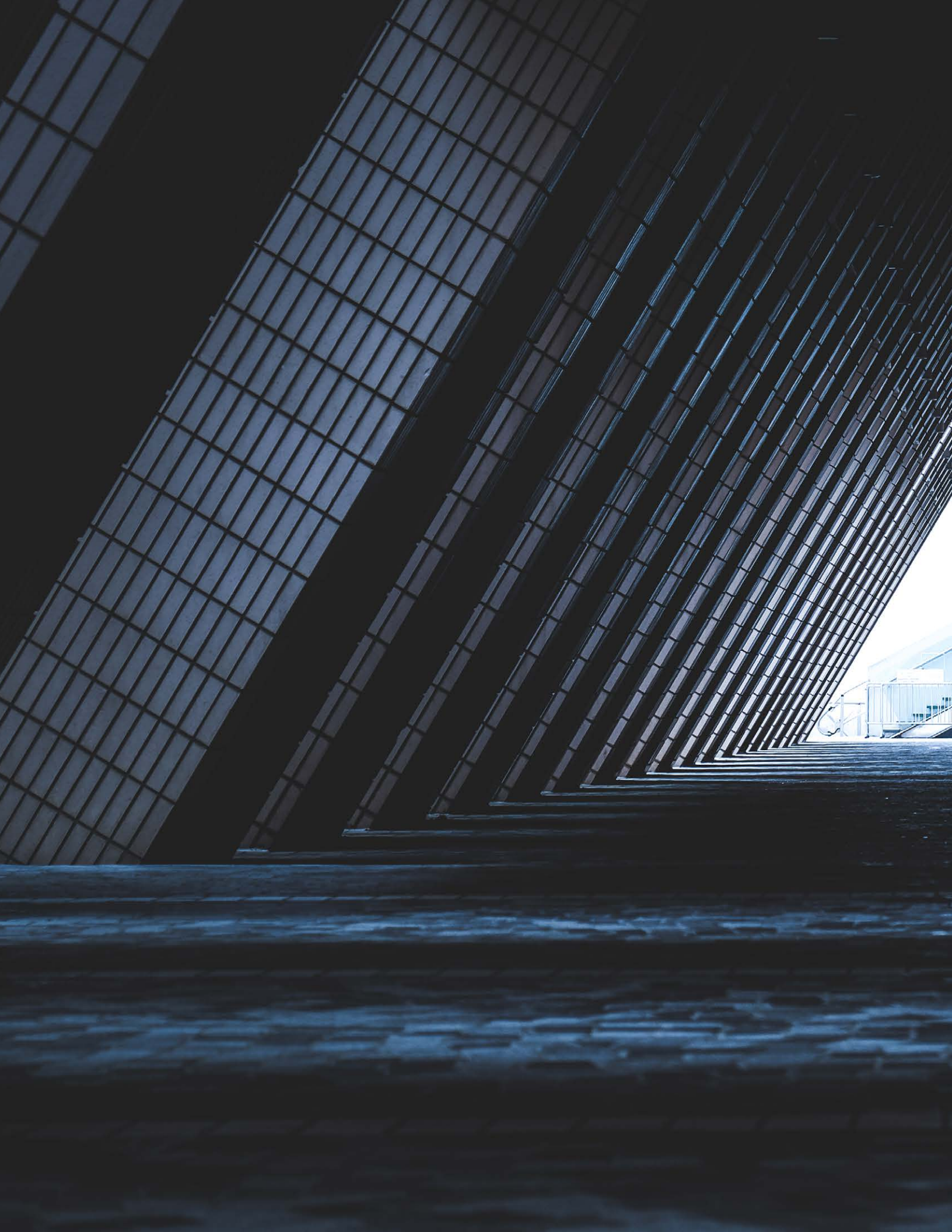


















A N G L E S  
E S S A Y

# MANILA GOTHIC

*Images of Asia's only church of steel,  
and its battle against time*

**Written and photographed by**  
Patrick Kasingasing





**EVEN** amidst the urban jungle that Manila has become, the San Sebastian Basilica holds its own, one of a precious few heritage landmarks in the city that is still in relatively good condition.

AN historical marker abbreviates the church's storied past.



B

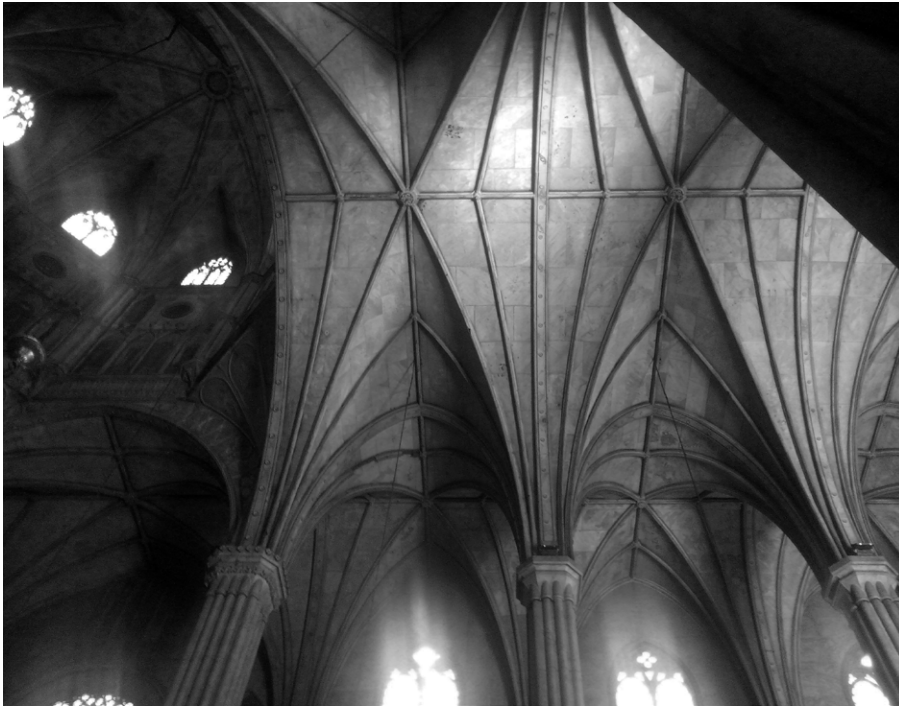
eing the imperial capital of Spanish-era Philippines, Manila has no shortage of heritage landmarks. But while a growing number of these storied structures are in a state of decay—or worse, days away from demolition—the Minor Basilica of San Sebastian in Quiapo is a refreshing exception. Standing proud in its quiet corner of the city, it is surrounded on all sides by generic buildings, but the church nevertheless maintains a sense of regal mien, retaining the original integrity of its neo-gothic architecture.

It is widely known why the San Sebastian Basilica is one of a kind. It is possibly Asia's only all-metal church, among the few all-metal churches in the world of this scale. What is not immediately apparent, however, was that the church was a product of international collaboration, which only adds to its importance to local architectural history. The mastermind behind the design and construction of the church was Spanish engineer Genaro Palacios, who decided that properly designed steel parts will endow the church with the strength necessary to weather the many earthquakes that periodically visit the city. The church itself was pre-fabricated in Belgium and shipped to the Philippines to be assembled. The original flooring was the work of Chinese artisans, with beautiful chandeliers from France, and the intricately-done stained glass windows were imported from the famed Heinrich Oidtmann Company, today Germany's oldest surviving stained glass studio. Last but not least is the masterful *trompe l'oeil* work done by the students of the country's most prestigious art school, the Academia de Dibujo, Pintura y Arte. They did a brilliant job passing off the church's industrial metal skin into that of marbled stone and embellishing its walls and dome with more than 130 figural paintings. Even more amazing is that much of it, interior finishes, windows, metal, are still authentic from 1891.





**TALL** metal doors open to the cavernous space within the Basilica, the overall atmosphere of the interiors reminiscent of ancient cathedrals in Europe.



**ONE** cannot help but look up at the beautiful vaulted metal ceiling that no other church in the country possesses. The masterful *trompe l'oeil* work encourages a double take: is the ceiling of steel? Or marbled stone?

Such is the architectural pedigree of the basilica. Yet its sheer beauty, most especially that of the church's dramatic interiors, tends to belie a creeping danger.

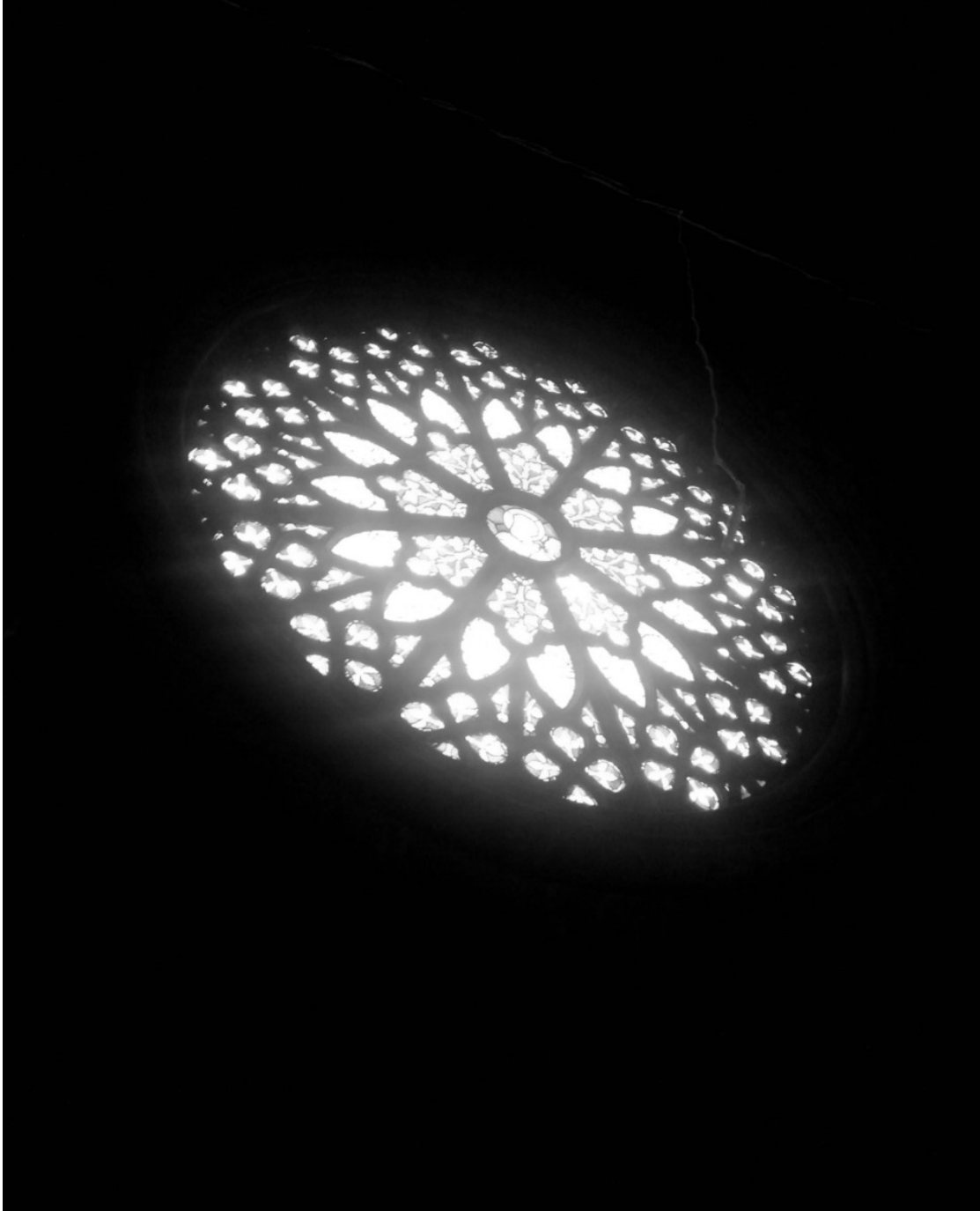
The ravages of time and the heat of the country's tropical climate have slowly caught up with San Sebastian Basilica, sapping it of its former strength. Most of the damage lies beneath the skin, with rust being the most potent enemy. Portions of the church have weakened, and the *trompe l'oeil* work and several of the church's one-of-a-kind wall paintings are suffering from deterioration. The beautiful stained-glass windows, while still in surprisingly good condition, are showing signs of wear, with some glass panes warping and missing.

Such is the severity of deterioration beneath the beauty. And while the situation seems dire, I'm happy to say that the San Sebastian Basilica is in good hands. The San Sebastian Basilica Conservation and Development Foundation, Inc., in close collaboration with the Augustinian Recollects, are implementing a 10-year program that has diagnosed the damage, execute long-term solutions that will further the lifespan of everything in it that is original, and continue to develop and integrate the church to the present. To date, over 80 volunteers, from conservation architects, structural engineers, corrosion scientists, and conservators, historians and metallurgists have banded together from different parts of the world to help save this unique treasure. Project completion will only come into fruition though with the help of the community and donors. Raising awareness of the church's present situation would make an enormous difference. I highly recommend a visit to the basilica. My photos do no justice to the sheer majesty and artistry in this singular piece of local architecture. But more than just a visit to the Basilica, or to any heritage landmark for that matter, let us do our part, however small, to raise awareness about our architectural heritage, and to help support the efforts to preserve these physical manifestations of our national identity for future generations to come. ●





**BEAUTIFUL** geometries abound inside the basilica, with neo-gothic architectural elements working hard to disguise rivets and structural elements that would otherwise remind churchgoers of its industrial skeleton.



