Kanto

CREATIVE CORNERS / Nº IV, VOL III

The Art of Craft

THE CRAFT ISSUE

ANGLES
Riding sustainably with *Bambike* and going against the grain with *Foresso*

COMPASS
Bellerby Globemakers on making worlds spin and *Ponchos Rojas'* handwoven crusade

TUNE
The illustrious *Vettori Family* balances tradition and innovation in violin making

I've always been more comfortable expressing myself artistically with my hands.

The advent of technological advances in artistic expression—with the availability of newfangled tablets, 3D printers and apps—have introduced new, faster and more efficient ways by which to unleash one's creative urges. But I've somewhat stayed resolutely traditional, especially when it comes to illustration.

There is absolutely nothing wrong about embracing new mediums for expression, but something about the visceral, sensory quality of creating with one's hand—the woody scent of pencils, the textured surfaces of paper, the lack of an "undo" button—makes drawing a live-in-the-moment type of activity for me.

I guess it isn't a surprise that, eventually finding myself in the realm of print publication professionally, I've become a staunch champion of the print medium while also acknowledging today's digital-led realities. All these observations made Kanto the journal it presently is: a balance of print-inspired design and editorial direction in an accessible digital package.

This issue is a celebration of going back to the basics, creating with one's hands; of the sensorial experiences, the myriad processes and the spontaneous moments that shape today's handmade creations. It pays homage to the tried and tested techniques, to tradition, and how these age-old practices have held true and how they've been innovated on by today's crop of talented creatives.

We also forged a special collaboration for this issue with Lamana, the exclusive Philippine distributor of Ishinomaki Lab, the world's first DIY furniture brand. Produced as part of its imminent product launch on April 2019, we realized the issue theme with a photoshoot that celebrates furniture craftsmanship and Japanese ingenuity, set amidst the sumptuous Philippine vernacular spaces of Artelano 11. View the full feature and the accompanying conversations with Lamana proponents Jar and Kay Concengco a few page swipes in.

Mankind has come far with the giant leaps in technology we've enabled; there was never a time where doing things and expressing creativity been more easy and accessible. However, there will arguably always be something comfortable, familiar and relatable to all that is handmade that we yearn for. Hope you enjoy this issue! ●

Patrick
@patrick_kasingsing

On the cover: A day at Bellerby Globemakers
Photographed by Andrew Meredith

Kanto

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Awesome People

WHO MADE THIS ISSUE POSSIBLE

Greg Mayo is a professional photographer who specializes in architecture and interiors, food and product photography. He loves to travel, is an avid collector of vinyl records and a big fan of math rock.

Patricia Herbolario is currently working as a content manager for multiple brands. Pat is looking to adopt a British Scottish Fold with her British partner, Tom. She is still shopping in thrift shops and is committed to her skincare routine. **Handmade creation you're proudest of?** A Lego castle that looks more dope than Elsa's ice castle.

Kara Gonzales has been advocating mental health awareness ever since she was diagnosed with clinical depression and anxiety in 2016. She has been quite successful in managing her condition with the combination of medication, art, yoga, tattooing and occasionally writing for *Kanto.* **Handmade creation you're proudest of?** One of the self-portraits from my exhibit last 2017.

Marcus Alianza is a Makati codemonkey on weekdays who's trying to get back on the wagon called work-life balance by dabbling on things he usually doesn't do, like writing articles and doing all kinds of photography and being the hooman of a half-Siamese, half-bitch hell cat.

Jezzel Wee recently finished her three-year Apprenticeship Program in Tsugaru Kanayama Pottery Aomori, Japan. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Studio Arts major in Painting at the University of the Philippines, College of Fine Arts, Diliman. She is currently interested to learn about the ceramic process and how to maintain sustainability with the said medium.

Black Wing is a small concept brand-workshop which experiments on various aspects of the shoe making industry. From reviving the custom made mid-range pricing to experimenting with handcrafted shoe construction methods, we strive to discover and recover the art of shoe making with the spirit of discovery and passion to find new ways in adapting shoe-making to our conditions here in Marikina.

Jemimah Dumawal is currently the creative lead at Bridge Southeast Asia. She specialized in studio arts back in college but does graphic design and photography by profession and passion. She is fond of nice papers, film photography, postcards and food. She is also the founder of Papersteak. **First thing you ever made with your hands:** As a kid and the only girl among my siblings, I used to create paper dolls and scrapbooks with my mother.

Jaime Rapi, Jr. is a photographer who specializes in people watching, trespassing and tumbling off small boats. Also incredible at getting people coffee. He graduated from a prestigious school where he learned to master essential skills, like how to skip class. From time to time he thinks he can write, so just let him be so you won't be bothered. Kind of looks like Jake Cuenca, I guess. **Handmade creation you're proudest of?** Sewing an intricate design using cross-stitch for a table runner. I spent an entire Christmas vacation slaving on that thing.

Elizabeth Ruth Deyro is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet, writer and editor from Laguna. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Rust + Moth, Hypertrophic Literary, Half Mystic, MEG, Wonder Mag* and *The Tempest*, among other places. She is the founder of The Brown Orient and publisher of RECLAIM / RESIST. **Handmade creation you're proudest of?** A zine-styled chapbook of work from my creative nonfiction class. Writing probably sucked, but it was still nice to get to create something like that.

ANGLES

GLOCAL FLAVOR

Lamana partners with Japan's *Ishinomaki Lab* in bringing the gospel of DIY furniture to Philippine shores

INTERVIEW AND ART DIRECTION *Patrick Kasingsing* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Greg Mayo*
STYLING *Patricia Herbolario* **LOCATION** *Artelano 11*

The Lamana product line by Ishinomaki Lab

Opposite page: The AA small, medium and large stools reach peak functionality

Hello! Please introduce yourselves.

Jar Concengco (JC): I am Jar Concengco, and I'm a photographer. My wife, Kay, heads an executive search firm, and we have partnered with Japanese furniture brand Ishinomaki Laboratory to bring their products here in the Philippines through a program called Made in Local. I have always been interested in furniture, interior design and architecture since I frequently photograph these on assignment. Our interest in furniture design was piqued during the process of building our home in 2014.

Where did you first encounter Ishinomaki Lab?

JC: I encountered Ishinomaki Lab while on assignment for Japan Foundation. My friend, Marc Chavez of the foundation, engaged me to shoot a workshop being held at SoFA (School of Fashion & Arts) Design Institute. They helped the creative communities of Brixton and Escolta create communal furniture together. In that same workshop, I was able to work with Keiji to build a bench for myself specifically made for my garden.

Kay Concengco (KC): When Jar showed me what Ishinomaki Lab makes, I was interested right away. I loved the designs. As a person who likes to turn something I believe in into a possible business opportunity, I asked Jar to find out if we can bring the products to Manila. I believe it would have a market here.

What attracted you to their products?

JC: The sheer minimalism of the pieces drew me in. Once you get to feel them, see them in person and try them, you'll know they're well designed. And once you get to know Ishinomaki Lab's story, you'll further appreciate its aesthetic.

Ishinomaki Laboratory was born out of the disastrous tsunami in 2011 as a community effort to rebuild. Ishinomaki is a seaside town about a three-hour Shinkansen ride northeast of Tokyo. It was the worst affected of all other tsunami-hit communities. How they were able to turn an experience so tragic into something so beautiful and useful is so meaningful for me.

Jar and Kay Concengco

A furniture family that works hard, indoors and outdoors

KC: I was immediately drawn to the beautiful, clean lines of the stools, particularly the AA and Ishinomaki stools. Then there is the heartwarming story behind it, how this brand started as an effort of designers and locals to rebuild an area most devastated by the 2011 tsunami.

You are now the proud owners of Ishinomaki Lab's Philippine outpost run under the Made in Local program. Can you tell us a little more about this?

When we inquired on how to bring in Ishinomaki Lab to Manila, we were told of an existing program called Made in Local, whose goal is to explore how existing designs adapt to new environments, as well as encourage collaboration among local designers. They had no partner in the Philippines at the time. Instead of importing, we would be manufacturing the products locally, using materials that are sustainable and accessible to us. This is even better than importing because we get to be a very active part of this amazing and well-respected brand! We found ourselves becoming big Ishinomaki Lab fans. After meeting its founders, and getting to know their design and production processes, we knew that this is a brand we'd like to support.

We think we are at a point where many of us have started to appreciate the Japanese way of living. The simple, uncluttered spaces that the Japanese are known for are becoming popular here. We have so many new Japanese restaurants, too.

The brand works with distinguished designers from all over the world. Keiji Ashizawa, one of the founders and designers of Ishinomaki Lab, is a renowned architect. To have their trust and confidence in our Filipino craftsmen to produce their designs is an honor for us because their names are attached to these designs. By being a part of the Made in Local program, we are now making these designer pieces easily accessible to the Filipino community. The products are made of high quality and sustainable materials for indoor or outdoor use. They are multifunctional, and are great for condos, resorts and hotels, restaurants and even offices. They are easy to envision in any space.

We are offering the market a Japanese designer brand at a good price point as they are locally made. We can even accommodate a buyer's choice of wood so, in a way, every piece can be custom-made.

Can you tell us a bit about the training and production process on the road to the store launch? How hands-on were the Ishinomaki Lab founders?

Chiba-san is one of the two founders of Ishinomaki Lab and is also the workshop leader in Japan. He came over to train our workers. Before he arrived we already made a few pieces, and he gave his input on those. Our craftsmen built prototypes based on drawings from Ishinomaki Lab. Chiba-san was happy with the work of the Filipino craftsmen.

Lamana's furniture range marry Japanese design with Filipino craftsmanship

The Kobo table and Ishinomaki bench ready to welcome dinner guests in the *comedor*

He said the workers are resourceful because at one point, there was a tool they lacked, but they were able figure out a way to still execute the work needed. After the training wrapped up, we received very good feedback from Japan. We also made sure that prior to making the pieces, our workers knew the story of Ishinomaki Lab because we wanted them to feel happy and proud to be making these beautiful furniture. This way every product that comes out of our workshop is an inspired piece – from the designer to the hands that produced it and hopefully, to the one who will acquire it.

The Japanese partners are very supportive, generous and patient. They always accommodate our questions and requests. We are truly fortunate to have met them and to enjoy their trust and confidence.

Are there special processes or materials used that are distinct to the Philippine store? What other factors make the Philippine outpost special?

We are currently making the pieces in two kinds of wood: larch and teak. This is unique to the Philippine workshop because we are the only ones using them at the moment. We chose these two kinds of wood because of their beautiful grain and their durability when situated outdoors.

How much of Ishinomaki Lab's present lineup will be sold in the Philippines?

At the moment we are producing select pieces only, and these are the AA Stool series: AA Stool, Low Stool, High Stool, the Ishinomaki Stool, the Ishinomaki Bench and the Kobo table. These are the key products in the Ishinomaki Lab lineup. In the months to come, we should be able to locally produce other very interesting items such as the Carry Stool.

Where can we find Ishinomaki Lab Philippines' shop? What attracted you to this location?

Our workshop is in Antipolo City. We are sold at Xception in The Biltmore, Makati City. It is a beautiful store that carries unique and well-designed items from all over the world. When we first walked into the store, we knew it would be a perfect home to showcase Ishinomaki Lab pieces. We will hold our formal product launch here on April 24, 2019.

Are there plans to create one-offs or new product lines special to the Philippines with local designers?

Oh, yes! This is a collaboration that we are definitely looking forward to! Stay tuned for that. ●

"We are at a point where many of us have started to appreciate the Japanese way of living. The simple, uncluttered spaces that the Japanese are known for are becoming popular here."

Mark of quality

Keep abreast on more DIY furniture goodness, future workshops and designer collaborations at lamanaph.com and at @lamanaph on Facebook and Instagram.

Old Bones, New Soul

Eric Paras' *Artelano 11* celebrates beauty that gets better with age

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*

Can you tell us about Artelano 11 and its beginnings?

Fourteen years ago, I came into a 15-house compound in Pasay that was being rented out as residences to expats, creatives and businessmen. I saw a vacant house that was numbered a-11.It was love at first sight. The thought of converting the house into a design and lifestyle gallery—inspired by quaint and chic shops I saw on a memorable Paris trip—popped up. When I moved in, I decided to turn it into an atelier, residence and showroom that we now know sa Artelano 11.

Our name is a combination of the house number and the Tarlacqueno word for "skilled worker", *artelano*. I was born and raised in Tarlac, and I used to hear that word from my mother whenever she would hire a carpenter to do improvements in our house.

What encouraged you to repurpose these aging properties into a mixed-use space for furniture, interior design and events?

I have a love affair with the houses. In order to maintain and preserve them, I needed to put up a business. It was also great timing that the "hipster culture" had became popular [when we started]. People were on the lookout for wonderful retail experiences and obscure spaces. I relied on word-of-mouth reviews in promoting the place.

The space is a dream come true for me. When I was in college, I used to visit a friend who lives in a posh Art Deco-style family house along Taft Avenue, which sadly was demolished a few years ago. I had been daydreaming of living in that old house in Pasay.

What about the process of putting together Artelano 11 did you find enjoyable and memorable?

Friends tipped that putting up a furniture and design showroom in an obscure place was not a good idea, that I should have invested somewhere else. But I was very optimistic then with the belief that people will come, as it was in that pivotal scene in the movie *Field of Dreams.*

Eric Paras at Artelano 11

“I am also awed by the timeless designs of objects and the stories behind how they were made. I love things that are not perfect and knowing how they are able to withstand time. It’s my *wabi-sabi* way of looking at things.”

Be it classic pieces or eccentric conversation starters, the house marked a-11 has it all.

How is Artelano 11 reflective of your aesthetic as an interior and furniture designer?

I am fond of different period styles, especially the Art Deco and Bauhaus periods. I also have vivid childhood memories of being curious and fascinated by those mid-century style houses in my hometown of Tarlac.

Being an interior designer, aside from addressing the functional requirements, I also need to tackle different design typologies in coming up with unique solutions for each project.

What do you find beautiful?

My first Paris visit was life-changing. I have become a modernist in love with the old world. I came to a greater appreciation of the classics, culture, historical and heritage values, and realized that the only way to preserve these is to keep them relevant.

I am also awed by the timeless designs of objects and the stories behind how they were made. I love things that are not perfect and knowing how they are able to withstand time. It's my *wabi-sabi* way of looking at things.

Tell us about your process as a designer for both interiors and furniture. Do you depend on an ordered sequence of steps, or do you allow spontaneity to dictate your output?

I'm on my creative high in the mornings, with lots of random thoughts and ideas.

It takes time for me to conceptualize and finalize a design. I do initial sketches. Production and functional requirements are to be considered, too. It's the old school way of producing. After discussing concept sketches with my team, they will produce the necessary drawings that are needed to produce the prototype. Then, we do all the necessary adjustments for the first run of the final product.

Having dabbled in both interiors and furniture design, what design insights have you arrived at concerning the livability of today's homes and the spatial needs of its inhabitants?

People will have to contend with living in compact volumes of dwellings in congested, urban cities. Around 50 cubic meters of space, from the dimensions of an urban dwelling of 7 meters by 3 meters by 2.4 meters height. It is already happening in Manila.

In spite of how compact the living space, the home owner is conscious about how to make it picture-pretty and worthy of being on social media.

We live in a world that is one global village. One's living space can be multicultural in its spatial and design requirements and also the aesthetics.

Many things that people buy now and that you see are products of global consumerism and fast retail. There is always a demand for unique and well-crafted objects.

Was Artelano 11 created with a target audience in mind? If so, how did this shape its eventual form and how it is being run as a mixed use space?

My objective in opening a-11 was to make it like an experiential walk-thru portfolio of my furniture line, design capabilities and branding ideas. We still rely on it a lot, in doing projects for clients and the design community.

The retail component and having a mixed-used space are add-ons to the experience, and they expand the story of the a-11 brand.

People who come and visit are the ones in the know: tastemakers, creatives, designers, architects, travel bugs, cool hunters. We never do straightforward advertising. We had the good luck of being supported by a lot of noted editors, writers and publications.

A Filipino spirit pervades your pieces and spaces without having to resort to tokenism and pastiche. How has the Filipino space of yore evolved? How would you describe Filipino spaces now, and what past interior practices before do you think our spatial design practitioners today should implement more?

Their old world and colonial charm is inherent to the houses. They were gifted with an amazing volume and proportion of the rooms, and integrated by a very smooth efficient original floor plan. Another original feature are the *baldosa* cement floor tiles that were handcrafted with unique patterns and color pigments that never fade.

