

CREATIVE CORNERS / N° III, MMXVIII

Kanto

City Beautiful

THE MANILA ISSUE

CANVAS

Artist *Gerome Soriano* questions the structures of power, overcoming oneself and making art in Manila

COMPASS

Kanto embarks on a five-stop LRT tour of the city for a sampler of Manila culture and history

VOX

Geographer *David Garcia* calls for inclusive growth and development beyond urban areas

“Is Manila really as bad as Filipinos say?”

So goes the top entry on Quora about Manila. The first time I read it, I was ready to be offended; then I remembered interactions I myself had with foreigners who were visiting. I had probably told a dozen to “skip Manila” with an embarrassing amount of enthusiasm. “The traffic in the city is horrible. The landmarks are just okay. Anyway, don’t people go here for the beach? We have really nice beaches.” (It’s true, we do.)

When I finally caught myself, I felt that I had done my city a great sin, and what followed was a compulsion to explore it for my own redemption. I thought that maybe if I looked closely and earnestly enough, I may find that Manila has plenty of qualities and stories that would make it as excitable as, say, Taipei or Tokyo. Of course that may be shooting for the stars (or comparing apples to oranges), but if I were to start convincing others that my city was beautiful, then I had to be convinced, too.

Doing an entire issue on the Philippine capital was actually Patrick’s idea. (In case you’re a new reader: he’s the real chief around here.) In the last few years, and together with other friends, we’ve gone on several photo walks and special tours around Escolta, Binondo, Taft and Quiapo. Though he recognizes that a day in the city requires mental and physical preparation, Patrick is always excited to visit new-to-him spots and check up on old favorites. I had never really seen the same interest that Patrick had for Manila with other friends who, like me, grew up here. It was refreshing.

It was also his idea to play with the irony of naming the issue after the partially-realized urban planning movement the noted American urban designer and architect Daniel Burnham envisioned for the city. While his plans for spacious parks, avenues and grandiose public structures quickly met its demise when war intervened and the fledgling nation had to mind more pressing priorities, we’d argue that there is much to still celebrate and champion beyond the admittedly tired and smoke-stained façades of the city. It is time we push for a movement that recognizes Manila not just for its historical significance but for its potential to be a proponent for local culture and creativity. In our exploration of the city looking for beauty, we find a city of possibilities.

Through this issue, I am happy to discover more creatives who recognize that the city contains many hidden and obvious beauties. Even better, some of them actively take part in the constant creation of that beauty. Take photographer Jose Bautista of The Manila Project; he tells us (shows us, too) that Manila’s stories and spirit “more than make up” for everything else that it lacks. The folks of Don’t Skip Manila argues that it really is only as bad (or as good) as we make it to be. Artist Gerome Soriano offers perspective on what draws other artists to the capital. We also have philosophy student Jay Asiddao, who proposes to reframe our definition of beauty. You’ll find more of their thoughts, and the work of other wonderful creatives, in the next pages.

So, is present-day Manila really as horrible as locals and pop culture depictions make it appear? Honestly, it’s not perfect. Is it beautiful despite its plagues? To me, and the rest of the people in this issue: absolutely. Don’t just take our word for it. Come and see for yourself. ●



Dani

@awsmchos



On the cover: Alan, Dangwa Market, Sampaloc, Manila
Photographed by Jed Sy [@jeddsy](#)

Kanto

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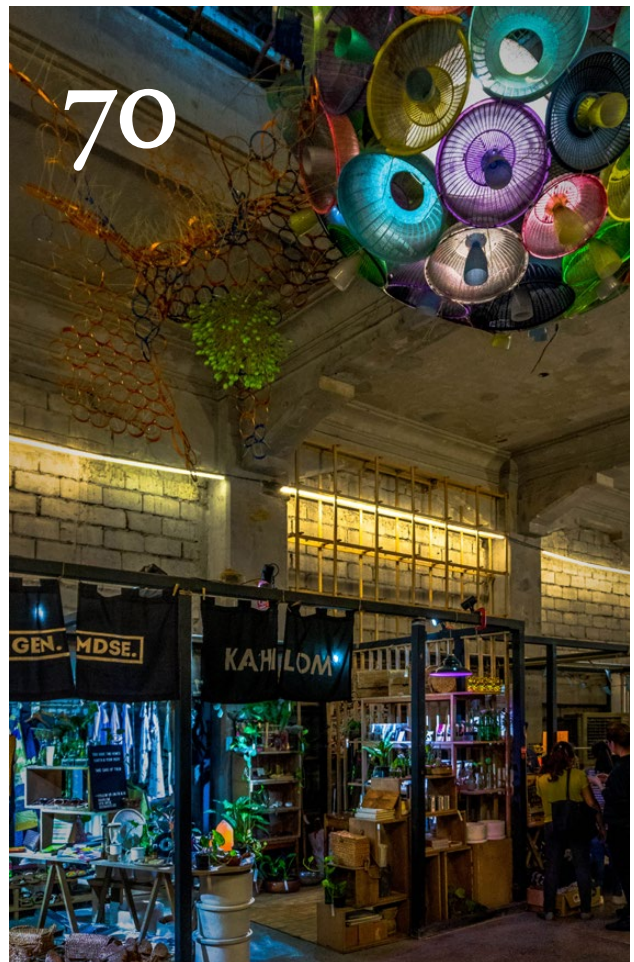
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Geographer *David Garcia* on mapping out possibilities for inclusive growth and development beyond the reaches of the city

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TRANSITIONS

Manileños

Manila is a city home to nearly two million inhabitants, each with a different story to tell. This series strives to capture a portrait of this fast-changing, vibrant city within five personalities.

Photographed by Jed Sy

Awesome People

WHO MADE THIS ISSUE POSSIBLE

Jaypee Fadrilan spends most of his days slaving away in front of his laptop as a UI/UX designer. On his days off, he can be found tinkering with Gunpla and his camera collection. **How has Manila surprised you?** Manila has changed so much through the years, so it's interesting to see and interact with those who are passionate about maintaining its rich history and traditions.



Jedd Sy's journey in photography started when his passage through life was literally put in peril. When he was diagnosed with cancer, he craved for an outlet for all his depression and confusion—a creative outlet with he eventually found in photography, albeit purely by happenstance.



Armed with Philosophy, an earnest desire for dialogue and an adorable dog, **Jay Asiddao** provides an alternative point of view to almost any subject under the sun. His openness to topics allows for a unique point of view for a variety of topics. **How has Manila surprised you?** Manila never ceases to renew itself with vigor and optimism unseen in other iconic cities. Her constant reinvention is cause enough to be curious what she has in store for us.

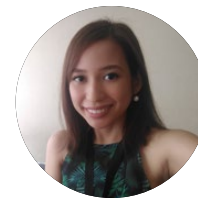


After a decade of living in the capital, **Vincent Ong** is in the process of moving back to his hometown, Cebu. As a writer, his work has appeared on *Preview*, *Esquire Philippines*, *Town & Country Philippines* and *CNN Philippines Life*. **How has Manila surprised you?** That I'd ever think of the crazy traffic as a normal part of life!

Jairuz Florentin is an aspiring photographer from the University of Santo Tomas. He expresses himself through photos and films, aiming to show the beauty that other people fail to see.



Ynna Milambiling was a cover artist for *Tessa: Ten Times Ten*, a book that celebrates Tessa Prieto's 10 years as a column writer. She is a member of the art collective The New Black, and currently works at FOX Networks Group Asia as a multimedia artist. **How has Manila surprised you?** I used to think Manila was so boring it hid behind its oversold tourist sites, but its vibrant events and hidden local gems proved otherwise.



Janelle Año can be found with her nose stuck in a book. **How has Manila surprised you?** It's impossible to get bored in Manila. Follow her on Instagram [@manila.reads](#). There's always something new to discover. Thriving art, film, music and literary scenes? Check. Nightlife? Easy. Good food? Eating is our national pastime!



Victor Burgos is a business consultant who finds his breathing room from solving corporate issues by taking photos, sketching and traveling. He works and lives in Makati with his husband. **How has Manila surprised you?** Despite all its chaos and mess, *mahal ko pa rin ang Maynila*.



Emarrah Sarreal is currently living out her realization that there is no such thing as “work-life balance”. Accepting that work is a part of life has given her so much peace and clarity in setting boundaries and prioritizing things. As a freelance writer, she’s on a quest to find the right level of sure-footedness to stay sane in this fast-paced world.



Cesar G. Ramirez, Jr. teaches under the Visual Communications and History Tracks at the DLS-College of Saint Benilde School of Design and Arts. With every subject he teaches, he finds importance in acquainting students with the country’s rich built-heritage. **How has Manila surprised you?** In both positive and frustrating ways. There is always something new to see and experience in this old city. But what excites me is the potential its rich history offers in inspiring new generations.

David Garcia is a mapmaker. He likes making useful, meaningful, and beautiful maps, which can be downloaded for free in mapmakerdavid.com. At present, he is doing a PhD on geographic information through a research project funded by the New Zealand Government. He graduated with a BS Geography degree from the University of the Philippines, with a postgraduate diploma in urban and regional planning while teaching in the same university. In 2016, he was awarded with a Chevening Scholarship by the United Kingdom to study an MSc in Geospatial Analysis in University College London (UCL). **How has Manila surprised you?** Manila, in all its chaos and woes, is still the refuge of Filipinos fleeing crises and conflict in the countryside. The metropolis has to be planned, financed and governed with that reality in mind.



Baked Zine is an independent, bi-yearly online magazine created for and by food obsessives. Their mission is to create quality content while keeping the magazine free to readers forever. **How has Manila surprised you?** Even with the passage of time, Manila today remains the same Manila that our parents knew and loved. Many of the places our parents used to hang out in (and eat at!) are still here today, and hopefully, will still be there in the future for coming generations to enjoy and preserve.

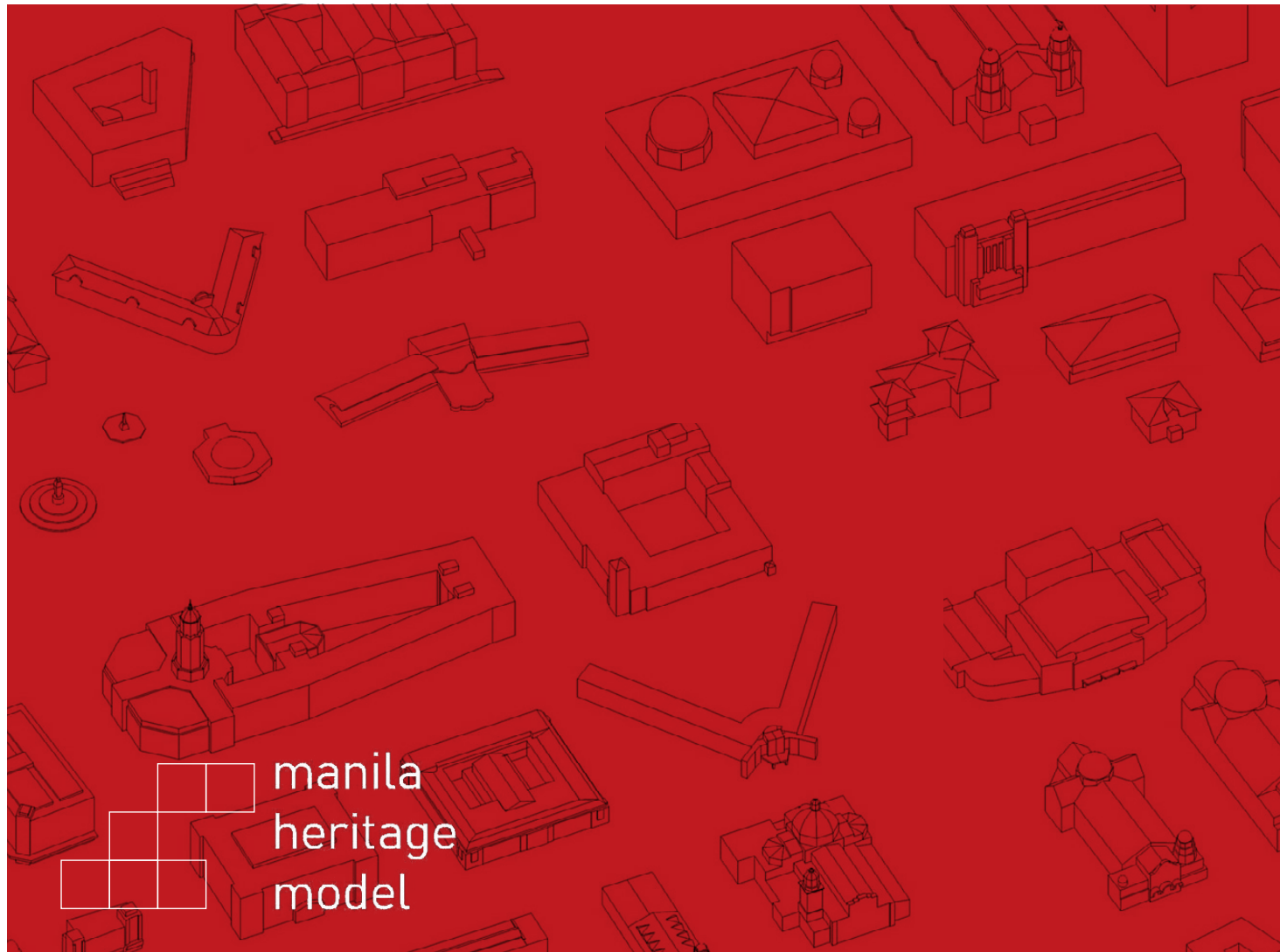


Natassja Velasco is an art director at Seven A.D. On her spare time, she does design work (specifically, branding), travelling around the globe on a budget, and collecting photos, receipts, toys, and pretty candy wrappers. **How has Manila surprised you?** Manila surprises me in two ways: it can either be because I’m seeing something new, or rediscovering something old.

Regine Velilla is a freelance art director whose roster of clients include AirAsia, AVA Consultancy, and more. She currently serves as the art director of *Travel Now* magazine and was formerly junior art director of food magazine, *Appetite*. Together with former magazine colleagues Janelle Añño and Yllaine Sabencio, they created *Baked Zine*, a bi-yearly online food magazine.

How has Manila surprised you? Manila is a special place for my parents, so they used to bring us around the city a lot when I was a kid. It’s been a while since I visited, but I still feel strangely at home even if everything looked totally different from what I remembered when I was younger.