**DESPITE** its age, San Sebastian Basilica's stained glass windows are in relatively good condition, with vivid colors and intricately rendered biblical scenes and religious figures, a picture Bible in glass.





**TWIN** bell towers complete the simple yet iconic profile of the San Sebastian Basilica.



**WHILE** many heritage churches in the Metro now suffer from terrible paint jobs, unsanctioned additions and tasteless modification, the San Sebastian Basilica is a refreshing exception, offering its visitors as authentic an experience as when it first opened 125 years ago. (Photographed by Chester Ong, courtesy of San Sebastian Basilica Conservation and Development Foundation, Inc.)

Join in the efforts to save the San Sebastian Basilica and spread the word.  
Like the San Sebastian Basilica Facebook page ([savessbasilica](#)) and follow them on  
Instagram [@savessbasilica](#) for updates on the church and its restoration.

Special thanks to Ms. Tina Paterno and Samantha Pacardo for  
making my specialized tour of the church possible.





# Found the perfect shot?

We'd love to share them! Send us your story  
and photography at [kanto.journal@gmail.com](mailto:kanto.journal@gmail.com)

Join us in our celebration of creativity.

**kanto**

CREATIVE CORNERS

# LENS

PHOTOGRAPHY

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PROFILE

### ODE TO THE WINDY CITY

Kevin Poglitsch and his visual love song to the city he calls home: Chicago

Photography by Kevin Poglitsch  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

## 56

PROFILE

### URBAN SEEN

Portraits of a frenetic city, captured in its gritty rawness by Mike Peralta

Photography by Mike Peralta  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

## 66

PROFILE

### WHITE SPACE

Norwegian hobby photographer Robin Johannessen uncovers beauty in simplicity

Photography by Robin Johannessen  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
ROBIN JOHANNESSEN









L E N S  
P R O F I L E

O D E  
T O T H E  
W I N D Y  
C I T Y

*The Chicago of  
photography enthusiast  
Kevin Poglitsch*

**Photography**  
Kevin Poglitsch  
**Interview**  
Patrick Kasingsing



## **Kindly introduce yourself: What is your present occupation, and what pushed you to go into photography?**

I provide customer support for a software company. I've always enjoyed looking at photography, and one day I decided I wanted to try creating it as well. I enjoy all types of photography, but what really pushed me into going architectural was having Chicago at my doorstep.

### **Your photos often exhibit a sort of cinematic and dark, foreboding quality. Why is this so?**

The way we see things normally with our eyes is too boring. Too ordinary. A camera lets me lie. When I'm editing, I have this dark Gotham-esque vision in my head which I consider to be a more interesting version of our world.

### **Your Instagram gallery is like a love song to Chicago. What is it about the Windy Cindy that you admire most?**

I appreciate the vast scale the city is able to provide. There are so many places I have yet to even have a glimpse of, it feels like there's so much opportunity within Chicago.



### **Have you had that one memorable shoot experience you'll never forget? Care to recount the details?**

I mainly get those memorable feelings when editing actually. Most of the time, photos will just look so bland on camera while shooting, and when I start editing them and they are transforming perfectly it is such a satisfying feeling.

### **What is your camera of choice?**

My first camera was a Nikon so I've since become invested in their systems. I think what Sony is doing in the mirrorless market is really making some waves though.





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**“When I’m photographing, regardless of the type (landscape, urban, etc.), my goal is to capture the unusual or extraordinary.”**

**Your style of photography seem to call to mind scenes of Gotham, or a Sin City graphic panel. Who/What are your inspirations in pursuing this photography style?**

I can’t really say something pushed me to pursue that direction. I definitely didn’t edit like that when I first started. I’m always experimenting with new ideas though, playing around with sliders in Lightroom, and I think one of those experiments just stuck on me.

**Favorite building that you photographed? Why?**

I think one of my favorite views in Chicago is looking down LaSalle Street and seeing the Chicago Board of Trade looming over everything at the end of it. Never gets old.

**What other places would you like to go and capture in photographs?**

I’ve hardly done any travelling with my photography but I think it is something I would love. Some must hit urban locations for me are Hong Kong and Tokyo, I think it’s fascinating how dense these cities are.

**Your imagery is mostly architectural in subject. What attracts you to documenting architecture?**

When I’m photographing, regardless of the type (landscape, urban, etc.), my goal is to capture the unusual or extraordinary. Urban architecture in itself panders to this concept. Just the concept of huge skyscrapers made of steel and glass is so unnatural that I think it makes for an intriguing subject.

**Do you have other hobbies?**

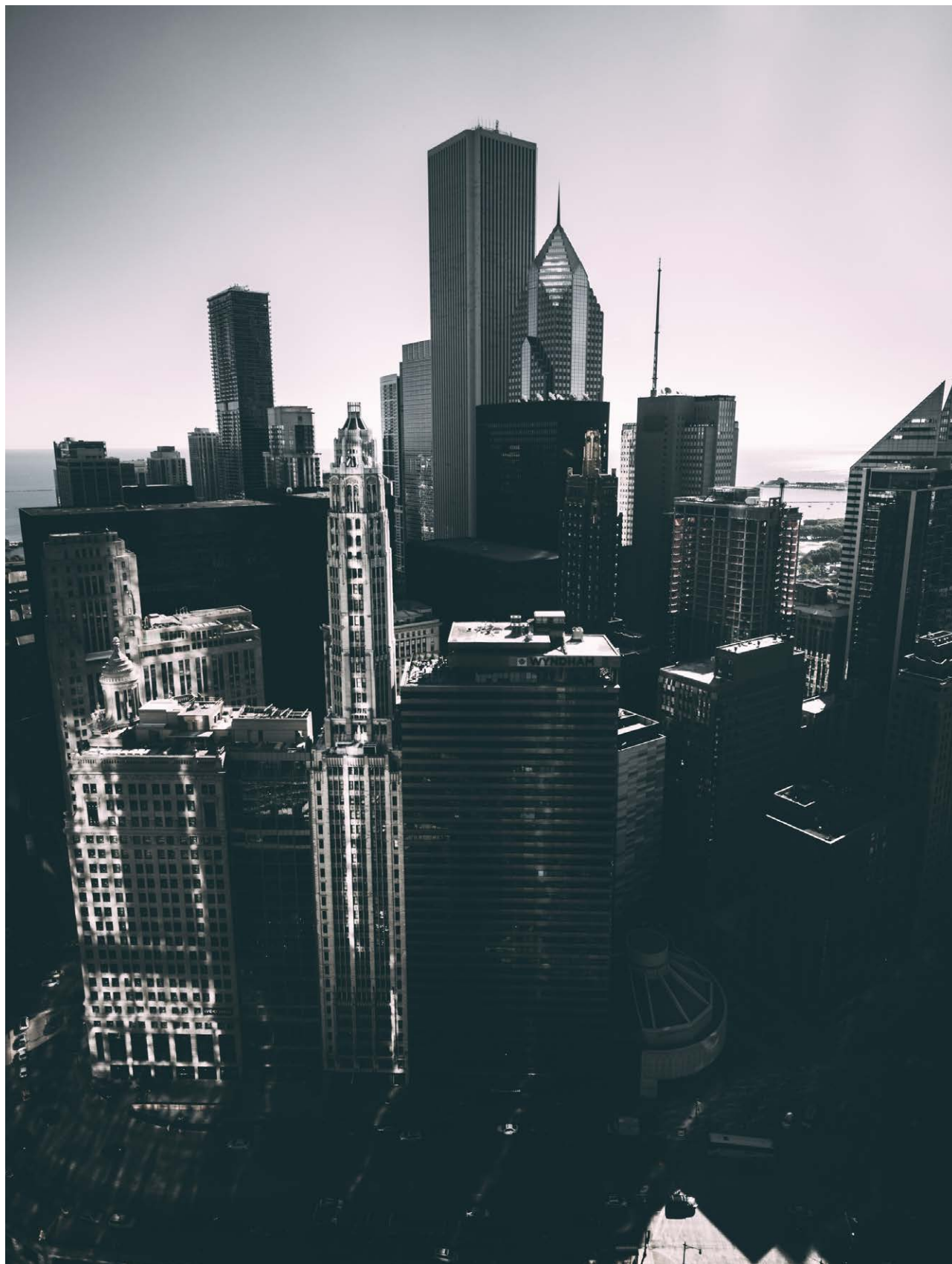
When I’m not behind my camera I like to play video games and watch animé. ●



Follow and view Kevin's visual stimuli on Instagram at [@kpogphoto](#)





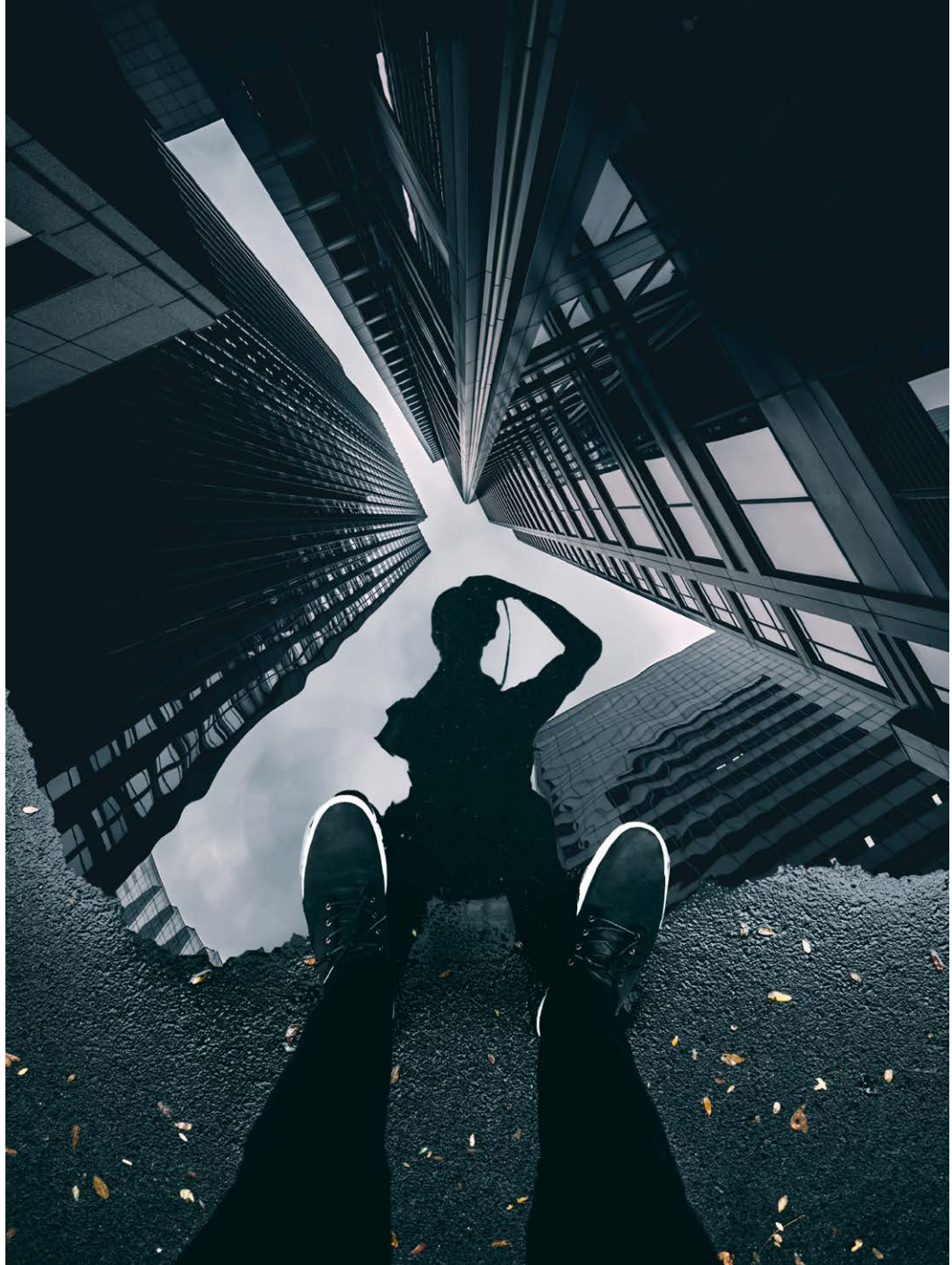
















L E N S  
P R O F I L E

# U R B A N S E E N

*The hustle and bustle of the city  
powers up the lens of photography  
enthusiast Mike Peralta*

**Photography**

Mike Peralta

**Interview**

Patrick Kasingsing









## Kindly introduce yourself.

I'm a sophomore college student, currently taking Multimedia Arts (MMA) at De La Salle-College of St. Benilde. I don't have a permanent job yet, but you might see me in nightclubs as a photographer.