When we did the interiors, we were very conscious that the feel of the old structure would not be erased or concealed. We even enhanced some imperfections.

More important now is on how we should find ways in making use of old and heritage structures as much as possible. It is a challenge to the architects, builders and owners.

Demolishing an old building for the purpose of greater financial gain is the worst thing one can do. We have a duty to respect and preserve our history, culture and tradition. This is one way we can keep our spaces Filipino. ●

An eclectic wonderland awaits at @artelano11 and artelano11.ph

DESIGN District

Ho Chi Minh City's *District Eight* encapsulates the colorful history of a hardy, resourceful nation with handcrafted furniture

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*

The Assembly collection

Left: Dayton chairs
Below: Distrikt armchair with
Theo wall unit clothing rail with drawer

Hello! Kindly introduce yourself.

Hello! I am Darren Chew, the founder of District Eight - a lifestyle furnishing brand based in Vietnam since 2010. The company has grown into an integrated studio, development team and factory (including wood, metal and upholstery working capacities). We have aimed from the start to elevate the workmanship of the manufacture and to develop collections that can achieve the highest quality standards while maintaining a handcrafted finish.

What brought about your fascinations with industrial design and furniture-making?

I have been mainly inspired by our environment here in HCMC, where I've been living for almost 20 years. Old HCMC is a mix of colonial and modernist architecture which, due to the fast modernization of Ho Chi Minh City, is being replaced with skyscrapers.

Those old buildings—created, furnished and used with purpose and quality—were made to last a lifetime. That is the ethos we like to apply to furniture-making, where we try to work with the best materials available to create products with an old-world quality.

What is the studio's design philosophy? How is this manifested in your product portfolio?

Our design approach stems from the three distinct historical influences in modern Vietnam: the French colonial period, modernist architecture influenced by the time before the war with America, and Saigon's current drive into being a modern city. You can see those influences layering the collection.

What made Vietnam the perfect place to create handmade furniture pieces? How easy or difficult was it to set up shop in Ho Chi Minh City?

I don't think we could have done this anywhere else. HCMC still maintains a massive ecosystem of small enterprises, with hand-work skills lost or not commercially viable elsewhere. Our luck was bringing together the right people who were willing to learn and strive for better quality, leading to the relative success of our products around the world. I think the challenge has been to educate and build the team in a market without the design and quality influence. It is not hard, but it does take time.

Are there any special processes distinct to District Eight employed in the creation of its furniture pieces?

The processes are quite straightforward. We would not say there is a secret ingredient, a hidden step that sets us apart. Everyone is actually welcome to visit our factories. However, we do have a distinct way of caring about each of those steps.

Our process, from design to the last steps of manufacturing, is designed to obtain our signature finish. We make sure that our idea of a product (which is hopefully distinct from others) will be produced wholeheartedly and with high fidelity. There is a human touch at every step of the way.


ANDO

Would you say that there is a difference in the connection and comfort offered by handmade products to factory-manufactured ones?

Of course. The difference is usually in the intention of the maker. When developing a mass-manufactured piece of furniture, the maker will be looking to optimize many parameters, with an economical approach. This means quality and comfort are not the priority, and the results will show. On the other hand, handmade (or what we would call crafted products), are made with a clear intention to put comfort and quality at the top. For that reason, we believe that maintaining a handmade aspect is a luxury, but we also do our best to offer that at a fair price.

Your Instagram feed cites a lot of architectural influences for your pieces. How easy or difficult is it to adapt and pay homage to architecture in furniture design?

The interesting thing with architectural movements is that they are formulaic. It results in quite a scientific approach to furniture design, where we deconstruct the influences that we referenced to, zoning in on materials, shapes and intentions that composed these architectural works. In our point of view, the translation to furniture doesn't need to be literal. What we interpret has to be expressed within the constraints of furniture design. We don't work with the same parameters of usage, but we might aim for a similar impression or experience for the user.

What attracted you to the industrial aesthetic you often employ in your pieces? Would you say that this aesthetic is having a moment right now?

To clarify our industrial stance, it has now come to a point with our collections where industrial is not only an aesthetic but is now a core idea in our creative process. We create with an industrial mind, but other collections might not look that industrial. We believe that the moment for reclaimed, industrial-inspired, rugged spaces has passed, but it has left everyone in the design and interior communities with a distinct desire for quality and substance. We can now see that trend weave itself into contemporary design across the board. There is no genre defined yet for this post-industrial design movement, but we hope to discover and contribute further in the field by creating collections that can be recognized as classics while evolving with the world.

How important is process in the overall narrative of a furniture piece?

One might say that in furniture design and making, the process shows, maybe more than, say, in the fashion industry. The fact that furniture is lived with for a rather long timespan makes the investment and the experience more explicit. What a fashion piece can convey in terms of identity is linked to the short-term and is usually achieved with simple design gestures. In contrast, a furniture piece will have to convey an idea that is interacted with at a slower pace. So the whole process comes into play. Each step of furniture design and making has to make sense and contribute to elevate people's lives in complex ways.

Opposite page: Akron desk chair with Stacking high benches and cabinet
Right: Dragonfly lounge chair

"Each step of furniture design and making has to make sense and contribute to elevate people's lives in complex ways."

What about the similarly named neighborhood attracted you to set up shop there?

Our first workshop, studio and office was based in District 8 of Ho Chi Minh City. The truth is that we have now moved out of the district, but we still carry the spirit. District 8 is by definition a historical industrial neighborhood. While nowadays, most large-scale production are located around the city, in towns like Binh Duong or Dong Nai, the older industries and traditional commerce of Ho Chi Minh City passed through District 8. It is located along the river, allowing for an extra means of transportation, and conveniently, the main national roads also track nearby. To this day, it's still a vibrant district conveniently sprawling on both sides of the river, although it's not a central district.

What steps does your studio take to ensure materials used are sourced sustainably?

From our first collection, which used reclaimed and recycled materials sourced locally from buildings lost in the regeneration of HCMC, we have always strived to use only sustainable products. That is why in our collection, you find a lot of oak from managed forests instead of old growth tropical hardwoods. When buying our products, you will notice our packaging is also designed to minimize plastic and foam.

Aside from furniture-making, what other services and projects does District 8 take on?

We are currently working on developing a space where the District Eight lifestyle can be expressed further, engulfing accessories and home objects.

We also are amazed with the widespread success of our Games collection (Foosball Table, Ping Pong Table, Shuffleboard) among creatives around the world and are dreaming to connect all the people who've played our games through a community.

We're currently trying to reach out with #D8sportingclub as a social media initiative and will encourage future buyers of the games to join the club. Wouldn't it be amazing to have a way to know, wherever you travel, that there is a like-minded space nearby where you can join a game?

What lies in the future of District Eight? Are there plans to set up shop and factories abroad?

Much like Ho Chi Minh City's current dynamic, we are open to collaborations. Setting up shop would be an exciting idea, and we would do so if the right collaboration could materialize.

Our first foray into spaces overseas is our next pop-up showroom, which will be set in Milan's Salone del Mobile. ●

"From our first collection, which used reclaimed and recycled materials sourced locally from buildings lost in the regeneration of Ho Chi Minh City, we have always strived to use only sustainable products."

More on District Eight's furniture pursuits at districteight.com, and at @districteight on Instagram. Visit their office-showroom and factory at E4/52, 1A Highway, Binh Tri Dong B Ward, Binh Tan District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Clockwise, from top: Foosball table with Compass desk and Akron desk chair in the background; The Salk desk with Dayton low stool; The Distrikt collection with Theo Tractor counter stool

Opposite page:
The Charcoal Mono, composed of British walnut in a black binder, from Foresso's London Collection

Against The Grain

Foresso takes a stand for style and sustainability with recycled timber terrazzo

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*

Opposite page: Conor Taylor, Foresso creator, flanked by the Bianco Mono from the London Collection

Hello! Kindly introduce yourself.

My name is Conor Taylor. Over the past few years, I have developed Foresso (the timber terrazzo) that we now manufacture in the UK using recycled materials.

What pulled you in into the world of industrial design?

I actually have a background in fine arts but as I was working in varied workshops, I started to fall in love with manufacturing. To me, it's like a puzzle waiting to be figured out. I'm also a bit of a perfectionist, so it was great to be designing the process for a material that is so random in its aesthetic. I could relax and focus on how to better make it. Foresso has exploded in demand, and it's a natural step to scale up into a much larger set-up for it. And I wanted to be part of a company that could follow a policy of ethics and constant improvement.

What spurred the development of Foresso? Was there a singular eureka moment that made you realize the potential of a product made from recycled waste materials?

I had been working for a carpenter on a variety of high-end projects. These kind of projects often have a very disposable culture about them, where the expectation is that it will all be torn out and replaced in a year or two. While I was processing all this beautiful British hardwood and high-end veneers, I got to thinking that there must be a use for the offcuts and planing waste rather than just disposing of it all.

It then struck me that I hadn't seen a timber terrazzo before, and so I started experimenting. Right from the start I had some goals in mind. I wanted to use only offcuts and waste; it needed to be practical and great looking, and my ethical stance needed to be taken through the entire process, and now through our business. For me sustainability is not just about recycling; it's also about knowledge of your materials' provenance, longevity and quality of workmanship. Finding a way to combine all these elements was one of the big challenges during the initial development.

How is the creation process for Foresso different from other aggregate tile materials, like stone tile terrazzo?

We've adapted machinery and processes from both woodworking and stone terrazzo, and although it is similar in some ways, our in-house processes involve a lot of techniques from different industries. For instance, we modified a machine that is for processing animal feed to produce our end-grain wood chips.

The major difference between the two is that most stone terrazzo is cast in huge blocks and then cut down to size, while we hand-cast each sheet individually, allowing a much greater freedom to designers to specify what they want as well giving a greater attention to detail to ensure high standards.

“I hope that by encouraging people to get emotionally and intellectually invested with their materials, we can help make better choices in architecture and design.”

What would you say are perceived advantages and plusses of handmade products as compared to manufactured ones?

Each handmade object will have little differences, even if they are the same piece, and it is this individuality and connection to the person who made it that is the biggest advantage for a handmade product. Handmade also tends to imply smaller batches, which means that it is easier to make better choices about sustainability and ethical responsibility as changing the supply chains and processes of very large manufacturing industries is extremely difficult.

What are some of your inspirations when it comes to blending various materials in a tile? What informs the mix and the hues that result from such a blend?

Some of my early inspiration actually came from cooking. I'm a keen home cook and baker. The order of combining ingredients or how they are mixed informed some of my early tests, whether it was mixing wet into dry, how workable the mix was, or how to get things to bind well. The standard collection I designed was inspired by parts of London that are familiar to me and tell a story of the city. By doing this, I hoped to show people that they could use a material that could tell their story and of their project. For instance, our colorway Bianco Mono, which is London Plane timber in a white binder, was inspired by West London's Holland Park neighborhood.

After the first tests, it was trial and error across hundreds (if not *thousands*) of samples to find the right consistency, how to get the binder to stick well to the timber and how to use more waste wood in the mix. Scaling up to sheet sizes was the biggest challenge, as there are always unexpected challenges when you change the scale of any kind of production. The color of the binder was the easiest part, as there is a well-established supply chain for the kind of pigments we use, allowing us to change the look of the sheets as we want.

How has the market reacted to Foresso?

From the start I had a clear “brand” in mind, although really it is a reflection of how we approach manufacturing and of our thinking in general. I want to be honest about the day-to-day difficulties of trying to be a sustainable manufacturer while still offering something beautiful and adaptable that can be used to tell the story of a project. In recent years, there has been a huge shift towards sustainability in design, so the reaction to Foresso has been extremely positive.

I hope that by encouraging people to get emotionally and intellectually invested with their materials, we can help make better choices in architecture and design.

We've seen your suggested uses for Foresso, but were there other applications by clients that surprised you?

Miter-joined skirting that matches the Foresso floor has been one of my favorite uses; it had this brilliantly modern yet classic look about it and was a really smart way to use every last bit of the sheets.

There seems to be a growing movement towards handmade objects and artisanal products. Why do you think this is so?

I think it's as simple as people wanting to feel a connection to others, and although computers have allowed mass manufacture to get even bigger and more homogeneous, it has also allowed the resurgence of craft and small companies who can now find their audience and survive without being tied to one tiny physical location. Handmade products are one of the few things that you can find this with, and it is nice to feel that you are also supporting a small business rather than a gigantic corporation.

Did you have any realizations or insights since creating Foresso that made a mark on you as a creative?

It's okay to go against the accepted way of doing things and that we can stand our ground without having to bend to what people think the market wants. It’s been amazing to find an audience that responds positively to this. At the moment, I'm just loving seeing it grow, knowing how far we've come, and that by continuing to make better choices each day, we can achieve a lot more.

Hanover Street Foresso table application

Foresso off-cuts **Top:** A Foresso floor in London Plane for a terrace house

Do you allow client customization of the materials and hues used in a Foresso tile?

Adapting Foresso is something that can help tell the story of a project, whether through custom binder colors or custom timber. The only catch is that we will only source off-cuts of British timber. Some of our clients ask us to source timber from specific locations or come to us with a reference we then work to.

Where do you source your raw materials for Foresso?

We source as much of our materials locally as we can. Our timber is all from Britain, a lot of it coming from London, and the rest from within 100 miles of us. We are very strict about our materials policies and source everything as responsibly as possible, whether by choosing formaldehyde-free, FSC plywood or by working to eliminate single-use plastics within the workshop.

Your ethical stance in the creation of materials that are sustainable and environmentally-friendly is admirable. You arrived at a turning point where you and your partner Jake Solomon decided to cut production of resin panels. What prompted this business decision, and what challenges did you encounter after this move?

When I first approached Jake, I had thought Foresso was fairly ready to go, but together we have developed it significantly. The more we worked on it and talked to people about it, the more we realized the potential in sustainable manufacturing and that we could do it the way that we wanted to. Both of us had long wanted to take an ethical stance and engage with sustainability, and it felt like the time was right for it. After we announced our shift away from resin panels for ethical and ecological reasons, we had mixed reactions. Some people were overjoyed to hear that we were taking a stand, and some didn't think that it was a good idea because they liked the resin panels. In the end, the change has had a hugely motivating effect on us and it's been wonderful to get such a good response.

Moving and then setting up our new production facility has been a massive undertaking, but we are getting settled in now and have been building an excellent production team who are really engaging with what we are trying to do. For us, it's been all about constantly improving and constantly trying to make better choices in everything we do.

Where do you intend to take Foresso next? Any new sustainable materials in the pipeline to look forward to?

We are currently in production at our new facility and are scaling up to meet demand, but we have still have long term goals for Foresso as a material to reach our ethical goals. We are aiming to make it 100% recycled and are currently working with some exciting institutions that specialize in sustainable materials and are helping us make this a reality. ●

"It's okay to go against the accepted way of doing things and that we can stand our ground without having to bend to what people think the market wants. It's been amazing to find an audience that responds positively to this."

Go against the grain with Foresso at foresso.co.uk and on Instagram at @_foresso.

Lifecycle

Bambike founder Bryan McLelland with cyclists crom the EcoTours Sunset Tour in Intramuros, Manila

Bambike goes beyond trendy environmentalism for sustainability that uplifts lives, while offering a healthier and cleaner way to get around

INTERVIEW *Danielle Austria* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Bambike*

The svelte bamboo-framed Victoria 2.0 touring bicycle

Can you take us through the beginnings of Bambike and where it is today?

Megan Calbalcar and Joshua Gan: Bambike's focus for its first few years was to provide a sustainable livelihood program to the Bambuilders through bamboo bikes (Bambikes).

Come 2014, Bryan (McClelland, founder) started a bike tour in Intramuros called Bambike Ecotours. Bambike Ecotours was mostly for potential clients to be able to try out the Bambikes. Now, in 2019, Bambike Ecotours is a significant component of Bambike's business model. The success of the ecotours doesn't only maintain the demand for bikes for our Bambuilders' livelihood program, but it also allows Bambike to employ individuals from diverse backgrounds to complete the Manila team.

Aside from obvious environmental benefits, what makes bamboo a better material than steel or carbon fiber for building bike frames?

Each Bambike is handcrafted by our Bambuilders from our partner Gawad Kalinga community in Victoria, Tarlac. As the process isn't industrialized and no two bamboo poles are alike, each piece is truly one-of-a-kind.

While Bambikes are a piece of handcraft, they are also functional and sturdy. Bamboo has natural vibration dampening capabilities that allows for a smoother ride.

What was the community like in Victoria, Tarlac before Bambike came? How has Bambike impacted the community for the better?