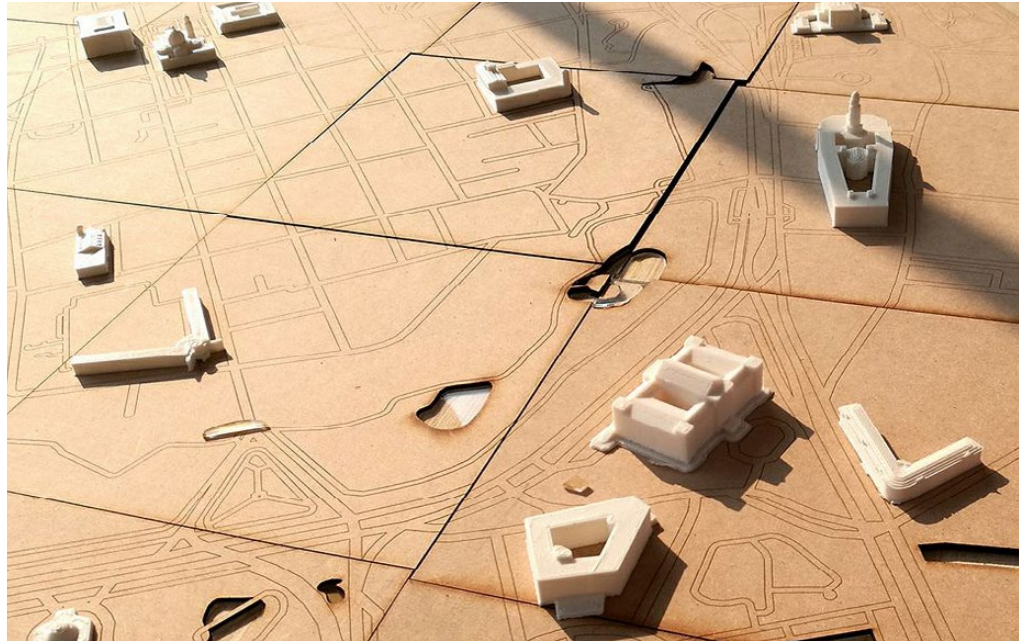
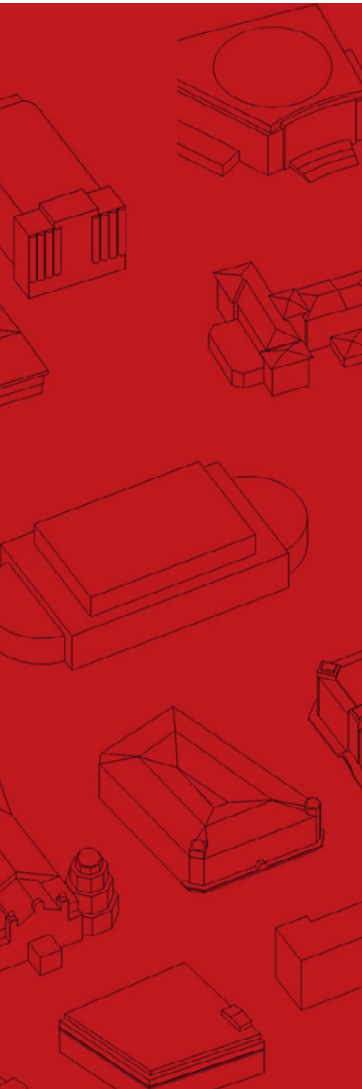
manila
heritage
model

ANGLES

Drawn to Scale

Architecture, history and
technology converge
in the name of learning
through the *Manila
Heritage Model Project*

WORDS Cesar Ramirez, Jr,



Map view with 3D-printed models of Manila landmarks. **Opposite page:** Wireframes of buildings for inclusion in the Manila Heritage Model Project, which spans the Binondo, Quiapo, Intramuros and Luneta areas of the city

A map, being a symbolic depiction of a place, an area or a district, enables us to see the relationships between the elements of a space—the objects, its buildings, regions or themes of districts.

The Manila Heritage Model Project aims to highlight the architectural heritage of Manila through 3D Modelling and 3D Printing. Originally a finals project for the History of Architecture class of the DLS-College of St. Benilde School of Design and Arts – Architecture Program, the students selected heritage buildings from the old districts of Manila: Intramuros, Luneta, Quiapo and Binondo. The selection of buildings feature colonial buildings, houses, as well as modern mid-rise structures of the American and post-war Manila.

Manila is a place of a wide range of architectural styles encompassing the rich history of Filipino architecture. In this old city, heritage structures offer a diverse selection of building types and aesthetics dictated by their time of creation. Despite surviving World War II, they have become victims of continuous neglect and decay, all but hidden in the chaos of urban growth.

The model is a product of data gathering and presentation through maps, archival images, photo documentation, 3D modeling and printing. A grid was overlaid on a 1:2500M scale map of Manila and was laser-cut onto 200-by-200-millimeter wood and clear acrylic modules. Selected heritage buildings were 3D-modeled and 3D-printed thru scaling and proportioning based on current and archival photos.

Through this model, we get an overview of these districts and see how these heritage structures stand hidden among all the new ones. These buildings are enduring examples of architects designing according to their times and adapting them to the Filipino needs, climate and aesthetics. We hope that through this project, each student gets to appreciate our heritage, and eventually, have the desire to conserve Filipino Architecture in the future—and as designers, be inspired to create responsive, contextual and timeless designs as exhibited by these buildings.

The model is designed to expand to cover the other districts of the city of Manila. The project is currently at Phase Two and is focusing on the built-heritage found in Binondo & Intramuros.

As the model is envisioned to expand, we are launching it as a collaborative project in modelling Manila's buildings focusing on its built-heritage; collaborating with different fields such as multimedia arts, production design and graphic design to produce themed-video projection presentations for the 3D Model Map; such as *The Battle of Manila*, *Manila's Open Spaces: Social and Green Spaces*, *Manila's Urban Planning*, *Burnham's Manila*, etc. Ultimately, the model is intended to be an educational tool in presenting, studying and analyzing Manila's history, architectural history, and present urban condition. ●

Follow Manila Heritage Visualization Projects on Facebook @mhvizproj.

Clockwise, from top right: Faculty and student proponents of Manila Heritage Map; the model setup; detail shot of The Met Theater 3D-printed model



“We hope that through this project, each student gets to appreciate our heritage and eventually, have the desire to conserve Filipino Architecture in the future.”





Ate, Tayuman, Manila, 6.30.2018



LENS

IMAGE MAKERS



*Danielle Austria and photographer
Jaypee Fadrilan visit the stalwart
photographers of Luneta and discovers
unflinching faith and pride in their trade*

INTERVIEW *Danielle Austria* PHOTOGRAPHY *Jaypee Fadrilan*



Perhaps as iconic as the monument of Rizal (well, at least in the writer's eyes) are the men and women who have snapped memories through the changes. Visitors may come and go, and the way we do photography may keep changing, but the photographers of Luneta are here to stay. We spoke to Larry Legario (LL), Gaspar Tañada (GT) and Romeo Ibañez (RI)—veteran photographers and officials of the Samahan ng Malayang Photographers sa Luneta—about the passage of time, life at the park and having pride on one's profession.

Kailan po kayo nagsimulang kumuha ng litrato dito sa Luneta?

LL: *Since 1980 o 1990, mga 30 years na ako dito. 'Di pa pinapanganak ang anak ko, nandito na ako. Dito ko na 'rin nakita ang asawa ko. Photographer din siya. Sa kaniya ako nakakuha ng experience.*

GT: *Mga ilang dekada na kami dito. Hindi naman nagkakalayo ang mga edad namin.*

RI: *'Yang fountain na 'yan, talahib pa dati 'yan. Hindi pa ganyan ang itsura ng monumento ni Rizal. Maliliit pa ang tiles. Nakita na namin ang lahat ng pagbabago rito. Ito [photography] na ang naging hanapbuhay namin. Ayos naman, nakaka-survive.*

Parang buong buhay ninyo na 'yung dumaan dito.

GT: *Dito na nagka-asawa, nagka-apo. Hanggang sa iwanan na ng asawa.*

Bakit nandito pa 'rin kayo?

GT: *Wala naman akong ibang alam na trabaho. Maraming puwede pasukan, kaya lang kinarir ko na ang photography. Dito, nalilibang ka na, kumikita ka pa. Kung sino-sino pa ang nakikilala mo na galing sa kung saan-saang bansa.*

Another day, another portrait shoot, **Opposite page:** Gaspar comes to the defense of his craft. "Sa photographer, walang imposible. Walang litrato na overpriced." **Previous spread:** Larry Legario, Romeo Ibañez and Gaspar Tañada share decades in experience and memories made at Luneta Park.



Marami pa ‘rin ang nagpapakuha sa inyo?

LL: Mga balibayan ang madalas.

RI: Mga bumibisita na gusto ng magandang *picture*. Kasi kahit anong ganda ng *camera* mo, hindi mo mapapalabas na maganda ‘yan [kung hindi ka marunong]. Kami, alam namin ang tamang anggulo, *shadow*, ilaw.

GT: Mayroon pa ‘rin. ‘Yung ibang tao iniisip na wala na kaming kinikita rito. Pero kung ang tao may *common sense*, bakit sila magsasabi ng “buti kumikita pa kayo riyan, marami nang may *cellphone* [na may *camera*]”? Kung may isip ka, magsasalita ka ba nang ganiyan? Kung ang ipinambili namin nito [*camera*], ibinili na lang sana namin ng pagkain. Tignan mo nga ang mga katawan namin kung mukhang nagugutom kami. Magtitiyaga ba kami bumili ng libo-libong halaga ng *camera* kung hindi kami kumikita rito?

Tama naman, kuya.

GT: Ang ibang tao kasi ang baba ng tingin sa *photographer*! Hindi ba nila alam na ang isang litrato, puwede mo bayaran ng milyon! Sa isang *photographer*, walang imposible. Minsan ang *customer* kapag bebentahan mo ng isang litrato ang sasabihin ay “ang mahal naman niyan!” *Ma’am, sir*, kahit saan tayo makarating, walang *overpriced* na litrato. Ang importante, hindi ko kayo pinilit [na magpakuha]. Aaminin ko sa inyo, *ma’am*, ako wala akong *diploma*.

Pero mayroon naman kayong kayang gawin. Isang skill na ‘di lahat ng tao meron. Hindi lahat kayang maging magaling na photographer.

GT: Kahit ‘di ka nakatapos ng pag-aaral, ang mahalaga marunong ka magsulat at magbasa. Kung matalino ka pero kapos ka sa kapalaran, anong magagawa mo? Ngayon lang ‘yan na puwede ka na mag-aral ng libre. Ang maganda ‘yung may talino ka na kaya mong gamitin sa kalawakan at may tamang pag-uugali ka. Kahit nasa kalsada ka, ang ugali mo hindi pang-kanto. Kapag ang kaharap mo alam mo na edukado, edukado ka ‘rin kaharap.

Ang hirap kasi sa [tingin ng tao sa] estado namin, ‘pag may aalukin ka ng “pa-litrato kayo, *ma’am, sir*”—

ang ganda ng bati mo pero ang sagot sa’yo: “May *cellphone* kami!” Ang sagot lang po ay ‘oo’ at ‘hindi’! Hindi kailangan magtaray. Mas mataas man ang pinag-aralan ng iba, mas malawak ang pang-unawa namin sa kanila.

Kumukuha pa po kayo gamit ang film?

LL: Wala na! Mabilis na kasi ang *digital*. Dati sa *film*, aabutin pa ang *customer* ng dalawang oras [sa paghihintay *ma-develop*]. Nag-iipon kami sa *studio* namin; minsan umaabot ng apat na oras. Kami ang nagpuputol ng *film*. Ngayon, may *printer* na. Mabilis na.

Anong oras kayo dumarating at nagtatagal dito sa Rizal Park?

LL: Depende. Wala kaming oras. Kung gusto namin umaga o hapon. Minsan umuwi na kami ng maaga, alas-sais. May iba, inaabot ng alas-dose ng gabi.

Sa labas ng Luneta, saan pa kayo kumukuha?

LL: Dati, malakas kami sa mga kasal. Ngayon, mahirap. Ang uso ngayon ‘yung mga *video*. Magaganda na rin ang mga *cellphone*.

GT: Kumukuha ‘rin kami sa mga *events*. Part ako ng mga iba’t ibang grupo ng *photographers*. Miyembro ‘rin ako ng Litratista ng Bulacan. *Hunter* ako. Gusto ko paspas sa trabaho.

Ilan kayo sa grupo ninyo?

GT: Kami ang pinakamarami. Umabot kami ng 72.

LL: Lahat ng naka-*orange* [na *t-shirt*] kasama namin. May *uniform* kami. ‘Pag hindi ka nagsuot ng *uniform*, may multa.

Sino humuhuli sa inyo?

LL: Kami ‘rin na mga opisyal. Nililista mga pangalan tapos ‘pag bigayan na ng biyaya, kakaltasan.

‘Yung mga nakasuot ng ibang kulay na damit, ano sila? Kasama niyo ba sila?

RI: Ibang *faction* pero kami [SMPL] talaga ang *official* na *photographers* dito sa Luneta. ●



“Magtitiyaga ba kami bumili ng libo-libong halaga ng *camera* kung hindi kami kumikita rito?”



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LENS

GET LOST

For street photographer *Jose Bautista*, the best way to see Manila is to find yourself lost

INTERVIEW *Danielle Austria*





Hey, Jose! What are you up to today?

Just working and backing up photos on Flickr.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself? What do you do for a living? And how did you get into photography?

I currently work as a project specialist for an Australian website and have been for the past seven years. From hiring translators to making sure that the design and translations of our site looks perfect in the languages that I handle. Attention to detail is key in what I do.

Now, what started as something “fun” to do on vacations, my passion for photography—street, specifically—quickly turned into a “full time” hobby during the weekends. From the time I held a film camera that I bought in Farmer’s [Market] when I was in high school, turned into a DSLR camera, and—until I had enough money to buy one—a mirrorless camera with two lenses that I lug around during my photowalks.

What made you start The Manila Project?

The “aha” moment happened during my first visit to Intramuros a couple of years ago. Having grown up in the province, I didn’t really get to experience the “real” Manila—not until I decided to relocate here after studying and working in Cebu. Admittedly, I’m not really much of a history buff before I started this project. It was more of like point and shoot whatever I find interesting, then post it on Instagram. Back then, I only had around 143 followers. I started to realize that I can turn this into a lifetime project if I really commit myself to it.

Jose Bautista, **Opposite page:**
Luneta Park, Manila, **Previous**
spread: Binondo, Manila



Plaza Lacson, Manila,
Opposite page: Carriedo
 Fountain, Binondo, Manila

That's when I decided to buy the domain (themanilaproject.com) and started to write articles, mostly of architectural landmarks at first, then came the occasional travel articles and "In Photos" series for street photography.

"Is Manila really as bad as Filipinos say?" That's the top question on Quora about the city. It's a very loaded question. If you were to be asked that, how would you respond?

No, I don't think it's inherently bad. While there are aspects that make others see Manila this way, I don't. All cities have their faults. While Manila may be far behind in terms of urban planning and cleanliness, it more than makes up for it in other ways.

If one were to find beauty in Manila, where or how should they begin to look? What is the best way to see the city?

For avid street photographers, the best way to get a feel of the place you're in is just walk and walk and walk and walk. Having a concrete plan or itinerary and following a strict schedule is a big no for me. There's no better way to explore Manila than by getting lost. You'll find your way around eventually. All thanks to Google Maps.

What's the most interesting discovery you've had during your photowalks?

That only by getting out of your comfort zone will you truly find yourself. Sounds deep but it's true.





Playtime at the pavements, **Opposite page:** City chow



We've come to a time when people take pictures mostly to promote a certain aesthetic and rarely to preserve a meaningful moment. Do you find yourself doing that sometimes, too? For future creatives, how would you advise them to move past mere image-building into a more genuine storytelling?

Who hasn't, really? If there's anything I learned from my trips, it's that you'll eventually grow out of it, at least for me and my friends. Taking a few good photos together is enough. Personally, since I like taking photos of the places I visit, I just capture the things I find interesting and wait for those subjects to appear before me.

Do you have a dream city to explore and capture?

Yes, Tokyo and Bagan. Hopefully [I get to visit] either one of those by next year if I get enough miles. Tokyo, I guess there's no need to explain why. Even Anthony Bourdain or Andrew Zimmern had nothing but praises for Tokyo. Bagan, on the other hand, looks amazing and not yet overrun with tourists. And with the thousands of ancient temples built centuries ago I'm sure I'm going to enjoy it.