**Your gallery is mostly a collection of dark and moody imagery that can be mistaken for cinematic stills from film noir. What inspired such an aesthetic treatment?**

Hardly anyone pays any attention to the atmosphere, but I do. I wanted to give my audience a heavier, grittier feel of things.

**What is it about a building or scene that stops you in your tracks and make you whip up your camera to snap a photo?**

Everything, actually. From people waiting to hitch a ride at the bus stop, to façades with trippy patterns. I'm also a fan of long exposures.

**What do your choice of subjects in photography say about you? Does your work have an underlying theme/advocacy it wishes to bring to light through photography?**

I'm not much of a vocal person when it comes to what I feel. I let my photos do the talking.



LOADING  
ZONE  
LIGHT  
VEHICLES  
B  
↑



WAL MAMATIL  
NG MGA PUV  
KINANG AREA  
KAGAPAS SA  
SEGUNDO







**“I find inspiration everywhere. From people waiting to hitch a ride at the bus stop, to façades with trippy patterns. I’m also a fan of long exposures.”**

**What is your camera of choice?**

Canon 1200D, though I’m saving up for a 6D.

**What’s the craziest thing you did to capture that ONE shot?**

Hmmm... Most of my photographs were taken when I’m in the car, so I sit on the window ledge while on the road.

**What is it about photography that you love?**

It connects me to people from other regions of the world, helps me gain new friends, and is somewhat an antidepressant.











**“Photography connects me to people from other regions of the world, helps me gain new friends, and is somewhat an antidepressant.”**

**What do you think is the primary skill or trait that needs to be present in a budding photographer?**

You have to be open. Show your mistakes, be ready for any kind of critique. That's how you learn.

**Name a place/activity/person that you've always wanted to capture in a photograph. Why?**

The Land of the Rising Sun, Japan. Why? I've long admired their culture, especially the automotive scene.

**Other hobbies that you indulge in?**

Besides being a shutterbug, I'm also a sneakerhead. ●

Follow Mike on instagram @itgmike



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CREATIVE CORNERS



# CANVAS

ART AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

## 78

EXHIBIT

### MAKING FACES

Filipino caricaturist Meneer Marcelo on the serious art of drawing funny faces

Art by Meneer Marcelo  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

## 86

EXHIBIT

### DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

Meeting the supernatural beings and the fantastical worlds of artist Camille Chua

Art by Camille Chua  
Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

ARTWORK BY  
CAMILLE CHUA





L E N S  
P R O F I L E

# W H I T E S P A C E

*Robin Johannessen's everyday  
portraits find its beauty in  
stark simplicity*

**Photography**

Robin Johannessen

**Interview**

Patrick Kasingsing









## Kindly introduce yourself: What is your present occupation, and what pushed you to go into photography?

My name is Robin Johannessen, a 26 year-old guy from Norway, currently studying to become a construction engineer. I live with my girlfriend in a cozy apartment in Oslo. A few years ago, I read a book about composing photos and discovered an interest in photography.

### **You mostly work with monochromatic and black and white photography. Why is that?**

I love the softness of tones and the versatility of black and white photography. I usually set a very low saturation in my Instagram photos to convey a signature tone and style to my gallery.

### **What is quickly evident of your body of work is its minimalist aesthetic. What about minimalism attracts you?**

I really like the versatility of motifs and how you can tell a story or convey a mood and spirit with a very simple motif, with almost no distractions.

### **You are a photographer of a variety of subjects. How do you know which moments/objects to photograph? What do you usually take photos of?**

I don't usually plan my shots and prefer taking moments as they happen. I mostly take pictures of trees, plants, people and architecture.

### **What is your camera of choice?**

I rarely use an actual camera nowadays. I prefer any good quality smartphone camera for quick snapshots that are easy to share.

### **What for you makes a good photo?**

A great photo has good subject placement, conveying a particular mood or atmosphere, with a story to tell.







**“I don’t usually plan my shots and prefer taking moments as they happen. I mostly take pictures of trees, plants, people and architecture.”**

**Minimalist photography seems to be quite a trend at present, especially within photo-sharing sites like Instagram. Why do you think this is so?**

Minimalist photography offers a wide range of opportunities, with many motives to choose from. You can take quick snapshots with any cellphone camera and share your pictures easily.

**Do you love to travel? What do you usually first take photos of in a new country/place you’ve visited?**

I love to travel and I often take my first pictures at the airport. There are many exciting motifs at the airport like its architecture, the people and the abundance of line patterns and textures.

**How do you stay inspired and creative?**

I try to stay active on Instagram and keep looking for inspiration from the many talented users out there.

**Do you have other hobbies?**

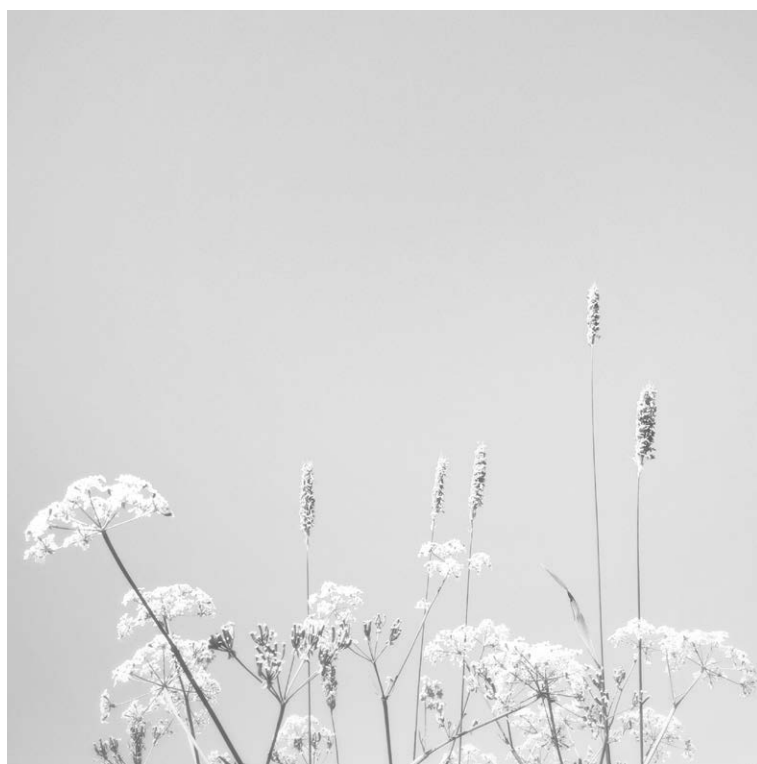
I spend my spare time exercising and rock climbing. I also play guitar and I have just started playing in a band. ●

Follow Robin on Instagram  
[@robinjohannessen](#) for more of  
his minimalist photography



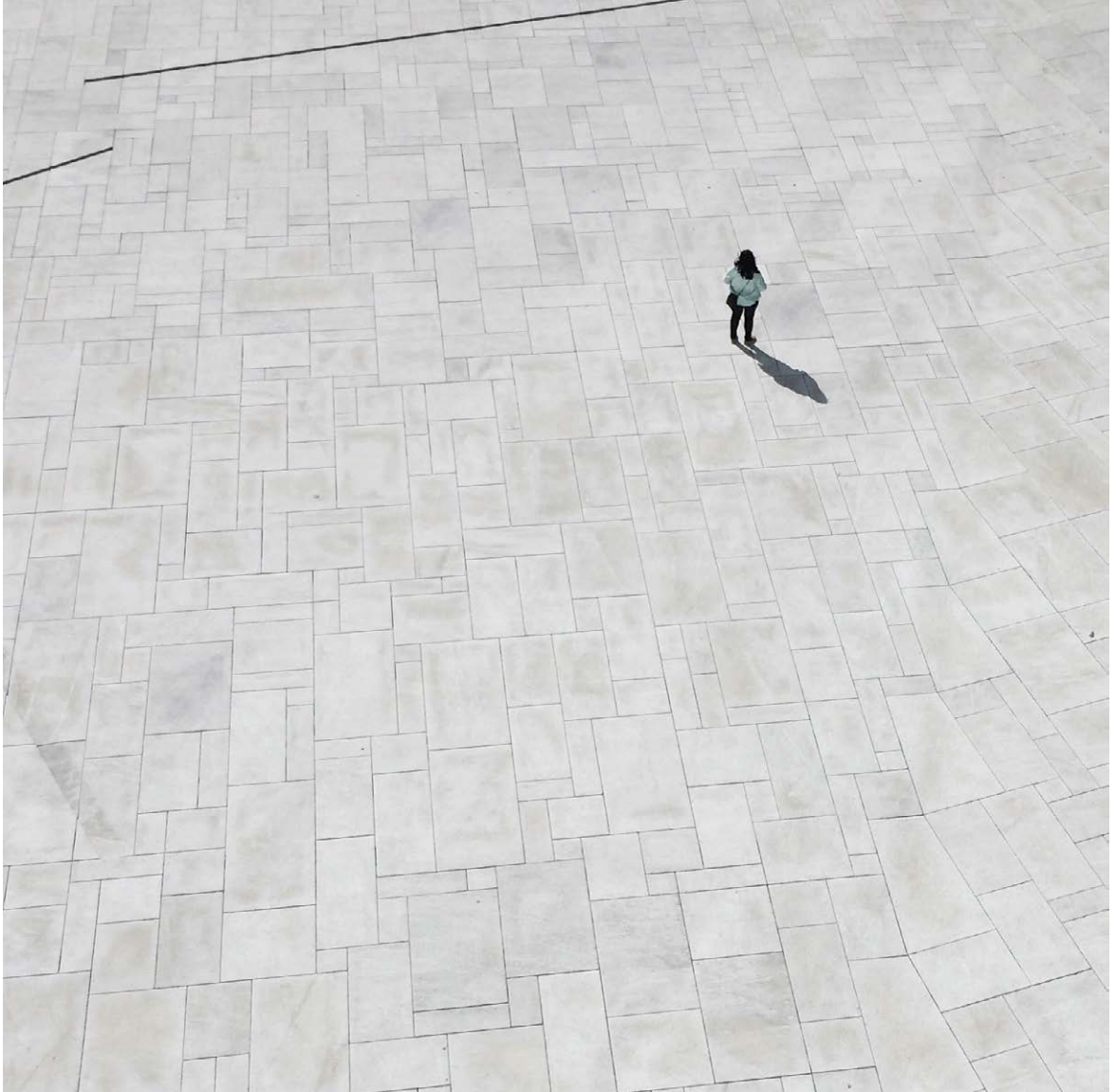














C A N V A S  
E X H I B I T

# MAKING FACES

*It takes a lot of serious work to  
make funny faces according to noted  
caricaturist Meneer Marcelo*

**Art**

Meneer Marcelo

**Interview**

Patrick Kasingsing

**Opposite page** *Steve Jobs*, digital portrait, 2011







## **You are now a renowned illustrator. What triggered this love for drawing and caricature? Where did it all start?**

Drawing people has been my passion since I was a kid. It saved me from mental coma during boring lectures. I made it my life to make people happy through making fun faces.

### **Who are your artistic idols? What about their work inspires you the most?**

Kim Jung Gi. The guy just puts every illustrator to shame. He is an endless pool of visual poetry.

### **You are most known for your amazing caricatures of renowned personalities. Do you have particular favorites that you did? Or perhaps an amusing anecdote connected to your caricatures?**

All of my works are special to me. Two of the most significant are a caricature of Steve Jobs and a portrait of my friend, Rai Cruz. The first one made it to a book tribute for Jobs. The latter was my first digital caricature and it paved the way for more fun stuff.

### **What are your favorite tools to work with? Are you most comfortable working in digital or with traditional art tools?**

I love experimenting and I'm pretty comfortable with both traditional and digital.

### **What is your ideal working environment? Are you one who needs the peace and quiet of your desk, or the I-can-do-art-anywhere type?**

I need an empty desk and a cup of coffee.

### **Illustration can sometimes be really tiring work. How do you stay inspired and refreshed? Any habits/exercises that you do during illustration breaks?**

I take walks. The neighborhood grocery is pretty near so I go there and linger. I also do jump rope during breaks.

