

THE PHILIPPINES: PROSPECTS IN BUSINESS AND ARTS

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I am really happy to be here this afternoon with all my kababayans. I know you will be given a lot of talk about investment opportunities but I like to talk about some smaller investments that you might be interested namely Filipino artists. I can guarantee you that these investments will give you less risk, more enjoyment and the investment amount is very small. I am talking about investing in paintings specifically paintings by Filipino artists.

I would like to show you some of the slides of our artists and as much as I would like to show many artists, I am afraid with the short notice and the time constraints, I am limited to what I have that is available.

INTRODUCTION

For me art is very personal and being brought up in the Philippines, living in the United States and Southeast Asian countries I have witnessed and interacted with many of our artists who are either visiting or working abroad. My views on the subject are probably very different from the rest of the panelists as I categorized the artists in a way that maybe different from academics and art critics. As you may have noticed, we have a great diversity when it comes to art as we have many different groups with many different influences. I am proud to say that we are rich when it comes to art and

that we, probably, have as many artists as we have islands in the Philippines. And by artists, I am only talking about visual artists.

1. For you investment types who mainly look at art for high return, you would have noted the annual auctions here two months ago where the two leading auction houses, Sotheby's and Christies, featured our well known artists like Anita Magsaysay Ho (S1: Portrait of a girl), Ang Kiukok (s2: Two Figures #4), Vicente Manansala, Juan Luna, Botong Francisco, Fernando Amorsolo (s3: Market place during the occupation) among others. There were also foreign artists who were either living or born in Manila like Locatelli and Antonio Blanco whose paintings were auctioned. Many of these names are very well known, some have been collected in museums around the region, others have been around for so long they withstood the test of time. Many are dead and very few are actively painting. Some of their works are so scarce that they are sought after in the auction houses. Many collectors are looking for early works of these artists and that is when the bidding goes very high. Two years ago, Anita Magsaysay Ho fetched the highest price for her painting for over \$600,000.

Unfortunately, the auction houses main emphasis are of the very old or dead artists and foreign artists who happen to be living in our country during that time. There is not enough focus on contemporary artists but I guess this is still a good step in the right direction.

2. GENERALLY SPEAKING, HOWEVER, THE FILIPINO ARTISTS COME FROM DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

There are the early avant garde painters in the likes of Hernando Ocampo (s4: Dancing mutants), Arturo Luz (s5: Performance), Nena Saguil, Cesar Legaspi (s6:Mansanita) and Mauro Malang Santos (s7: Untitled) who belonged to the generation of the 40s.

There are the modernists-Lee Aguinaldo, Romulo Olazo (s8: Diaphanous B LXV VII), Roberto Chabet, Ray Albano, Gus Albor (s9: Ether at play), Impy Pilapil, and Lao Lianben who venture into the total abstract and none objective art.

The seventies were marked by political unrest and a growing anti-Establishment sentiment hence the beginning of Figurative Expressionism with artists like Ben Cabrera (s10: Delia) with his larawan series, Manuel Baldemor with his interpretation of his hometown landscape, Danilo Dalena'Alibangbang series, Onib Olmedo (s11: Song from the alley) street vendors, prostitutes and other denizens in his own stylistic way.

In the eighties, the social realist painters like Edgar Fernandez (s12: Unfinished painting of the present), Renato Habulan who hails from Tondo and whose series on Sisa, crazed mother of Rizal's Noli Me Tangere exposed his works to the art world. Jose Tence Ruiz was also known for his series on the "Alienation Suite". Another award winning social realist was Antipas Delotavo. Elmer Borlongon (s14:Underpass) was a member of the Sanggawa, a collaborative group who did murals depicting the life on the streets, particularly the lives of the children. The painting called (s15: Water

of Life) was one of my refugee paintings from the series called "Portraits of Cambodia".

The Philippines is also famous for religious art which is not surprising given our Catholic background like Norman Dreo's (s15: Ipinako sa krus). An ex-seminarian Norberto Roldan examines aspects of Filipino spirituality through his icons and religious paraphernalia related to his Catholic practices. Alfredo Esquillo, Jr. (s16: Panatiko) explores the contradictions in reference to the Catholic faith.