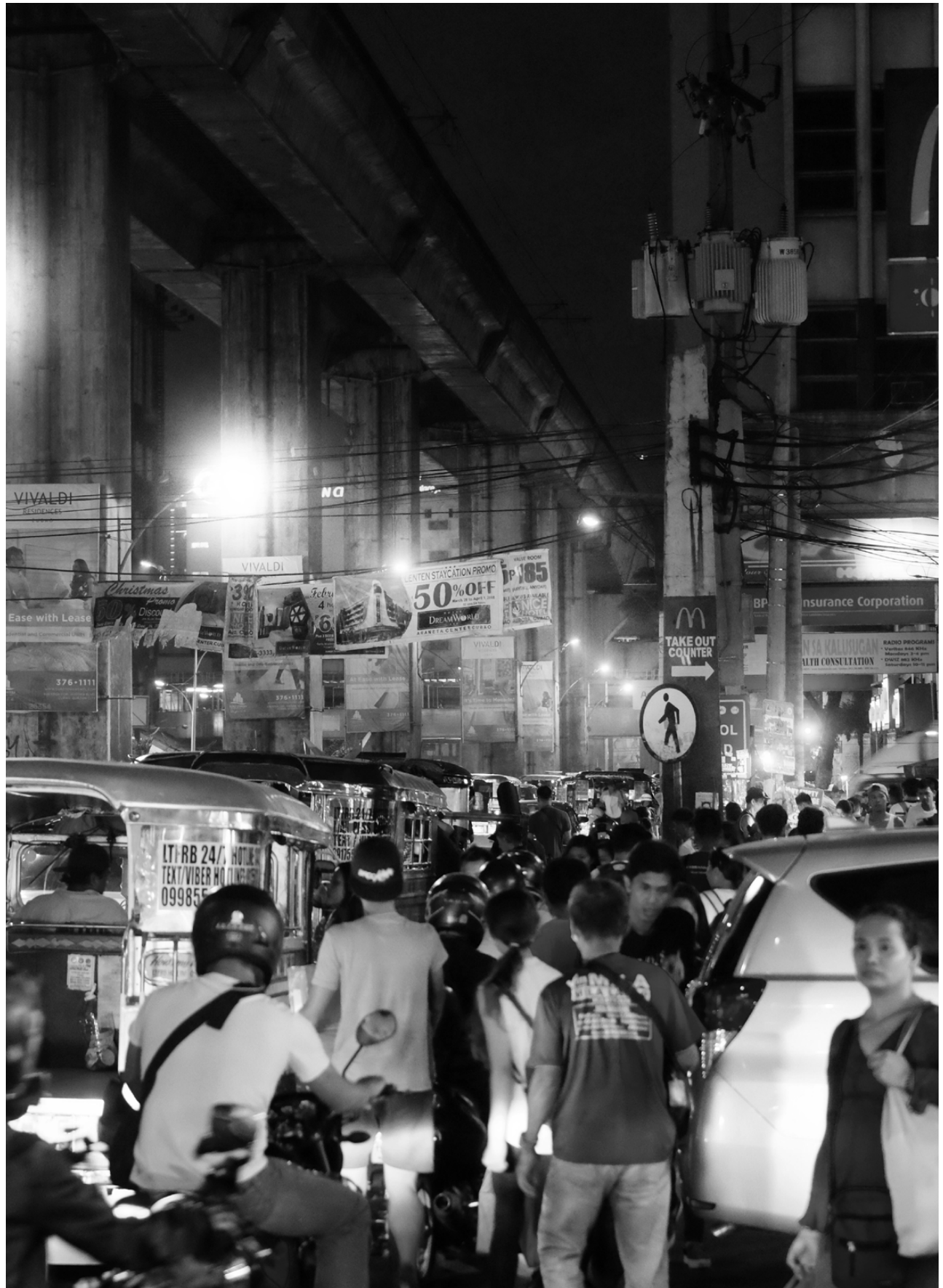
What is your hope for Manila?

For everyone to appreciate its contribution to the storied past of the Philippines. And, naturally, have everyone respect the city that they live in. By that, I mean not throwing trash wherever they feel like it. When you visit Fort Santiago and stand atop the old stones of Baluarte de Santa Barbara overlooking Pasig River, just imagine how a dead rat smells like and multiply that by a hundred. That's how foul smelling Pasig River is—this, considering that Pasig River stretches over 25 kilometers of Metro Manila. While NGOs like “Kapit Bisig Para Sa Ilog Pasig” certainly contributes to the cleanup, it can only do so much without the help of the national government. ●

Binondo, Manila, **Opposite page:** Home run



Follow Jose's adventures in and out of Manila at themanilaproject.com.
Follow [@themanilaproject](https://www.facebook.com/themanilaproject) on Facebook and Instagram.





CANVAS

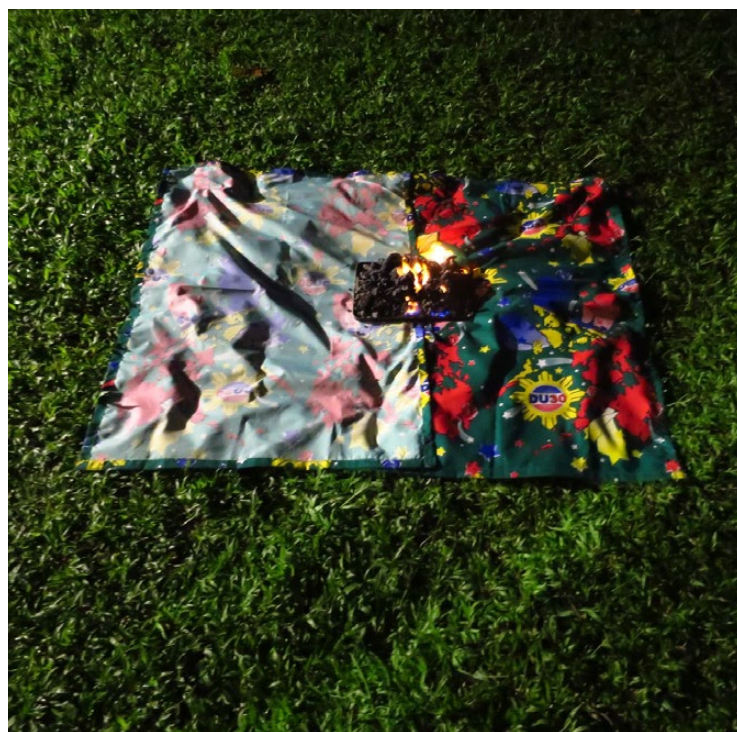
WORK IN PROGRESS





Artist *Gerome Soriano* questions the structures of power, overcoming oneself and making art in Manila

INTERVIEW *Vincent Ong*





Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! I'm Gerome Soriano, a 28-year-old visual artist who lives in Manila, Philippines. I mostly work with photographs, videos and zines. I use daily activities and everyday objects as take-off points to tell stories about contemporary issues, history, and ideas.

I graduated with the Best Thesis award for my Kite Aerial Photography in the Fine Arts program of the University of Santo Tomas. I also received the Most Appreciated Portfolio award from the 2012 Manila Behance portfolio review.

Were you born and raised in Manila? Have you always lived in Bacood?

Yes, I was born in Sampaloc, Manila. I had my consciousness in Mandaluyong, moved to another apartment in the city because the previous one was prone to flooding. We had a conflict with our landlord because the apartment was collapsing on itself thanks to my mother's *ukay-ukay* hoard and more. [That's when we] moved to Bacood.

When I was in elementary, my father would drop us off in their ancestral house in Morong, Rizal. There I got to live the *probinsya* life: waking up before the sunrise, helping lolo gather duck eggs, hunting for spiders, walking under the hot sun to go to the hut in the middle of the rice fields, biking like a mad man, trying to go up steep cliffs then speeding down with adrenaline.

'Quiapo Church'
kaleidoscope photograph, 2012
Previous spread: Stills from the *Spin Cycle* burning ritual. Sugar, baking soda, sand, lighter fluid, fire, metal tray, Duterte jeepney front seat curtain, 2018

How does one's environment influence his art? How has Manila done this for you?

Manila opens me to many things—like how I spent two or so years volunteering for a great Buddhist monastery, Ocean Sky, in San Juan. That influenced me a lot.

Also, I think with Manila being the main city, a lot of people who are the best in what they do are here or are compelled to go here. And it's great that I can be friends and hang out with some of them.

Do you sense a difference between art in Manila and in the regions? How so?

Yes, I noticed that a lot of art from the provinces are very traditional and crafty. Not that it's bad, but in that way it's different. Of course, there are outliers but they end up having to show and do work here in Manila eventually. In a way, some of the artists who come from the provinces bring strong local traditions with them. That can be quite unique and exciting to see.

As someone who isn't from Manila, what you said struck me. What do you think draws people to the capital?

I think because the institutions are here. The embassies are here. The museums are here. The galleries and collectors are here—not all but most of them.

How does that affect the art scene in Manila?

We get to see various art from different places, too. During art fairs, galleries from other regions come here. I have friends who are based in Laguna, Cavite, Cebu, Bacolod, Davao, and they come here to do projects. I think it makes the art scene more varied.

With people from outside Manila coming here, it generates interests for people to visit and do projects in their [regional] spaces, like how we recently did an exhibit in a pineapple farm in Cavite.

What types of art is Manila conducive to?

There's a loud side. The dirt, grit and chaos. Then there's the more silent side: subtle, subversive, coded, toned down. And also humor: fun and play.

There's also a generosity of being able to do way more things publicly and be able to get away with them, in contrast to how strict more-developed countries can be.

How can Manila be more conducive for creatives?

I don't believe it has to. I believe the artists should be the one adapting. But less traffic would be nice.

What were the most pressing barriers in your pursuit of art? Myself. Anxiety and worrying. From having so many possibilities of what I can do and be.

I think this resonates not only with creatives, but everyone in our generation as well. How do you overcome yourself?

I think it affects everyone, like I can see my parents struggling through their own stuff, too. It amazes me how they manage to still function sometimes. There are a lot of people struggling with worse things, and it really amazes me how they manage to get along on their endeavors.

Sometimes, I struggle really hard. The thing is I try to notice it, like in the past week I've been feeling really down. When that happens, I usually resort to playing games. I'm trying to find a balance and a working system but so far here's some of the things I've learned:

Self-help, self-improvement books can help. Listening to them while working [works] even better. Hypnosis, as weird as it is, works for me; mantras, too. Journaling and writing. Still, there are times where I just don't want to work. Sometimes, I will say that I'll just work for 15 minutes today, or just do whatever the minimum is. It sucks.

There are times when I'm back on my feet. But it bums me out when it's a weekend and all of my family is at home, trying to relax, while I'm there trying to grind.

When I work for someone or with someone, I'm amazed just how hard I can work for them. But when I work for myself I just burn out. But yeah, it's still a work in progress.

**“There's a loud side
[art done in Manila].
The dirt, grit and chaos.
Then there's the more silent
side: subtle, subversive,
coded, toned down. And
also humor: fun and play.”**

What do you want your art to convey and express?

I'm still working on it. I guess, my weird interests in stuff, like trying to listen and stumble upon interesting stories and trying to visualize those, literally or creatively. Like the story of how in nature, there is no perfect line, square or circle, but somehow man created these perfect shapes from nature's suggestions. How Sir Robert Sylanteng of First United Building, where 98B is hosted, washed his paper money bills. Or Carlos Celdran's telling of the history of Intramuros and how those structures are like they're made up of chocnut candies, because they are made of adobe.

Also, my political leanings and beliefs like those hidden behind the coded message of my maritime flags, painting series. And the recent video of me dropping a bottle of UFC Mang Tomas in response to the recent labor issues with NutriAsia, with reference to Ai Wei Wei's dropping of an ancient vase.

I am currently thinking about and working on how to effectively communicate my support for free speech, criticism of radicalization, call for more debate and dialogue, and I'm also still figuring out how to attack the hyper-reactivity of people nowadays. Judging situations like the one in NutriAsia from the get-go, without taking into consideration the bias and agenda of the media, without investigating deeper into the matter. And the annoying pointing out of problems without any proposal or effort into trying to solve those problems.

You mention Ai Wei Wei and Carlos Celdran a bit. The former is a fine artist who uses everyday objects in the creation of pieces that challenge the state; the latter a performance artist who doesn't bring himself into the space of high brow art and so, does not receive the same acclaim as the former (or Mideo Cruz for that matter) but does equally important work that is critical of the government. How do you see this delineation between fine and lowbrow art? Where do you see yourself on this scale?

They're polarizing personalities. I've managed to get to know Carlos Celdran more after working as a staffer for the recent inaugural Manila Biennale. I see Carlos's point of framing his tours as tours and not as performance art—in a way, to not alienate people, and also to get more people to join the tours. After all, that's where he earns his

money. But attending the tour, as someone familiar with contemporary art practices, I noticed the performative-ness of the tour as well as the depth of history. I managed to learn a ton about what Intramuros was like way back, what it could have been and what it still can be.

I think their work is not really that critical of the government but more of an invitation for people to dig deeper, to question the grand narratives of modernism, such as the sacredness of religion. Now the Catholic Church is more open to receiving criticism and admitting its wrongs, but before you could say that the church was the tyrant. It was separated from the government but was still highly influential. Nowadays, Islam is taking that spotlight. With that, some of its critics are accused of Islamophobia.

One of the things that I admire about Duterte is how he managed to maneuver around the strong church here—and demonize them. But my stance here is more nuanced. I see the value in questioning, criticizing, pointing out the flaws of the church, and I also see the value they give to communities, how they give hope to people, how the church is like therapy for the people. But then when the therapist is not just helping you cope with your struggles, but also persuading you to take their side, that's not good. It's like that politically-inclined taxi driver or barber who you just want to mind their own businesses.

So, fine art and lowbrow. Fine art is a more modern idea—of painting and sculptures, of using expensive materials, being highly skilled. Lowbrow art is more of a postmodern idea of art, in that it's more about what can be art and how far can we push it.

I think there is still that line, but it's more blurred. You can see street art, which was previously seen as lowbrow, getting shown in galleries and appreciated by [art] collectors. But you still see a lot of paintings in galleries. I think it's not a matter of removing the modernist ideas in exchange of postmodernist ideas but it helping them work together. I'm not sure if I'm making sense.

Personally, I find myself more [drawn to] the postmodern side, because I'm not really that keen on spending much time to make something look good—as you can see in this [email] interview. I'm more “get the ideas out there as fast as possible, clean it up a little bit, then send it instantly”.



'Stand out' kaleidoscope photograph, 2012
Below: 'The message is love' kaleidoscope photograph, 2012





Chaotic Festivities, Photographs and cardboards formed into fiesta *banderitas*; rope, c-prints, cardboard, masking tape; size variable, 2017. Photography by Abbey and Emen Batocabe.

I think that's because sometimes, I think that I should perfect things before I put them out there—so I do the counterintuitive thing, which is to make the simplest, worst thing that I can do and put it out there. From there, there's momentum and it builds up to better work. But then again, that does not look well when you're working with others.

I'm really not that fine-handed. I almost failed in my first year in Fine Arts, because I'm not really good at drawing. So sometimes I question my current position: Is the acceptance and validation [I receive] as an artist bogus?

You speak about the importance of momentum in art-making. Are you speaking from a commercial standpoint? If not, where?

Medyo. As I mentioned one of the ways I try to win against myself is by reading self-improvement books. Along the way I stumbled about startup methodologies of working with feedback.

Another one of the books, which I really, really like, *Mastery* by Robert Green, talks about having a conversation with reality, of creating prototypes and observing how they work in the real world.

“The aim is not really to please any audience. Maybe not even myself. But I guess it’s to be sensitive enough of the times. ”

Is the greater aim to create work that resonates with an audience, e.g. social media, or work that sells, e.g. in galleries?