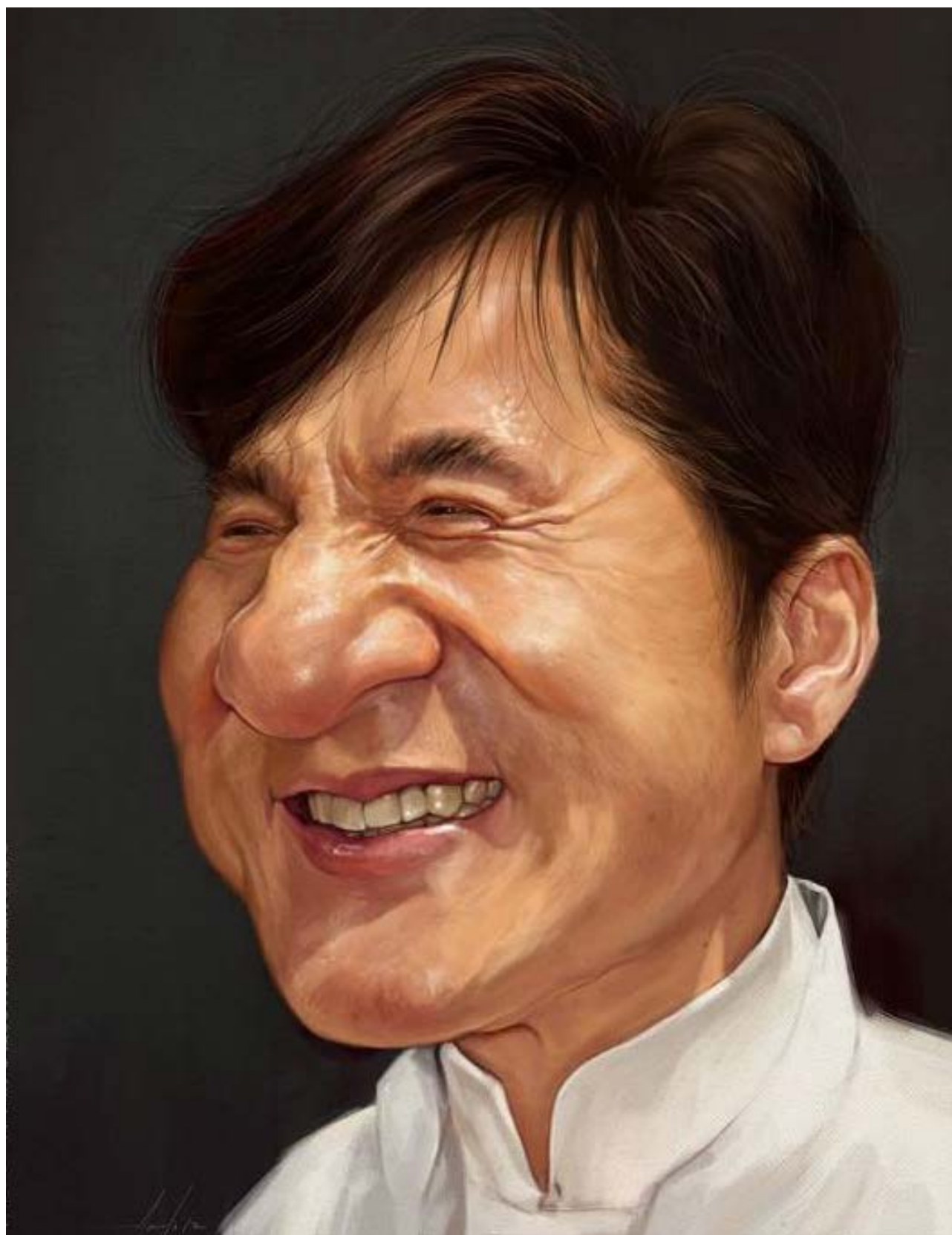
### **Any other interests aside from illustration? A hobby or a pet project?**

For the past months, I've been trying to find my talent in cooking. I'm now exploring the wonders of airfrying. I put everything in the airfryer and things come out magical. ●



Follow Meneer on Instagram @meneermarcelo and on Facebook Meneer Marcelo Illustration. View his portfolio on Behance ([www.behance.net/meneer](http://www.behance.net/meneer))





**“Drawing people has been my passion since I was a kid. I made it my life to make people happy through making fun faces.”**



**Opposite page** Jackie Chan, digital portrait, 2012; **Above:** Bush, digital portrait, 2011, first published in *Rogue* magazine







**Opposite page** Dan Matutina, digital portrait, 2011; **Top left:** Juan Ponce Enrile, digital portrait, 2012;  
**Right:** Leila de Lima, digital portrait, 2012, first published in *Rogue* magazine



C A N V A S  
E X H I B I T

# DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

*Fantastical realms and imaginary  
creatures come to life whenever artist  
Camille Chua starts to draw*

**Art**

Camille Chua

**Interview**

Patrick Kasingsing

**Opposite page** *Lair*, from *The Highlighter Project*,  
mixed media (Stabilo Boss highlighters with a combo  
that may include Unipens, brush pens, ballpoint  
pens, selected colored pencils and Copic markers on  
sketching or toned paper), 2015









**Opposite page** *Thought & Memory*,  
from *The Highlighter Project*,  
mixed media, 2015

## **Your illustration work is very original and rich with detail and story. What inspired you to pursue illustration?**



**Camille Chua's illustrations & art has always been about trying to construct characters, ideas and worlds for the sake of great storytelling.** She believes that the world is forgetting what it feels like to be in wonder or in awe of something, especially in today's fast-paced age, and that it is through illustration where she finds her 'oasis' from the stresses of the everyday. Her work has always been heavily influenced by fantasy and science fiction, genres which she admires for being so alien yet relatable at the same time. Aesthetics-wise, her work often takes shape through playful experimentation with mixed media, with a handcrafted and painterly style, and an emphasis on strokes, etches and textures.

Quite frankly, dinosaurs. I used to love reading encyclopedia books about them back when I was a kid and was really mind-blown that these creatures actually existed in the past. I wanted to become a paleontologist then...until I picked up a pencil and started drawing them. My love for art completely blossomed when dinosaur-copying turned into Pokémon copying. Pokémon was my life, and then came the Harry Potter fan art. The original art came after trying and failing to come up with a good Pokémon-Harry Potter crossover comic.

### **Your work is often fantastical in nature, seemingly inspired by video games and fantasy novels. Any other sources of artistic inspiration?**

I love nature and discovering how things work. Some of the random muses and sources of inspiration I had in the past were exotic insects, deep sea creatures, car engines, ancient tribes, death masks and poisonous plants. These don't only involve looking at the items, but also researching about them. Inspiration comes and goes; old ideas can sometimes resurface or lie dormant in my brain.

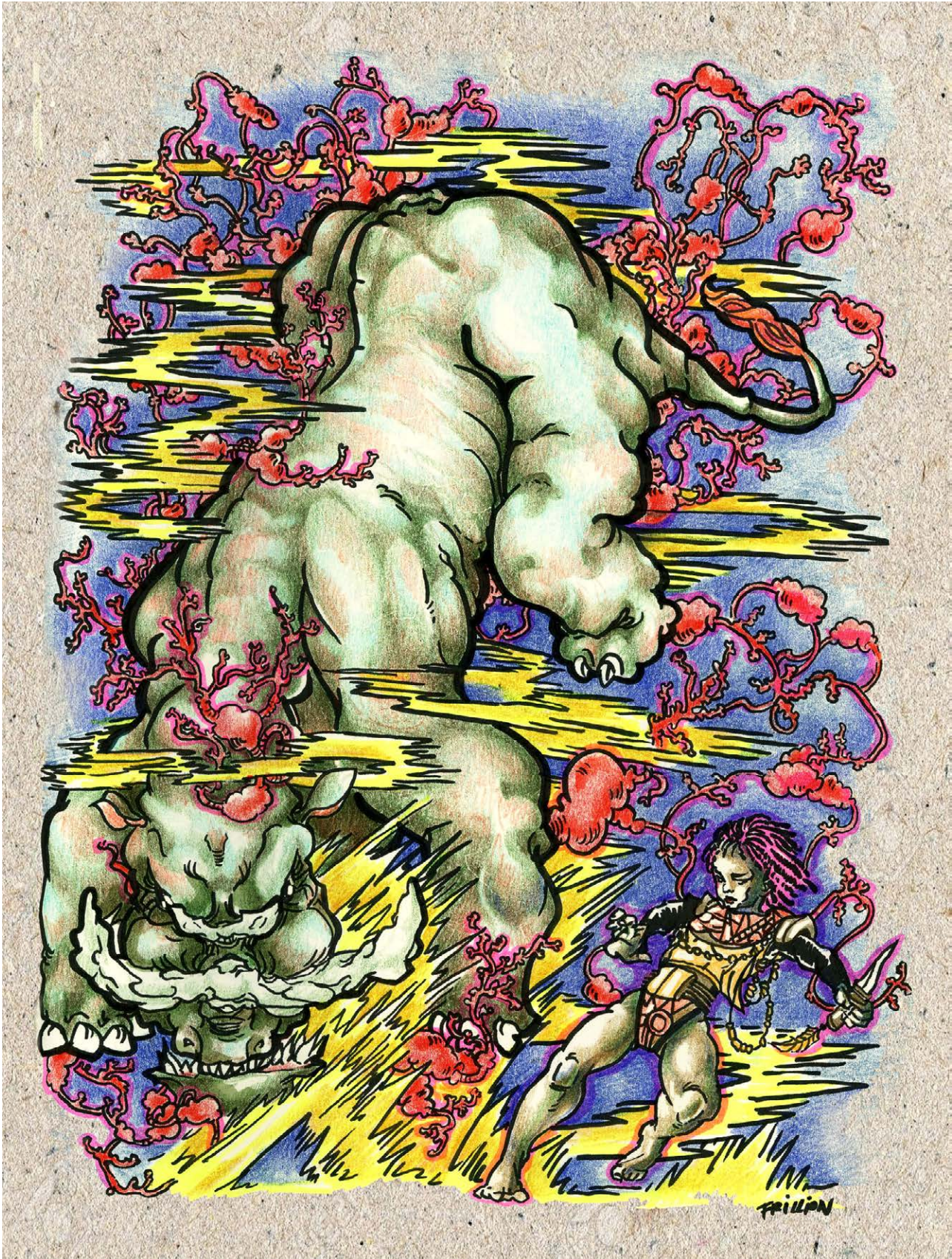
### **How long do you usually work on an artwork? What's the longest you've taken in completing one?**

Hmm, that's hard to gauge as an average, but for my highlighter artworks, it usually takes a few days to a week. For more detailed artworks such as my concept and storytelling digital illustrations, it can take 2 weeks to a month depending on how much time I have after work. I often allot 1-2 hours for art-making on weekdays, although I sometimes spend most of those hours procrastinating, watching art tutorials and playing with my dogs.

### **What are your favorite tools to work with? Are you most comfortable working in digital or with traditional art tools?**

I've always had a tendency to experiment with different types of tools (either within the traditional art realm, or having crossovers between traditional and digital tools), but the ballpoint pen and mechanical pencil will always remain my favorites. I'm all for precision and detail. As for my newest favorite tool, it's got to be acrylic matte medium! I can transfer my black and white works onto almost any surface with it AND it makes using mixed media a whole lot easier by protecting one layer from another, whether it's acrylic, watercolor, cut and paste or print!







**Opposite page** *The Bloodhunt*,  
from *The Highlighter Project*,  
mixed media, 2015

**Some artists have been known to suffer from the ‘illness’ of having too many ‘WIP’ (works-in-progress). Are you guilty of this as well?**

I usually make it a point to finish what I started (with a bit of procrastination), but I think I have another illness, which is having too many “IIPs” (Ideas in progress). I tend to think of new ideas too constantly that sometimes it hinders me from finishing my WIPs. I try to remedy this by jotting down all the best ideas that I come up with, filter them after, and keep them for future projects. At least, I’ll never run out of personal project ideas!

**Who are your artistic idols and what about their work inspires you?**

Oh god, where to start! For childhood idols, it must be Miyazaki, Hergé of ‘Tintin,’ and the European comic writers and artists of ‘Asterix & Obelix’. Their movies and comics captivated me enough to start creating artwork of my own. As for current influences, old masters such as Lord Frederick Leighton, Jean-Léon Gérôme and John Singer Sargent for their epic skills in composition, brushwork and their subtle play with colors. Fantasy artists such as Frank Frazetta, Moebius, James Jean, Andrew Theophilopoulos and Wylie Beckert (to name a FEW!) all have a story to tell in their works that I’d like to hone in mine.