There are artists who deal with feminine issues and issues of identity like Agnes Arellano (s17: Three Buddha mothers), Yasmin Sison (s18: Mrs. Sison's cake), Francesca Enriquez and Norma Belleza with her portrayal of the everyday life.

Then there are the conceptual, post modern and installation artists like Gerardo Tan (s19: Compressed/Decompressed), Sid Hildawa (s20: Osiris/Iris) and Ces Avancena (s21:Gypsy mood thermometer) who were all part of the recent exhibit here called extra-small-EXTRA LARGE where they were able to challenge the idea of setting up an exhibition internationally at low costs and in a short period of time whether in the centers or the peripheries.

3. THERE IS ALSO AN INCREASING NUMBER OF FILIPINO ARTISTS PARTICIPATING IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGIONAL FESTIVALS, COMPETITIONS AND ART FAIRS.

In 1992, the Sydney Bienale had the work of Imelda-Cajipe Endaya (s22: Lupa sa aming altar) featured as one of the major contributors to Southeast Asian art.

The First Queensland Art Gallery Asia Pacific Triennial held in 1993 had the largest contingent of Filipino artists to participate: Santiago Bose, Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Francesca Enriquez, Lazaro Soriano, Roberto Villanueva, Junyee, Alvarado, Brenda Fajardo and Julie Lluch-Dalena (s23: Woman and Heart).

In 1995, Indonesia hosted the first "Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned countries where several curators from the region were invited to select artists to participate. Fernando Modesto and I were chosen from the Philippines. (s24: Pandawa brothers).

The ASEAN art awards was created to support the development of ASEAN contemporary art and to increase the national and international exposure for ASEAN art and artists. Philip Morris Group of companies is the first organization to have provided a platform for the young artists of the region. Our very own, Nona Garcia (s25: Double exposure) won the grand price last year where she submitted a work that demonstrated a strong element of experimental art, combining painting and x-ray.

The Nokia Arts Awards Asia Pacific started in the year 2000 where Filipino artist Rodel Garcia won the first price of US\$8,000 cash, educational grant of US\$15,000, a mobile phone and a five week training program at Parsons in New York and eight week program at the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland.

The recent Singapore art fair held two weeks ago, which is on its third year, witnessed several Philippine galleries participating like Galeria Duemila, Finale, the Drawing Room and in addition several Filipino artists being represented by none-Filipino galleries. One of the Filipino favorites is Kiko Escora (s26: Show off). The general

feeling was that the Filipino artists in the fair did very well and I just came back from the Philippines and learned that more galleries will participate next year.

There are also a number of art festivals in the provinces like the Baguio arts festival organized by BenCab and the rest of the Baguio artists, the Bandung and Yogyakarta festivals.

4. THERE HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF GALLERIES, CURATORS AND ART DEALERS IN THE COUNTRY AND OTHER COUNTRIES REPRESENTING PHILIPPINE ART.

Gallery owners and dealers have played a very active and aggressive role in promoting their artist. In San Francisco, there is an art dealer who deals with Philippine masterpieces and is very active in the auction houses. In the California area, there are a number of galleries representing Filipino artists living in the Bay area. During the past two years while residing in Singapore, I have seen Ippreciation Gallery, the Sculpture Square, Art Seasons Gallery, Atelier Frank, Sunjin Gallery, Plum Blossoms Gallery among others showcasing Philippine artists.

During the last five years, there has been an increasing number of artworks in public places in Singapore. The galleries and dealers are mainly responsible for putting these artworks in public space as well as in hotels and office buildings. Ramon Orlina's glass sculpture (s27: Glass installation) at the Singapore Art Museum and my mural of (s28, s29 Celebration and Joy) at Singapore Expo are examples that has increased the public's awareness of art. This coming month of November, I will have a ceiling installation called "Sky is the limit" at the atrium of the newly opened

Esplanade. (s30: the Sky is falling, the sky is falling) is one of the twenty two large trapunto paintings on view during the whole month of November.