Most Bambuilders were farmers or *pedicab* drivers. They didn't hold regular jobs and had no stable source of income. Because of the livelihood program of Bambike, they now have steady income. Today, the Bambuilders are even able to send their kids to college.

A great example of Bambike's impact to the community is the success of Lander, more commonly known as Luis. He was a Bambuilder who is now a college graduate. He's currently working with the Manila team as the shop assistant manager.

What are your most best-selling frames?

The Luntian 2.0 is the best selling Bambike frame. The Luntian 2.0 can be built up as an all-terrain bike for those who prefer off-road adventures, as well as a touring bike for those who need two-wheels for more leisurely biking in the city. It boasts of our double top tube bamboo innovation.

It's safe to say that sustainability is at the heart of everything Bambike does. However, the irony of the sustainability movement is that it's now become a trend and, by design, most trends are unsustainable. How can both businesses and individuals navigate sustainability in a way that it becomes more than just a fad?

Overconsumption is one of sustainability's most common undoing, which tends to happen with trends. Bambike does not promote overconsumption; instead, we promote responsible production and resource use that will be beneficial for the environment and the people as a whole.

The best selling Luntian 2.0 Bambike frame. **Bottom:** A ride down Intramuros' cobblestone paths with Bambike Ecotours

At Bambike, we make sure we are—and that we remain—sustainable by lessening our environmental impact from material sourcing to our products' end of life.

We replace the need for resource-intensive hardwood with bamboo. Bamboo is a grass; it grows easily with little resource input! Our production is also small-scale, with as little waste generated as possible. Bamboo cuttings that can't be used on our bamboo bikes are used for bike stands, flyer stands and more!

Making sustainability a norm, and not just a fading fad, is a tough, multifaceted challenge. Two of the solutions Bambike is currently working on are to be cost-competitive and to constantly improve processes to be more efficient.

What's in the near future for Bambike?

Bambike would like to venture into bamboo agroforestry, whole bamboo pole processing, and engineered bamboo production and construction. We're also looking into producing new Bambike models to suit more needs, widespread Bambike Ecotours and more projects that engage communities to deliver a diverse portfolio of bamboo products. ●

Get on the Bambike revolution by visiting bambike.com, or following them on Facebook and Instagram @bambike.

The Night Tour reveals Intramuros after dark
Top: Bambike's Intramuros Experience include visits to some of the old city's most important attractions, like historic Fort Santiago

"Bambike does not promote overconsumption; instead, we promote responsible production and resource use that will be beneficial for the environment and the people as a whole."

Ferdinand and Fredy with Bryan McClelland of Bambike

Bambuilders

Ferdinand Fernandez and *Fredy Yusi* on how Bambike has changed their lives for the better

How did you find yourself working with Bambike?

Ferdinand Fernandez (FF): Nagsimula akong magtrabaho sa Bambike noong pinatawag kami ni Sir Bryan McClelland para mag-*training* sa San Jose, western Tarlac City. Natutunan ko dito ang bawat proseso para makabuo ng kawayang *bike*.

Fredy Yusi (FY): Nagsimula akong gumawa sa Bambike nang makitaan ako ng potensyal sa paggawa ng kawayan ni Sir Bryan.

What's the most important thing one should remember when working with bamboo?

FF: Dapat ang isang kawayan ay nasa tamang gulang. Ito ay maibabad sa gamot na pangontra sa mga naninirang insekto.

FY: Ang pinakaimportanteng kailangan kapag gamit ang kawayan ay ang tamang laki, gulang, pagpapatuyo at pag-protekta laban sa mga peste.

What is the biggest challenge you face in building bikes, especially when it comes to building new designs?

FF: Ang pinakamahirap sa paggawa ng *bike* ay ang pagkuha ng tamang sukat at dapat nasa tamang proseso ang paggawa ng *bike* upang magawa ito ng maganda. Hindi puwede ang "puwede na".

FY: Ang pinakamahirap sa paggawa ng *bike* ay pagputol ng mga kawayan sa puno; matinik at mahirap ito hilahin. Kapag nag-*set* lahat ng detalye, dapat alam mo ang sukat.

Can you recall the first time you finished building a Bambike? How did you feel, and what did you learn (about yourself and the trade)?

FF: Masaya ako nang unang beses na ako ay makagawa ng Bambike. Natutunan ko sa sarili ko na kailangan magtiyaga ako sa ginagawa ko. Ang pagbuo ng isang Bambike ay hindi basta-basta dahil sa mga dapat sundin at isaalang-alang upang lumabas na maganda ang paggawa ng isang Bambike.

FY: October 2009 'yung una akong nakagawa ng *bike* na kawayan. Nagulat ako na puwede pala ang kawayan sa *bike.* Nakatulong sa aking sarili sa pang-araw-araw na pinansyal [ang paggawa ng *bikes*]. Ang Bambike, nakakatulong din sa kalikasan dahil ang kawayan, madaling dumami. ●

Kampong Glam I, 2015

Silent Cities

Film photographer *Tham Jing Wen* distills today's cities into urban vignettes that speak of the passage of time and spatial conformity amidst diversity

INTERVIEW *Jaime Rapi, Jr. and Patrick Kasingsing*

Kampong Glam II, 2015

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

I'm Jing Wen from Singapore. I've been shooting since 2010, and I have a strong interest in urban landscapes.

How did you find yourself in the realm of photography, and eventually large and medium-format film?

I first started taking photos innocuously as a way to document my travels, and this developed into a deeper interest in photography. Naturally, this led to becoming more serious about it and going beyond just taking photos for fun; thus seeking to improve myself and learn more about the masters of photography. My first point of inspiration was Ansel Adams. I immersed myself into his well-known trilogy of the Camera, the Negative and the Print. Through those books, I learned about large and medium-format film photography, so I decided to give them a try and never looked back since.

In this day and age wherein digital photography has become more and more technologically convenient, why did you choose to work with large and medium-format film?

As cliché as it sounds, shooting with large and medium-format film really does slow you down and make you focus on one shot at a time. The look is another factor; the organic nature of film grain does render the urban scenes in a less sterile manner than how digital captures it. This, coupled with the wider tonality of large and medium-format film, renders the scene subtly but definitely different from digital cameras. It's one of those things you can't quite put your finger on, but you just know it when you see it.

Does shooting with mostly mechanical equipment hinder your workflow? Or does it allow you to become more creative and focused?

I feel that mechanical and analog equipment do allow one to be more creative and focused. Especially with large-format cameras, they strip away any distractions relating to configuring the camera as they are simply a "light-tight" box where you don't need to think about activating the high-speed shutter or setting the HDR mode, or adjusting the focus area, etc. It allows me to really focus more on the scene, to decide if it is really worth shooting or not.

How long does it take for you to shoot one frame, especially when using large-format film? How many sheets of film do you spend on a subject before you move on?

I would say it takes me about 10 minutes of analyzing a potential scene before I finally decide if it's worth setting up the tripod and large format camera. From there, I roughly know what needs to be in the shot, but I'll spend maybe another 10 minutes or so to focus, compose and ensure that the desired elements are within the frame. This might take longer if movements are needed, especially when using tilt and swing.

Telok Blangah I, 2015 **Opposite page:** Bukit Merah, 2015

Do you process your own films or send them to a lab? If you send them to lab, how do you ensure that they will get the look that you want?

I send my film to a local lab called the Analog Film Lab. They're actually run by a group of large and medium film enthusiasts who so loved the processes behind film development that they set up their own darkroom and film lab. Because they're film photographers like me, I can work closely with them to get the look and quality that I want because they understand it as well.

Which film do you use?

I mainly use Fujifilm Provia 100 for the majority of my color works, although I have used Velvia 50 occasionally in the past as well. There's something about the vibrancy and punch of color reversal film that I just prefer over color negatives, and among the various brands for color reversal, Fujifilm gives me a cooler palette than Kodak which works better for the environments that I shoot.

What would you say is the overall message you'd like to convey in your depictions of the urban environment on film? Would it have worked if taken digitally?

The overall message I'd like to convey is that the seemingly random complexity of the features and structures in urban environments can sometimes give rise to unintended arrangements of spatial conformity. And yes, I believe it would have also worked if it was taken digitally, as film or digital simply affects the look, which is just an aesthetic layer over the message and intent.

What observations have made a mark on you about the urban environment we now live in, about how our cities are planned and run?

As cities grow and renew, different sets of urban planners design different sections of the city in their own time frame. As I move through them to shoot, it almost feels like moving through time as well. The age of the environment is laid bare to us if we just learn to look for it.

What other photographic subjects and mediums are you keen to explore?

I'd like to explore more intimate or abstract views of the urban environment, given that I've been shooting it very environmentally. Also, I think someday I'd go back to digital for some projects as well, because it opens up different avenues of shooting that you can't do with large and medium-format film. ●

More of Tham Jing Wen's urban vignettes at thamjingwen.com

CANVAS

Making The Cut

Consistency is crucial for *Ryan Villamael*, who turns an everyday medium into extraordinary worlds

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*

10°81°75°, 2019, stainless steel, dimension variable,
A Paradise Lost, Silverlens Galleries, Philippines, 2019

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

I am Ryan Villamael, 31 years old. I am a visual artist.

How did you find yourself in the art world? What convinced you that this is what you want to pursue in life?

I don't think I ever had a choice. Since I was a kid, this was what I wanted to do. When I got into the Philippine High School for the Arts, it felt like I was already on that path. I had to be away from my mom and live in Makiling (in Los Baños, Laguna) to study at the school, but she always assured me that the sacrifice would be worth it.

You are known for your paper artworks. How did you discover this craft and what attracted you to it?

I started working with paper not out of desire but out of necessity. After college, I was working as an assistant for different artists and, on the side, trying to figure out my own practice. I wanted to paint and I wanted to sculpt, but I couldn't afford to work with those mediums. I ended up with paper because it was what I could afford. I realized I could say what I wanted to say and do what I wanted to do with a very simple material. I think we all have a very personal relationship with paper as a material. We played with it as kids, we write on it, we shape it. I realized I didn't have to paint or sculpt; paper could be expressive. I've stuck with it since then because the material keeps revealing different possibilities.

In the last few months though, I've been experimenting with different materials—metal, mirrors, even sand—and we'll see where that goes. For now, I'm having fun playing. It's serious play.

Behold A City, paper, dimension variable
Art Fair Philippines, 2019
Opposite page: Artist with *Locus Amoenus*, paper (replica maps), dimension variable

Can you tell us a little bit about your process? What issues or themes do you usually draw your inspiration from?

I grew up fascinated with history: both our national history and our own personal narratives. Our country's history is a big inspiration for my work. I did a show called 'Behold A City' that was my way of paying tribute to old, lost Manila.

"It's also essential to listen to the people you trust, people who are familiar with your process. Be open to their criticisms about your work and your ideas."

10°81°75°, 2019, stainless steel, dimension variable, *A Paradise Lost*, Silverlens Galleries, Philippines, 2019

On the other hand, my personal history informs my process. My mother is a scientist, so my interest in nature, specimens and the scientific method comes from that. You could say the intricacy of my handiwork is my way of aping my mother's preciseness in the laboratory. Meanwhile, my father is an overseas contract worker. He left home when I was young and growing up, looking at maps was my way of connecting with him, of tracing the paths he might have traveled, trying to see the places he may be living in.

Have you imagined yourself venturing out into other mediums beyond paper?

Yes. For 'A Paradise Lost', my solo show in Silverlens Galleries last January (2019), I worked with metal and sand. For 'Behold A City', for Art Fair Philippines, I worked with cut metal mirrors and light.

Now I'm starting to experiment with different material. I think there's still a lot to do with paper—I'd like to really exhaust the material, if that's even possible, because I really enjoy working with it—but it's fun to play and experiment every so often. I don't see myself married to just one medium.

You work with paper, a versatile medium but with a perceived weakness in constitution and longevity. Do you feel a sort of attachment or bond with your works in that you fear its destruction? Or are you an artist that quickly moves on from a statement made, and on to the next one?

I guess, the process of making evolves along with the ideas. I think I focus more on consistency, the process of making and the ideas rather than the final result of the work. I try to stay true to intention rather than getting fixated on the result I want to achieve. Of course they have to work in equilibrium – the tangible work and the idea. Materials and technique become tools to execute the idea.

For example, the original 'Behold A City' in Silverlens a few years ago actually got burned in a fire. But the intention of the work is intact.

For the second question, maybe not so much quickly moving on from the statement made in the work but more of not being afraid to jump into another idea to create new work. Consistency is key. It's always going to be a continuing work as the process evolves.

I am fascinated by your recent piece for Art Fair Philippines 2019 ('Behold A City') that delves on architectural heritage and urban existence. What has this project revealed to you about how we (as a race and generation) perceive, live in and build spaces?

It's a sad truth, but I guess we have that mentality as a nation of not thinking of long-term solutions, or maybe

Behold A City, paper, dimension variable, Art Fair Philippines, 2019 **Below:** *Home: Hoya,* blueprint, 24.21 h x 15.75 w in., 2019

we've become accustomed or forced to think that way. Everything has tenure. I read this article that said we are so protective of our "personal spaces" but only until the perimeter of our own houses. The moment we step outside of it, our perspective instantly changes. We don't care about and respect our public spaces or common spaces, whether it's part of a built heritage or not.

It's repeatedly said that us Filipinos have lost our national identity. It's such an abstract notion for us.

Your works have been shown around the world. Despite the diverse set of viewers exposed to your works, what unified responses or views regarding your art and its message have surfaced? How has this shaped how you create your art?

It's hard for me to say if there is a unified response about my work. I think you just have to focus and set your intention when working in the studio. It's also essential to listen to the people you trust, people who are familiar with your process. Be open to their criticisms about your work and your ideas. But at the end of the day, when you get back to the studio, none of it matters if you don't do anything. ●

I read somewhere that it takes a person 10 years to master something.

This implies that in our lifetime, it is possible for us to master at least three to five things, whether it be in the academic field, through practical experience or in the arts.

On my 30th birthday, I decided that I wanted to master something other than my profession of retail design. I decided to learn how to tattoo.

I had long been on the receiving end of a tattoo gun but have always wanted to be on the other end of it. I always loved telling stories, and I was excited at the prospect of doing so in an altogether new medium, in this age-old craft of permanently inking symbols onto the skin.

Three years and many stories later, I am continuously learning and very much enjoying the art of tattooing. I still have a long way to go and still quite far from mastering this craft, but I was very fortunate to have learned from an extremely talented mentor, Katz Lorenzana, and to have technology expose me to many great tattoo artists who inspire me to become better and to keep learning this amazing craft.

One of the artists who I actually have in my tattoo bucket list to meet and get inked by is Mo Ganji - an Iranian-born, Berlin-based artist known for his single-line tattoo designs. In this interview, Mo shares his inspirations, processes and thoughts on his chosen craft of tattooing.

CANVAS

A Fine Line

Tattoo artist *Mo Ganji* draws from nature and the energy in all things, in designing beautiful single-line tattoos

INTERVIEW AND FOREWORD *Kariza Gonzales*

What got you into tattooing? What sparked your interest in developing this craft?

About six years ago, I was looking into tattoos because I wanted to get one myself. I was fascinated by this form of art. I have been painting and drawing my entire life, but tattooing—drawing with a needle that leaves a permanent mark—was completely different [to me]. Besides that, my life at the time was screaming for change and a new beginning from working in the retail industry for almost a decade.

I was talking so much about tattoos that my friends bought me a tattoo machine on my 31st birthday. That kind of pushed me to just start doing this. It was the beginning of an unbelievable journey.

Today, five years later, it's like the biggest gift from the universe because I feel that everything is finally in place. Ironically, I still don't have a tattoo myself, but I do enjoy the time and the freedom that this profession provides me.

Please tell us more about your single-line tattoo style. How did you develop this, and what got you into doing just this particular style of tattoos?

We live in a world that is suffering from the constant need for more. Developing this style was more or less a part of a bigger process that involves the development of my own character and my own beliefs. One of my deepest beliefs is that simple does it. I don't need much for a fulfilling life.

The single-line style is a perfect reflection of that and of the way I live. It's clear and easy to understand regardless of age, gender or heritage. Simplicity can also be so complex that it blows your mind, but it's definitely not for everyone.

Mo Ganji

Your work is very minimalist, yet it also has a really strong, bold look and approach. Apart from the single-line style, the themes mostly center on animals, human faces and other organic forms. Is there a reason for sticking mainly to these themes? Where else do you draw inspiration from?