**Any other interests aside from illustration? A hobby or a pet project?**

I’m part of a Dungeons & Dragons campaign where I play as a wood elf sorceress with a thieving streak. The group I’m part of is about to start on a Star Wars tabletop campaign as well (Star Wars hype is real!) and I’ll be an explorer droid. I haven’t been playing a lot of games, but I’m eagerly waiting for Dishonored 2 and Mass Effect: Andromeda. Those games are a work of art! (Well, anything from Bethesda & Bioware is, in my opinion). I also try to hike/trek a couple of mountains each year. ●

**“Some of the random muses and sources of inspiration I had in the past were exotic insects, deep sea creatures, car engines, ancient tribes, death masks and poisonous plants.”**

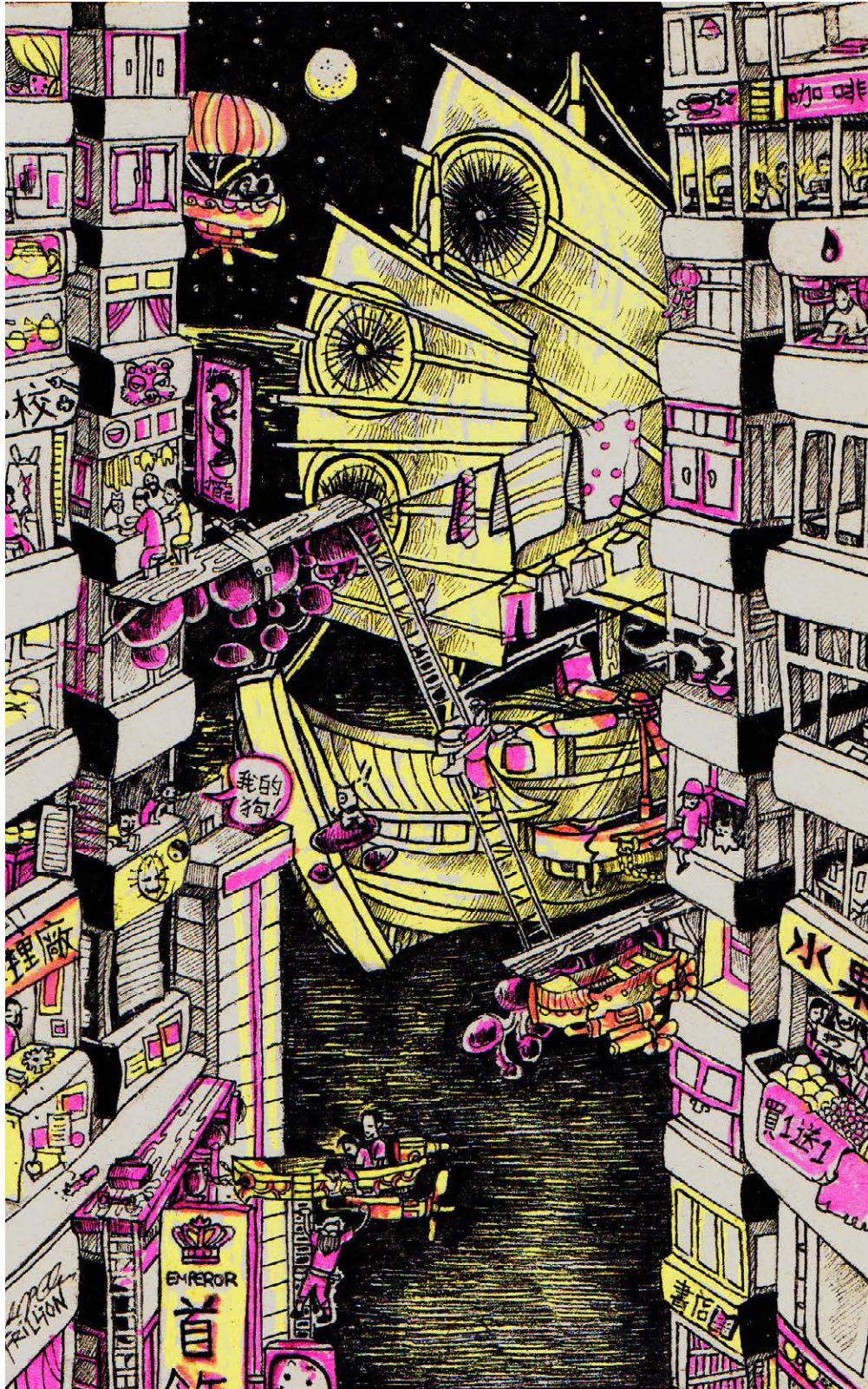
Follow Camille's quest of honing her visual storytelling skills on Instagram: [@frillion](#), Facebook: [Frillion](#) and at [www.frillion.weebly.com](#)





*Expulsion, from The Highlighter Project, mixed media, 2015*  
Featured in the 4th Instant Doodles Exhibit in Cevio Art Haus

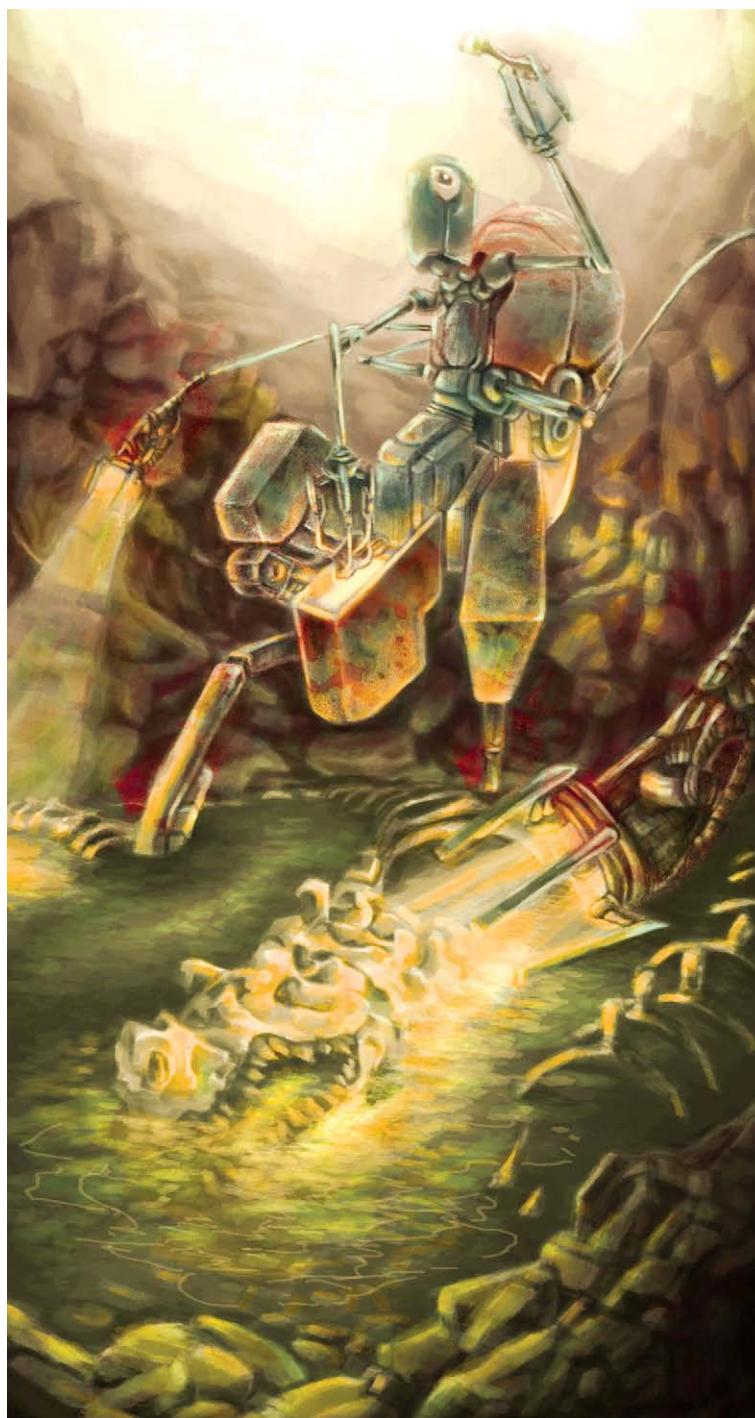




Sci-fi Hong Kong, from The Highlighter Project, mixed media, 2015  
Sold in Asia Pop Comic Con 2015

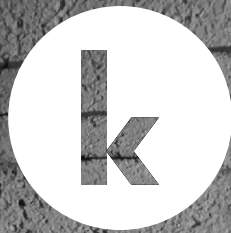






*The Bone Collector*, Photoshop, 2015  
**Opposite page** *Birth of Saturn*, Photoshop, 2015





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CREATIVE CORNERS



# QUILL

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PROFILE

### ROMANCE IN THE VERNACULAR

Writer and poet Mia Lauengco  
on the depth and beauty of the  
Filipino language

Interview by Patrick Kasingsing

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POETRY

### SELECTED WORKS

Written by Mia Lauengco

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SHORT STORY

### THE CHOICE, PART ONE

A tale of a girl in two worlds

Written by Joanna Parungao

ART BY  
POLYMAT





# Romance in the Vernacular

*Young poet Mia Lauengco revels in the beauty and the romantic sound of the Filipino language*

**Interview** Patrick Kasingsing

**What is it about the art of poetry that you fell in love with?** The harmony of images and metaphors, and how this creates layers of meanings; how multiple messages are conveyed beyond the literal sense of the poem, and how even just a few lines can make great emotional appeal to readers.

**You write your poetry mostly in Filipino. What characteristics of the Filipino language do you love and has prompted you to write in it?** Funny, because the first few poems I wrote in high school were in English. I used to think that only poems written in English are romantic, classy and elegant; while those written in Filipino are *baduy* or old-fashioned, and inaccessible (I know people whose perception of Filipino poetry is *sobrang lalim* (too profound) or ‘nosebleed’). Like most writers I know, the younger me had always wanted to know the answer to “What makes a poem a poem?” and how to tell if the pieces I’ve written are actually poems. So, I was out to figure these out when I joined the LIRA poetry clinic. It was the only workshop I knew that was available for newbies like me. Once I began writing poems in Filipino for the LIRA workshops, I knew that I wanted to pursue writing in that language. I realized that it’s easier to use my native language, and there’s a certain sincerity and seriousness in the language. It just seems so pure to me, plus there are a lot of beautiful and Filipino words waiting to be discovered. (ex. *Salamisim: malungkot ngunit matamis na alaala* (the remembrance of happy memories which awakens a feeling of sadness or nostalgia); *kilapsaw* or ripples of water)

**Who are your literary idols and how do they inspire you in your writing?** Virgilio Almario would be one, because he really has a deep understanding of poetry. Rebecca Anonuevo and Benilda Santos for melancholic poetry and for their feminist themes. Jerry Gracio and Joey Baquiran for their contemporary and entertaining poems. I try to reflect their poetics and writing styles to my poems.

**What are the most prevalent themes in your literary body of work?** I’m still in the stage where most of my poems are about love—from the early stages of a relationship to heartbreak poems. I’m also trying to write more performance pieces, but I’m still working on that. I also have poems about finding one’s self. I’ve also just realized that most of my poems use auditory devices.

**Any tips for aspiring poets reading this?** As what my mentors would tell me, I’d say “read, read, read!” And I suggest starting with works by Filipino poets. Most workshops invite panelists who have already proven their flair for poetry, so it would be nice to personally learn from them, as well. I really would recommend attending the LIRA poetry clinic. It runs every weekend for around 6 months. During these weekends, known poets and fictionists conduct a series of lectures covering various topics related to poetry. ●

Hone your writing skills and volunteer for Filipino poetry by joining the annual LIRA poetry clinic. Visit [facebook.com/PalihanLIRA](https://facebook.com/PalihanLIRA) or the YouTube channel Makatang LIRA for more information on the organization’s workshops, activities and events.



## Hulagway

1.

Sinubukan kong kalmutin ang balat sa salamin  
 Upang doo'y matagpuan ang sarili  
 Ngunit hindi doon nabuksan ang kaloob-looban;  
 Datapwa't paulit-ulit pa ring ginalugad ng mga daliri  
 Ang rabaw ng nanlilitis,  
 Nangingilatis na mukhang tumititig  
 Hanggang bumagsak  
 At mabasag ang imaheng pinapasok nang pilit.  
 Makailang ulit mang mawasak  
 Ang di makilalang pagkatao,  
 Ilang libong  
 Ako ang hindi pa rin mapagtanto.

2.

Inilubog ko ang kamay sa tubig  
 Noong isang gabing maningning  
 Upang doo'y sagipin ang aninong  
 Maaaring akin—  
 Ang nakatitig nang walang mata  
 At nangungusap na parang bilanggo  
 Sa kabilang uniberso—  
 Subalit nahaklis lamang ang rabaw,  
 Kaya muli kong hinawi  
 Hanggang magdulot ng kilapsaw,  
 At hindi na maaninag ang anyong di maangkin.  
 Hinintay ko ang tubig na muling mamayapa,  
 Baka sakaling magkaganoon din  
 Ang damdaming kong nananatili sa ilalim.

3.

Tumitig ako sa iyong mga mata  
 Upang hanapin kung ako ay naroon pa ba,  
 At pumailanlang ang aking anyo,  
 Subalit agad ding naglaho sa kawalan  
 Sapagkat lumilihis din ang mga damdamin  
 Kasabay ng mga pagtingin.  
 Hindi na lamang akin ang iyong tingin,  
 At tunay ngang hindi na tayo magkaugnay  
 O walang ikaw sa akin.  
 Hindi ko na makita ang iyong kaluluwa.  
 Ikaw ay nilisan na.

## Boses Sa Hatinggabi

Matagal na nahimbing ang paborito kong libro  
Sa pagitan ng mga kauri nitong bago.

Nanaginip siyang nahuhulog  
Ang mga titik mula sa kanyang mga pahina,  
At mula rito ay nagdugo siya  
Ng tinta.  
Basang-basa, nalulunod sa sarili nitong likido,  
Hanggang maglagas, malusaw,  
At tuluyang mawala.

Malamang, narinig ko siyang sumigaw  
Sa gitna ng gabi.  
Tinatawag ang aking pangalan,  
Kaya bumangon ako sa hindi pagkakatulog  
At muli kong hinimas  
Ang kanyang pabalat  
Upang tanggalin ang kumot  
Ng alikabok,  
At saka ko muling binuklat ang mga pahina  
Nang mahimasmasan ang kanyang loob.  
Habang nililirip ang kanyang nilalaman,  
Muli akong nagising, napadilat,  
At nabihag  
Ng kanyang hiwaga.