5. THE ART MUSEUMS IN MOST OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN PROMOTING LOCAL ARTISTS.

The Singapore Art Museum has been a pacesetter in buying artist works from the Philippines (s31: Marcos and his cronies) was bought by Singapore in the year 2000. The Fukuoka Museum has continuously invited Filipino artist to participate in their Bienale at the same time purchasing works of participants. Roberto Feleo had a one man exhibit where his works seem to reflect the Filipino history of bitter struggle for the sovereignty from Spain, Japan and the United States.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has played a very important role in co-sponsoring Philippine exhibits like the traveling show called "At Home and Abroad: 21 Contemporary Filipino Artists" which was exhibited at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. As a result, these museums have become important venue for our artists.

Other government support groups like the National Council on the Arts, foundations and art centers play important tasks of giving financial support to the artists. These efforts, however, still fall short of what is being done in the West. I would like to see a similar National Endowment for the Arts, Guggenheim fellowships and other art patronages. It would be nice in the Philippines if we could even have, perhaps, a Lopez, Ayala or a Go Kong Wei fellowships.

6. THERE IS AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF INFORMATION BEING MADE AVAILABLE ABOUT FILIPINO ARTISTS

Initially, most of the books and articles about Filipino artists were written either as dissertations by local Phds, foreigners who came to the Philippines to do their dissertation on Philippine art, or published coffee table books.

In recent years this has changed with the advent of magazines like Asian Art News and Art in Asia Pacific and more recently the development of art critics. Art professors and writers like Ana Labrador, Alice Guillermo, Emmanuel Torres, Patrick Flores and Rod Paras Perez are frequent contributors to these magazines, guest writers for exhibitions and in addition to writing weekly reviews of recent shows in our local newspapers. This has also changed due to museum curators who have pushed to publish larger and more detailed catalogues about museum exhibitions. An example of this was the exhibit held here two years called FAITH: A survey of contemporary Filipino art curated by Valentine Willy. This traveling exhibit moved to Penang and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

More importantly, many artists have taken the initiatives to provide more information about themselves and their works through brochures and books. With the advent of internet many Philippine artists now have their own websites to provide information to the world about their art. Most of my overseas exhibitions are organized by email and transported by DHL. All of these positive trends will only accelerate the future knowledge and appreciation of Philippine art.

7. THE PROFILE OF COLLECTORS OF PHILIPPINE ART HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY

In the past much of Philippine art was bought by expats looking for a low cost cultural reminder of their stay in the country. They tended to prefer barebreasted women and traditional rural scenes. Nude women always sell whether it is in Mabini or Sotheby's. More importantly, Philippine art was supported by a small number of local patrons who tended to be nationalistic.

In recent years the collector profile had changed tremendously with increasing wealth of upper middle class Filipino professionals greater appreciation of art in general and promotion of their respective artists. Many Filipinos living overseas are actively purchasing works of Filipino artists and this is happening in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Jakarta and Singapore. Many of these Filipinos living abroad have achieved a level of financial success in their fields and become avid collectors and supporters of Filipino art. These collectors will grow in the future and a good example are the number of Filipinos who showed up at the recent opening of the Singapore Art Fair.

A good example of this is Jun Villalon, owner of the Drawing Room who after the opening night was very pleased with the sales and confided to me that he could finally sleep that night, thanks to the support of the Singapore Philippine community.

8. SOME FILIPINO ARTISTS ARE NOT ONLY TURNING TO THEIR CULTURAL ROOTS FOR INSPIRATION BUT ARE ALSO INCREASINGLY USING LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS MATERIALS LIKE LEAVES, SHELLS, TWIGS, HOMESPUN, BARK AND ANIMAL HAIR FOR THEIR ARTWORK

There were many reasons to resort to this medium. The escalating cost of art materials which were imported was an issue. During the Marcos era, there was a growing nationalistic sentiment which gave a lot of artists a new reason to find a new medium. Installation art was one way of rejecting the traditional form of art. With installation came the materials which artists use: leaves, twigs, barks, shells, fabric, etcetera. Artists like Santiago Bose (S32: Serenade of broken dreams), Junyee, Paz Abad Santos, Roberto Villanueva and Jerusalino Araos (s33: Buntis (Pregnant) were known for their works in Asia for their use of indigenous materials. They have continued to pursue their art this way putting the Philippine in the map through representations in the biennales and foreign exhibitions.