Nature is the most fascinating thing and is the best artist that I know. Nothing is as beautiful as nature. I find all my inspiration there, and you can clearly see this in my work.

The humans from a thousand years ago probably felt the same way when they first started to paint on cave walls. When you look at my images, you can see animals, humans, nature. One and the same line, just in different shapes.

I do believe that everything in this world is energy – one and the same energy. Some people call it *prana* or *chi*, some say nature, life or God. Anyways, I do believe that the only thing that is separating us from each other and the world and the energy around us are our egos.

The art and practice of tattooing has been around for centuries. As a tattoo artist myself, it has been amazing to see how the art has evolved and how new technologies and developments have impacted the way tattooing is done and even how it is viewed in general. It has gone from a traditional and sacred practice to something taboo in popular culture to now an art form that is more widely accepted and available to almost everyone. How do you think these modern changes have impacted the art and practice of tattooing? Has it affected you personally? How so?

To me, the act of tattooing somehow is still very sacred, and I feel like I have the responsibility and privilege to make sure that my clients get to experience a more spiritual setting, even now that you can get tattoos on the beach.

You are changing someone visually for the rest of his or her life. I feel like this requires a peaceful setting where everybody can relax completely and enjoy the entire process without any disruption.

Some of the studios I see on the Internet today remind me of nightclubs. Many people, flashlights, laughter, loud music. It's not an environment that I would feel comfortable working in or getting tattooed in myself. But this is only my personal view on this – as an insecure, introverted person. Whatever floats your boat.

Technology has made so many parts of the entire tattooing process easier – from drawing up the designs digitally all the way to the more advanced tattoo machines that are in the market today.

What are your thoughts on these developments? Have they helped you in your own process, or are you more inclined towards the more manual and traditional approach?

"Simple does it. I don't need much for a fulfilling life. The single-line style is a perfect reflection of that and of the way I live. Simplicity can also be so complex that it blows your mind."

If I have to choose between pen and paper, a typewriter and a computer, I would always go for the fastest and most accurate option to write something up. The most important thing is that I know how to write and read :)

Technology nowadays is great because it makes the entire tattooing process a lot easier, and it saves you lots of time, from first sketch to the aftercare of the tattoo. Regardless of the technological aspect, if you are a good craftsman, you can still tattoo someone with a fishbone as long as you understand the whole process.

What is your process in designing a tattoo for a client? Please tell us more about this.

Every client gets to explain his or her story and requirements for the tattoo, plus two reference pictures. The rest is up to me. I do ask for 100% freedom and explain beforehand that I'm not changing any of my finished designs.

It means that if you don't like the design I'm sending you a week before the appointment, I give the appointment to someone on the waiting list. It is totally fine with me if people don't like the stuff that I come up with. All I'm asking for is that they respect my view as an artist and the fact that a finished painting should not be overpainted once finished.

Your work is celebrated and recognized the world over. And yet, you provide free designs for everyone to use through your website and Instagram. Why do you do this? Why is this important for you?

How do you measure success nowadays? In my case, as a visual artist, it is through the people who appreciate my work – liking it, sharing it. I would not have been "successful" at all without the massive support that all these people show me every day.

I feel like giving something back to everyone, especially to the ones who can't afford to travel all the way to Germany [for a tattoo]. This is the least that I can do to show my appreciation for their support. Grow and give, regardless of what you do. It is somehow a form of healing.

What is one thing you would like people to know or understand more about your craft? Why?

That there is something magical about the whole process of tattooing. It's something that is hard to explain because it's something you have to experience to understand.

The best part about my craft is definitely the people. It is an absolute privilege to get to know so many different individuals from all over the world. For that reason alone, I consider myself one of the richest persons I know.

Do you have a piece of advice for those who are also taking up or learning about the craft of tattooing?

This craft, like any other art form, is very individualistic. I can give you a brush, a canvas and some paint, and show you exactly what to do but like painting, tattooing is something that you have to feel as you are doing it. It is a very personal journey. Enjoy every second of it. ●

Mo Ganji's one liners await on Instagram @moganji

Indie zine publishers *Megan Flores* and *Gantala Press* speaks of the importance of community in art-making

INTERVIEW *Elizabeth Ruth Deyro*

CANVAS

Going Behind the Zines

From the more structured comics to the loose, experimental pieces of art and poetry, zines have always been rooted on political matters. In the Philippines, we have witnessed its rise to fame through art expos such as Better Living Through Xeroxography (BLTX), first organized by renowned poet Conchitina Cruz and artist Adam David in 2010. Such events paved the way for local collectives to start their own series of art gatherings for sellers and enthusiasts alike. Today, art fairs are everywhere, thanks to indie presses such as Gantala Press and Magpies Press. Newer bookstores have also begun to specialize in showcasing zines to a larger audience, with Kwago and Studio Soup Zine Library taking the lead.

We chatted with two women artists respected in the field of indie publishing about zines and what they think of indie publishing in relation to the dying (is it really?) art of mainstream publishing.

"A personal act of shedding"

Megan Flores's involvement in independent publishing began when she joined Pantas UPLB, an undergraduate writing organization in the University of the Philippines Los Baños. She later became a member of The Cabinet, a group of individual artists and writers also based in Laguna. Megan noted how members of both groups were always encouraged toward the experimental and alternative in terms of form and production. "Because of that, I think self-publishing was always an eventual, logical step."

Her first try at producing and publishing a zine was "a sort of exercise" for herself, "which came at an apt time because I was struggling with writing, and then it helped me ease back into it". Her inaugural zine tackled the concept of omission, and she likes to think of it like "a personal act of shedding".

Megan has only been involved in a few but notably successful collaborative projects, most recently with fellow The Cabinet member and literature professor Christian Tablazon. Megan describes the process of collaborating for zines as involving a lot of dialogue and self-editing. "I like collaborations as you get to be hands-on in creating something that feels much bigger because you're not doing it alone. It's always interesting to see how a project will turn out with your combined efforts."

Megan adds: "Being part of a collective has definitely informed what I produce and how I read as well. Most of us who are active in The Cabinet also came from Pantas, wherein we would workshop texts heavily, so I know we all work with a similar critical voice by default. I definitely also think that our works influence each other. I suppose it can be a little harder to find or keep your own voice in a collaborative setting, especially if you have similar styles. But in the collective's case, for example, there's freedom for us to explore our work on our own."

Members of The Cabinet at Gandang-Ganda Sa Sariling Gawa, an all-women art fair organized by Gantala Press, held at the Cultural Center for the Philippines, March 2018

Megan personally enjoys the aspect of creating by herself and calls it "empowering". She explains, "Everything is straightforward and immediate—essentially, it is as simple as making something and putting it out. It really gives us full creative control which allows us to stay true to the work we want to make. Mainstream publishing doesn't afford us the same."

While she acknowledges how "zines in general have [recently] been improving in terms of quality", she still thinks that "what I've been doing so far through self-publishing would be possible through mainstream publishing companies. It's also really important to note that this has always been the point, to subvert the existing practices and conditions."

"Genuinely collaborative"

The feminist-oriented, indie publishing group Gantala Press was founded by Faye Cura in 2015. Today, the press is comprised of women artists, editors, and writers who volunteers their time and efforts into publishing books and holding activities that tackle important subjects such as violence against women, state repression of activists and farmers, food production and land reform, war and internal displacement, lesbian invisibility, migrant work, and workers' rights. Most of their recent works have focused on engaging with communities that "do not have the means nor the inclination (because they never thought it was an option) to write their own stories and have their stories heard." The collective explains, "We believe that everyone has a story to tell and that sharing this story is a valuable contribution to the collective action of speaking out, of claiming better living and working conditions, of demanding for justice accountability, etc."

They are currently in collaboration with the Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women, and have previously worked with the NAMASUFA union workers on strike and KASAMA-LR, a group fighting for genuine land reform in Cavite. Through these community writing projects, where they immerse in communities to conduct workshops and collate literary outputs directly from community members, they hope "to document the lives of ordinary Filipina women in their own words" and "encourage more women to speak out against everyday forms of oppression and violence". They add: "We hope that these texts would serve as a valuable resource for students, so that the scholarship on women, land, and history would grow and more Filipinos would have access to local knowledge and wisdom which will inform our collective pursuit for a better life."

Gantala Press is more interested in publishing "genuinely collaborative, truly collectively written work rather than individually authored". She explains, "The more writers there are, the more issues are discussed, or the more perspectives are offered if there is only one issue at hand."

"[Independent publishing] has helped me recognize that if you're involved in any kind of art, you can't remain in a vacuum, and that art-making is senseless without community."

Members of Gantala Press taking part in a demonstration against TRAIN Law.

In what ways did independent publishing aid in your artistic growth?

Megan Flores (MF): It introduced me to the ever-growing independent publishing community. It has helped me recognize that if you're involved in any kind of art, you can't remain in a vacuum, and that art-making is senseless without community. Because of this, I'm always challenged to look outside the self, in terms of what I produce.

Gantala Press (GP): I (Faye Cura) write poetry, and since with my work in Gantala I had met peasant women who also write poetry, I have become increasingly skeptical of my work which, although written in Tagalog, is still so far from the reality that surrounds most Filipinos. I wish I had read more poetry in the vernacular, poetry written by ordinary nameless people, when I was a student of Creative Writing. I am challenged to produce poetry that is meaningful, that fellow poets like Ka Tess and Ka Miriam, who are farmers, would be pleased to read; poetry that would move them in the same way that I was moved when reading their poems.

I think I can speak for the others when I say that our work in Gantala has truly widened our perspective of the world because that world has also grown and widened, that our own "artistic growth" is not anymore as much of a concern as it was when we were younger and thought that the world revolved around us and our "art". What is important for us now is to enable as many women as possible to contribute to memory-making and history-setting through writing and publishing.

What would you say is the downside to it?

MF: I think that the only downside to small press is that, while you welcome its growth, it also becomes easier to forget that it's an alternative movement. But with more zine, and more discussion and critique, I think it will be more faithful to its roots.

GP: The lack of funds and a regular production staff can get really frustrating and tiring. It means a small print run of books and a nonexistent marketing infrastructure, which also means that only a minuscule part of our population can access our works. It also makes it challenging for us to keep the price of our books low and affordable.

What does independent publishing offer that cannot be provided by mainstream publishing?

MF: At the end of the day, mainstream publishing is a business that relies on a market. It's always going to be geared toward making profit. Small press gives writers and artists the space to make the work they want to make. In that sense, independent publishing is inclusive because there's no one way to do it. In fact, it's an exciting thing to see the different ways zines have been evolving these last few years. It's even a little harder to describe to people now, because there's no way to strictly define a zine. Anything can be a zine, and anyone can make a zine.

GP: As an independent press, we can afford to engage with and publish "political" issues, especially current issues. This is because we can move faster than commercial publishers—all we need is a word processor. Some small presses are even more old-school and just have their handwritten zines photocopied. We are realistic enough to know that we cannot compete with commercial publishers (and we do not, in fact, and we never will) in terms of having a streamlined production process, their volume of publications, their selling capacity, their big-name authors, etc. But by not making our books available in large commercial spaces like National Bookstore (not that we can afford it), by having to sell the books ourselves, we are able to cultivate a relationship with our readers and followers. We are also forced to find more creative ways of making and selling our books, and so we get to meet more people and project partners in the process.

Last month, Visprint, Inc. officially announced that they will be closing the company in 2021 and will stop publishing new material beginning this year. While this is not the first indicator of developments in the state of local mainstream publishing, it certainly was a major index which opened several discussions concerning its implications on contemporary Philippine literature per se. What are your own thoughts on this matter? What do you think does the current state of local mainstream publishing say about Philippine contemporary literature?

MF: It's disheartening to hear about print publishers folding up. With Visprint, it was particularly sad because they're responsible for putting so many alternative works in the mainstream, and because they already had a substantial following. I think it's definitely telling of the landscape in general. There are even fewer good options in the mainstream available to a contemporary reader, with publishers like Visprint closing shop. The lack of market is a huge factor, but I really don't believe that Filipinos aren't reading anymore. With a lot of content migrating to the Internet, I think we're just reading from alternative sources.

GP: Local mainstream publishing is actually alive and well. It is still prolific, very healthily producing both books by bourgeoise writers or academics and the more popular, "low-brow" varieties.

“There’s no way to strictly define a zine. Anything can be a zine, and anyone can make a zine.”

Local mainstream publishers are also quick to capitalize on new authors, which is great for the authors if that's what they want. It's great too for the readers who can afford to buy their books. In short, mainstream publishers still reach their target audiences, it seems. On literature: we know that mainstream publishers have the capacity (and interest) to help establish Philippine literary canons, which in the long run are what prove to be profitable. Thus, contemporary Philippine literature that is published by mainstream publishers remains to be in a great position indeed.

Alternatively, there is significant progress in the underground movement that is independent publishing. Do you think that this rise in interest on independent publishing among younger creators affect the industry of mainstream publishing? If so, in what ways?

MF: Independent publishing is almost a direct criticism of mainstream publishing, so I definitely think that there is an effect. For one, it democratizes the craft of art-making and writing, ensuring that it belongs to established writers and rookies alike. More events and gatherings among the community have been keeping it alive. I think it has also been reviving interest in tangible, print-based work (albeit produced digitally). I believe that there’s been growing interest in general toward literature and art, but especially for younger generations, there’s less faith in mainstream institutions. I think that eventually creators will veer toward their own platforms for publishing their work, whether through print or digital. I think that alternative publishing is still on the rise.

GP: The interest in independent publishing only strengthens mainstream publishing, which always grabs the opportunity to co-opt what is new and interesting and transform it into capital. Mainstream publishing is helped in this task by institutions like universities and cultural institutions, seducing independent creators with funding, awards, recognition and validation, promotion, etc. ‘Gandang-Ganda Sa Sariling Gawa 2’, Gantala Press’s own all-women art fair, itself is co-presented by the Cultural Center of the Philippines; our "compromise" is that the event is free to both sellers and visitors. And the Silangan Hall is really a large, safe, comfortable space for women creators and readers to meet. Likewise, we would like to think that holding an all-women small press fair at the CCP is a way for women to reclaim and assert their position in the shaping and defining of art and culture, even if only metaphorically.

What projects do you have lined up that we can we look forward to? How can we support you and your collective?

MF: I would like to try making comics soon. I’m also looking forward to working on more collaborations. You can support The Cabinet (as well as several other local collectives and individual artists) by keeping the community alive: go to events, buy from the artists, tell your friends about it. Make your own zines, collaborate with people, keep creating.

GP: We are publishing the collected poems of the feminist-activist Aida F. Santos, to make her work accessible to this generation of young women. Aside from the briefer for the Cavite farmers, we are also working on a Manual on Activism for young readers. We are co-publishing a series of manifestos on motherhood with Alam-am, another independent publisher. And we are closely working with Amihan in collecting the literature of peasant women all over the country.

Follow the works and advocacies of Gantala Press on Facebook and Instagram @gantalapress.
Find The Cabinet on Facebook @technologiesoftheself.

CREATIVE CORNER Nº 6

Jezzel Wee

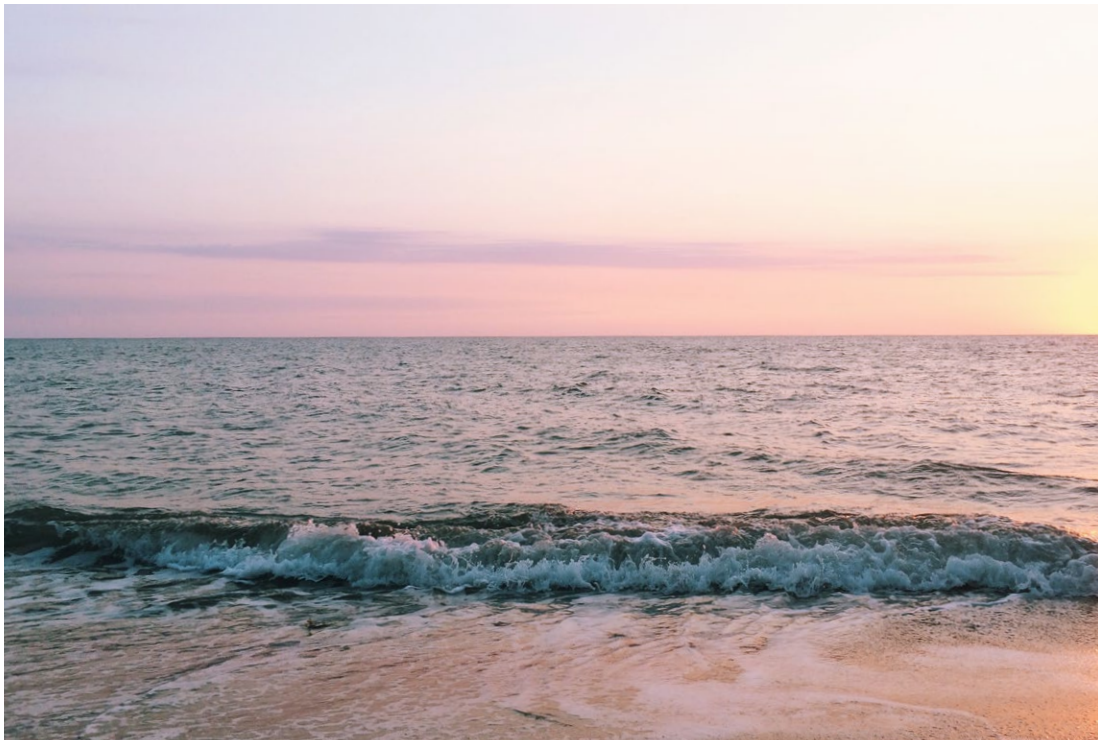
Located right behind our house, my creative corner is very compact. Even though the space is small, it's very comfortable. I cannot say it is ideal, but I am making do on what I have as I am still saving up for my own studio. Here, I have my potter's wheel (kick wheel), wedging table/hand building table, ceramic books, oxides for glazes, buckets of clay and my pottery tools. Oh! I recently acquired a second hand slab roller! (I'm so excited to try it out, but I have to look for a space for it first.) ●

See Jezzel take the wheel at @jezzel.wee. Listen to her six-hour work playlist on Spotify.