## Pagtingin

May maririnig na kalabog sa banggaan  
 ng ating mga tingin,  
 At dadagundong ang mga paputok  
 Sa tuwing magdadaplisang ang  
 naghuhulihan nating mga titig--  
 Palitong sa sandaling kumiskis ay may dalang kislap  
 na sisindi sa mga pailaw sa langit.  
 Makulay,  
 Subalit nakabibingi ang paulit-ulit na kabog  
 ng ating mga dibdib na hindi lamang tayo ang nakaririnig.  
 Hindi tayo  
 ang nasasilaw sa liwanag nating higit pa sa buwan,  
 ang nabubulahaw sa ingay nating higit pa sa bagong taon.  
 Hindi lamang tayo  
 ang nakakikita sa sunod-sunod na  
 mga kislap sa ating pagitan.  
 Hindi atin  
 ang mga gabing pinatutugtog at pinagniningning.  
 At upang marinig ang katahimikang hiling,  
 Ito ang dapat gawin:  
 Ipikit ang mata't itigil ang pagtingin,  
 Kipkipin ang ningas at hayaang magsaabo ang damdamin.

## Kuliglig

Nang di na bumuka itong ating bibig  
Dahil di mahanap ang nais sabihin  
Ay mas maingay pa ang aking narinig.

Sinusuyo kita. Di ka nakikinig.  
Walang pakialam sa aking damdamin.  
Ayaw nang ibuka itong aking bibig.

Mga salita ko'y di mo na daigdig.  
Katahimikan mo'y pag-iwas sa akin  
Ay mas maingay pa ang aking narinig.

Kantahan man kita, di ka na maantig  
Ng harana't awit. Dapat bang pilitin  
Na iyong ibuka ang tikom mong bibig?

Hikbi ko sa iyo, "Bakit nanlalamig?"  
Ngunit nang ang tanong, tinangay ng hangin  
Ay mas maingay pa ang aking narinig.

Malumay mong dibdib ay wala nang pintig  
Na para sa akin. Kung ako'y alipin  
Sa hindi pagbuka niyang iyong bibig,  
Di na mag-iingay, di mo maririnig.



## Jessica

Alam kong ikaw ay aking kilalang kilala  
 Subalit ngayon, hindi kita namumukhaan.  
 Tinitigan kita mula ulo hanggang paa.  
 Nagbabakasakaling muli kitang mahanap  
 Sa kailaliman ng iyong dalawang mata,  
 Sa loob ng iyong ilong na ngayo'y dumapa,  
 Sa iyong balat na nangingitim, namumula,  
 Sa gitna ng mga aalon-alon mong braso,  
 Sa higanteng dibdib na may mahahabang marka,  
 Sa singit ng nagkikiskisang mga hita  
 Ngunit wala roon ang nakagisnan kong ikaw.  
 Binago ka't babaguhin pa ng batang dinadala  
 At sa kanyang paglabas ay makikita kita  
 Ngunit ngayon, kayo bilang iisa ay higit pa rin sa  
 anumang ganda.

Q U I L L  
S H O R T S T O R Y

# The Choice

*A tale of a girl in two worlds*

Written by  
Joanna Parungao



Image from unsplash.com



I

**Once, a long time ago, I went to a fortuneteller who told me she could divine my future simply by looking at the lines imprinted on the skin of my palms.**

“Only for a small fee,” she assured me. Initially, I declined her offer, certain of the fraudulent nature of her wares. How could one predict the future when time was in flux and forever changing? A student of physics, I was a person of logic, of mathematical equations and scientific formulas—I understood the possibility of predictions, but only up to a point. Even the fractals of chaos theory could not predict the entirety of the universe without using a limiting parameter, a blind spot. How could the grooves etched on my palms provide the key to discerning my future?

“No,” I told her as I moved away, but she held out her hand and caught me by my fingertips. She insisted that I stay, despite my protestations. If palmistry did not interest me, then she would use her cards. “It is what you like, yes?” She smiled knowingly. “Your numbers and your shapes and your counting—always the counting with you. How many dimensions now? Four? Nine?”

I blinked, surprised. “M-Theory says eleven but there’s a new theory, F-Theory. It posits that there may be twelve.”

She laughed and shook her head, “Wasn’t it easier when reality consisted of just three dimensions? You have your up and down, and left and right, and backwards and forwards. Now it is all jumbled up. Come inside, come inside...” She ushered me off the quad and into her small tent. It was dim and smelled of incense. I hesitated at the threshold, wary.

“Come sit down,” she said.

I shrugged and stepped inside.

She seated herself behind a small round table covered in heavy brocade and gestured for me to take the seat on the opposite side. I was pleasantly surprised at the plump softness of the cushion beneath me. Nothing inside her tent looked cheap or vulgar and a part of me could not reconcile the potential earnings of her profession with the apparent luxuries to be found around us. It bothered me, this incongruence. It was impossible for the cloths to be actual silk and the threads used in the embroidery of the tapestries, glinting silver and gold, could not possibly be genuine. I told myself it was a trick of the light and perhaps the perfumed air.

“You are very mistrustful.” She gestured to the tapestries, the throw pillows, the tassels and various accoutrements that went with her trade. “These things they do not put you at ease. They are meant to. It is to help you enter a different state of mind, facilitate a belief in a different type of world, not so hard, not so cruel, not quite so isolating. Ah, but then you already know of such a world with your multiple strings and their vibrations, don’t you?” She rummaged underneath her table and took out several decks of cards. “You know about this already, the perfect symmetry of these cards? They are just numbers, these decks,

and they will unlock the future for you. Now, what to choose? The Rider Waite is a crowd favorite, feel the energy in the deck, touch it with your hands." She withdrew the cards after I touched them. "Or how about this one, the Tarot of the Old Path, very popular with those drawn to white magic and nature based religions...or how about this Cosmic Tarot? Very few symbols, easier to understand if you prefer..."

In truth, as she prattled on about arcanas, wands, and fools, I was gripped with a desire to stand up so strong that it made my calves ache and my toes curl. I shrugged without comment. I wanted to leave but I knew instinctively that she would not let me until she deemed it was time for me to go. Somehow, I felt no real trepidation despite this knowledge. I was more put-upon than afraid.

"You do not understand me, do you? Very well, shall I speak your language then?" She shook her head, voice petulant. I stared at her, not remembering her to be quite as beautiful as she seemed at that moment. It was the same face, and yet different. I squinted at her and she laughed at me, like a child. Had she always been so young? "Yes," she said. "Now pay attention! These are the tarot cards, yes? Do you see? And the reading of them is the reading of a pattern. You like patterns, don't you? The golden ratio, remember? The sum of the quantities to the larger quantity is equal to the ratio of a larger quantity to the smaller one..."

"1.618."

"Clever girl! It's the divine proportion, the fingerprint of creation. You're very smart; this is why you were chosen. Now listen, patterns emerge when you shuffle the cards, and in the dealing of the spread, the paths to your past, and your present, and your future are opened. These patterns in the change, the difference between the final and the initial, they are just mathematical functions calculable with differential calculus—static images interpreted, projected into the past and the future."

Her smile was self-satisfied when her eyes met mine. She told me she could map out the entirety of my existence thus far using only her cards. She chose one deck and fanned out the cards on the table, all seventy-eight of them. "With Rahdue's Wheel, I can lay out your past and your present lives; give you a glimpse of what your tomorrows will bring." She tilted her head to one side and studied me. "But it is not the future you seek to see, is it? And no interest in your past lives either...Oh! I see!" She put away her decks and placed what looked like an Apple Ipad at the center of the table. "Here we go. This is more suitable I think. This is a tablet."

"That's an iPad."

"No, it's a tablet. With a windows application." "Oh. China-made?" She reared back a little, as though my question affronted her, which apparently it did. "I'll have you know this was forged with the stringent howls of icy winds and the most forlorn sighs of the fire mages. Alloys were bent and stretched on the forge to craft this! Elements not naturally occurring in nature came to be in order for this tablet to be formed!"

"I see." I fidgeted. "Is this going to take long? I have homework and I really must go. I'll just pay you and be on my way." I started to rise but the force of her glare stopped me. "Look, you said you were going to tell me my future, but then you said you don't think that's what I want. You're perfectly correct."



“I don’t want to know my future. All I want is to get out of here.”

She smiled. “Exactly.” She tapped her index finger on the surface of the tablet and it lighted up to show, as it was initiated, a whole black apple that slowly became red. “It’s from Snow White. Not the first witch to use surveillance but she is the first one to use semi-sentence to fulfill that task. Usually they send out birds or small animals. Very difficult. They have small brains you know. Tiny. No real cognition. It’s very uncomfortable trying to get into the mind of say a squirrel or if you want it closer to home, a cockroach or a rat.” Before I could call her insane, she grinned and beckoned me to look at the screen. “Look, it is open. This is the windows application. It taps into the nodes of the strings in your universe, even the unfurled dimensions and the possibility spaces.”

I saw an infinite number of strings vibrating on the screen, arranged in intricate geometric patterns that were nothing short of beautiful. It reminded me of the night sky with millions of stars all connected with bright light.

“I thought you might like this theme,” she said and I looked up to see that her eyes were trained on me. “It’s beautiful isn’t it? Very elegant.” I nodded. “The theory of everything.” She smiled. “There are other templates of course, should you desire a different view. Would you like to see them as branes? Fantastic things. Or would you be more comfortable with little soap bubbles floating in the dark? How about slices of bread in a loaf? I can show you a weave of quantised loops if you prefer. No? All right then, we’ll stick with this one. The window is only the frame after all, doesn’t matter as long as you get to look...” The fortuneteller tapped on one winking point in the tablet’s interface and it expanded into a bird’s eye view of the world. It was like Google Earth and the more she tapped, the closer the view, until the tops of the buildings became the view in the street, close enough to see people’s faces and hear them speak.

“You know how each choice you make is the fulfillment of one possibility? Parallel worlds are thus created, a multitude of them, reality splitting again and again. Come closer and take a look, this is a universe where you were born a boy, would you like to be a boy? No? How about this? In this world you are a dog...or how would you like to be a model, look you are taller and your face is more angular, more beautiful, oh but then you die very young. Sexually transmitted disease, who knew you could be so promiscuous?” Her chuckle discomfited me more than the image of my model-self dying alone in a hospital bed. I hugged my jacket tighter against my body. “Would you like to be a doctor? A lawyer? A surgeon? A teacher? There’s a universe where you’re the Miss Universe and there’s one where you’re a meth junkie with no lower jaw. Would you like to be a mermaid? A fairy? A narwhal falling down from the sky? Would you like to know the feeling of living on the snow-capped Alps or would you like to be on the FBI’s most wanted list?”

On and on, she presented me with all the possibilities, both fascinating and terrifying scenarios, fingers flying on the interface of the tablet, showing me all my different selves in an infinite succession. I wanted her to stop talking but I couldn’t help but listen to her speak. It was as though her voice and the images flashing on the tablet’s screen held me in thrall. I could neither leave nor look away, like matter caught within the radius of a black hole’s event horizon. Her voice pulled me forward, all voluntary motion ceased, and I was only aware of her voice, my other lives, and the rapid beating of my racing heart. Caught as I was within this invisible sphere of no return, this space wherein time stops the closer you get to the center, a place of singularities where all known laws of the universe ceased to matter, my reality splintered, time dilated, and I felt myself become fragmented as the strange woman’s voice, slow and steady, somehow kept abreast with the nimble movements of her fingers flying over the tablet’s interface. I panicked. “Stop it!” I said, half-rising from my chair, hands gripping the table’s edge, the brocade scratchy on my palms.

“What are you doing? Stop it! Please stop!”

She did.

She gazed at me intently, all the manic energy gone. She kept very still, as did I. I couldn't move. There was something almost predatory about her gaze, as though she had anticipated everything that had transpired thus far and was set to make her final move. I should have run out of there then. It would have been the smart thing to do, certainly, but I couldn't bring myself to leave. Anomalous occurrences of such a degree rarely happened, and to have it happen to me of all people, how could I turn away? It was not in my nature. I sat back down.

She straightened in her seat after what seemed to be an eternity. Her face wore a look of concern, her voice gentled. "What's wrong Maica? Why are you so terribly unhappy?"

"What?"

Of all the things she could have said at that moment, I had not expected that.

She showed me my life, a sequence of disjointed events. I hated looking at myself from the outside. I hadn't realized I walked with such a defeated gait or that I had a groove, faint but deepening each year, right where my eyebrows met whenever I frowned – and why was I always frowning?

"You're a healthy young woman. You're smart. You have a family and a future. No deformation mars you. You wanted for nothing during your childhood. No extravagances of course, but you were cared for, loved. Again, why are you so unhappy Maica?"

Her tone rankled. It was mild and reasonable yet I couldn't help but feel as though she had accused me of something, judged me as wanting. "You know nothing about my life! Those are just random slides. You don't understand anything about me."

