

Strengthening ties with Singapore thru food and art

Margaux Salcedo

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VIBRANT DIALOGUE Singapore Ambassador Constance See brings a rare exhibit featuring the best of Singaporean and Filipino artists to The M in BGC. The exhibit runs until Oct. 26. —Margaux Salcedo

Hainanese chicken, laksa, Ya Kun Kaya toast, nasi goreng ... the list of our favorite Singapore dishes goes on. Many of us have been blessed to explore and love Singapore for its restaurants—from hawkers to haute cuisine.

But those who both visit and live in Singapore have also been starting to appreciate Filipino food there, too! While there is no specific date yet, Hayop—from the creators of Manam—is expected to open soon on Amoy Street in Chinatown.

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They will serve stylized versions of Filipino classics such as kinilaw and adobo, as well as more regional specialties such as piyanggang manok of Mindanao. They will also highlight classic Pinoy desserts such as halo halo and leche flan.

Hayop, of course, is not the first Filipino restaurant in Singapore. Last June, the Philippine embassy in Singapore once again hosted a “Food Trek” as part of its Independence Day activities, promoting Filipino restaurants such as Lechon Republic, Don Lechon, Iskina Cebu, Second Serving, Nanay’s Kitchen, Kuya’s Kusinang Pinoy and more, even Max’s!

Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Medardo Macaraig shared that they continue this tradition as part of our Independence Day celebrations because the event “not only highlights the delicious and diverse flavors of Filipino cuisine but also strengthens the cultural ties between our two nations.”

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Chances of contact

Meanwhile, here in Manila, Singapore Ambassador Constance See has been strengthening cultural ties between our nations through an art exhibit that is now ongoing at The M (Metropolitan Museum of Manila) in BGC. This exhibit is part of the celebrations for 55 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and the Philippines.

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Ambassador Constance says that the exhibit took a year to curate as it features the works of 16 important artists — eight from each country — all of whom had participated in artist residencies at STPI in Singapore. Patrick Flores, who is now deputy director of Curatorial and Research at the National Gallery Singapore, curated the exhibit and had to hunt down each of these artists and invite them to participate.

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STPI is a dynamic creative workshop and contemporary art gallery based in Singapore that promotes artistic experimentation in print and paper. It has become one of the most cutting-edge destinations for contemporary art in Asia, which forms part of the national Visual Arts Cluster of leading institutions in the region along with the National Gallery Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum.

The Filipino artists in the exhibit at The M are Alfredo & Isabel Aquilizan, Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Benedicto “BenCab” Cabrera, Geraldine Javier, Lyra Garcellano, Manuel Ocampo, Pacita Abad and Ronald Ventura. The Singaporean artists are Amanda Heng, Charles Lim Yi Yong, Chua Ek Kay, Genevieve Chua, Goh Beng Kwan, Han Sai Por, Heman Chong and Yanyun Chen.

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Having all these names under one roof results in what Ambassador Constance describes as a “vibrant cultural dialogue and artistic exchange that has flourished between our two nations over the past five decades”.

“It is a shining example of how art can transcend borders and bring people together, reflecting our shared vision for a more connected and culturally enriched Southeast Asia,” she adds.