THREAD
SWEET DREAMS

The women of *Locano* keep the legacy of abel Iloko warm in their hearts and urge the Ilocano youth to do the same

INTERVIEW *Danielle Austria*



Clockwise from top: The dreamy shores of Ilocos entrance at sunset; This is what a dream feels like. The *abel* is soft to touch and beautiful to look at; Thread count: The *plecos* (edging) is made by combining individual threads together.

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! I'm Cesca (*ses-ka*). Most of my friends call me Chem (*ch* as in *ch*imes), so that's also me. :) I'm a daughter, a lover, a maker, a seller and, most of all, I am the mother of Locano. I am also a co-host of Ladies, Wine & Design Manila – a conversation series inspired by Jessica Walsh for ladies of all gender experiences. It aims to foster female creativity through conversations about creativity, business and life.

I like to ideate and do a lot of things, but I mostly run and take photos of everything that fascinates me in and out of the city.

Tell us the story of Locano. How did it start?

Locano is about love for things beautifully made, love for discovery and grounding, and love in relationships, especially that of mothers and daughters.

My mom is from Vigan, Ilocos Sur, but I grew up in Manila. When we were kids, we would only visit Vigan during holidays of obligation, like Holy Week, family reunions and funerals. As I grew older, I visited Vigan less and less. I became a stranger to the city.

During a visit in January of 2015, we met with my mom's friend. She owned a weaving house in town, where they made all kinds of *abel* (Ilocano for "weave"): rugs, kitchen towels, table runners and blankets. Curious, I tried out the loom and ran my hands through every piece of fabric in that place. It felt magical. I was lost in stacks of *abel*. I wondered why I never noticed this before. It was right under my nose!

I left with some blankets and a couple of rugs. At first, I didn't know what to do with them, but I felt an excitement to start something – to tell others about it. The frustration and burnout from working a full-time job at a bank kept me motivated. I knew I had to start with a name, and in August, while talking to a friend, "Locano" presented itself. I am Ilocano and also a bit of a *loca-loca*. Locano Weave went live on October 11, 2015. We turn four this 2019.

Locano's story began after Cesca Torrente found herself lost in a stack of *abel* at a family friend's house in Vigan.

Who are your weavers, and who makes up Locano?

Locano is more like a family activity. Everyone is involved and willing to help.

Our first partner was Timothy, my mom's childhood friend who runs a souvenir shop in Vigan. We then met my aunt's classmate, Wilma, who has been weaving *inabel* (Ilocano for "woven") for 40 years. She lives in Santa, the town before Vigan. We also partner with Tita and PhilMarie from Bangar, La Union. My brothers help with tech. I occasionally ask help from my friends to model the blankets for me.

Some of our readers may not know this, but weaving is a long-standing craft and tradition of the Ilocos region. What makes a weave undeniably Ilocano?

You can tell a lot about the *abel* by the pattern it has and how it's made. The pattern will tell you where it was weaved.

As a brand, how does Locano reflect the culture and traditions of Ilocos?

By creating love stories and taking part in new chapters in life, passing on the craft as an heritance, exemplifying hard work, sparking conversations and connections. Whenever I would talk about Locano to my friends or strangers at bazaars, they would always relish the references to the *abel* with a close relative, their stay in Vigan or the person they got it from. Locano creates a feeling of nostalgia for someone or something.

From leather-crafting to woodwork, there has been a growing preference for handmade among young Filipinos, whether as hobbyists, as consumers or as entrepreneurs. What do you think is driving this?

There has been a raised awareness and consciousness on giving equal opportunity to locally made products and services. Young Filipinos are also beginning to recognize the sustainability of small, independent businesses. We believe in small but good work.

For the young who dabbles, how can they pitch in to keep the craft sustainable for everyone, especially the local communities where the craft originates and where materials are sourced?

The Department of Trade and Industry can work with local government units to revive workshops for the youth, so they can learn the crafts of their parents and grandparents. We must keep the the youth engaged. Show them the loop and how this industry, and the creative industry in general, has huge potential to sustain and realize one's lifestyle aspirations.

What are your thoughts on indigenous/ traditional crafts being adapted by mainstream brands? When is it appreciation, and when is it appropriation?

Culture is our fingerprint. It's what we are made of, and is key to appreciating the present and creating the future.

In Ilocos, *inabel* blankets are passed on as heirlooms, lasting as long as antique furniture.

“Locano is about love for things beautifully made, love for discovery and grounding, and love in relationships.”

Building a culture of sustainability and appreciation of handcraft doesn't happen overnight, or through trends—it has to be worked on everyday. The responsibility lies on each one of us to work with communities, write about them, use the *abel* and share them with others.

There must be accountability, respect and transparency. You must honor the culture. Just because it's beautiful and deemed cultural doesn't mean it should be used. Do your part in conducting research and utilizing context, and that's what will help you distinguish appreciation from appropriation. The fine line between appreciation and appropriation is in the way that the craft is used, how it is marketed and what goes back to the artisans/community.

What's next for Locano?

Locano is a work in progress. We will find more stories to tell. It will probably go through the same chapters and phases in life that I will go through. It's exciting and uncertain but all worthwhile.

I hope to discover and share more designs and functionalities of the *abel*, and how it can be assimilated in a modern way of life. I want to continue to tread the path to sustainability. There really is an opportunity to sustain the art of weaving and I think it's about time we use technology as a strategic partner in building a new blueprint for the future generations to use.

My big audacious goal for Locano is for everyone to relate to it in their own way. I hope to hear people say, "'*Yan ba yung nasa* Vigan? *Meron din kami sa bahay, pang-regalo ko 'yan, lagi kong gamit 'yan.*"

I want Locano to continue to create feelings and memories. ●

"Kailangan may papalit sa amin. Ayaw ng kabataan na gawin ito kasi mahirap. Kailangan nila ma-*experience* kung gaano kahirap mag habi. Sa kabataan, pag-aralan ninyo ang abel. Kaya kayo nakapag-aral dahil sa negosyo ng abel.

See more of Locano's sweet weaves at locano.ph and on Instagram @locano.ph. Follow Cesca's work on ladieswinedesign.com/manila.

Dreamweavers

Cesca shares the stories of the women of Locano, *Tita Dacio Nogueras,* 63, and *Wilma Baldos,* 62

How did you get into weaving?

Tita Dacio Nogueras (TDN): Natuto ako maghabi nung ako ay 13 *years old*. Lagi ako nakatingin sa nanay ko habang naghahabi; tapos pag tumatayo siya, ako yung umuupo sa habi-an at doon ako natuto. Noong ako ay dalaga na, tumira ako sa bahay ng *auntie* ko sa Coloma kasama ng nanay at *stepfather* ko. Ni isang kusing, wala akong nakuha [sa kanila] para makapag-aral kaya't naghahabi ako maghapon, para kapag sumuweldo ako ng Sabado, may baon ako *next week.* Mahirap pero sa awa ng Diyos, nakatapos ako ng *high school.* Dumating sa *college*, mahirap pa 'rin ang buhay.

Nung matapos ako, naisip ko na hindi ako aasenso sa pagtuturo kaya nag-*apply* ako *abroad* bilang *domestic helper.* Sa Kuwait, nakilala ko si lakay (Ilocano for "husband"). Dalawang taon kami doon bago umuwi at nagpakasal. Tapos bumalik siya, ako naiwan sa *family house*. Habang nasa *abroad* siya, nag-negosyo ako. Nagbebenta ng *duster* at payong, at naghabi sa Coloma at De Castro, nagbebenta ng *merienda.*

May nag-*offer* sa akin ng lupa na ito, binili namin. Nag-simula ako sa isang habi-an na malaki. Naging dalawa, dumami pa. May kasabihan ang matatanda, "Ang ibinababa ng iba, siyang inaangat ng Diyos."

Wilma Baldos (WB): Ako ay 25 *years old* noong natuto mag-habi. May asawa na ako noon. 'Yung dalawang apakan lang ang alam ko gamitin. *After two to three years*, kaya ko na 'yung limang apakan. Tinuruan ako ng nanay ko. Wala akong trabaho noon kaya naisipan kong mag-habi.

Marami kami naghahabi dati; 40 na *households.* Ngayong 2019, apat na lang kami kasi mahal ang puhunan. Tumigil nang 2007 dahil wala na bumibili. Yung mga naghahabi, empleyado na sa iba. Wala na marunong maghabi maliban sa aming apat.

How do we keep the tradition alive?

TDN: Kailangan may papalit sa amin. Ayaw ng mga kabataan na gawin ito kasi mahirap. Eh mas mahirap tumambay sa kanto. Kailangan nila ma-experience kung gaano kahirap mag habi. Sa kabataan, pag-aralan ninyo ang *abel.* Kaya kayo nakapag-aral dahil sa negosyo ng *abel.*


STRIDE
POETRY
IN
MOTION

LE FLOW Paris adds a touch of class and spontaneity to an increasingly competitive market with paint-injected, one-of-every-kind kicks

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

I am Lionel Le Floch, the founder of footwear brand LE FLOW Paris. I was born in Marseille, the south of France, but I now call Paris home.

Tell us a little bit about how you found yourself in the realm of footwear design. What made you fall in love with it?
I've always been attracted to footwear, especially sneakers. I would say I was born right at the beginning of the foundation of sneaker culture.

What also really got me started being into footwear was my love for basketball, a sport obviously linked with sneaker culture, and it started with the 1992 US Olympic team, the Dream Team. I loved that game. However, I couldn't play basketball because I was in a small village where there were no hoops. I started to draw sneakers instead.

Years later, I got back into footwear when I did an internship at the House of Berluti. There, I started to learn shoe design. After that, I did different jobs for different brands. I was a footwear assistant, then a collection director for Givenchy. I eventually came to a point where I wanted to launch my own project to really show my personal universe, so I started LE FLOW.

This spread: LE FLOW's signature paint-injected soles promise style statement and exclusivity. No two soles are alike.

What pushed you to create your own footwear brand?

I really wanted to find a way to embody "poetry in motion" but in footwear. I desired to create a brand that is innovative, an expression of a new kind of luxury that speaks of no boundaries in terms of design. I feel like, in the creative market, we only often consider the designer brands and I like the idea of somebody from the sneaker culture muscling into the scene armed with individuality and innovative design to push the boundaries even more. That's one of the goals I want to accomplish with LE FLOW.

“There are people behind these products. We want our clientele to react to our products as the fruits of the hard work of talented, hard-working people. It is not just about product itself.”

Bottom right: Wave Lo Black Ocean

LE FLOW footwear's signature feature is its paint-injected soles. What inspired this touch?

It really started with a painter called Akihito Takuma. I loved his paintings. He has a special drying technique, which really got me thinking hard on how I could incorporate mixing different paints into footwear. I wanted to do something different instead of just splash painting on the shoe. I started brainstorming and experimenting with my sole factory on how it can be done. We then started injecting liquid rubber with paints, and while the result was amazing, the sole factory told me that there was a “problem”. Each shoe is going to be different. I was like, “Wow that is amazing! That's what I want! Let's do it and make it our signature.”

What is admirable about your product is the individuality each shoe possesses with the paint-injected soles. How has your clients reacted to this artistic touch?

I think the Asian markets were the first to really love and embrace it. Some people are a bit scared and unsure of it because they are afraid not to know what the final product will look like. But generally the feedback is great, and people have been intrigued.

How would you describe the designer sneaker industry today? How do you run LE FLOW as a response to these conditions?

I would say that the designer sneaker market is super strong and super dynamic but very brand-oriented like the big brands. They are the automatic leaders. The way I

responded to this market reality was to really concentrate on creating a strong product and identity, so you can really recognize the LE FLOW brand. That's the way to react instead of trying to follow trends: to really express one's identity to affirm it and to move forward always.

Today's world offers speed, technology and ease of access but there is still demand, even an obsession, for what is handcrafted. Why do you think this is so?

I think that even with all this technology, handcrafting will always be the origin. It feels safe, pure and noble. That's why I think people are still attracted to it. And it's very important to us. Even though we use technology for soles, we still work with handcrafted materials. There are people behind these products. We want our clientele to react to our products as the fruits of the hard work of talented, hard-working people. It is not just about product itself.

Have you considered bespoke painted sneaker collaborations as well?

Yes, we're open to collaborations. I would like to do it now because I feel like the brand has found its DNA and is really well-defined, so it can go and be ready for collaboration with other artists, sportsmen or brands. We definitely want to do this.

On one hand, collabs are also difficult because, since we have a strong identity, it's sometimes hard to find a common ground on product, visuals and concept. We don't want to have collaborations just because everybody else is doing it. I want to do it because it is part of the brand's DNA.

Aside from painted sneakers, what other product innovations are in the pipeline that you can share?

We are developing derbies, a more formal line. We didn't want to be seen as just a sneaker brand. I wanted to bring this kind of technology, the sneaker flow and mood, into a more formal line. You can have the technology of the ultralight rubber and paint injection and the more formal feel of the derby upper; it's different. Lots are in the pipeline that I have to keep secret, but do stay tuned! ●

Celebrate individuality with LE FLOW at leflow-paris.fr and on Instagram at @leflowparis.

Beyond designer sneakers, LE FLOW has also ventured into formal footwear
Below: Founder Lionel Le Floch

STRIDE

BARBERS

TALE

Pride in their craft drives *Underboss Barbercafé's Ian Balaccua* to persist and champion barbering as a viable creative career

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Ian Balaccua*

Congratulations on your shop! I have known you since high school but never expected you take this this direction. Can you fill us in on how you ended up in hair-cutting and setting up your own barbershop?

Ian Balaccua: Thanks! Neither did I!

Back when I was an intern in 2014, I stumbled upon a documentary about the Schorem Barbers of Rotterdam. That's the first time I saw barbers who were slick, well-dressed and covered in tattoos. Also, around that time, I did not know that a similar scene was brewing here in the Philippines. For me, the Slick Barbers Co. started the barbering and pomade culture here. They were also the inspiration for me to drop whatever I was doing [at the time], and pick up the clipper and razor.

Can you describe the initial aha moment for Underboss?

Marikina is a quiet and laid-back city. Before I opened up shop, there weren't concept barbershops around. I thought, "Why not build one?" I established the first concept shop with a vision of promoting the barbering culture. With that in mind, even if competitors came around, I would still be unique.

Opposite page: The barber-bosses of Underboss Barbercafé
Below: Owner Ian Balaccua

What was your goal for setting up Underboss, your mission or vision of sorts for it? What do you want to achieve?

The initial vision/mission was to promote barbering as a craft and viable career. I also wanted people to see that one can make it as a barber. I've heard a lot of comments made, not specifically to me, like "*Sayang ka naman, magba-barbero ka lang*" ("It's a shame you're only set out to be a barber") or "*Malaki ba kita diyan?*" ("Does it even pay well?"). I wanted to change that through Underboss.

Underboss is proudly barber-owned and barber-operated. In a way, as long as Underboss stands, that idea also stands.

Was Underboss a solitary undertaking? Who were your collaborators for the shop?