Hmm, it depends. I think in real life, very few things really go as planned. Sometimes they just magically line up.

Yeah, so about politics, one thing I’ve been interested in is conspiracy theories. I really looked up the 9/11 conspiracy theories, and found out in the end, that most amazeballs conspiracy theories can’t really be true, especially if it takes a huge amount of people to have conspired together. It’s just too hard and people are better than we think.

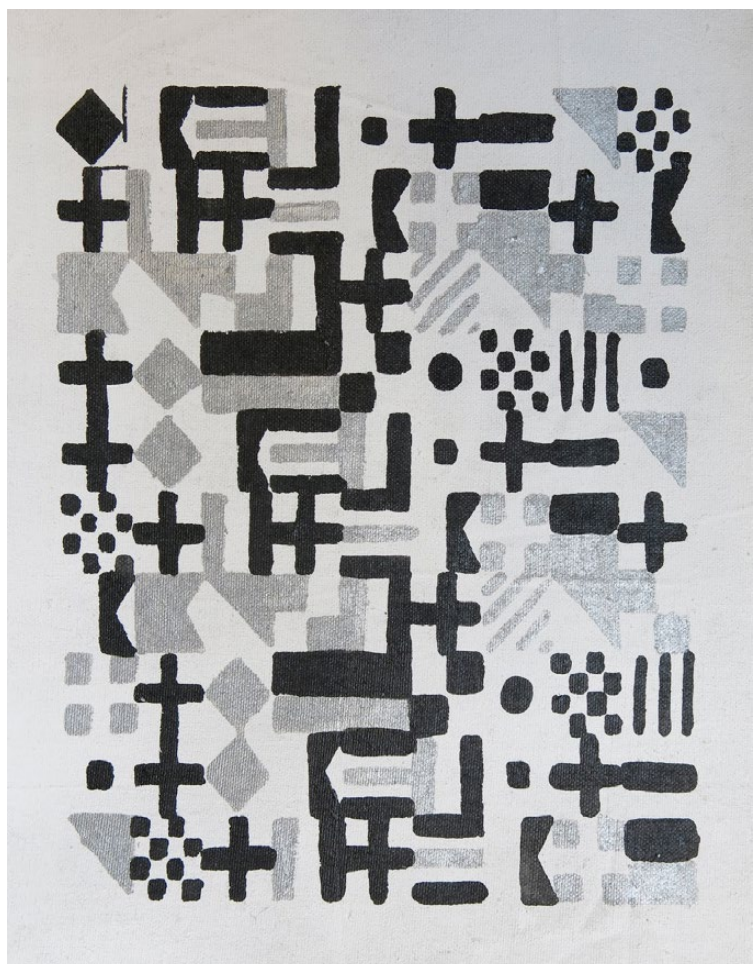
For “Circles”, I got to thinking if I want to go in [artists] residency. I have to make works that are conducive to that kind of setup. So, I had a time when I was just researching about that, but nothing solid came from it. Then, when I was frustratedly working a 9-to-5 job, having no time to create works, I thought of doing [“Circles”] again. Then magically, it all aligned—I was recommended to do the residency in Japan; that was the work that got the attention of the host.

So...no, the aim is not really to please any audience. Maybe not even myself. But I guess it’s to be sensitive enough of the times. I find myself doing stuff that aligns with my ideologies, then through feedback, find out that work also aligns with what others are thinking.

Who do you call your mentors?

The Internet! Alain Briot’s articles about photography and chasing your passion. John T. Unger’s podcast. *Lateral Action* blog. Bad at sports. Veejay Villafranca, Roy Voragen, Ben Shapiro and the Intellectual Dark Webs. Online debate platforms like that of Oxford.

A lot! I’m thinking about the various communities and people I’m involved with. In small and big ways they influence how I think. 98B, Load na Dito, Green Papaya, Sofia and Mita Santiago, Con Cabrera, Manila Biennale Team, 1335 Mabini people, Lost Frames Community. ●



Maritime Flags, undated

See through Gerome Soriano’s perspective
on Instagram [@geromesoriaknow](https://www.instagram.com/geromesoriaknow).
View his works at geromesoriano.blogspot.com.



CANVAS

Class Act

Escolta-based *The Public School Manila* champions design and sense of place by working and fostering a budding creative community in a city they love

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*





Vincent Africa and Reymart Cerin (seated) in their First United Building studio in Escolta Street, Manila

Hello! Please introduce yourselves.

I'm Reymart Cerin, co-founder of The Public School Manila, a branding and design studio based in Escolta, and The Manila Creative Exchange, an independent initiative that serves as a platform for creatives in Manila to collaborate and foster a community through talks, publications, and community-based projects.

Can you briefly recount to us the beginnings of The Public School Manila? What convinced you to put up a branding studio?

My partner (Vince Africa) and I were about to re-launch a streetwear brand back in 2015. However, during the branding and planning stage, Vince also had to deal with more clients than he can accommodate. So out of necessity, we eventually found ourselves opening a design studio. He used to work as an art director for Team Manila while I did accounts management for Vgrafiks for a while. I guess our passion for good design and love for Manila brought us together to form the studio, where our work mostly revolves around the two.

Your studio seemed to have formed a strong bond with the city (Manila), particularly Escolta. Why did you decide to set up shop in this location?

There's this interesting story about how Vince was working on a documentary in his past job and got to interview Robert Sylianteng of First United Building. During this interview, Robert toured Vince around the building and they stumbled upon a studio which Vince posted a picture of online. He was fascinated with it because of the big windows and abundant lighting — it really looked like a dream studio. And then voila! Two years after, that studio ended up becoming the home of The Public School Manila.

But aside from that, we're just really very passionate about the untapped potential of Manila, with its deep history and cultural significance. It's a city that gives us a glimpse of our past and easily connects us to our struggles as a people —something that is a very potent well of inspirations.



FIRST Coworking Community stationery

Opposite page: Escolta Block Party poster

escolta
**BLOCK
PARTY!**

The
Anniversary
Celebration of a
Lovely Community

11.25.17
Escolta Street, Manila

swoop





Intramuros Administration poster, **Top:** Celebrating Cesar poster for The CCP

Kudos to you and the young folks who have contributed to bringing life and a promising future to what was once the city’s busiest street. What made you believe in the potential of Escolta?

The authenticity of the place and the beautiful architecture are things that’s hard to find anywhere else in the city. That, and the openness of the Syliantengs when it came to new and creative approaches of reintroducing Escolta to the new generation. These factors are what made the community what it is right now.

How has the city and Escolta influenced your work and approach to graphic design and branding?

With the endless visual inspirations around the city and our love for abundance—or the aesthetic of it—gave our practice more focus on what’s straightforward and essential. The purity of what’s left in Manila reminds us of what’s important and needed. Our exposure to Japanese and Swiss designs helped us also in sifting through the details that matter when it comes to visually communicating the core of anything that we work on.

What’s a normal day in the office like?

We usually open the studio before lunch. Then we say hi to our neighbors who have become very good friends—especially the guys at one/zero design collective since they’re just next door. Sometimes, we drop by the Kalsada Coffee office at the fourth floor when they have new beans from their farms or dark chocolates they might want to share, but usually we grab our first cup at The Den. Then we proceed to the usual work day that sometimes include entertaining visitors who would like to check our studio or Standard Objects—this little shop we set up inside the studio. Other creatives and friends drop by every now and then to bounce off new ideas for Escolta and other initiatives.

As of now, most of the work output we see from the studio are Escolta-centric. What design works and projects can we expect to see from the studio in the future?

We haven’t had the time to put much of our work out there but we’ve been consulting for various government agencies like Intramuros Administration, Nayong Pilipino, Department of Tourism, Department of Transportation, MMDA, etc. Not much has changed since we started in terms of focus, we still want to work with government agencies, non-profit organizations and start-up companies.

“The authenticity of the place [Escolta] and the beautiful architecture are things that’s hard to find anywhere else in the city.”

The Practicing Misis cookbook cover art



iDiscover Manila Binondo Map

Aside from that, we're planning to work on more projects through The Manila Creative Exchange. It's an initiative that we started along with Anjo Bolarda and architect Angelo Ray Serrano. We want to tap Escolta and the existing creative community to help the new generation of creatives in terms of discussions, connections, and exploring their potentials.

Manila isn't without its problems, and I'm sure this is something you guys are reminded of, being based in the city. As creatives, what issues or problems of the city can be addressed through design?

Where to begin? Well, I think one of the fastest ways we can all help in is through the communication and branding materials of different agencies. Especially in this day and age of social media and fake news, being able to communicate whatever it is that you're trying to say is already hard in itself—more so in an effective and affecting way. It doesn't hurt also to approach different agencies if you would like to lend a hand because most of the time they just don't know where to find the right designers for their projects.

Any urban myths about working in Manila that you'd like to debunk?

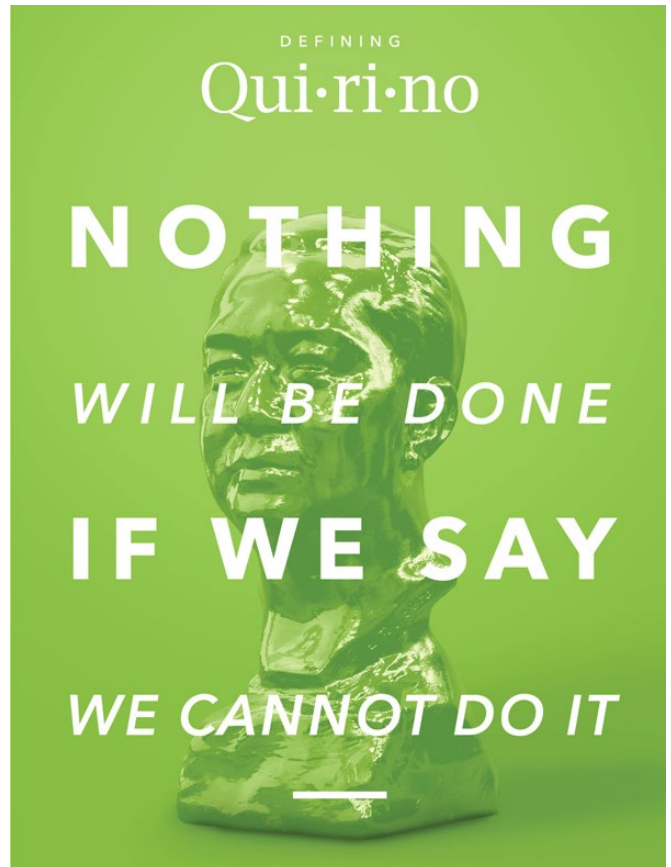
I can only think of two things right now: Traffic and security. It takes me more time to get out of Makati or BGC to anywhere than going to Escolta from Mandaluyong. Manila is very accessible via LRT and the MRT, and even via the Pasig River Ferry. And you can pretty much walk around Escolta and Binondo without worrying that much about your valuables even in the wee hours of the night.

What other quality/qualities of the city do you love that is often overlooked by everyone else?

As cliché as this may sound, the vibrant energy and dynamism of the city and the people who live in it. I also love how Manila runs 24 hours a day—something that I'm surprised is not the same with other neighboring capitals. But above all are the many creative possibilities that it allows you to explore with its collaborative minds around and frequent challenges with the limited resources.



“Urban myths? you can pretty much walk around Escolta and Binondo without worrying much about your valuables even in the wee hours of the night.”



Defining Quirino poster series for the commemorative exhibit celebrating former President Elpidio Quirino's 125th birth anniversary

“Escolta's 'success' is because of the passion of all the people who work here and the time and effort that they devote for its flourishing.”

The continuing revitalization of Escolta has been a bright spot for Manila, thanks to the efforts of creatives like yourself. However, there are various other spots in the city that could benefit from the attention. What do you think made for the continuing success of the Escolta story, and how could this be replicated in other places within Manila?

Personally, I think we have a long way to go before we can say that we're “successful”. But thank you for thinking that—a lot of people are working hard to give Escolta new life. There are a lot of challenges in terms of focus and communication because we're practicing in different industries and our resources are limited since we're all independent. But I think the 'success' that you mentioned is because of the passion of all the people who work in Escolta and the time and effort that they devote for its flourishing. The term “passion” has been given many different connotations along with the generation of “millennials” but truly, it's the one thing that runs all of these creative hubs around the world. And if one is to “replicate” it, they must find enough passionate people to run the show and steer that community to creative success.

What do you guys do on your free time? Any hobbies or advocacies that you pursue on the side?

We're always out there trying to find new inspirations from music, film, art, food, and design. I always try to catch local film festivals and gallery

openings to provoke and stimulate creative thinking. It's always best for creatives to find new things that interest them so that they stay inspired to work and respond to these different stimuli. We recently opened a café in Malate called blocleaf café, which keeps us busy too, and it came along through our curiosity and passion for great local coffee. Lately, I got into functional and kettlebell training just to give me some sense of trajectory when it comes to my personal health. ●

Nayong Pilipino branding identity



More works coming out soon on publicschoolmnl.com.



Mita, Escolta Street, Manila, 6.30.2018



CANVAS

Scene City

Illustrator *Daniel Tingcungco* depicts beautiful little scenes within Manila that reminds us of the city's oft-forgotten charms

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*





Sentinel of Freedom monument,
Luneta Park, Manila

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! I am Daniel Ansel Tingcungco, an illustrator and art director based in Manila. I am currently an art director for Leo Burnett Manila and a member of Ang Ilustrador ng Kabataan (Ang InK).

Can you recall when you first got into illustration? Was there a particular moment in the past that convinced you that the artistic track is what you want to take?

I've been drawing for as young as I can remember, influenced by a lot of books, cartoons and animation. I won my first poster-making contest in grade school and continued being the class artist up to high school. Never thought of it much until my brother encouraged me to take Fine Arts in college. I graduated from college and started working soon after. I experienced a kind of quarter-life crisis during this period. A lot of my friends in college seemed to have already found their artistic style and voice, especially those in illustration. While I was happy with my work and with how I'm drawing as a hobby, I sought to "find myself" by taking illustration seriously. By taking inspiration and influence from a lot of artists and styles I love, I've been able to slowly develop a style I'm comfortable with. I've encountered so much frustration and confusion, but I was able to get through with the help and support of mentors, friends and family. It's still a long way to go, but now I'm having fun as I keep evolving and experimenting.

Your take on illustration has a nostalgic and very traditional vibe about it; one is reminded of picture book illustrations from the 1950s and vintage travel posters. What influenced such a style and why do you favor such an approach?

Growing up, I'm influenced by a lot of picture books from my childhood, together with cartoons and animation, then moving forward and being exposed to various art styles and illustrators.

Daniel Tingcungco



Opposite page: The Manila Central Post Office from across the Pasig River

But a particular influence came from a trip to Japan a few years back, as I got exposed to the artworks of *shin-hanga* (new prints), an art movement in 20th century Japan that came after *ukiyo-e*, that uses the same woodblock print process but incorporating elements of Western art such as light and perspective and inspired by European Impressionism. Those artworks, especially by Kawase Hasui and Yoshida Hiroshi, moved me so much. Also, Tatsuro Kiuchi and his work have inspired me so much. I consider him a kind of mentor as he's given me valuable advice from time to time, most especially with techniques and the approach to work when I met him in his studio in Tokyo. Their use of light and color, composition, use of simple and complex details, all create a timeless mood and feel that inspire my illustration style, which I believe, is still evolving.

This issue is our ode to Manila, a city close to our hearts but criminally underappreciated. We noticed that a lot of your artworks paint Manila in a positive and very picturesque light. What is it that you love about this city?