"I understand you have ambition. I understand you have your goals and your dreams." The woman smiled. I felt uncomfortable at the sight. It looked strange on her face suddenly, too wide and with too many teeth. "You have a lot of potential energy, but you do not harness it and it stagnates inside of you. Right now, at this moment, you are almost past the point of your ripeness. You will begin to decay soon, if you do not do something about it, and that would be a real shame. I propose this. Let me show you something." She motioned to the screen of the tablet between us. "Look." It was a bird's eye view of a house with a red roof and a garden with a mango tree on one side. She tapped on the interface of her contraption in order to zoom in on the picture. My breath caught when I saw the girl seated on the same bed, in the same room as mine. "Looks the same as you, doesn't she? She's the same age, lives in exactly the same place. She's at the top of her class and has a good family, the same as you. She has a boyfriend though, and has lined up an internship in a large company. She's going to go abroad to study, enroll in CalTech or MIT. She's not sure yet, hasn't even applied yet but she will, and she'll get in."

I drank in the fortuneteller's words as I stared at the image on the screen. It was everything I wanted. I leaned forward, fascinated. She looked like me, but different. I watched as she got up, arranged the bed, and bounded downstairs. My brother, no, her brother greeted her as she sat down to eat breakfast with the rest of the family. It was like watching a rerun and I experienced a strange sort of déjà vu. Everything that had happened at the breakfast table with my family that morning recurred at this other table. It was all replayed, the conversations, the motions, even the silences. Like me, the other girl remained quiet all through the meal. The only difference was that halfway through breakfast, the doorbell rang and the other me stood up to see who it was.



“It’s the boy you like,” the woman said. “They’ve been together for a while now. He asked her out last year during the school dance. The one you didn’t want to go to.”

It wasn’t any of her business that I hadn’t gone because nobody had asked me so I kept that knowledge to myself. I watched the other me open the door and true enough, there he was. He smiled and their fingers twined as she pulled him inside. I felt a pang. No matter how alike we seemed, she and I were leading very different lives. I turned to the fortuneteller. “Why are you showing me this?”

“I could give you her life, for a price. I told you, only a small fee and I can give you what you desire. Think on it. You have energy inside of you, enough so I could send you to that reality and pull the other one here.”

At first, I declined her offer. The idea was tempting, should it prove feasible, but there were too many unknowns, too many variables to consider, too many things that could go wrong. I made to stand up and leave but she held out a hand and bade me to wait and to listen.

“Haven’t you wished constantly, fervently, to forget yourself for a moment? This is your chance. She is who you are, in the same way that you are who she is. You can lead another life without losing yourself. I can give you a week to decide,” she told me. “A week to live her life, to experience your every desire fulfilled in her shoes. After the seven days, should you wish to return, everything will go back to the way it used to be. You need not stay in that reality, merely experience it.”

My eyes strayed towards the tablet’s screen as it displayed a montage of scenes featuring the other me as she went about her life. We went to the same school, had the same classes and classmates. “It is almost the same life isn’t it?”

“Almost, yes.”

“The only real difference between that reality and mine is that...” I watched her stop to talk with one of my few friends. Then she went on to join a group of people I did not know. She laughed. There were so many people, so much laughter and merriment. I narrowed my eyes at the scene. “I’m happy there, aren’t I? Successful...”

The woman inclined her head. “What would you get out of it?”

“Your leaving would leave a vacuum in this reality. I told you, you have potential energy inside of you. What you are now is not what you were meant to be. With the creation of this vacuum, energy will be expended. I will harness that energy. That will be my fee.”

I told her to send me to that other world...and she did.

# II

I cannot describe exactly what it felt like to crossover. There are several theories about inter-dimensional travel, most of which end up with matter being crushed by the gravity of a black hole, long before it could reach the wormhole at the heart of these dead stars. The Einstein-Rosen Bridge Theory stipulated that though these bridges, these wormholes existed, they were impossible to get to and get through due to the gravitational force of the black hole. But Einstein and Rosen were thinking about stationary black holes and not spinning stars. With Roy Kerr's black hole as a spinning star, a dying star could collapse into a ring of neutrons which would remain stable due to the intensity of its centrifugal force pushing outward thereby neutralizing the inward force of gravity and enabling matter to pass through safely. In through the black hole, sucked through the wormhole, out through the white hole into an entirely new dimension of reality.

Was this what had happened to me?

The instability of Kerr's ring is problematic as light getting pulled into the black hole could cause the entire balance to shift, preventing anyone from passing through unscathed. And then of course there were the traversable wormholes by Thorne and Morris, which use exotic matter to hold the bridges open. In fact, considering the changes wrought in general relativity by the Gauss-Bonnet theory, exotic matter is omitted entirely as wormholes are seen as natural occurrences in brane cosmology.

I've had some time to mull things over but I am no closer to comprehending the manner of my transition from one world into another. I cannot even accurately describe it. The sensations, the sights, the sounds, how does one explain what one does not understand? Suffice it to say it was a non-linguistic experience. If there is a language in the world that would enable me to describe it, I have not learned it yet. Perhaps it hasn't even been invented. For this, I invoke Newton's hypotheses non fingo.

One thing is clear though. The world I found myself in—this world—is a chiral world, enantiomorphous to mine. Though my past and current realities mirrored each other, they were not the same in every respect. For example, I had met the fortune teller because the school I had been attending had set up a carnival in the quad in order to celebrate the centennial anniversary of its founding. As a member of the student body, I had been enjoined to attend. The school grounds in my world had teemed with people, most of them milling around, going on rides and partaking in the general festivities. I had been on my way to find my adviser and have my attendance noted when the fortuneteller had caught my attention. She had spoken directly to me, picked me out amidst the tumult that had surrounded us. In this world, I found myself standing alone in the school quad. There was no carnival to celebrate its founding. Unsure about how much difference existed between the worlds, I wasn't certain if the currency I carried would be accepted. I walked home.

The fortuneteller let me keep her tablet and assured me that its signal would never fail and that its battery would never bleed dry. "There's an application that searches for the nodes where the strings of the universes intersect. This is the coordinate of your world. If you wish to view how the other you is faring, all you need to do is to tune into this coordinate." She reminded me that after the week was through, she would consider our arrangement permanent. I agreed.



To spend a week living a life where my every desire was fulfilled, to have this experience and suffer no consequence – how could I turn the chance down?

I wish I could say that from the moment I landed in this world I have lived a charmed life but the truth is, like most every wish that finds its fulfillment, the reality of it did not live up to my expectations.

Oh, it was wonderful in the beginning, yes. The symmetry of the two worlds amazed me. History, science, celebrity, the news, they were the same. Our families were identical down to the most intimate details, like the scarring on dad's eyebrow or the mole on mom's back, the type of food each one liked and what drove the rest of the family mad. The first few days, I found myself poring over photo albums and marveling at the familiar photographs stored within them.

Remarkable as the similarities between the two worlds were, it was the minute deviations between them that fascinated me. They were not obvious, just minor things. It was quite easy to assimilate into her life with her family so willing to accommodate her 'lapses', and I had made lapses as I tried to become her in those seven days. Sometimes, there would be a false note, an experience lived differently, a person not recalled, and I would falter, fail at remembering and fulfilling what was expected of her. I found it a bit more difficult to deal with her life in school, though I enjoyed it all the more for its difference from mine.

I had always been keenly aware of my marked difference from others of my age group and I consistently failed at societal interactions, though how exactly to remedy the situation, I did not know. To find myself suddenly surrounded by so many people, so many friends, was a novel experience, one I greatly enjoyed in the beginning for it had never happened to me before. I was much in demand. Apparently my other self had a hand at almost every organization in school, from the student council to the school paper to the photography club. The phone at home would not stop ringing, and my cell, a new one programmed with the numbers of people I knew but had never been friends with, would constantly be filled with their messages.

The seven days passed in a whirl of activity. When the woman called to ask if I would like to be pulled back into my reality, I told her no. Why would I? Here, I felt no isolation. People did not treat me with indifference. I mattered. I belonged. My life was perfect. Or so I thought.

I should have known.

Nothing remains in stasis. The universe is not a stagnant place. Nothing can remain perfect forever. Entropy will get you every time. I enjoyed all the attention and the accolades heaped on me, but soon the pressure got to be too much. I felt restless, hounded. People expected so many things from me, encroached on my time to the point where I felt as though I was being pulled in too many conflicting directions. I couldn't cope. I had no mechanism to handle that sort of pressure.

I found out that it was just as easy to feel isolated while surrounded by people, as it was while alone. To make myself feel better, I watched the other me as she tried to acclimatize herself to her surroundings —my life. There is a function in the tablet that allowed me to replay recorded events as though I were watching a movie. In the beginning, she was as miserable as me, probably more so, because at least I knew what had happened – she just woke up one day with a different life. I watched her approach people that she knew and was friends with only to be rebuffed because I did not know them, did not normally interact with them. When she tried to talk to the equivalent of her boyfriend in my world, he only looked at her strangely and walked away. The night she cried herself to sleep, I felt equal parts guilt and aversion. How could she cry over a boy? How could she permit herself such weakness? I liked him too, but never, not

once, did I allow him the power to hurt me. It was her own fault for being so careless.

Our lives paralleled in a strange way. When there was an exam in my school, there was one in hers. When there was a play at her school, a play was also being staged in mine. I tried to make decisions according to how she did things. I tried to maintain her life, or at least a part of it. Most of the organizations she was a member of meant nothing to me, but I did try to stay in them though it took much effort on my part. She, on the other hand, did not live her life the same way as I did mine. Despite the difference in how other people perceived us in her world and in mine, she kept on as she was until, after a while, just as how her perfect life began to crumble around me, she gradually turned my life into another version of hers.

It took a few tries and a couple of months, but soon she began to thrive. My parents, initially surprised by the changes in my behavior, began to take the change in stride. I was left breathless with hurt the first time I witnessed my father comment on how much I had changed, how happy I seemed, and how glad he was for it. I felt gratified every time my younger brother grimaced when my other self behaved in a way drastically different from me. “You’re weird,” he would say with a roll of his eyes. I loved him all the more.

As for her boyfriend, funny how it turned out that I didn’t know him at all. He had always been part of my idea of a perfect life but as it was, I wasn’t as affected as I thought I’d be when he asked to break up with me. He wasn’t mine to lose to begin with. He was the least of my worries.

My relationship with her family was similar to the one I had with mine. It was clear that they loved her, and by extension me, the one who had taken her place. There were times though when her parents looked at me with concern, asked if something was wrong, because I was not performing as well as their daughter had. I was miserable. Her brother frowned at me all the time and asked me “What’s wrong with you?” every chance he got. I did try, but he seemed to sense that something was amiss. He even asked me one time if I was all right and the genuine concern in his voice made something in me ache to get back home.

It was one thing to be unhappy with my life, but to be unhappy living the life of another was something else. I knew I needed to do something to fix everything but I was at a loss as to what course of action to take. True the tablet continued to work, but whenever I tried calling the number that the woman had used to contact me, it was always out of reach, the signal too weak. I even returned to the quadrangle, at the same exact spot I had found myself at the beginning, hoping that the proximity to the point of spatial intersection would help boost the signal, but I still couldn’t reach the woman using her number. I tried connecting the tablet to a booster kit to help with the signal. I used a router and downloaded applications from the Internet. For all intents and purposes it was still a tablet after all and it allowed itself to be used as such. Nothing worked.

Then, almost by accident, I hit on it. The answers to the most complex questions are usually simple, elegant, brief, and beautiful—like Euler’s Identity and Einstein’s mass–energy equivalence, complex mathematics reduced to barely an inch of solution. This is the principle behind Occam’s Razor and this is what slapped me in the face one afternoon as I fiddled with the woman’s tablet in the quad after class. There was a function on the gadget, the Contact Service Provider. I accessed it and the tablet initiated the communication. It was connecting! When the woman answered my call, her face appeared on the screen. She looked bemused. I informed her of my desire to return.

“Oh my dear, I’m sorry,” she replied, not sounding sorry at all. “The portal has closed. I told you, once the days are done, our arrangement becomes permanent. You can no longer cross into this reality. That would be dangerous to the fabric of space and time. You might cause a rip and then where will we all be?”

I knew this, at least theoretically. Fissures formed when stretching the fabric of space and time. “But you did it once! You can do it again. You have to!”

“You’ve expended your potential energy. You know you can only travel from a higher energy frequency into a lower one. The reverse, as of now, cannot be done. There is nothing I can do.”

“You can’t! You can’t do this to me...”

“Oh but isn’t this what you wished for?” she asked me. “Didn’t you say it was the exact same world? You were correct in that assumption. It is exactly the same world as yours. Each parallel is created from potential, remember? A choice not taken, a test not passed, a love never loved, even a sandwich left uneaten.”

“I don’t understand!”

“Whether or not you wish to continue lying to yourself is none of my concern.”

“I don’t want to be here anymore. I want my old life.”

“And you do have it,” she smiled. “You see my dear, in another world, we’ve never met.” She bid me goodbye and dropped the call. I tried to contact her again several times but the CSP option had ceased to be effective. I couldn’t even view my old world, my old life, my other self. That function too had been locked.

Determinism they say is a philosophical belief that each occurrence is based on the preceding action—it was Newtonian, Karmic, Heaven and Hell, Crime and Punishment. It made sense. It was my decision and I found I could blame no one but myself.

By the end of the school year, people had begun to turn on me, thinking me a changed person. The only friends I was left with were the self-same people I had in my original world. I was astonished to find that this time around, I did not mind. Why had I been so unhappy before? This mirror world is almost the same exact place, populated by the same exact people as the ones in my world. I was the only independent variable, the x in the equation. I could be happy here, I knew that now, but the desire to go back home, to make amends, was a constant, nagging ache in my chest. I didn’t belong here. I needed to find a way to get back.