Underboss started as a "barber-café". I operated the barbershop while my mom and sister operated a small snack bar that served coffee, frappuccinos, burgers, fries, etc. My sister recently built a small tattoo shop within the confines of Underboss.

In the search for hapless dudes in need of a dapper trim

“The mission of Underboss was to promote barbering as a craft and viable career. I wanted people to see that one can make it as a barber.”

Your shop has a catchy name. How did you arrive at it and the overall concept for your shop?

In gangster films, which I love, the underboss refers to the right-hand man. Other shop owners usually name their shops after The Boss or The Godfather. It was a cliché, and I just didn’t want to go into that direction, so I used the second-in-command. Haha.

What about the craft of haircutting appealed to you?

What appeals to me is the transformation that happens. The before and after of every haircut. I guess barbering is like sculpting. It just feels so satisfying when a client comes in with a huge chunk of hair, and you use all your skills to transform that big mess into something precise, neat and slick.

Tell us about your first foray into haircutting. How was the learning curve for you?

I did my first haircuts in a poor village nearby. Some kids wanted to get the free burgers [they would get] if they let me cut their hair. The first time I held the clippers against someone’s head, I was so baffled. I really had no clue about what to do, so I ended up messing up their hair. (But hey, free burgers.)

Fast forward to a few weeks, after some hours spent on YouTube, some of my friends volunteered their heads. My haircuts were more presentable than the previous ones, but I needed more heads to practice on. When starting, learning can be pretty slow. The difficult part is finding someone who would entrust their crowns to you.

How would you describe the barbershop and haircutting scene in the Philippines? What prevalent issues about it informed you in how you run Underboss?

The scene and industry are booming. Even in our area, the competition is diverse.

Some shops that are built recently are businessman-owned though. No love for the craft, just in it for the hype and profit. I didn’t want that. I thought that if I’ll be running a shop that is my brainchild, I should be selling a service that I myself would be serving.

Barber-tun, barber-owned

By being true to our craft and being hands-on, we are able to keep our works consistent. We take pride in our DIY-or-die mindset, and that is what separates us from the others, and that's how we'll be doing it in the next couple of years. Built, not bought!

Haircutting also entails forming a bond of trust with your clientele. Tell us how you keep clients (especially new ones) at ease. I notice how a lot of barbers are people-persons and are very conversational. Did this come naturally to you as well when dealing with clients?

At first, when I ask about which hairstyle they want, I repeat it to them just like when waiters repeat your orders to you in restaurants. I clarify the instructions given to me, so that they know what they're getting. I also make suggestions when they do not know what to get. For me, this is one way of letting them know that they are in good hands.

I try to make sure to at least make small talk with clients, especially the new ones. I become observant with the new ones when they come in. You can start a topic just by giving them a brief lookover – the way they react to the music that's playing, the clothes they wear, the way their hair looks, tattoos. I also have some templated questions just to keep them talking, like asking them where they are from, where they got their last haircut, what hair products they use.

I'm curious about the process of haircutting. Is there a general sequence to doing it despite varying haircuts or does it differ depending on the hairstyle requested?

When we're doing our signature cuts, we stick to our process wherein we cut sides first, then top, line-ups, blowdry, and then styling. Some unusual heads or hair pattern demand different approaches though.

Predictably, as presaged by your shop name, you specialize in clean undercuts and vintage men's hairstyles. Why this direction?

I really love the classic look and classic haircuts. They are the reason I got interested in doing hair. I wanted to focus on those because you can get the other hairstyles from salons. If you want classics, you go to Underboss.

"Stick to your process, no shortcuts."

Can never go wrong with the classics

A dashing do for every pomp and circumstance

What's the biggest insight you've gained from haircutting, and how did this change your attitude towards life?

Some people are shocked when they hear that we cut for 45 minutes to an hour. It's because you really can't rush the art of haircutting. Fading, on its own, takes a lot of time. Not to mention the scissor-work required in forming the hair shape. I've heard feedback from people, like "*Diyan yung matagal mag gupit, di' ba?*" ("That's the shop with long service time, right?") We take pride in that.

When you take your time and pour everything you've got in whatever you're working on, you'll see significant difference in the output. Stick to your process, no shortcuts.

What's the most rewarding aspect of haircutting for you?

I'd say, the client's appreciation of the haircut. Knowing that the clients are satisfied with our cuts help me sleep soundly at night. Haha!

What's the most difficult part in cutting hair?

The most difficult for me is making your ideas and the client's ideas meet. Once you pull that off, you're all set. Once you have all the skills needed, everything is easy peasy. So the difficulty comes in the subjective aspect of the haircut session.

Very scrapbook-ish of me to ask but who would you say is your dream client, dead or alive.

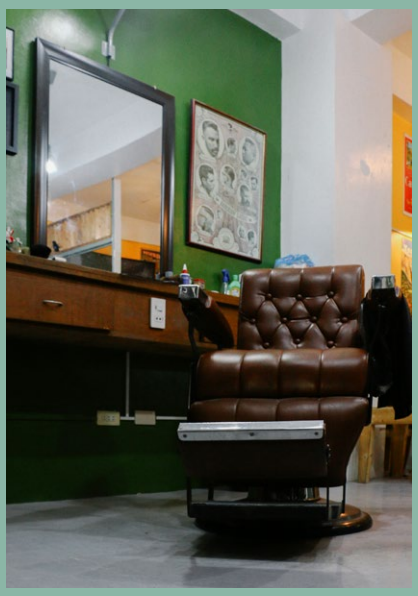
I'd like to cut Mak Azores' hair for sure. He's my "barber goals" and one of the barbers I look up to. He's also a pioneer of the classic barbering scene here in the Philippines. It would also be awesome if I could get to meet myself. I wanna see myself from a barber's perspective, know how my hair goes, *kung paano di-diskartehan, kung* okay *ba ako ka-kuwentuhan* (how I can be approached, if I'm the type to enjoy stories). Haha.

Should you be given a chance to restart Underboss, what would you have done differently?

If given a chance to restart, I would change *when* I would establish the shop. I would have done this maybe a year or two earlier.

What's next for Underboss? What else do you want to develop for the store? Do you envision opening other branches?

Underboss is kinda turning into a collective. We're pretty much DIY. My mom's into sewing right now, so we might venture into clothing and other merchandise. I'll be displaying some film cameras for sale. The tattoo shop would be operating soon. I guess we'll take in more apprentices so that we can branch out. ●



"We take pride in our DIY-or-die mindset, and that is what separates us from the others."

Cool crowns await at Underboss Barbershop. Like their Facebook page at @underbossph to set an appointment and stay updated on shop schedule.

GLOBAL APPEAL

What started as a novel gift idea for *Peter Bellerby* becomes a full-fledged globe-making studio crafting globes the traditional way

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Paul Marc Mitchell, Julian Love Andrew Meredith, Jade Fenster and Alun Callender*

Spheres of influence.
Photographed by Jade Fenster

Hello! Kindly introduce yourself.

Peter Bellerby, owner of Bellerby & Co Globemakers in London. We handcraft and hand-paint globes the traditional way. Each of our globes is one of a kind and made bespoke to order.

You started this business because you couldn't find a globe you wanted to buy for your father's 80th birthday.

If I had set out to make a business of globe-making from day one, it would have most likely never happened. I would have costed it up and made a business plan, then probably torn it all up and moved on to something else. It really started as a hobby, where I thought I would be making two at most (one for my dad and one for myself), but it got out of hand. I think I was stubborn enough to keep pushing myself.

The inspiration came after a lifetime of buying my father standard gifts like books and socks and ties. When I went to buy a globe, all I found were poor quality imitations, plastic globes, or fragile and insanely expensive antiques. Everything I saw that was close to modern was so badly made with cheap stands and incorrect cartography. It inspired me to create globes that could be up-to-date, personalized to suit any taste and preference, aesthetically beautiful, as well as functional. Our globes are made to be touched and spun.

The Livingstone Celestial desk globe with cherry wood stand
Opposite page: Peter Bellerby, photographed by Julian Love

How would you define your approach to globe-making? Are you creating it in a style unique to Bellerby, or prefer to let clients provide direction and learn new approaches in this manner?

I taught myself to make globes by trial and error, so the techniques have been developed by me. We do things totally original, and some may be how things used to be done more or less. (The old masters did not leave behind how-to manuals.) The map is of our design, as are the bases. We have many color suggestions but, once in a while, a customer requests something totally new.

What is dictated by our clientele is the personalization. Many want us to guide them, but some people come up with ideas we have never thought of. This is in the form of hand-drawn and hand-painted illustrations, or special markings on the map like travel routes. Occasionally we work with customers to design their own one-off base as well. We've had customers doodle with pen on paper and send us a snapshot, and we make it a reality.

What surprising insights or trivia have you uncovered when you embarked on the globe-making path?

When referencing maps that were supposed to be up-to-date, I discovered that most of the available date had the Aral Sea at its original size rather than split into several smaller seas which is the reality. I was lucky to have a pilot who flew that route take a photograph for me. He had to angle the plane in order to get the shot.

We live in a world heavily reliant on technology and demanding of speed, and yet there is a growing interest in bespoke and handmade. What is your take on this?

I think many people are wanting to own fewer things that are of higher quality and that have a story behind them. It's nice to own things that can be passed down to future generations.

What are the key tools and techniques that a globe-maker needs?

Hands, water, glue. Going back to the 1400s, the map was etched onto a copper plate and run through a printing press to produce the gores. Now we use modern printers. Etching in reverse onto copper plates would be taking it too far!

The techniques are all learned. You can't come into the job with the techniques needed, so it just helps to be a creative and patient person who loves working with their hands. Even our engraver looks like something out of the 1400s in the way she works and the tools she uses. Our metal work comes from a local foundry.

Innovations? Better quality inks, better paper, better ways to seal the globe so it can be touched and spun without falling apart like many of the old ones.

How long does it take to make a globe?

Between a few weeks and a few months. That is not every minute of every day, of course. There is drying and resting time between phases. Each globe passes through at least five sets of hands, meaning we work on multiple globes at once.

Our largest globe, the 127-centimeter Churchill, takes at least six months to make, from the time we start cartography work to the time we can deliver.

"I think many people are wanting to own fewer things that are of higher quality and that have a story behind them. It's nice to own things that can be passed down to future generations."

Clockwise, from left: Globes of various styles and sizes, photographed by Alun Callender; A day at Bellerby & Co., photographed by Paul Marc Mitchell; No detail too small, no globe too complicated, photographed by Paul Marc Mitchell

Making worlds spin is no easy thing; top image photographed by Andrew Meredith, bottom image photographed by Paul Marc Mitchell

"We are proud of all of our creations. They all go through a similar process, so favorites tend to be ones that posed extra challenges and came out better than expected."

What would you say is the most difficult stage in globe-making?

Wetting a fragile piece of paper and then stretching it as much as you can without ripping, rippling or overlapping that paper incorrectly. If you try and manipulate the paper too much, it degrades and turns to mush.

What steps are taken by the studio to ensure cartographic accuracy in the creation of your globes?

We stay updated with world politics and [applicable] changes. At the scale of a globe, there are not as many changes as you'd think, and when there is something like a capital changing names, we hear about it before it even comes official. We have two full-time cartographers working with us, and every map is bespoke anyway, so it's very easy for us to update things.

Any memorable anecdotes from clients who've purchased a Bellerby? What's the nicest thing a client has told you?

Jade (Fenster, social media manager) works with all of our customers one-on-one. She works with them over months and sometimes years (since we always have a wait list), so almost all of them say incredibly nice things once their globes arrive. They are involved from start to finish.

We had a customer who bought a small globe instead of an engagement ring for his girlfriend (probably wife by now) and used it to propose.

What is the role globes play in this day and age of Google Earth, GPS and mapping apps?

I think globes are totally unrelated to Google Earth, GPS and maps. No one ever used a globe on the small scale to find their way from one neighborhood to the next. They are beautiful objects, and people, for hundreds of years, have admired them not only for their information but because they lovely to have in your home. Importantly, globes also show the world in the correct scale. A globe is an accurate portrayal of the world and a great reminder of just how huge and fragile it is. Maps get you from A to B, but globes will inspire you to go in the first place!

What globe creation are you most proud of?

We are proud of all of them. They all go through a similar process, so favorites tend to be ones that posed extra challenges and came out better than expected. We have high expectations, so it's exciting when something is beyond what we imagined it would be.

What globe type or material would you like to work with someday?

I recently took a trip with my senior artists to Venice, Italy, and we went to the last hand gold-beater in Europe. We watched his process, which was fascinating, and bought some gold leaf from him. We are currently experimenting with it to see how we can incorporate it into our work.

What's next for Bellerby? Any new products or directions you're willing to share?

We will always continue to add new base designs but also maybe branch off with a new (related) product. We are still a young company, so every day still brings surprises and challenges to keep me busy. With a team heading towards 25 people now, and me being the sole owner, I am still looking forward to catching my breath and having the headspace to think about what might be next! ●

The classic Britannia floor standing globe

More of Bellerby and Co.'s exquisite globes await at bellerbyandco.com. Follow them on Instagram @globemakers

Ponchos_Rojas' vintage ponchos

WOVEN Narratives

Modernity threatens a centuries-old Bolivian weaving tradition, but *Ponchos Rojas* is here to help strengthen its connections to the world

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Ponchos Rojas*

Hi! Please introduce yourselves.

My name is Ana Catalina Rojas de Merkel. I was born and raised in Bolivia, but now I live in Brooklyn, New York with my husband Greg Merkel who is from Colorado. We both love design. We met studying architecture and have been together ever since, and this has led us to fall in love with the rich textile history of Bolivia and the high Andes. And we want to share it with the world.

Can you tell us a bit about how you started Ponchos Rojas?

Our company Ponchos Rojas is the culmination of many intersecting interests and passions. Our love of nature, family and a passion to know where we come from have led us to travel throughout Bolivia. We do this to see the beautiful natural environments, experience the local customs and learn from the fascinating history this area has.

What struck us the most in our travels was that there is a sharp divide between the young and old generations in the countryside. You travel to the small towns throughout the *campo* (Spanish for grass plains) and there are no young adults carrying on the traditions of their parents. And these traditions aren't really written down – everyone weaves from memory. The high plateau of Bolivia and Peru has been the cradle of South American cultures for centuries, and these cultures developed one of the most advanced and beautiful weaving traditions of the ancient world. These techniques have lasted the test of time and the curve of history, but modernity is threatening to erase this weaving knowledge from history.

You mentioned in your website that you've fallen in love with the beauty and artistry of the Mollo's weaving tradition. What about it exactly set it apart from other weaving traditions that inspired you to help preserve this artform?

The Mollo culture predates the Inca civilization and are thought to be the direct descendants of the Tiwanaku culture. They have a rich tradition of embroidered and woven fabrics, and are well known for their triangular patterns representing rivers, mountains and stars, as well as their detailed embroideries that capture both the sacred and everyday symbols of life.

When we went and visited them, we were blown away by their beautiful and detailed clothing as well as by their hospitality.

“These techniques have lasted the test of time and the curve of history, but modernity is threatening to erase this weaving knowledge from history.”

What convinced you of the market viability of the products under Ponchos Rojas? What do you think is the most distinctive characteristic of your products?

We believe that there is always a market for traditional, sustainable handmade products that tell a history about a place but also have a twist of modernization in the design. Especially now that everything is made "fast", and as a result, there is a huge textile waste. For us it really comes down to two things: quality and giving back.

When something is made with care by hand, and you can feel that quality with your own hands, people can tell and want a part of it. Also, when products are responsibly sourced, and you give people a chance to support a good cause, most jump at the chance.

How has the Mollo community reacted to your admirable initiative?

Overall, everyone is excited to be working with us because it gives the women an extra income that will help them and their families.

We did a blessing ceremony with the community when we first started, where we burned a *challa* (an Andean burning ritual) as an offering to Pachamama and to commemorate a successful collaboration between us and the community. We also shared an *ajtapi*, which is an Andean sort of Thanksgiving where food and drinks are shared in picnic style with friends and family.

We are also working with another community in the north of the Potosi district called Livichuco, where the whole process of the making of the textiles —from sourcing the wool from the llamas and alpacas, to dying the wool the natural way, to weaving on a ground loom—is done the traditional way.

Clockwise, from bottom left: The Mollo's *challa* burning ceremony; Mollo *hermanas* at work; Weaving under the heat of the Andean sun

“You can really see the ‘hand’ in the pieces that we have made and sourced. You can understand that someone actually made these pieces with love and attention.”