This personal project, '100 views of Manila', was inspired by Hiroshige's '100 famous views of Edo', and also stemming from the feelings I've always felt coming home from travels abroad. There was always this frustration of what a certain country has, that Manila doesn't, especially in terms of aesthetics of a city. But through fresh eyes and looking at Manila as I would marvel other countries, I was able to change those feelings by looking at Manila differently—accepting it for what it is now, but also hopeful of what it can be. I realize through every artwork that there is so much beauty in this city if you just keep looking. It's when you're far away from home that you realize how important it is to you.

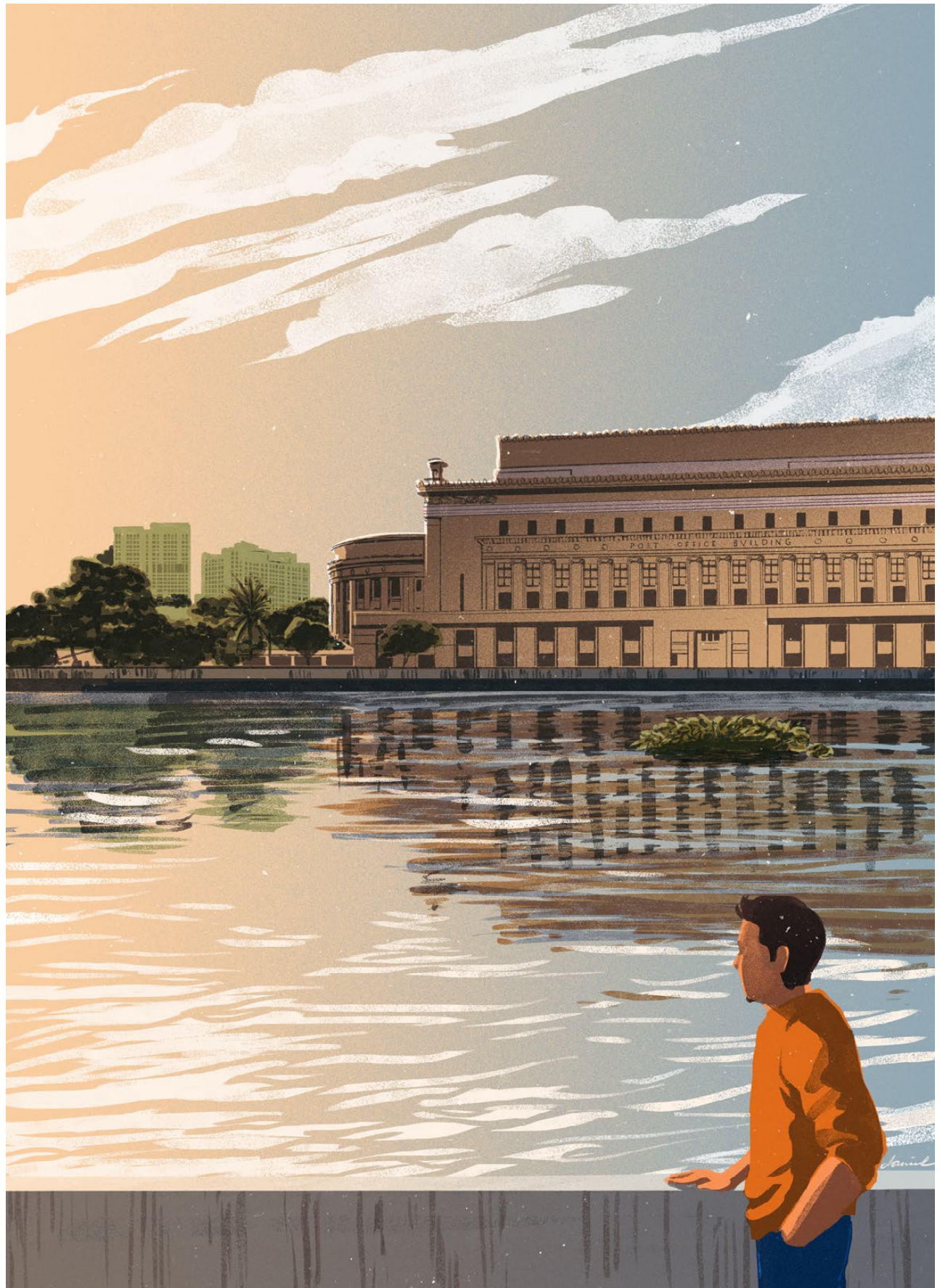
What do you hope to accomplish with your Manila illustrations? What message do you want to convey with your works?

I'd like people to look around Manila with a different perspective, to realize that there is so much to love here, as much as any other place in the world. Hopefully, as that love grows, and everyone would appreciate it more, to help in growing its potential in their own way—not just occasionally, but always, in everyday life.

“I'd like people to look around Manila with a different perspective, to realize that there is so much to love here, as much as any other place in the world.”



National Museum of Natural History, Manila





The world-famous Manila Bay sunset

“Amid all the hateful things we know and hear, people in Manila always find ways to smile, be happy and help other people as much as they can in their own way.”

As a creative, can you suggest points of improvement for Manila in the aspect of supporting a vibrant, creative community?

I believe it all starts with having a mindset that believes in the possibilities of what Manila could be. Believing in the place, believing in the people are keys to building this city. It may take some time, but surely it is the foundation of this community. We need to love our country more, nurturing what we have and taking action rather than just complaining and comparing. From here, the rest will surely follow.

We've all heard the stuff we hate about the city but what is one thing Manila has that no other city possesses? Are you reminded of little moments or personal anecdotes that illustrate this?

Amid all the hateful things we know and hear, people in Manila always find ways to smile, be happy and help other people as much as they can in their own way. One of the many moments I remember is that whenever I ride a taxi or a ride-sharing vehicle and encounter terrible traffic, most of the drivers I encounter tell jokes and chat to keep light of these daily downers. In effect, I forget the traffic and soon arrive at my destination with a smile and a light feeling. It's these small things that still make it home for me.

Can you give us a brief outline of your workflow for the illustrations you make? How do you obtain references and decide what scenes to draw?

Every illustration starts with me spending a lot of time thinking and letting ideas simmer in my head. Then, I plan my artwork based on the mood I want to capture, creating some initial sketches. For the '100 views of Manila' project, I visit the specific place I want

to illustrate, get to feel the atmosphere of the place at that moment. I take a lot of reference photos, trying to explore angles and perspectives that best represent the place. I make quick sketches, sometimes already drawing it directly to digital. Colors take some time to finalize as I keep experimenting until it is right. It takes a few hours to finish a piece, more if it had detail. But I don't dwell much on these as I like the sketchy feel of imperfect and rough strokes. I finish as soon as the mood has been wonderfully captured in the artwork and it feels complete.

We currently live in a reality riddled with fake news, misinformation and false promises. What do you think should our role be as creatives to halt the progress of such negative forces?

As creatives, we have the power to communicate. Whether it be through visuals, words, or music, we must always be present and take action with all that's happening around us to protect the truth and freedom we've always fought hard for. Go out, take a stand, talk and take action from beyond the screens. Just keeping silent removes us from our purpose and meaning in society.

Aside from illustration, what other hobbies or interests do you pursue?

I enjoy film photography from time to time, taking long walks as often as I can and snapping moments that move me. I also spend a lot of time reading books and watching films. All of these have an influence with my illustration. But most of all, I enjoy a lot of coffee! I make it a point to always go around cafes around the city and whenever I travel. I take time brewing my own cup every day, and for friends, too. This pretty much explains my Instagram name, @cafedandy. Let's have coffee! ●

Follow Daniel Tingcungco on Instagram at [@cafedandy](https://www.instagram.com/cafedandy).



CREATIVE CORNER N° 5

Natassja Velasco

I always prefer quiet spaces and minimal interactions with people when searching for ideas. I want to see how far my mind can go. Hearing others' ideas puts me in a corner, so I leave out the brainstorming part for when I'm ready. While I prefer quiet spaces, I do want it to be visually inspiring; from clean to gritty.

While it's hard to find a quiet spot in Manila, there is something rewarding about its noise. The sounds of the city reflect the contrasts of its people's lives, which can be quite insightful. ●

See more of Nat's world on her Instagram [@itsnatthing](#). View her works on [natassjavelasco.com](#). Listen to her music playlist [here](#).



Bobong, Luneta Park, Manila, 6.30.2018



QUILL

W E L L

Read

Intramuros' *Tradewinds Books* is a hidden gem of a bookstore that aims to preserve Philippine art, culture and history through the written word

INTERVIEW *Janelle Año*

Tell us about the history of Tradewinds.

Tradewinds Bookshop was established in 1989 by Robert and Mila Lane as part of the complex housed in the Silahis Center. Silahis Arts and Artifacts was the first enterprise located in the building named El Amanecer in 1985. Since its inception, three other subsidiaries were formed to complete what is now known as The Silahis Center. Aside from Tradewinds Books, there are Chang Rong Antique Gallery, Galeria de las Islas and Kayamanang Asya (an auction and appraisal house).

Making recommendations,
Bottom: The El Amanecer Building
in Intramuros, Manila, where
Tradewinds Books is located

What made you decide to open Tradewinds in Intramuros?

After Silahis Arts and Artifacts opened in 1985, we realized that there was a need for more information on the Philippines, its culture and history. This inspired us to open our bookstore. Being located in Intramuros, a unique historical center, it seemed ideal for the what we had envisioned. The building which houses Tradewinds Books is named El Amanecer (“The Dawn”) and it’s built on the site of the Lourdes Church which was completely razed to the ground during the battle for the liberation of Manila in 1945. The building was designed to approximate the home of the landed gentry of the 19th century or the Ilustrados.

Tradewinds is described as a “cultural bookshop”. Can you tell us more about that?

Tradewinds Books specializes in Filipiniana books and publications particularly those on art, history, culture and related subjects, as well as publications on Asia and the Pacific.

What role do bookstores play in conserving our heritage and history?

Bookstores play an important role in conserving heritage and history by making these factors easily accessible to the general public. Books and the printed word are records of our history which generally survive for generations to enjoy and benefit from.

Tradewinds has been around for almost 30 years! How is running a bookstore, especially an independent one, different, now that there are more chain bookstores and online shopping?

Tradewinds Books has been around for 29 years and hopefully will continue in its mission to make Philippine history and culture available to all interested parties for many more years. There is always room for independent enterprises as long as they provide services that are needed. Of course, every enterprise has to keep up with technology and Tradewinds Books is not an exception. We do online marketing,





Literary treasures and intriguing curios await Tradewinds's patrons

“Bookstores play an important role in conserving heritage and history by making these factors easily accessible to the general public.”

Visit Tradewinds Bookshop at Silahis Center, 744 Real Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1000 Metro Manila. Follow them on Facebook @TradewindsBookshop

Can you tell us about your regulars?

Many of our regular customers are historians and authors of books on Philippine history, among whom we may mention Professor Ricardo T. Jose of the Department of History, University of the Philippines; Professors Michael “Xiao” Chua and Lars Ubaldo of De La Salle University; and Professor Augusto V. de Viana of the University of Santo Tomas. These regular customers of Tradewinds Books always find time to visit the store because, according to them, this is the place that has a good selection of new titles, hard-to-find books and good reference materials, as well as publications for their personal collections.

You have an impressive collection of books—most of which I’ve never seen in other bookstores. How do you curate your books?

We try to keep abreast of all new publications and books, especially those pertaining to the Philippines and Asia, and try to limit our choice of books to promote by selecting those we feel are relevant, factual and unbiased.

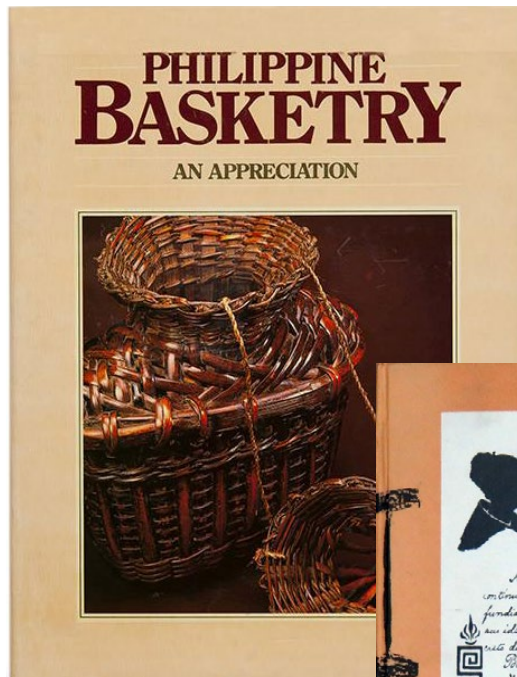
I noticed that you also sell other items like prints, maps and even the fortune-telling board game Jose Rizal made when he was exiled in Dapitan. What are some unique items customers can find at your store?

Aside from books and publications on the Philippines and Asia, Tradewinds Books has expanded its Filipiniana line to include artistic notecards and stationery, calendars, locally produced games, and souvenir items such as flags, magnets and postcards.

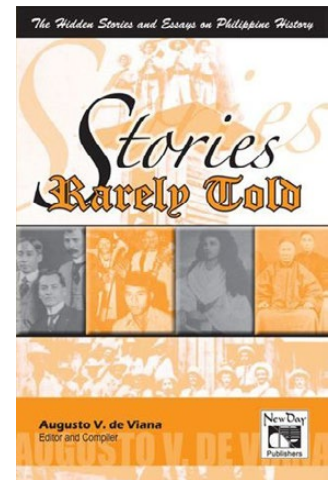
Do you have any upcoming activities we can look forward to?

We join the Manila International Book Fair held once a year. That’s when we promote certain new authors, release our yearly art calendar for the coming year and slash prices on certain items to make room for new publications. ●

Tradewinds Recommends



**Philippine Basketry:
An Appreciation,**
by Robert F. Lane
A documentation of over
20 years of work, this book
offers the most exhaustive
coverage of the subject to date.

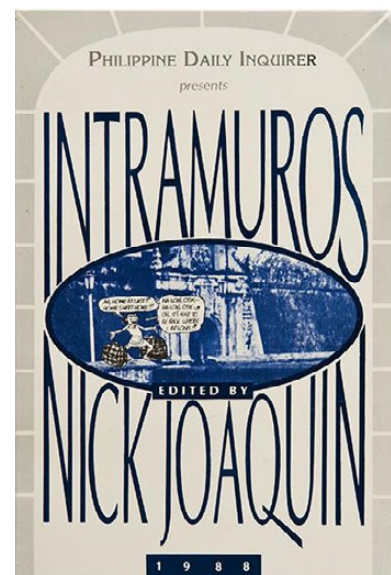


Stories Rarely Told,
Compiled and edited by
Augusto de Viana.
The hidden stories and
essays of Philippine history.

**Noli Me Tangere,
El Filibusterismo,**
Written by Jose Rizal
Translated from the original
Spanish to English by
Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin.



Intramuros, Edited by Nick Joaquin
A rare and previously out-of-print book providing the reader with the
historical facts, places, people and events within the walls of Intramuros.



*Timeless picks from the
bookshop's Filipiniana collection*



COMPASS

Don't Skip



Manila



Don't Skip Manila founder *Anne Uy* talks of the surviving and strong spirit of the city, and why tourists should stay a while

INTERVIEW BY *Danielle Austria*



Hi! Please introduce yourself.

Don't Skip Manila is a passion project that aims to create awareness for the mostly misunderstood city. We craft tours that tell the stories of Manila. With all the reasons to skip this city full of chaos, traffic and poverty, we tell travelers otherwise. DON'T SKIP MANILA.