To stave the loneliness, I carried the tablet around, using it as much as I could and sometimes trying, though in vain, to see if perhaps this time I could contact the woman again—persuade her to let me go back. It never did work again though, not after that first time. ●

*To be continued on Kanto N° 3, April 2016*



# COMPASS

TRAVEL




## 116

BACKPACK

### MUSIC TO MY EYES

The raw beauty of nature at Liwliwa,  
an idyllic seaside destination just  
a few hours from Manila

Written and photographed  
by Sibyl Layag



COMPASS  
BACKPACK

# Music to My Eyes

*An experience of synesthesia in Liwliwa, Zambales*

**Written and photographed by Sibyl Layag**





**LIWLIWA BEACH** at dusk. The waves get a bit wilder as the sun sinks into the horizon.





**THIS** is the stuff perfect mornings  
are made of: clear blue skies, sand between my  
toes, the sound of waves crashing into the shore,  
the briny smell of the ocean and magnificent  
mountains just visible in the distance.

**THESE** friendly local aspins revel in this view every day. Lucky dogs!



**L**

iwliwa. Before I even laid eyes on its shores, the name enthralled me first. The name rolls off the tongue just as smoothly as its strong waves rolled off the coast. Melodic and mellifluous, it captured my imagination even before the sight and feel of the place it identifies captured my heart.

It had been my first time to hear of the place, and our decision to visit was purely serendipitous. Our initial plan was to go to Baler, but a typhoon had ravaged the province of Aurora and we were forced to cancel. At the very last minute, my partner managed to find an alternate destination from — where else — the Internet. It was the perfect place for a weekend beach trip: near, accessible, easy to get to even without private transportation, laidback and uncrowded. And the name: Liwliwa.


As a lover of words and their meanings, I couldn't help but romanticize the name. A quick Internet consultation reveals that in Ifugao, "liwliwa" is a kind of love song chanted alternately by a male soloist and a group of women. In Kapampangan, "liwa" seems to mean something like a variety, such that "liwa-liwa" can be translated as "sari-sari" in Tagalog. "Liwliwa" also sounds like Tagalog-pidgin for "liwaliw," which means excursion or vacation. Not to mention the sound of it, to me, conjures up the image of "liwayway," or dawn. Love, diversity, stunning scenery and a great escape: it's no wonder I fell hard for the name as soon as I'd heard it.



**SKIMBOARDERS** trying to catch the perfect wave to practice their exhibitions on.

“Liwliwa. Before I even laid eyes on its shores, the name enthralled me first. The name rolls off the tongue just as smoothly as its strong waves rolled off the coast. ”



A photograph of a wooden structure, likely part of a hostel. The upper portion shows horizontal wooden slats. Below this, a dark, shadowed area is visible. A white horizontal band across the middle contains the text "IF WE ALL BID A LITTLE IT WOULD DO A LOT" in black, hand-painted capital letters. The lower portion of the image shows a dense, textured thatched roof made of dried palm fronds or similar natural materials.

**PERHAPS** the most popular hostel in Liwliwa is The Circle Hostel, which also has branches in Baler and La Union. It's a beach bum's paradise and its interiors have a laid-back, endearingly ramshackle, quirky feel to it. Catchy, Instagram-able lines like these can be found all over the hostel.




And then, two bus rides and four hours later, we arrived at the place itself. Liwliwa's charming beauty is woefully (thankfully?) overshadowed by the beaches and islands of neighboring towns San Antonio and San Narciso. It is so small and quaint that a throng of maybe five families could easily crowd the place. Getting off the Sta. Cruz-bound bus at a provincial elementary school in San Felipe, one could easily miss the narrow dirt road that leads to this haven.

There are no beachfront resorts (yet) — only tents for rent, hostels and simple inns. Only two *carinderias* serve the area, but our favorite one, Mommy Phoebe's, serves the best food at dirt-cheap prices (for city dwellers, at least). But, hungry as we were when we got to our inn, we first allowed the gentle sound of the waves to fill us up.

The waves, we soon saw, were far from gentle up close. Liwliwa is a surfing beach, but we are not surfers. Still, we enjoyed tackling wave after giant wave head on, riding them sans surfboards, or else letting them violently wash over us. It was exhausting, but also exhilarating.

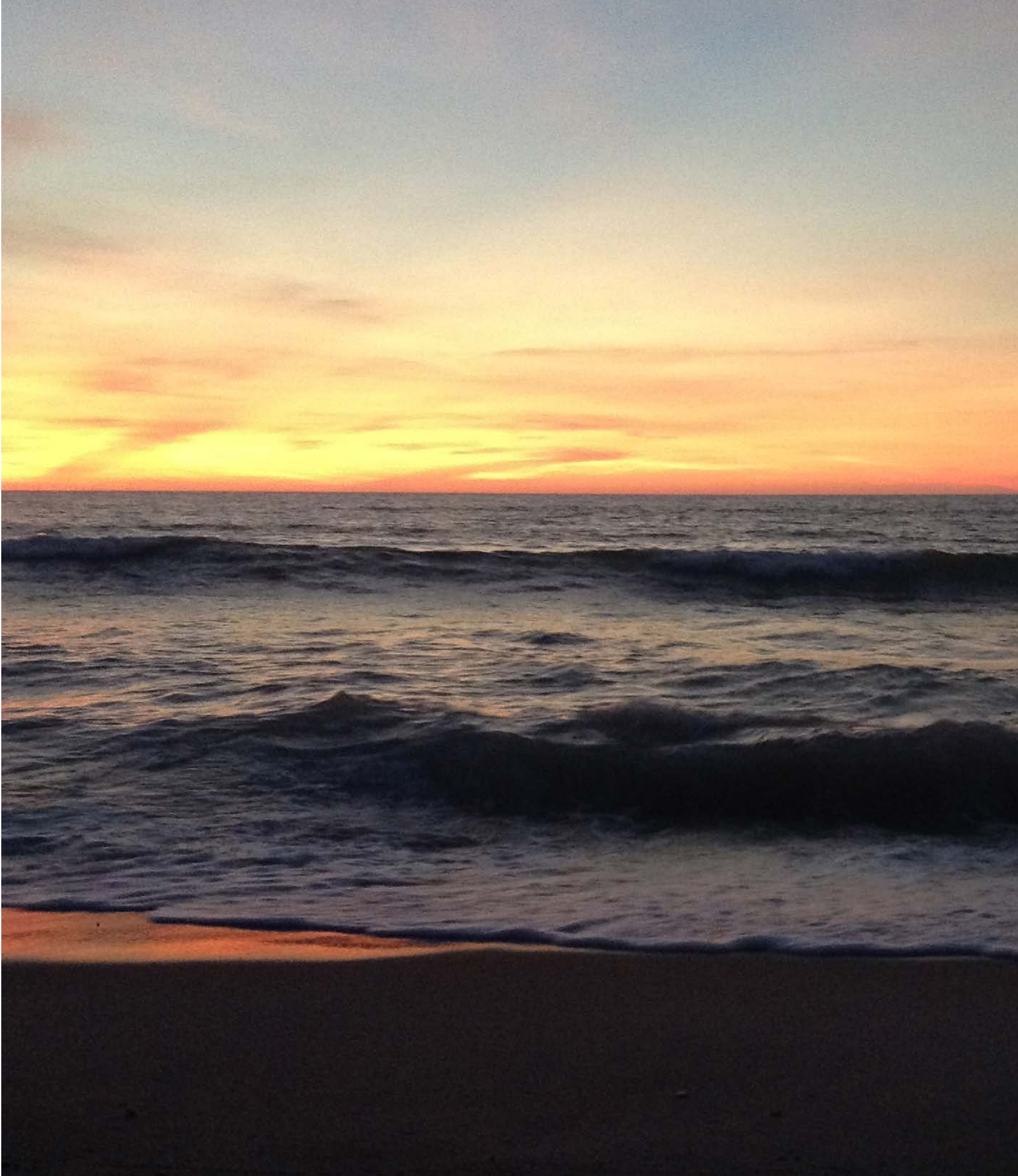
**YOU** just can't miss Mommy Phoebe's, with its conspicuous surfboard sign and the unmistakable sound of friendly banter you can hear even before going inside; **ONE** of the most memorable vacation meals I've had in a while: fresh *talakitok*, caught by locals (and I heard these feisty things can put up a fight, too), and *ensaladang pako*. Nothing better than sitting down with a simple but amazing local meal after a long day out in the sun.





AT the cool twilight hour, *barkadas* begin setting up their bonfires and wait for the stars to emerge and crowd around the bright moon.







**WITH** a view like this, even with the darkening skies, it becomes exceptionally difficult to leave the beach and call it a day.

“As the day drew to a close, it was the sunset’s turn to wash over us, and I thought about how especially fierce and brilliant the sun’s death throes are when it drowns in the sea.”

Whenever we fancied a break, we watched the surfers try to conquer the waves. Along the shoreline, skimboarders stood by waiting to catch the perfect wave to practice their exhibitions on.

The people we encountered greatly contributed to the chill atmosphere of Liwliwa. From the *carinderia manang* and our inn caretaker to the surfing regulars, everyone was genuinely warm, friendly and kind. Laughter came easily to their mouths, seemingly unencumbered by petty concerns. No one judged you or took advantage of you for being another one of those odd-one-out city slickers that occasionally visited their little beach town. We listened to their banter at Mommy Phoebe’s while partaking of tender, freshly caught, perfectly cooked *talakitok* with rice and an overflowing plate of *ensaladang pako* for less than the price of a single lunch meal in the city.

As the day drew to a close, it was the sunset’s turn to wash over us, and I thought about how especially fierce and brilliant the sun’s death throes are when it drowns in the sea. And of the times I let myself be swayed by the sound of a place, Liwliwa was one of those rare places that felt better than it sounded. ●



## Liwliwa, San Felipe, Zambales

Liwliwa is a *sitio* or village nestled inconspicuously in the town of San Felipe, Zambales. Though it is not as popular as other destinations in Zambales like Crystal Beach or Anawangin, if you're looking for a no-frills, nice, cheap, quick and quiet beach trip, Liwliwa Beach does the trick magnificently. This place is not for you if you like luxury, nightlife and bustle, or if you want to be seen in your best swimwear. Liwliwa Beach's charm lies in its rawness — the shore is not combed lifeless, there are no tourist traps, and people go here to simply experience the beach, whether through surfing, skimboarding, swimming, camping or just enjoying the views.

### PLACES TO GO

There's really nowhere else to go, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Know that Liwliwa is a simple place going in, and just enjoy its small-town feel. The inns, however, offer a tour to the cascading waters of Anghalo Falls for a small fee. You may also take a tricycle to the falls from Liwliwa.

### THINGS TO DO

Surf! Liwliwa is a surfing beach, and if you don't have your own board, the *carinderias* and inns offer rentals. Skimboarding is also a popular activity here. If you're not the sporty type, simply swimming and wading in the cool waters or walking along the shoreline and admiring the famed mountains of Zambales are more than worth your while. The hostels and inns are very spare, so don't expect air-conditioned suites and room service. Better yet, camp out on the beach, cook your own food, read a book with sand between your toes and enjoy a bonfire with friends while watching the sky for shooting stars.

### WHAT TO EAT

Given how small Liwliwa is, it's actually a surprise that there are two *carinderias* in the area. Choose between Mommy Phoebe's and Ate Fely's—even with their names, both feel like you're just eating at home or at a relative's house! Ate Fely's is the place to be if you love eating breakfast *silogs* all day, every day (and who doesn't?). Mommy Phoebe's serves a great variety of food, from home-cooked meals such as bulalo, callos, fresh fish and plump and juicy garlic shrimp, to noodles, pasta and Filipino and continental breakfasts such as *silogs* and pancakes. This place is also a one-stop shop for tent and board rentals, souvenirs, board care items such as sex wax, and even grocery items such as slippers, canned goods and *chichirya*. Both *carinderias* also serve refreshing fruit shakes. It is impossible to spend more than P100 for a single meal in Liwliwa, unless you are a voracious eater!

Catch up with Sibyl's travels on Instagram @sibyllayag



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# PARTING SHOT

A VISUAL ENDNOTE

Photographed by Aisne Trinidad

The terrifying truth that comes with old age is oblivion—a daunting state of your mere existence not being remembered. It's like a temporary mark of water on a sad concrete floor that would soon fade and be forgotten. You will soon be forgotten for what you've done, what you've made, and how you lived. But what hits me more than the impermanence of life is this: time is fleeting and it will never stop ticking for anyone.

The world will remain the same and it will go on as if you were never here.

*Interested in submitting your images? Email us at [kanto.journal@gmail.com](mailto:kanto.journal@gmail.com) or follow us on Instagram @kanto.journal, and use our hashtag, #kanto\_partingshot*



*And the Fears and  
darkness of the night shall  
give way to the Hope and  
light of a new day.*

*To the memory of lives lost  
in the tragedies of last year,  
and the promise of a  
better tomorrow.*

*See you in April 2016!*





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