

>> TRAVEL LIFESTYLE OCTOBER 2006



Mabuhay

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TURNING JAPANESE

TAKING IN TRENDY TOKYO
AND TRADITIONAL KYOTO

+ MABUHAY HOLIDAY SPECIAL
SAILING IN THE PHILIPPINES

HIGH ART

This October, Philippine art takes center stage along with works from the rest of Southeast Asia as giant auction house Sotheby's in Singapore puts masterful pieces on the auction block. JACK TEOTICO takes a peak into what's in store in the house that art built.



Mario Parial's
"Eight Horses"

CUSCADEN ROAD, ON an October afternoon, makes for a lovely walk. Just off the end of Orchard Road, it is where one can truly appreciate the end of the monsoon weather in Singapore at this time of year. I like this rather genteel avenue, free of the heavy pedestrian and tourist traffic of shopping hub Orchard Road, and home to the Regent of Singapore, one of the island's more upscale five-star hotels. The Regent, in turn, is home to auction giant Sotheby's Southeast Asian operations.

For an entire weekend in October, art lovers and aficionados of all persuasions converge at the Regent for the traditional two-day viewing of auctionable art. The viewing usually starts on a Friday, and for this year it will commence on October 20 until 8pm

on Saturday, October 21. The auction follows immediately the next day or on Sunday, October 22.

Sotheby's is perhaps the oldest auction house in the world, operating for over 260 years now. It first made a mark in Asia in 1973 with its landmark auction in Hong Kong—it made the world take notice of the potential, diversity and importance of Asian art. Thanks to this initial success, Sotheby's opened offices in various parts of Asia. It opened its doors in Singapore 21 years ago where it currently hosts a bi-annual auction of Southeast Asian art—one in April and another, seemingly much larger and highly anticipated one in October.

PHILIPPINE ART ON THE AUCTION BLOCK

While most of the revenues for Southeast Asian art come from Indo-European, Indonesian and Vietnamese paintings, Filipino paintings are holding their own ground. On occasion, works by masters such as Juan Luna and Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo find their way to the auction, although the most consistent in terms of presence and success are works by National Artist Fernando Cueto Amorsolo. Also at the auction are works by other National artists and masters such as Jose Joya, Manansala, H.R. Ocampo, Arturo Luz, J.Elizalde Navarro, Ang Kiukok, Anita Magsaysay Ho, Fernando Zobel, Nena Saguil, Romeo Tabuena and Juvenal Sanso. A Sotheby's 20th anniversary article waxes effusive about Filipino art, stating that, "Filipino painting has been able to create a stimulating and original balance between traditional themes and new ideas. Colourful, passionate and ostentatious, Filipino painting encompasses the





Carlo Magno's "Peaceful Duet". (RIGHT)
Juvenal Sanso's "Blooms of Summer"



Lydia Velasco's
"Flower Vendor III"

totality of the contemporary experience in the country, from low to high culture." In recent auctions, Sotheby's opened a new category called New Contemporary section. This section includes works from new contemporary Southeast Asian artists including Filipinos E.L. Cordova, Mario Parial, Lydia Velasco, and Carlo Magno.

Filipino paintings were first offered at Sotheby's seven years ago. In its October 2004 auction, the Filipino section sold 32 paintings, accounting for a total of 18.9% of the revenues earned that day. The second most expensive painting sale for the day were two Juan Luna works auctioned under one lot titled "Steel Mills". In the most recently concluded auction held in April this year, all 16 Filipino paintings chosen for inclusion by Sotheby's were sold. Amorsolo's painting "My Daughter in a Native Dress", estimated to sell at S\$70,000, went for S\$174,000.

ALWAYS A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

The frenzied energy of an auction hall—teeming with artists, collectors, buyers and dealers—is always an interesting experience. I once sat beside a gentleman who owns a reputable catering establishment in the Philippines. It was a Pacita Abad (who, unfortunately for the

art world, passed away last year) that was being auctioned and the bids just kept on soaring. As the prices kept going up, the more ashen-faced he became. Finally, when the hammer fell, and the price closed at five and a half times the original estimate, he looked ready to faint. Only then did he manage to flash a nervous albeit impish grin. Because of the confidential nature of the auction proceedings, I will never be able to ascertain if he indeed owned that Pacita Abad. Judging from his smile and sigh of immense relief, I am *sure* that he made a killing that day at the auction. Well, almost sure.

ART AUCTION 101

HOW DO YOU BID? First, register. At Sotheby's, a registered bidder is given a numbered white paddle to hold up at any moment during the auction. Holding up the paddle means you (or the organization you represent as a bidder) are committed to purchase the particular artwork being auctioned at the particular price being announced by the auctioneer when you raise your paddle.

THE BIDDING FRENZY. The auction master starts the bidding by coaxing bidders to meet the minimum or reserve requirement usually set by the artwork's owner. Once a bid meets the reserve price, the bidding frenzy usually begins. Bids may also be done by faxing the completed official form to the auction house at least 24 hours before the actual auction, or by phoning in. For phone-in bids, arrangements need to be made at least 24 hours before the sale. When the lot that you are interested in bidding for is nearly on deck, officials of the auction house will contact you by telephone so that you can participate actively in the actual bidding.

CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE. Whether you are buying or selling anything, no one else will know except you and the auction house. Anyone with a legal identification document, such as a passport, can attend. Sometimes, bank references may be requested of you. For Sotheby's, it's best to get a Sotheby's ID number beforehand for instant accreditation. Should you win a particular lot, you will need to pay in Singapore dollars. Once your payment clears you may either carry off the artwork or have it shipped or air-freighted to your chosen address.