9. A MAJOR PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES IS THAT THE FUNDING AND TRAINING FOR THE PROTECTION OF PHILIPPINE ART IN BOTH PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL SENSE IS NOT AVAILABLE

In the physical sense, many of our museums, unlike the Western museums, do not have the capability or finance including insurance to take care of documentation, preservation and conservation of valuable pieces including insurance. I have been in the back rooms of many museums in the Philippines where paintings carefully done by noted artists are piled up on top of each other, paperworks are getting mildewed,

flooding in the storage rooms and a general impression that many of these valuable works are not being properly care for.

In the intellectual property sense, another growing problem is that much of the Philippine art is being copied or modified by unscrupulous forgers. A typical example of this is when on two separate occasions, two five star hotels in Indonesia stole my artwork, copied them 300 times so that each room will have a copy and not bothering to look for me and ask my permission. To add insult to injury, I found out that the forger is a Philippine art consultant who lives in Los Angeles.

10. UNFORTUNATELY FOR SOME OF OUR WELL KNOWN ARTISTS, THERE IS A DANGER OF COMPLACENCY AS ONCE THEY BECOME WELL KNOWN FOR A CERTAIN STYLE, THEIR DEALERS ASKED THEM TO PRODUCE SIMILAR WORK OVER AND OVER AGAIN. MANY ARE SEDUCED BY THE SALES WHICH IN THE END STIFLES THEIR CREATIVITY AND WILL NEVER GROW FROM THAT COMPLACENCY

11. MY FINAL COMMENT THAT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IS THAT PHILIPPINE ART IS NOW MAKING ITS MARK IN THE WESTERN WORLD (AUSTRALIA, EUROPE AND THE USA)

To many in the Western world, any art that is not from North America or Europe must be folk art and there is a lack of appreciation. I remember when a New York curator came to my studio and we started discussing Asian contemporary art and how she should start making exhibitions for them. She did not know what I was talking about. She wanted to know if these artists were doing folk art. I managed to tell her that it is

very important for her to look for these artists. Otherwise she will be losing her job in the future.

Now this ignorance of contemporary Filipino artists is beginning to change for a number of reasons.

Many of the Filipino artists living in international capitals like New York, San Francisco, London, Paris, Berlin have begun to make their mark on the local art scene. In the mid 80s I was living in Paris and came across Nena Saguil. I spent many days talking with her in her small cubicle in Paris filled with paintings which at that time very few Filipinos knew of her and yet she was collected by museums in Europe. Now at the recent auction, her small painting sold for over \$67,000. Another example is Alfonso Ossorio who lived in East Hampton in New York. Ossorio painted during the period of Jackson Pollack, deKooning and Rauschenberg. I remember going to his place in the Hamptons and it was like a huge Ossorio museum. Although his paintings hung next to his friend Jackson Pollock at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he never had a major exhibition in the Philippines, even though he told me that his greatest wish was to have a major show in the Philippines yet he is collected by almost all major art museums in America. If you ever happened to be in this hometown Negros, he did a wonderful mural in one of the churches in Negros Occidental.

In recent years, a number of younger Filipino artists have followed the path to the Western countries including the enfant terrible Manuel Ocampo who was a favorite of curators and art dealers in the nineties and is currently living in California, David Medalla in London, Gaston Damag and Ofelia Gelvezon Tegui in Paris and Lina Liani

in Italy. Paul Pfeiffer, who lives in New York, has participated in the Venice and Whitney Bienale and has been awarded the Bucksbaum Award in New York. Lani Maestro who is based in Canada, a multi-media artist, won the Grand Prize in the Havana Bienale in Cuba.

Well I apologize for taking so long but I wanted to give you a good tour of the Philippine art scene and I can only encourage all of you investors out there to buy art and support the Filipino artists of your choice.

In closing I just wanted to tell you a story about an international investor I met on the plane from Zurich, Switzerland to Singapore. I asked him what he did and he said he was an international investor coming to Asia to try to restructure some of his failing projects. I said if that is too bad and he said: "Yes, I should have invested more in my art collection.

Even in bad times they give me joy and they very rarely go down in value." I hope you all keep this in mind when you make your next investment.

Thank you !