**What's the story behind Don't Skip Manila?
What makes your tours different?**

We (with co-founder Andre Julian) both studied tourism in college, and as we read about Manila on the web, we often came across recommendations to "skip" the city. So what we did was to create a Facebook page that initially compiled events that were happening here, and later on added tourist attractions and destinations, that could entice people to not skip Manila. Eventually, we ventured into creating tours. We thought that people couldn't love Manila just by visiting, they have to know the wheres, whys and whats of the city. You can't truly love something that you don't know, right?

When people talk of Manila as a travel destination, we usually take them to places that show the capital's glorious past. But what of today? What do you think makes Manila beautiful right now?

More than the places, it's the stories of Manila that make it beautiful. It's the surviving and strong spirit of this city that makes it unique.

Manila is a mirror of one's soul. If you want to see the traffic, then you get the traffic. If you want to see poverty, you get poverty. If you want to see the bad, you get the bad. BUT if you want to see art in Manila, you get art. If you want to see culture, you get culture. If you want to see sunset, you get the most beautiful sunset.

I love that you have a Pandacan tour. I live nearby (Santa Mesa) and am familiar with many other parts of the city that most people may not be. Escolta, Intramuros and Quiapo are key to understanding Philippine history, but Manila has more to offer. Are you planning to include more neighborhoods in your tours? Can you name others that you think are underrated?

We are planning to create 16 tours inside Manila! Manila as a whole is underrated. We partnered with Smokey Tours to present the other side of Manila for our Port Area

BASECO Slum Tours. We are finalizing our Ermita Tour and Sampaloc Tour. We are partnering with the trolleys of PUP to create the Sta. Mesa Tour.

San Miguel has a peaceful vibe that feature the old rich houses of Manila. The Sta. Ana Heritage District makes it seem like you are not in Manila. Tondo has a food street. There is so much more to explore and discover.

What have people been saying about the experience? Has anyone shared a particularly surprising insight of how they had viewed Manila and how their perception may have changed after the tours?

Even though the idea had been floating in our minds for the last two years, we started just last December (2017) and the reception has been great so far. We get to meet like-minded people who share our love for culture and heritage, foreigners who have been reading the 'if you don't have time, skip Manila' statements on the internet, students who have been studying here for the longest time but were unable to explore the city. It's satisfying to see how their perceptions change after the tours.

We had one guest who joined us in Pandacan and fell in love the Ilog Beata (Estero de Pandacan). We hooked him up with the local community, and now they are working hand in hand to preserve the old beauty of the river.

If our readers were to take your tours, how should they prepare for it?

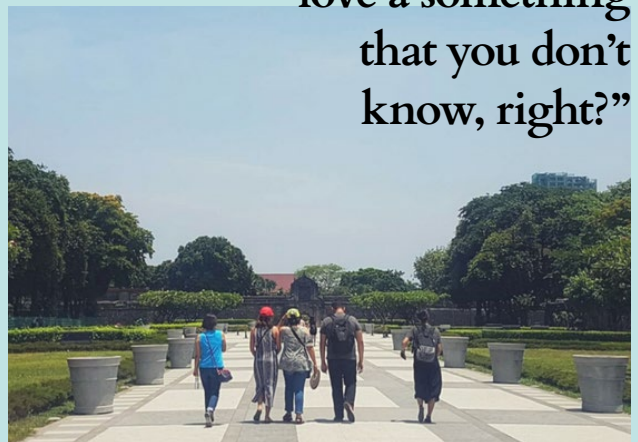
[Have] an open heart for the city. "Manila is a city that's very easy to judge and very hard to understand." It takes an open mind and heart to see beauty in this city.

Very few experiences in the city actively promote sustainability as much as Don't Skip Manila. At the start of every month, you hold a Barter Week where people can exchange Ecobricks for a tour. How important is it for the experience industry to participate in this kind of advocacy?

This was our reaction to the Pasig River Rehabilitation Committee's efforts to save the Pasig River. You see, it was the Pasig River that created the city, and we destroyed the Pasig River. We [the city as a whole] tried a lot of fundraising campaigns like Piso Para sa Pasig. It's time for a new approach. PUSO PARA SA PASIG. We try to engage people with conservation by promoting the making and donation of ecobricks.



“We thought that people couldn’t love Manila just by visiting, they have to know the wheres, whys and whats of the city. You can’t truly love a something that you don’t know, right?”





What is your honest opinion of the current state of the capital in terms of art and culture, people and/or its economy? Do you believe we really are moving ever forward?

We can't do an honest opinion of the current state of this city for we try to shine on the good and not the bad, but we see youth joining our tours who are also eager to make a change. We see efforts to revitalize this city, to put it back on the map. We meet people who work, in their small ways, to promote their district (like When in Tondo) or save their culture (like Mr. Wilven Infante, who opened his own museum of finds from his excavations, in P. Guevarra Elementary School). We got to work with people who are as passionate as us. We meet people who support our advocacy.

Because of this, we realized that people don't really hate Manila. They just need reasons not to skip it.

How would you like to imagine Manila, five years from now?

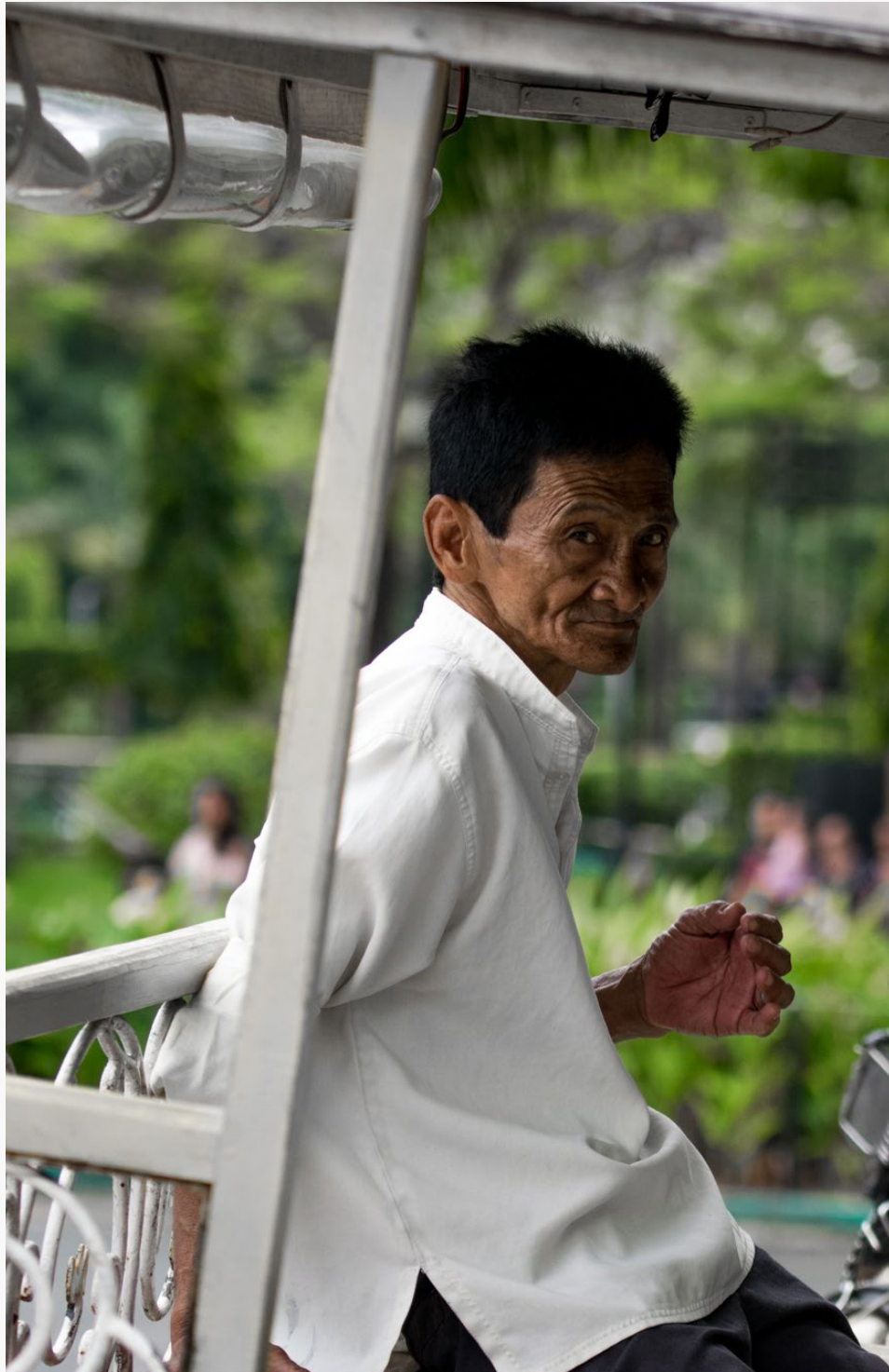
Let put it at ten years. :) We have a Ho Chi Minh City-like dinner cruise at Pasig River, showcasing the architecture of our colonial past or a Manila Dinner Bay cruise without the stench.

We have youth who are proud Manilenyos, aware of their own rich culture and history. A better government that support cultural education and preservation. A much cleaner Manila.

And local and foreign tourism not skipping this wonderful city. ●

“We got to work with people who are as passionate as us. We meet people who support our advocacy. We realized that people don't really hate Manila. They just need reasons not to skip it.”

Find more reasons not to skip this city on their Facebook and Instagram [@dontskipmanila](#).



Ato, Luneta Park, Manila, 6.30.2018



COMPASS

Train Spotting

Hop on, hop off the Yellow Line for a culture and history-filled tour of the Philippine capital

WORDS *Danielle Austria* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Victor Burgos and Patrick Kasingsing*

Metro Manila's rail systems may not be talked about for the best reasons, but they're still some of the fastest and cheapest ways to get around. The 20-stop Yellow Line, the oldest of all three that run through the metro, enters Manila from Quezon City through the R. Papa Station and exits to Pasay after Vito Cruz. In this issue, we'll explore five stops (out of 12 in the capital) from the Yellow Line and the different neighborhoods that surround them. Pull out your Beep card, and come along!





No eating nor drinking
Kumain o uminom



No smoking
Bawal manigarilyo



No littering
Bawal magkalat

For train service updates and announcements:
@officialLRT1

Email us:
feedback@lrmc.com.ph

Call us:
8888-333



Clockwise from top left: Stores selling saints and other religious figures line up Tayuman; Felymar Special Bibingka (1830 Rizal Avenue, Sta. Cruz, Manila). Felymar brings Christmas to Tayuman 365 days a year with its city-wide famous bibingka (rice cake); Pictured is their face-sized Super Special, cooked fresh from a clay pot and best eaten hot; Faith for sale



Tayuman

In Tayuman, religion is a business. Attracting a different kind of shopper, religious craft stores line up the street immediately below the station. Handmade saints (porcelain from Bulacan, woodwork from Paete) gather at the storefronts, beckoning devotees and tourists to bring home a miracle. The shops complement the sight of the 83-year old Archdiocesan Shrine of Espiritu Santo, which, like many Catholic churches in the Philippines, used to be a cemetery and is a survivor of the city's hard times.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Victor Burgos*





Clockwise from top left: View from Carriedo LRT Station; The Sta. Cruz Church; Carriedo welcomes its visitors with a fountain built in honor of the 18th Century Captain General of Manila, Don Francisco Carriedo y Peredo, the benefactor of Manila's pipe water system; Commercialization finds its way back to Escolta through HUB: Make Lab, but with a slightly different face. A project of 98-B Collaboratory, HUB is the home of the Saturday X Future Market, where creative entrepreneurs congregate to sell artworks, hand-crafted items, upcycled clothing and more; Regina Building in Calle Escolta



Carriedo

Perhaps a true melting pot, Carriedo is where people of different purposes and sub-cultures come to meet. Like Tayuman, it is a good stop for the religious, with both the Quiapo Church and Santa Cruz Church only short walks away from the station. Every year in January, Quiapo is packed with maroon-clad, frenzied devotees hoping to touch the Black Nazarene. Day to day, parishioners in the area mingle with their Muslim brothers and sisters who worship at the Masjid Al-Dahab (or The Golden Mosque), a beauty hidden in the farther Globo de Oro Street. This station also leads to the camera haven that is Hidalgo Street, the fortune-tellers and quack doctors of Plaza Miranda, and the newly revitalized Calle Escolta.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Victor Burgos and Patrick Kasingsing*

Clockwise from top left: The Manila Central Post Office is a neo-classical building designed by Juan M. Arellano and Tomás B. Mapúa. That it is easily accessible from Ermita, Malate, Quiapo and Binondo is not coincidence but part of Daniel Burnham's strategic plan for Manila; an array of Ionic pillars greet visitors to the Post Office; The iconic art-deco façade of the Manila Metropolitan Theater, currently undergoing restoration; detail of the porte cochere; Sculptures of exotic dancers and other oriental-inspired touches give this art deco landmark its distinct Asian flavor



Central

From the Central Station, one could stroll through a long list of landmarks. Start outside the Manila Metropolitan Theater, an art deco gem currently being restored by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and cross the street to find the Manila Central Post Office at Liwasang Bonifacio. The Post Office sits east of the Walled City of Intramuros, which is the address of a few universities (like the writer's alma mater, the city-owned Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila), churches, many cultural institutions and historical sites including Fort Santiago. A ride to the Central Station offers a view of the Pasig River, though it might take a bit more imagination to see how it used to be treated with importance by the people who lived and worked here.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Patrick Kasingsing*





Clockwise, from left: Pristine Paco Park; The iconic saddle-shaped entrance of the now derelict Philamlife Building; Manila's newest attraction, the National Museum of Natural History; Juan Luna's 13-foot tall Spoliarium, housed at the National Museum of Fine Arts, commands attention and invokes emotion from all who sees it for the first time; Arthur Walsh Fergusson glowers from his lofty pedestal amidst museumgoers



U.N. Avenue

This station serves Ermita, the civic center of Manila. Along with Malate, it used to be a swanky residential area for Americans and upper class Filipinos. War changed that—commercialization rose from the destruction but, somewhere down the line, it transformed into the infamous red-light district we know today. While much of the business, residential and leisurely activity eventually moved to Makati and Quezon City, you can still see traces of it in Ermita.

The old Philamlife building down the avenue remains an eye-catcher, even though it's been closed for years. Luneta National Park (or Rizal Park) is the most famous attraction that's close to the station, and with the reopening of the National Museum of Natural History, the park's immediate vicinity has come back to life. Other spaces of interest near the UN Avenue Station include the National Museum of Fine Arts, the National Library, the Planetarium and Paco Park.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Victor Burgos and Patrick Kasingsing*

Clockwise, from left: The Cultural Center of the Philippines is the official home of culture and the arts in the country. Aside from regular performances by the Philippine Ballet Theatre and Tanghalang Pilipino, CCP is the main site for the annual Cinemalaya Film Festival, which has seen a boom in public support in recent years. The complex was designed by Leandro Locsin; The Philippine International Convention Center, Asia's first international convention center; The CCP Theater fountain only operates during special events; City skyline from the CCP complex grounds; Harrison Plaza is a time capsule. Other than what's sold, not much has changed in the first airconditioned mall, and there's something both sad yet strangely comforting about it.



Vito Cruz

Do you know who Vito Cruz was? Few people do. He was Hermógenes Vito-Cruz, a mayor of the 19th century city of Pineda (now Pasay). The street is now called Pablo Ocampo, after a Filipino statesman who served in the Spanish-American transition, but the name of the station stuck. Today, a fresh take on art is brought to the area by the students of the DLSU-College of Saint Benilde. In 2008, Benilde opened Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), a space for its students and other artists to showcase their work to the public. A jeepney ride from outside De La Salle University, the bigger unit of which CSB belongs to, will take you to Harrison Plaza (the oldest major shopping mall in Manila) and the Cultural Center of the Philippines. ●

PHOTOGRAPHY *Patrick Kasingsing*





TUNE

Final Space

Benilde-cultivated *Space Onigiri* takes us to dreamland one last time before bowing out of the scene

INTERVIEW *Ynna Milambiling*

Please introduce yourselves to Kanto readers.