What qualities of handmade objects do you think has made it desirable even more so today, in the midst of faster production and automation?

You can really see the ‘hand’ in the pieces that we have made and sourced. You can understand that someone actually made these pieces with love and attention. And with the pieces that we source as vintage, a lot of them are likely at least 50+ years old, and they still have a lot of life left in them. You don’t get quality like this from mass-produced products.

You've expanded your range from ponchos to blankets to even rucksacks. Any other applications of the weaves that you are interested to pursue?

We are working now on some home goods, pillow cases and tableware. We’ve also starting a one-of-a-kind fashion line where we are using vintage jackets and combining them with vintage ponchos. We also do custom-made doggie ponchitos. We would really love to work with all of the major weaving areas in Bolivia so they are all represented.

How has your experience with Ponchos Rojas enriched your understanding of the world as an avid traveler?

It has been very eye-opening to travel to small communities around Bolivia and see the reality they live in. It’s always good to get out of the bigger cities to really see the daily life of the people in a community, sit with them on their territory and break bread with them. We try to do this everywhere we travel.

The traditional art of weaving survives with the growth of its practitioners. Any other initiatives you are a part of that helps encourage the youth to take up the craft and keep the weaving tradition alive?

Yes, we started a non-profit called Ponchos Libres, where 10 percent of our earnings go toward our goal of preserving and keeping this art form alive, through weaving programs and community schools to teach the younger generations. We are currently working with four communities from La Paz and Potosi that specialize in different types of weaving or embroidery. Ponchos Rojas and Ponchos Libres are set up to help share the high Andes weaving traditions with the world and in effect help preserve these traditions for generations to come. ●

Ponchos Rojas' latest offerings: The Livichuco table runner and the Mollo pillow cases

Save a tribe with Ponchos Rojas. Visit their website at ponchosrojas.com and follow them on Instagram at @ponchosrojas

TUNE

Aural Tradition

Age-honed techniques and an enviable collection of violin making paraphernalia play second fiddle to the familial passion of *The Vettoris* for 'sculpting sound'

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *John Isaac and Lucio Ghilardi*

Cello model Giuseppe Guarneri filius Andreae by Dario Vettori the Second

The family workshop at
Via della Dogana, Florence

Hello! Please introduce yourselves.

We are Dario II and Lapo, from the Vettori Family, makers of the finest violins, violas and cellos since 1935, when my grandfather, Dario Vettori the First started creating violins in the tiny mountainside village of Firenzuola. In that village, he became known as "the violin-maker of the mountains".

We are now an 84-year old practice that is wholly family-run. My father Paolo and his brother Carlo were the only two pupils of our grandfather, whose constant exposure to his explorations in the craft of violin-making inspired them to set up their own shops, finding success on their own paths.

We are third generation Vettoris who have all pursued the same path chosen by our dear grandfather and father. My brother and I, together with our sister Sofia, work with our father in our family shop in Florence, where we utilize the same workshops, tools, instruments and ideas, all borne from a violin-making tradition that is the product of our multi-generational learnings from various violin-making personalities and families in Italy who taught and inspired us.

Your family has had a storied past in the field of violin making, but what do you think fueled your generation to continue the business and keep things going, and in the handmade tradition? How was the love for violins and music nurtured in the family?

I think what fueled us third generation Vettoris to keep the family business going is the history and shared passion the family has for the craft. It is something that goes beyond being a hobby or a means of income. It is a vocation and a calling whose music we've answered. Our father has a lot of passion and love for his work, and this was passed on to us, his children. We loved watching him at work and creating his masterpieces, which he compares to sculpting sound. As for keeping the tradition handmade, we believe that the quality and sound of our instruments are best made that way. We also believe that the human touch adds more value and warmth to our works.

Your violins are beautiful pieces of art drawn from a mold that has been passed down through generations. What steps were taken to keep the family process of violin creation faithful and true to the original? Were there changes to the design process made along the way?

We use molds and drawings from our grandfather, who was able to amass quite a collection from his various apprenticeships with different violin-making families across Italy. Grandfather Dario first began with Stradivari models but eventually transitioned to Guarneri del Gesù forms. He was formerly a pupil of Primo Contavalli, which influenced the deep fluting and sharp corners of his early violins, but it was the noted Milanese luthier Giuseppe Ornati that exerted a lot of influence on his succeeding work.

As I mentioned, we are a family of eager learners; we collect violin molds from all over Tuscany. This is something unique to us, and we are very proud and protective of our collection. Tradition for us is very important and forms the backbone of our practice as luthiers.

“Quality handmade violins...are special in that the process is much a part of its beauty and character as its design.”

While we depend a lot on our family’s violin-making practices and traditions, we do open ourselves up to experimentation; we try out new molds and materials, anything we find interesting. I think this is also what helps set us apart from the generally conservative world of violin-making.

Can you talk about some of the wood materials you've used and found special?

We mostly use maple from both Italy and Bosnia. We have various sources of wood and make use of a variety of types for our work, from the traditional spruce from Val di Fiemme to poplar, willow, cherry and pear wood among others.

There are some standout materials however, like how we make beautiful cellos from white Bosnian maples, some of which were left by my grandfather for our use, and the time I (Dario) was able to find antique spruce in a sawmill that dates back to the 17th century. There was also that one time when my father was driving his car in the countryside. He then caught sight of beautiful maples which he saved from a fire from a farmer, who let him have it.

What changes or innovations did your shop pursue to keep up with contemporary needs? How have the changes affected the family and clientele?

Innovations...well, the internet for one truly helped as it gave us tremendous possibility to open our market and cast a wider net. Our website is our window to the world and the portal by which people from around the globe can learn about us. The advent of websites and social media is especially good for our overseas clients. We still do things our way, but the clientele has definitely grown with online exposure. The internet has also allowed us to share our expertise and share our views on the importance of tradition, patience and material choices in the field of violin-making.

Today's world has hurtled towards speed, efficiency and mechanizing processes, but there is still clamor for handmade instruments. Why do you think this is so? What distinct qualities do handmade instruments have that mass-produced ones don't?

I actually think that drawing out patience and the long waiting time for handcrafted objects, like our violins, make people appreciate and love the craft more because it makes them aware of how much time, care, passion and dedication is necessary to produce works of beauty. It takes six months up to a year to complete a violin commission. While mechanized processes can speed up production, hardcore violinists and fans know that the sound and build quality of handmade violins are much different, and definitely more attractive and special in that the process is much a part of its beauty and character as its design.

What are the qualities of a Vettori violin that is distinctive to it and no one else?

Definitely its familial heritage. What makes every Vettori violin special is that it is a product of the learnings and practices of a single family devoted to perfecting the art of violin-making. This is something our clients cherish about our pieces.

Any interesting or memorable anecdotes about clients who've bought and used your violins?

We once had a professional musician client whose husband owned an original Stradivari violin. A teacher as well, the musician came to Florence for a masterclass and fell in love with a cello we created. The cello wasn’t for sale, however. She came back to us and wanted to try the cello again. We lent it to her. She professed to us: “I am in love, and I have to buy this cello.” The husband also told us how his wife was so enamored with the instrument and that as he loves her so, he pleaded its sale to us. We were won over by the client’s passion for the instrument so we sold the cello to her, and she toured with it.

How would you describe the violin-making scene now?

It is now very international, something we have always been used to, as even in the olden days, my grandfather had an open mind. Every region in Italy had its own style of violin-making and my grandfather was able to learn from various regions and schools, devouring techniques and designs, eventually producing ones distinctly his own.

In today’s open and diverse world, being open-minded is a must, and I’m glad to say this has been passed on to us. We know having an open mind opens us up to even more learning. The advent of the internet has also helped widen and increase exposure to the practitioners and practices surrounding the world of violin-making, which I think is good because it reveals the amount of work and dedication needed to produce our pieces. ●

Clockwise, from left: Dario Vettori at work; Spruce in Paneveggio forest, Northern Italy; Shop founder Paolo Vettori bending cello ribs in cherry wood

The world of violin-making according to The Vettoris at vettorifamily.com


PEDRO
BREWCRAFTERS
ENDLESS SUMMER WHEAT ALE
PEDRO
BREWCRAFTERS
PROCRASTINATION PALE ALE
PEDRO
BREWCRAFTERS
ELEMENTARY, ENGLISH ALE
PEDRO
BREWCRAFTERS
WANDERING WONDERER IPA

Cheers to That

Pedro Brewcrafters balances loyalty to the craft with consumer tastes, creating flavors that just might redefine our notions of Filipino beer

WORDS *Marcus Alianza* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Pedro Brewcrafters*

It was nine o'clock on a payday Friday out in the the porch of a converted house along Matilde Street in Poblacion Makati. I was talking to Nadine Howell-Fanlo, director of sales and marketing at Pedro Brewcrafters, about the journey thus far of Pedro and how the craft beer scene is these days.

"So, *literally usapang lasing*," I asked, slightly incredulous.

Nadine slowly nodded in agreement and beamed.

"Yeah, as in. There was somebody who asked us, 'Do you have any funny drinking stories?' The last three years were one big drinking story."

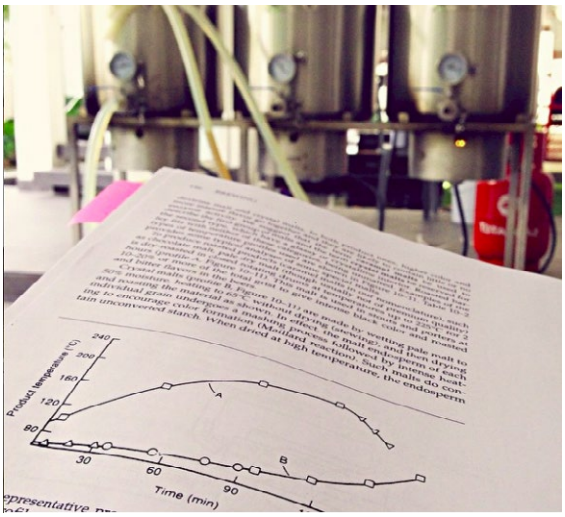
There were craft beer brewers in the country before or by 2014—Privo Praha, Katipunan Craft Ales, Craftpoint, Baguio Craft Brewery, among others—but after that "*usapang lasing*" in 2014, the people behind Pedro realized what they were actually looking for. They wanted a brand that would be able to represent the country, and they figured they could make it happen.

Pedro started commercial production early 2016 and, after three-but-feels-longer-than-that years, Nadine feels craft beer has started to break into the mass consciousness to the point they now see both ends of the awareness spectrum whenever they go out. There's still a lot of educating the market to be done though; many people still don't know what craft beer is in the first place, and there's still a lot of comparison between industrial and craft beer when there really is no comparing the two. Pedro, and all the other craft brewers in the country, have recognized that there needs to be a singular message on educating the market on what craft beer is and how it's different.

Nadine believes that that craft brewers have one unique advantage over the industrial breweries: their leanness. Industrial breweries can only push two or three types of beer to the people. Craft brewers, with their relatively small operations and the amount of choice for ingredients nowadays, have the flexibility to do more and, ultimately, stay true to what craft beer was meant to provide to people.

"That's the nature of craft beer, that's the reason why craft beer exists – so that there's choice. And because we can."

Almost all of the beers in the country can be considered a pale lager – a light, refreshing type that makes sense due to the climate here. A major player even created variations that follow the modern sociocultural norms of Filipino society – two clean, crisp variants for the tired urban salaryman, three with various levels of robustness for those in craft and labor industries.


Product temperature (°C)
240
200
160
120
80
A
B
30
60
90
Time (min)

"Pedro kept those in mind; balancing our brewing style between being true to the craft and the brew style, and with what consumers are willing to accept as a beer," Nadine shared, when I asked about their thought processes on which styles to start with.

"As a brand, Pedro wants to be relatable to people – accessible, approachable, not intimidating. Wheat ale beer styles were good ones to start with due to them being light, fruity and not too far from what people know as beer: the sweeter lager styles. And also then, we can't brew a lager. We didn't know how to properly brew a lager at the time, and there is no way you can mask your faults, so we decided to brew ales. It also allowed us to turn over our tanks due to the quicker fermentation turnaround."

And so Endless Summer was born.

"We wanted the beer to speak for itself without you explaining what this beer tastes like – something you can enjoy on a hot day and be quenched. And yeah, it still remains our best selling beer," Nadine said when I asked about the name of their first ale. And speak for itself it did.

"But now, we actually have a lager. It's quickly becoming our best-selling beer. Still very, very different from the industrial lagers," Nadine said with a twinkle in the eye and a laugh. "Nothing wrong with industrial lagers. It's accessible; there when you need it at a very cheap price. You can chug it down when you're really thirsty, and ultimately, industrial lagers are there for options," she added.

I asked about their Indian Pale Ales (IPA) and how they approached making it. For someone used to industrial pale lagers, on first taste I felt IPAs are definitely alien and even possibly unsellable here, with a seemingly excessive amount of bitterness in various forms due to it putting front and center the most expensive ingredient of a beer: hops.

Nadine agreed and added: "If you're a craft beer brewery, it's almost like you HAVE to brew an IPA. It's the quintessential craft beer brewery style. It's like you're showing off that you're not afraid to showcase these really bold flavors that industrial beer will never ever do. IPAs have been around for as long as the British started trading spices with India, hence the name."

I had to ask, "So, if you don't have an IPA, people won't take you seriously?"

"Well, we got teased on that. For the longest time we've been holding off on brewing IPAs. We say 'we brew for a larger market, I don't know'. The other brewers kept on goading, and finally Jaime (Fanlo, head brewer) went, 'fuck it, let's brew an IPA'," Nadine laughingly recounts.

Perennial bestseller, Endless Summer Wheat Ale
Opposite page: The road to Pedro Brewcrafter's signature flavors, as depicted on Instagram

"We wanted the beer (Endless Summer) to speak for itself without you explaining what this beer tastes like – something you can enjoy on a hot day and be quenched. And yeah, it still remains our best selling beer,"

Pedro Tap House, the brand's latest venture. **Top:** A collaboration between Yardstick Coffee and Pedro Brewcrafters resulted in the Space Out Coffee Stout, which carries hints of Yardstick's Golden Ticket flagship blend

The night was still young. People of all stripes were coming and going – friends, guests, people from the industry. A newcomer excitedly approached Nadine with this recycled mineral water bottle with something inside in hand, asking her to smell it. Nadine gushed as she did, eyes lighting up. Later, Jaime popped back out, excitedly asking Nadine if she has tasted whatever was in that bottle. Shop talk ensued, and I got this feeling that I witnessed the continuing birth of something really special. Which, Nadine said with a wink, I shouldn't really talk about for now.

I asked how this venture has affected their communities in its many forms – their immediate families, the area where the plant is physically located, and the craft beer scene in the country.

"Our families are actually invested in the brewery, they believed in our crazy idea enough to become our partners," Nadine shared. "At times they even ask 'Hey, do you need help? I don't mind putting some labels on bottles' and we go '...what?' There were times where we really needed to rush on surprise orders, and my sister was like, 'Hey, I can make boxes'. We never had to ask for help; thankfully they're the first one to offer it."

Going for San Pedro, Laguna was a no-brainer, from their perspective. "We went for San Pedro because it's near enough Manila. Jill (Gerodias Borja, managing director) grew up there, and her family had businesses there, too. There weren't many warehouses of that size for that price in Manila, and the utility rates are lower. It matters a lot when you use a thousand liters of water at a time for six fermenting tanks. The area where the brewery is is slightly industrial but still have people living around; they were pretty curious when we were moving in with all the tanks, asking if we were going to make wine. Surprisingly, you don't need a lot of people to brew beer; for our system maybe two people can do it. Other than that we're a pretty lean organization. We have an assistant brewer, a general manager, a sales administrator, an all-around person and someone who services the keg customers."

"Does it smell when you brew?" I asked.

"It doesn't smell like beer; it smells awesome when we're brewing – sweet, biscuit-y aroma from the malt, then herbal, citrusy when you put in the hops."

The craft beer scene now is going through very interesting times, Nadine opines. One reason for building the taphouse was to support the craft beer

“If you want to be a maker, start making as soon as you can. Forget about the apprehensions running through your mind. You're going to make mistakes that are a stupid thing to be making. What's important is that you start making. ”

community by showcasing their (Pedro’s and other’s) beer as fresh as possible, the way they were designed to be. “We’d love to work on towards this unrealized goal of exporting our beer but there is still much to be done; cultivate craft beer culture here first, focus on the taphouse, showcase experimental brews and all the collaborations we're doing with other breweries here. We do fresh beer best.”