We're Space Onigiri! So, there's me (Tobi) on vocals and bass, Hiroshi on rhythms, Nicho on leads, Zed on synths and Eldric on drums!

Did you guys meet through music or did that come in later?

We started out with different members. We used to not have synths and a different vocalist. We all met in school (DLSU-College of Saint Benilde). It all started with Nicho and Hiro's guitar teacher teasing them about starting a band. We just wanted to play and that's what drove us, at first, to make this kind of pop. To be honest our main influence for 'OK' (EP) was Last Dinosaurs. We liked each other's music taste; I guess, that's what made us a band.

You all went to the same school, so you've had a taste of the hustle and bustle of Manila for at least a good four years. How did being in that shared ecosystem inspire creativity?

There were different local acts who we looked up to, and eventually we had the chance to meet and play alongside them during gigs, and who also helped us in many ways during writing. Sharing this said ecosystem with people we look up to made us keep wanting to improve ourselves.

What is your songwriting process like?

Nicho makes the demos. We all pitch in ideas during the live performances. Hiro and I help each other out when writing for songs.

Some of you have solo music projects as well. Do these projects, in a way, help you make music for Space Onigiri?

It did! Playing for different acts gave us new playing perspectives to sort of apply in our own music. Adapting to different styles is what we're kind of good at. Just the right amount of practice and time is all it takes.

You have announced late last year that you were working on your album. How different/similar is it from your EP, 'OK'?

Sad to say but two weeks ago [from writing], we actually decided to disband. This is where we'll say it first. Compared to before, right now we have different goals. So I think 'OK' might be the last you'll hear from us as a band.

When you were starting, what had been your expectations towards the local music scene? How did reality compare?

It was quite intimidating, because we didn't know where and how to get shows. Making new friends that liked our sound made it easier. I'm really grateful for meeting Jao Bernardo and Jojo Sibal of Yurei, and Megumi Acorda! Without them I don't think we'd be playing where we feel comfortable and at home during our active time.

Favorite live performance so far?

We played during this year's Fête De La Musique! That was our last gig as a band, something we'll never forget. As well as when we got chosen to play for Vinculados, to cover an old Spanish pop song via our style and identity as Space Onigiri. Also, all the gigs at Mow's! Cheers!

Go-to Manila Traffic tune?

I think it depends on who you ask from us but Last Dinosaurs, Wild Nothing, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard, Good Morning, Deerhunter. Stalk our Spotify playlists! ●



Stream and dream with Space Onigiri on Soundcloud @spaceonigiriph.



Opposite page: Scotch Kwek-Kwek with
Gin Pomelo with Lychee in the background



Often the best way to experience a culture is through its food. The folks from *BAKED* put their own spin on some of Manila's street food favorites and roadside drinking session staples

PRODUCED BY *BAKED* Zine

PALATE

KANTO Eats

Scotch Kwek-Kwek

Longganisa and eggs? *giggles*
Makes 4-6 servings

1 (450g) pack Skinless longganisa
1 tsp Choice of mixed dried herbs, to taste
(Optional, we used Italian seasoning mix)
1 cup Breadcrumbs
¾ cup Flour
1 Egg, beaten
Salt and pepper, to taste
8 Hard-boiled quail eggs
Oil, for frying
Spiced vinegar, for dipping

1. In a bowl, combine longganisa and herbs. Set aside.
2. Prepare two plates for the breadcrumbs and flour, and a bowl for the egg.
3. Season the breadcrumbs with salt and pepper.
4. Roll each egg in flour to coat and shape the longganisa around the egg. Dip each into the beaten egg then coat with crumbs to cover completely.
5. Fry each egg until fully cooked and brown on all sides.
6. Serve with spiced vinegar, if preferred.

Gin Pomelo with Lychee

Unleash your inner *tito*
Makes 1 glass

4-6 Pomelo segments, depending on size
2 Lychees, preferably canned with the
syrup reserved
¼ cup Gin
1/8 cup Lychee syrup
2 Tbsps Simple syrup
Ice

1. In a tin shaker, muddle the pomelo and lychees.
2. Add the gin, lychee syrup, simple sugar, and ice to the shaker. Shake until well-combined.
3. Strain the mixture to a glass with ice. You may add some pulp to your drink for added texture.
4. Serve immediately.



Punyeta!, **Opposite page:** Crispy Fried Isaw

For more scrumptious chow and a celebration of all that is edible, read BAKED Zine on Issuu at issuu.com/bakedzine

Crispy Fried Isaw

Grill, who? It's about time to introduce the isaw its new home, the fryer.

Makes 6 servings

1	Egg
½ cup	Soy sauce
1 cup	Flour
	Salt, pepper, and chili powder to taste
½ kilo	Chicken intestines, cleaned and simmered in vinegar and bay leaf then skewered*
	Oil, for deep-frying
	Spiced vinegar, for dipping

1. In a bowl, combine the egg and soy sauce.
2. Add flour to the mixture then season with salt and pepper. Transfer the mixture in a glass for easy dipping. Set aside.
3. Prepare and heat a pot of oil for deep-frying.
4. Dip each skewered chicken intestines in the batter and deep-fry until golden brown.
5. Remove from oil and serve with spiced vinegar, if preferred.

**Alternatively, you may also use about 15 sticks of grilled isaw.*

Punyeta!

This may or may not be inspired by one person's unholy mouth

Makes 1 glass

¼ cup	Pineapple juice
¼ cup	Prepared iced tea mix, preferably lemon flavored iced tea
¼ cup	Dark rum
	Ice

1. In a container, combine the pineapple juice, iced tea, and rum.
2. Pour the mixture in a glass with ice.
3. Serve immediately.



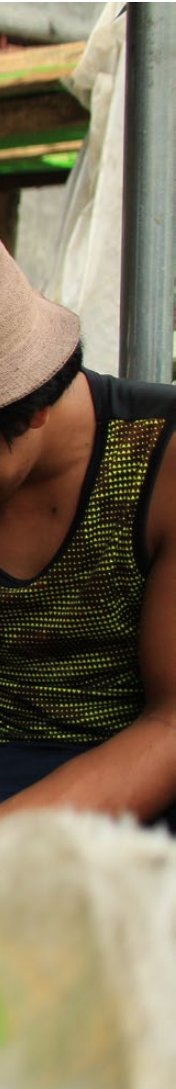


PALATE

A Coffee Journey

Coffee connoisseur and Kalsada Coffee founder *Carmel Laurino* shares how her personal coffee journey inspired her to move from Seattle to Manila

INTERVIEW Emarrah Sarreal **PHOTOGRAPHY** Kaye Lavin, Rennell Salumbre



How are you? Please introduce yourself.

I am Carmel Laurino, and I'm the founder of Kalsada Coffee, a social enterprise working with smallholder coffee producers in the Philippines.

What attracted you to pursue coffee?

The inspiration stemmed from a dusty, old photograph I found while doing research in one of the libraries at the University of Washington. It showed a small stall, operated by the “Filipino Coffee Company”, in Pike Place Market. Aside from my curiosity surrounding this photo, my decision to pursue coffee was also rooted in my desire to learn more about my heritage and culture. I grew up abroad and wanted to connect to my parents' home country. Pursuing coffee allowed me to do just that.



Your passion towards coffee is inspiring. Can you share with us your experience tasting coffee for the first time?

I can't remember how old I was, but I remember having to mix my mom's instant coffee—you know the Folger's soluble?—and adding milk and sugar to it. It was so sweet! I do, however, distinctly remember the first time I cupped specialty coffee. It was at Stumptown Coffee's roastery in Seattle. In that place, we were able to travel across the coffee belt one region and one cup at a time, ending with a cup from Ethiopia—the birthplace of coffee. That was the first time I'd tasted coffees side by side. I remember being so wide-eyed and exclaiming: “I taste blueberries!” That was the turning point for me. How could plain, black coffee taste like blueberries?

Carmel Laurino, photographed
by Rennell Salumbre



That does sound like a wonderful experience! Let's bring the experience closer to home. Kalsada Coffee currently partners with coffee farmers in Benguet and Bukidnon. Which coffee cup from your partners has made an impression on you?

They're all so amazing and different! I don't think I could pick just one.

What was the state of coffee farming like when Kalsada first started?

In the community we now work in, each farmer was processing in their own backyard. There wasn't a centralized area for them to collectively work together. This situation put a lot of the responsibility on the farmers, which explains why most coffee farmers eventually focused on other crops. One of our missions at Kalsada Coffee is to sustain the country's coffee farms. The Philippines has such a great coffee history, and it would be a shame to let it fade away. This was also one of the reasons why we wanted to pay farmers more. In

When work becomes play; The Philippines presents a new source and flavor profile to the burgeoning coffee industry



“One of our missions at Kalsada Coffee is to sustain the country's coffee farms. The Philippines has such a great coffee history, and it would be a shame to let it fade away.”

our opinion, farming is the most crucial and difficult part of the entire coffee journey. So we make it a point to pay the farmers over \$1 per pound more than Fair Trade.

That old photograph that you found played a crucial role in setting you on this path. As the Philippines reawakens to find its place in the global coffee industry, what do you think can our country offer? What makes our coffee unique from the other types of coffee?

The Philippines can offer so much! For the global coffee industry, the Philippines represents a new origin, a new profile, and unique characteristics. We've only been working at farm level for four years, and each year, we are amazed by what we learn and uncover.

In this issue, we're exploring Manila—its beauty and its boundless creative energy. In the last few years, we think that coffee has played a significant role in the city's reawakening. What can you say about this?

Since Kalsada Coffee opened four years ago, we noticed that more specialty cafes are setting up shop in Manila. These cafes cater to more curious consumers that want to understand the nuances in flavors, as well as learn more about where their product is made and how it's valued across the supply chain. We hope more and more consumers continue to stay curious, ask questions, and drink more local coffee!

Before we end this interview, we're curious: What is a typical week like for the founder of Kalsada Coffee?

There isn't one! Last month, I had one of my busiest weeks. I was a panelist for a workshop on MSMEs held at Asian Institute of Management. After that, I boarded an overnight bus to Baguio to spend a night at our community partner's farm in Benguet. Then, we did a coffee crawl in La Union, after which I had to go back to Manila immediately. ●



The Kalsada team, **Top:** Quality beans ready for coffee lovers
Visit the Kalsada HQ at 413 Escolta St, Binondo, Manila.
For orders and updates, visit kalsada.com, and follow them on Facebook and Instagram [@kalsadacoffee](https://www.instagram.com/kalsadacoffee).



VOX

Beauty within the Beast

Ruminating on the matter of
beauty in the context of Manila

WORDS *Jay Asiddao* PHOTOGRAPHY *Bash Carlos*

“It took him one hundred working sessions for a still life, one hundred-fifty sittings for a portrait. What we call his work was, for him, an attempt, an approach to painting.”

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty on Paul Cezanne

There used to be a time when people complimented how beautiful Manila is; her sunsets, her churches and her architecture. After all, Manila was named, among other things, Rome of the East, Queen of the Pacific, and more famously, the Pearl of the Orient. She was once seen as one of the greatest works of the Spanish empire in the East.

Today though, whenever I find myself in a conversation about Manila my compliments about her are sometimes met with knotted foreheads or doubtful retorts. Every time I mention the Manila Cathedral, I’m met with the ironies surrounding Quiapo Church. Every wonderful compliment about the famous sunset is countered by the trash of Manila Bay. It seems Manila has lost some of its luster more recently, and if you ask around, it appears it is losing more of it with each passing day.

Suffice to say that Manila’s beauty is being put into question.

Manila now, is torn between two polarizing opinions, but at its core, the debate is a question of beauty. Can we still really appreciate the beauty of Manila? (Or whatever of its beauty is left.)

If so, how?

These are only some of the questions asked regarding the matter. However, this wasn’t the first time the beauty of an object was put into question. It is often said that the harshest critic of an artwork is its own artist. This was never truer in the case of post impressionist painter Paul Cezanne. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s essay “Cezanne’s doubt” chronicles the struggle of the artist. This was especially true with Mont-Sainte Victoire, a subject he painted countless times, in as many mediums in his paintings.

Cezanne could be credited with fathering the impressionist movement in art, but not because he set out to do so, quite contrary. Unlike his predecessors he wanted to capture more than the mere visual. He wanted to capture more than this. He wanted to capture the exact moment of the lived experience. He captured the moment that inspired him, and his subject gave him something different each and every time. His frustration stemmed from the limitations of his art form. For Cezanne, his paintings failed to capture the beauty he saw as it revealed itself.

Fickle as it was, to be fair, he did set a high bar.

His problem was containing what cannot be contained in a limited medium. How can color express the emotion of the moment? Or add tension to the vision of a subject? His problem wasn’t of technique; it was of substance. While others lamented over the color, shape and form of the beings (or

the things) in their work, Cezanne labored over being in his work. He wanted to capture the phenomena as it happened, attempting to express everything it made him see, smell, hear, even feel.

Merleau-Ponty saw how Cezanne’s problem shifted from the aesthetic to the existential. Cezanne’s doubted his work because he was no longer concerned with his work’s visual, but rather, he was concerned with what his work meant.

This was unique for an artist of his time.

Finding meaning is a central theme in Existentialism, a field of philosophy where Merleau-Ponty was heavily invested in. Philosophy prior to Existentialism believed in the idea of an essence, or a property that made a thing what it is. It is toward this essence that a being (or existing thing) drives toward. Existentialism shifted from this idea proposing that our essence is what we make of it. “Existence precedes essence” as the famous quote goes from one of the most famous existentialists John Paul Sartre. Our existence allows us to build meaning, to find our essence.

However, finding meaning in art is always a difficult endeavor. This is a struggle that both Merleau-Ponty and artists like Cezanne is painfully aware of. Art will always attempt to express beauty in its entirety. Beauty merely inspires, speaks or appears to the artist, and he translates it into something that allows an audience to experience it the best way they can. The artist makes his artwork speak not only to himself but also to the audience, and back. It is a continual exchange, and for Merleau-Ponty this is as it should be:

“It is not enough for a painter like Cezanne, an artist, or a philosopher, to create and express an idea; they must also awaken the experiences which will make their idea take root in the consciousness of others. If a work is successful, it has the strange power of being self-teaching.”

I have gone on for almost 700 words about beauty, which begs the question: “What does this have to do with Manila?”

My dear Manileños, Manila is our work of art, perhaps this is also why we are her harshest critics. She speaks to us as we move about within her borders, in her sunsets, her architecture, and her people. She hopes to inspire us with whatever beauty she has in store, in the hopes that we express it in a form that inspires others within her. Whatever beauty she offers, take it, create something from it, and share it.

Manila might not be the Pearl of the Orient it once was, but we are her artists, and as Manileños, she is our magnum opus. We doubt her beauty, but probably because we cannot fully capture it. However, the only thing we can do to is follow Cezanne’s example. As the artists of Manila, we must bring out her beauty because her beauty truly dies if we stop expressing it. Manila’s beauty may not always be evident, but it is everywhere, especially in you, the artist. ●



Islands



Rivers and Lakes



Steep Slopes



Faults, Trenches
and Volcanoes



Earthquakes



Cyclone Paths



Population Densities



Brightest Cities and
Towns at Night



Road Networks

VOX



For The Citizen Who Still Cares, This is a Map of Cities and Towns in The Philippines

Geographer *David Garcia* on mapping out possibilities for inclusive growth and development beyond the reaches of the city

WORDS AND MAPS *David Garcia*

Map data sources: Islands, Steep Slopes: ASTER GDEM, NASA and METI; Earthquakes: USGS; Population Density: CIESIN 2015; Roads: Open Street Map; Rivers and Lakes: UN-SPIDER; Faults, Trenches and Volcanoes: PHIVOLCS; Cyclone Paths: NOAA; Brightest Cities and Towns: NASA
Original ideas and methods: Making the population density map: from Dr. James Cheshire, spatial.ly; Ryan Brideau, whackdata.com

We care about our city. We dwell in its communities. We use the city all the time. And we spend a huge part of our lives building the metropolis through our hard work every day. Hence, we want the promises of “sustainable”, “inclusive”, “green”, “smart”, “resilient”, “safe” cities and communities to be realized. But why are our urban commons closing, deteriorating and disappearing?

We need a map. And it needs to answer important questions. Where are we now? Where should we go? How do we get there? Why are we still here? So, what? And that map—a representation of the urban reality that we ought to transform—is comprised of space, knowledge and power.

Where are we now?

Public spaces are being fragmented. Spatial data is being ignored. Human rights are being denied. Whether it is about poverty, blight, disaster, traffic or crime, the arrangements of space, knowledge and power in the metropolis are systematically, institutionally and practically annihilating our urban commons. At present, the quality of our urban commons is limiting what we can achieve individually and collectively. This issue is not only about Manila but also about the major urban centers in the archipelago.

Where should we go?

Imagine public spaces where commuters and strangers can encounter each other without hassle. Imagine that pedestrians and public transport are first. In that place, we do not have to shout that cities are for people and not just for cars.

Imagine good map data about how our metropolis works in a usable portal or app. Imagine the digital city, and the sources and recipes for making the digital geographic information, at your fingertips and in your village center. In that place, we do not have to plead for free, open and accessible geospatial data.

Imagine the day when we have not only the right to access space but also the right to produce space. The right to be alive in the first place. Imagine that we do not have to remind our leaders and law enforcers about that. In that place, there is no mourning because the extrajudicial killings are a barbarous thing of the past.

We need to restore our urban commons—public spaces, spatial data and human rights.

How do we get there? And why are we still here?

We need to go from merely reacting to the problem; to reframing and transforming our shared urban reality. But our usual responses are harming us.

The first thing we must change is how we react to our shared urban problems. Urban life in Philippine cities has become very difficult throughout the generations. So we would rather be relentlessly pessimistic, be overly optimistic or just stay pragmatic. When we are relentlessly pessimistic, we say: “*Pinoy kasi—ganyan talaga.*” But this changes nothing. When we are overly optimistic, we say that the Filipino spirit is resilient. That is symbolic, but it is empty. When we stay pragmatic, we just resign ourselves to saying that “I will just work hard”. But hard work is not enough. Millions of Filipinos have worked hard and are working hard. Yet the urban commons are still closing and deteriorating.

Instead, we must look at the situational, institutional and systemic dimensions of what is happening (space), what the limits are of our thinking (knowledge) and who benefits from very solution we think of (power). We must reframe our thinking about our urban problems.

Look around. Shortcuts are being pursued, even using “modern” and “democratic” means in response to the uncomfortable levels of uncertainty around us. Instead of centralizing public spaces, most our landowners and developers are privatizing them. Instead of making spatial data open and usable, our government agencies are controlling the flow and use of precious geospatial information. Instead of expanding, enhancing and enriching human rights, the governments then and now continue to discipline, punish, and eradicate anyone who is deemed as a threat.

“Look around. Shortcuts are being pursued, even using “modern” and “democratic” means in response to the uncomfortable levels of uncertainty around us.”

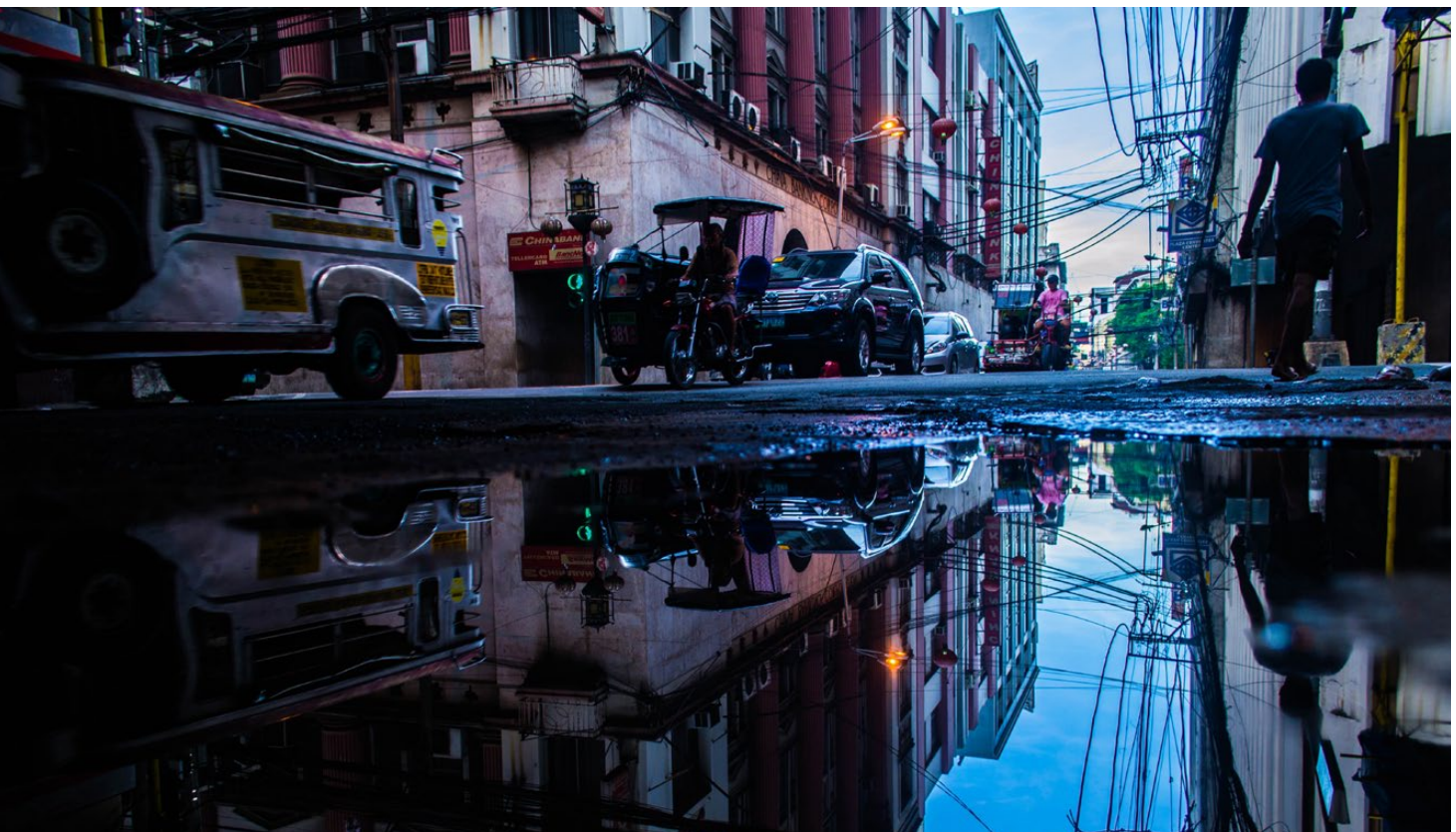
The trends are troubling. They happen not just because of natural causes but because of wrong leadership and commitments. In the face of complexity, our society's leaders and followers still prefer bureaucratic and militaristic approaches. Here are major historical and geographical examples of such approaches, and they make up a meme:

When the issue is poverty, the usual response is to relocate slums. The relocation is usually to far-flung areas where there is a huge lack of water, power, transport and jobs. The (un)intended consequence of this is that the people's socioeconomic vulnerability is increased. Then, people return to high-risk locations in the city center that are closer to opportunities. In contrast, the unpopular alternative is to address why people are escaping landlessness and conflict in the countryside.

When the issue is blight, the usual response is new private development, and to relocate more slums. In these popular projects in the city, people are evicted, and houses and heritage sites are demolished. After the new development is gentrification, which is another wave of

displacement as older residents and businesses cannot cope with the rising rents. In contrast, the unpopular alternative is to promote mixed-use and mixed-income development at the scales of the district, neighborhood, block and building.

When the issue is disaster, the usual response is hazard avoidance or impact reduction, and to relocate more slums. The centerpiece here is the blanket no-build zone, extensive seawall and flood control project. This happened in Tacloban. But going against the flow of water and merely speeding it up may intensify other hazards, such as erosion. Also, there are no completely safe places in the Philippines—there are only places of varying risks. Hence, quickly relocating people, usually slum families, to other waterless, powerless and jobless areas merely exposes them, especially children, to other hazards, and increases their socioeconomic vulnerability. In contrast, unpopular alternative is to work with nature and people through mix of natural buffers and hard infrastructure; performing a managed retreat from high-risk areas; preparing for usual evacuations; and by testing intra-urban relocation projects.





Rivers and coasts, roads and streets, popular places, and public parks of Metro Manila

Metro Manila and the rest of urbanizing cities and towns in the archipelago will grow relentlessly over the next decades. What will urban life in the Philippines be like? And what will happen to the urban commons—public spaces, common geospatial data, and human rights? How will such map look like? We can make that by opening, restoring and enlarging our urban commons.

We can start from this map, which was made using OpenStreetMap, a crowdsourcing project that makes and shares free spatial data of the world (openstreetmap.org).

When the issue is conflict, the usual response is to increase the militarization of both the urban space and the planning process. In Marawi, this happened through the proposal of more military facilities and the tight control of the planning and development process. Such command-and-control approach will create consequences because the disenfranchisement of the citizens affected by war may be used by the proponents of radical religious agenda. In contrast, citizens continue to ask for a more meaningful and participatory consultation.

When the issue is traffic congestion, the usual response is to build more roads and widen them. There are the pundits who preach more “self-discipline”. There are frequent calls for a new megacity, too. But no amount of extensive road construction and self-discipline in the world can systematically solve the problem if the city is built and dependent on the automobile. Making a new megacity will not prevent Metro Manila, as well as the urban centers in the rest of the country, from growing nevertheless in the foreseeable future. In contrast, a mix of a better network of walkable spaces, public transport, congestion pricing, and other measures for inclusive mobility should be preferred as the metropolis densifies and extends.

When the issue is crime, the usual response is to spot and kill suspects, especially those from the families in the slums. This wastes precious lives, increases socioeconomic vulnerability, and deepens the culture of impunity and violence that we have experienced since colonial times. The unpopular alternative is to rehabilitate offenders and address the root causes of poverty.

Such urban culture of privatize-control-discipline-punish-eradicate is the meme of our urban generation. It is our popular behavior when we fear uncertainty, hate ambiguity and become tired of precarity. In such milieu, the problems are always misunderstood; solutions are mismatched and more problems are created; and unpopular but reasonable alternatives are abandoned.

With such culture, our society is creating a map of our urban age where our urban commons continue to disappear. It is becoming a prison-panopticon-penal type urbanism. In that map, the arrangement of space, knowledge and power makes sure that the forms, values and rules of urban development benefit only the few.

So, what?

These maps show a troubled place. But if we are to have a better urban future, then we must stay in that map and transform it.

We have a fair chance to enlarge our urban commons. The strategy is to retrace, redefine and redistribute space, knowledge and power. The tactic is to recognize, empathize and organize. Those simultaneous streams are being pursued by individuals and groups in the urban parts of the archipelago today. It is already happening.

Recognize. Using systems theory, communities that practice data science are trying to grasp the complex systems of our cities. Such communities use tools like data mining, machine learning and spatial analysis to address complex problems such as disaster risk or transport networks.

Empathize. Using socio-technical approaches, communities that perform design thinking are trying to enhance the user experience of both the digital and material parts of the city. Such communities use interaction design or urban design to address issues, such as blight, in creative ways.

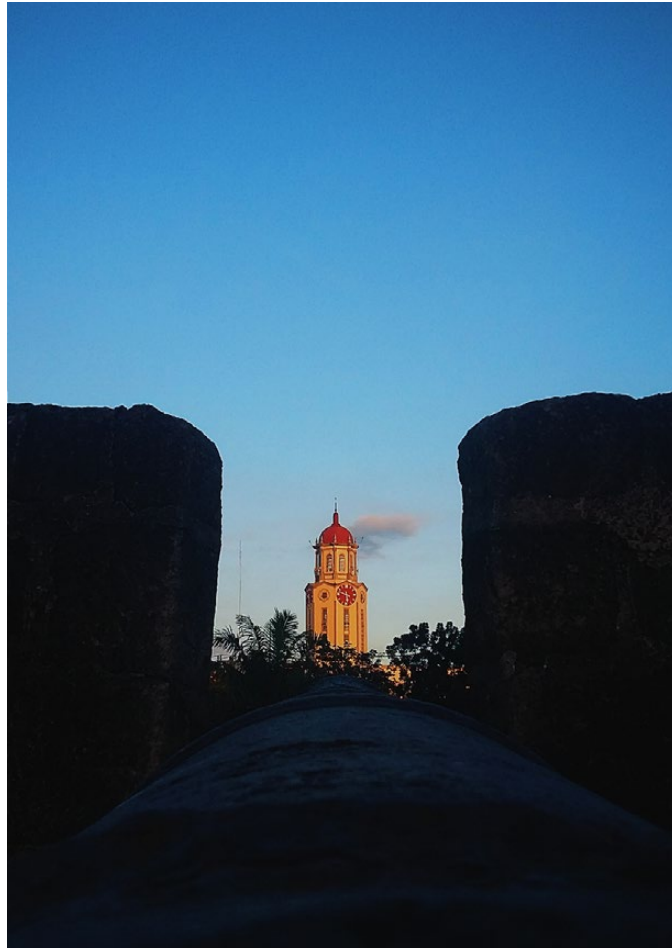
Organize. Using participatory advocacies, communities that promote deliberative democracy are trying to deepen social justice by revealing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. Such communities use protests, crowdsourcing, social media and counter-mapping to highlight the horrible fact that whether it is about poverty, blight, disaster, conflict, traffic, or crime, it is the families in poverty who pay the price, sometimes with their lives.

Those streams about recognizing, empathizing and organizing are merging now. Through collaborating, the boundaries between those communities are dissolving to challenge and replace the privatize-control-discipline-punish-eradicate meme of urban life in the Philippines. Such urban transformation will require you and your friends to be weave ways of engaging the city. And you do not have to do it on your own.

“Another world is not only possible; she is on her way.” - Arundhati Roy

Imagine that world where the urban commons—public spaces, spatial data, human rights—are opened, restored and enlarged. We must realize that map of that urban world in our lifetime. ●

More of Mapmaker David Garcia's maps, which can be downloaded for free, at mapmakerdavid.com. He is asking for your support through Patreon (patreon.com/mapmakerdavid). You can contact and follow “mapmakerdavid” through Gmail, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.



LOCATION *Intramuros, City of Manila*

Parting Shot

A VISUAL ENDNOTE

By **Jairuz Florentin**

I caught this view of the Manila City Hall clock tower from the walls of Intramuros, during the scorching summer season. The colors caught my eye, especially the way the warmth of the sunset complemented the cool sky.

See beauty from Jairuz' eyes by following him on Instagram [@jairuz_the_virus](https://www.instagram.com/jairuz_the_virus).