“Old beer is sad,” I had to say.

“Yup. Old beer sucks,” Nadine agrees.

The DJ was still going at it, with a bunch of *titas* as a captive audience. Their husbands are in another table, nursing their beers as they wait. This part of Poblacion closes relatively early, which, if you think about it, is apropos for the beer they have – best consumed fresh and in just the right amounts for proper appreciation. At this point Nadine gave a bit of context on the core group when they started Pedro.

“Jill was Jaime’s law school classmate. They’re both lawyers. Jill is an entrepreneur through and through, but Jaime – he used to be a lawyer who brewed on the weekends, and now he’s a brewer who lawyers on the weekends. You need a creative outlet that has nothing to do with what you do for a living, sometimes. For Jaime, it was brewing, and he found a lot of satisfaction in running his own business and creating something that people enjoyed. It’s a very nice feeling seeing people enjoying something you made yourself.”

“What would you tell other makers, or those who want to become one?” I asked, maybe for myself.

“If you want to be a maker, start making as soon as you can. Forget about the apprehensions running through your mind. You're going to make mistakes that are a stupid thing to be making. What's important is that you start making. That's the hardest part, but the fact that you made the first step—that you showed up—is the one that counts the most.”

“What would tell your past self?”

“Brew that lager now. Do it. It's worth it. Don't worry, people will like it.” ●

The brains behind Pedro Brewcrafters, from left to right: Nadine Howell-Fanlo, Jaime Fanlo, Jill Borja and Rochee de Leon

What ales you? Perhaps a swig of Endless Summer? Pedro Brewcrafters await on Facebook @pedrobrewcrafters, Instagram @pedrobrewcrafters and at pedrobrewcrafters.com

PALATE

Tokyo Sampler

Salaryman *Lloyd Besin* whips up a culinary storm in his two-square-meter Tokyo kitchen

INTERVIEW *Patrick Kasingsing* **PHOTOGRAPHY** *Lloyd Besin*

Konnichiwa! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! My name is Lloyd. I'm a converted "salaryman" by day and a pretend-chef by night.

Have you always been crazy about food and gastronomy?

I grew up surrounded by good food and cooking, and was lucky enough to be independent from 17. I moved to Manila from Cebu for university and had to fend for myself by learning to cook. Relocating to Tokyo in 2011, however, would have to be the strongest trigger. The Japanese's level of sophistication and respect for food is just a whole other world.

Your Instagram account is filled to the brim with beautifully-styled dishes, often accompanied with little anecdotes of where you got your ingredients or found inspiration for it. How has Tokyo nurtured the foodie in you? And what finally pushed you to start the Tiny Tokyo Kitchen page?

Cooking has always been a channel for me to discover and rediscover myself. I've been lucky enough to call Tokyo home for over eight years now. This has allowed me to experience the best that the city has to offer and meet people who share the same love for good food. As for my Instagram account, it is surprisingly a recent addition. I broke my left hand terribly while doing Crossfit and decided to start posting my photos as a distraction while rehabilitating.

What do you love most about the process of cooking and preparing food?

My mood greatly affects the choices I make while grocery-shopping, and my current state of mind inspires my cooking. The books I read, conversations I've had, recent travels or experiences also influence my choices in the kitchen. Cooking is a great way to gain insight into where I am in that moment in time.

You hail from Cebu, one of the country's gastronomic hotspots. Have you found yourself experimenting and fusing Sugbu fare with Tokyoite staples?

I would love to. There is low awareness for Filipino food [here], and I am still trying to figure out the right balance in developing content.

Live Japanese prawns "kuruma ebi," grilled with "nanohana" broccoli rape greens **Opposite page:** The makings of a seafood tapas plate

Sea bream ceviche: sweet and acidic fruits and lightly-pickled red sea bream ceviche, with grapefruit, strawberry, mikan, orange tomatoes, basil leaves and fragrant olive oil

I would like to keep my content fresh but still be inclusive to the majority of my followers who are from Japan.

Do you have a set weekly menu of dishes you cook or do you decide what to cook on the fly?

Spontaneous and seasonal, well-inspired by Japanese cooking.

You capture your impeccably-styled dishes beautifully with photography. How did you develop an eye for styling and shooting food? What is your process for documentation after food has been prepared?

Let me keep this my trade secret, but there really is no rule book. I love design and good style - things I have not had much chance to communicate through my content so far. I think if you share the same love for beautiful things, it translates in everything you do.

Would you say the limitations of a tiny Tokyo kitchen helped you better your craft as a cook?

Definitely. My two-square-meter kitchen has taught me to balance good timing, neatness and an orderly manner of cooking.

What insights have you gained having been immersed for a while in Japanese food culture?

I have a lot of respect for Japanese food culture. There is great respect for local produce, seasonal ingredients and the freshest quality. All good food starts from the source.

Opposite page, top: Homemade gyoza **Opposite page, bottom:** Making fish carpaccio is so much more fun in Japan - with easy access to the best seafood. Using red sea bream with the autumn flavor of zesty yuzu citrus

“I have a lot of respect for Japanese food culture. There is great respect for local produce, seasonal ingredients and the freshest quality. All good food starts from the source.”

“We should pay more attention to where our food comes from, to buy local and seasonal, and reduce waste.”

Homemade, full fat Greek yogurt and lacto-fermented blueberries
Bottom: Wafu bouillabaisse

In this day and age of countless Instagram food posts, food tasting vlogs and the resto flatlays, what aspect/s of preparing and enjoying food do you think we should pay more attention to?

Where our food comes from, buying local and seasonal, and reducing waste.

Have you ever thought of opening up your own restaurant?

Yes actually, a pop-up restaurant is in the works this Spring. I'm partnering with a friend, and we're planning it as 一見さんお断り which is like a "members-only" pop-up idea.

As a long time Tokyoite, what dish would you prepare for a first timer that is evocative of the city?

Anything seasonal, a *teishoko* (meal set) with pickles and miso soup.

What's the most difficult dish you've prepared so far? Can you tell us how you went about it?

I think the most difficult part with cooking in Tokyo isn't the cooking but the process of shopping, knowing what you want, understanding what is seasonal and knowing how to cook them. These days, I reduce the anxiety by visiting a nearby farmers market and speaking with the producers themselves to learn about what is seasonal and what they suggest I do with it.

Where do you intend to take Tiny Tokyo Kitchen next?

A successful pop-up restaurant run and maybe even publish a book or a regular digital newsletter at some point. ●

For more of Lloyd's gastronomical explorations and market finds, follow @tinytokyokitchen on Instagram

Top: Japanese oshoku: Spicy mentaiko and ikura on a pasta. **Right:** Scallop ceviche and snap peas, on Kyō-yasai golden carrot purée, snow crab and kumquat.

VOX

Rejuvenating The Sole

Fighting for the Marikina shoe industry heritage

WORDS AND IMAGES *Buddy Tan of Black Wing Shoes*

While there is a resurgence in interest in Marikina-made products, foundational issues remain. Buying Marikina doesn't necessarily mean helping Marikina. As with many aspects in life, we need to first acknowledge that we have a problem and recognize it before we can address it. Supporting Marikina by buying Marikina is a typical response but is no more than a Band-Aid solution to a problem that requires extensive surgery procedure.

Our local shoe industry, as with most Philippine-based and locally-developed industries, suffers from being rooted in outdated business models. Yes, one can argue that we have started utilizing the Internet and social media as selling platforms, but it's more like changing the packaging with the same old machine running at the heart of the business. Let me just reiterate briefly the main issues of the industry:

Outdated Labor Practices – Most brands big and micro still practice the piece rate system. Yes, one can potentially be "your own boss" who can earn a lot if you are skilled and persistent enough, but this is nothing more than an economic trap which usually has very limited opportunities for vertical movement. Those proudly Marikina-made shoes that you got for P1,600 from a bazaar brand had a labor budget of around P200 split among at least three people. This is the very same system which brought down the shoe industry because, at this time, we do not have the all year-round volume demand that the industry enjoyed back in the 80s.

Limited Local Materials – While there are a variety of options in the market, most of it is imported from China. The outsoles options are limited and the new EVA and PU prebuilt outsoles are imported already. The main issue with this is supply availability. Since most of the available imported materials do not have a steady supply, samples/prototypes are hard to develop since, even if it gets lots of orders, there is no assurance that there are enough of the imported components. And even if there are, once the local supply runs out, it is hard to say when the materials will be back in supply, making it difficult to market unless for limited releases or special projects.

Lack of Professionalization – There are no standards in place and no overall umbrella group to ensure that our local industry is progressive in terms of quality and design. The lack of basic shoemaking education has created a weak foundation for the industry. While there are remedies in the custom shoe market, the lack of professional standards will definitely affect the commercial products in the long run.

The lack of professionalization also creates a problem with continuity and issues with training new shoemakers. Without proper basic foundations in sizing and fitting, how can the industry create products which comply with industry standards to be able to meet basic customer expectations.

Lack of Public Awareness – Marikina, being the shoemaking capital of the Philippines, prides itself with handcrafted shoes. Most of the shoes that are being sold by local brands are usually assembled mostly by hand still. Lack of consumer awareness further adds to the inherent flaws of the industry, pushing it towards a degenerative path. Supporting businesses that push down quality and underpay shoemakers in order to meet price demands weakens the industry. It also doesn't help that older shoemakers themselves might be unaware of the negative effects that some of their practices/traditions are inflicting to the industry.

This lack of education and awareness has led to the resurgence of old practices on all sides. From the producer side, shoemakers get paid piece-rate with no job security. It keeps senior shoemakers from teaching the next generation properly in order to lessen the chance of training up their competitors.

The brand/workshop owners do not properly educate themselves and instead rely on what their suppliers tell them, resulting in misinformation and misleading marketing at times. On the consumer side, the lack of awareness in the mode of production has led them to compare handcrafted/assembled leather shoes to synthetic mass-produced, imported shoes being sold by retail and mall brands. This short reprieve is doomed to repeat the old mistakes and make new ones if we do not address it by injecting new ideas and processes which will make our industry progressive.

These issues have been around for a while, and we have yet to see significant progress towards fixing our industry. From what I understand, most businesses/brands that the authorities listen to are more concerned about making a quick buck rather than creating a sustainable process and taking steps to ensure that Marikina, or even Philippine shoemaking, thrives for the next generations of Filipinos.

Here are some steps which I see are needed in order to create a more sustainable manufacturing/service industry:

Professionalize the industry – This entails regularization of artisans; with this, you get a proper seniority system where your artisans can move up like in any corporate structure. The salary system will be applied in order to provide for vertical movement for the artisans.

But before we can apply this, we need to structure local operating standards based on international standards. As of now, the industry is using a system that is loosely based on the US system. The main problem is now is that most local shoemakers do not know basic international standard sizing so they rely purely on the last that is given to them by the shoe last factory. The shoe last factory operator himself does not know the basic standards in sizing and fit hence creates a problem where the sizing system is unstructured. The grading of the lasts are so bad that unless the workshop is doing purely custom, the production will suffer grading issues. Without job security and a progressive compensation system, no new generation of shoemakers will be produced. Who'd ever want to get stuck in a dead end career?

Regulate the business owners – To protect the shoemakers, we need to establish a culture of mutual respect. Currently, there is a culture of taking advantage of each other. Business owners push down compensation; shoemakers steal time and resources from the workshop; the industry espouses contractualization and the piece-rate system. Without basic regulation, it is doomed to repeat past mistakes all over again while eroding future chances of reestablishing the industry. It has to start somewhere and business owners have to initiate the change and weed out unwanted elements slowly while establishing a safe and secure working environment to grow future generation of shoemakers. Baseline operating practices should be set to regulate business behavior and prevent oppressive and backward practices.

This entails having compliance incentives and punitive measures for brands and businesses. Policies should be set so that the industry will have operating guidelines in order to ensure the dignity of our artisans for the better and brighter future for the industry.

Develop the Industry – Proper identification and segmentation of the industry is vital in order to create policies targeted to help that specific segment or population. Lumping together business owners, brands and artisans/workers creates an anomalous policy where those on top of the organization benefits while the base suffers. This is a reflection of world economics where the low and middle income suffer the brunt of the effects of bad policies while those on top generally have it better, and the only time when they suffer is when the base dries up and they lose their relevance to the market.

Budgets and grants to the industry will be misappropriated and wasted if it never even reaches the target recipients. I know this is elementary knowledge, but how come waste is still so prevalent now? It is because our industries and policies are part of a system which oppresses progression. You see, this is about fixing a broken system. We have seen the industry fall during the late 90s.

“To protect the shoemakers, we need to establish a culture of mutual respect. Currently, there is a culture of taking advantage of each other.”

“There is no opportunity for greatness if all players aim for the mediocre. Subsistence operations can help a company weather through various economic situations, but it cannot plant that seed that will bring about greatness.”

Lives destroyed and opportunity lost, this is the effect of a system rooted in weak foundations, supported by a system which does not recognize the solutions to perennial problems hampering the industry from reviving properly and progressing forward.

Developing the industry also requires the development of our supply chain. Whether it's imported or local supplies, the business environment has to be conducive to free-flowing trade of quality input/raw materials. Local industries should be given incentives to develop quality products. There is no opportunity for greatness if all players aim for the mediocre. Subsistence operations can help a company weather through various economic situations, but it cannot plant that seed that will bring about greatness which brings dignity and rewards for the stakeholders.

Marikina Heritage Roadshow – Creating a roadshow with the purpose to educate and raise awareness will help in preserving and progressing the Marikina shoe industry. This will showcase the industry and its various sectors to entice and educate others to properly support and invest in the Marikina shoe industry.

This could include talks about the industry including local historians and industry leaders, basic information and consumer education for assessing footwear products, showcasing local brands and locally made leather goods to create and spread brand awareness, live demonstrations on how leather goods are crafted and the like.

One of the main goals of the roadshow is to create opportunity for Marikina to reach out to our fellow countrymen and create opportunity for those who wish support the industry by investing in local manufacturers to drive up demand and hopefully scale properly set up production facilities.

Creation of a "Seal of Excellence" – This brand recognition would ensure that baseline standards are met in terms of sizing, materials, labor practices and after-sales services. Think of it like the "Super Brands" of Marikina. This can also set the tiering for incentivized programs so that local businesses would operate in a more ethical and sustainable way. It can also give grading to locally-made shoes and other leather goods to give a basic valuation and set client expectations.

Mass production and entry-level footwear production should be mechanized to reduce wastage while mid and high-value products be produced by hand. Shoe/footwear engineering and artisanship are two different things. While interdependent at the level of product R&D, in manufacturing things become different and improper appropriation of the production means and method can result to unsustainable practices which hurt the artisan base of the industry. Subsistence is a thing of the past, the industry and its stakeholders should be thriving. Shoemaking as a craft should be grown and nurtured, not squeezed and milked for all its worth without growing the grassroots.

We, at Black Wing Shoes, have already started documentation of international standards and how they apply to the local market as well as a documentation of basic pattern tolerances for grading and custom footwear use. As most of our clients know, we have already adopted a daily wage system since the beginning, and next year, we will implement an informal ranking system to differentiate the skill levels of our artisans. We have also started taking in apprentices as part of our study to see how much time they would need to fully mature. Currently, we have a pattern-making apprentice and a cobbler apprentice.

I believe in presenting and working toward effective solutions rather than just dreaming about them. Proper problem identification is key to effective solutions. Awareness of issues is also key to creating a more sustainable system. It is a lot of work, but hopefully we get to dialogue with the authorities in order to create more realistic, effective and sustainable solutions with the budget that is given to them. It is about time we stop wasting government resources and grants on senseless things that will never impact the grassroots.

2019 is another year to try and make an impact yet again, another year to hope that we may save what is left of our heritage by growing it instead of milking whatever is left of it. ●

Previously published as "A Time to Hope – Fighting for the Marikina Shoe Industry Heritage," January 2019 at blackwingshoes.wordpress.com

Let your footwear game take flight with Black Wing Shoes. Follow them on Facebook @blackwingshoesph

LOCATION *ASPACE Philippines, Makati City*

Parting Shot

A VISUAL ENDNOTE

By Jemimah Dumawal | Photographed by Jepren Solis

I have always been fond of mixed media. I would always start with a pen and paper during the conceptualization, and work digitally for the most part. But in terms of the series of artworks for 'In Between You & Mi' (exhibit), finishing with a touch of traditional and tangible elements such as paint, textured papers, fabric and thread made the creation process come full circle. I love working with my hands and heart.

Follow Jemimah on Instagram @jemimimi and her paper crafts @papersteak.ph.