

Philippine Pavilion Announces the Participating Artists to Represent the Country's First Participation to Venice Architecture Biennale

Muhon: Traces of an Adolescent City, the selected exhibit for the country's National Pavilion at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition in the Venice Biennale, has gathered the country's foremost architects and contemporary visual artists to be part of the historic first participation of the Philippines in the Venice Architecture Biennale. The Philippine Pavilion will hold its vernissage on May 27 and will open from May 28 to November 27, 2016 at Palazzo Mora in Venice, Italy.

The exhibit's curator, Leandro V. Locsin Partners (LVLP), has invited six architects and three contemporary artists to start a conversation about the rapid creation and destruction of Metro Manila's built heritage, and whether such conditions preclude the formation of the city's cultural identity. The curatorial team is composed of Leandro Locsin, Jr., Sudarshan Khadka, Jr., and Juan Paolo de la Cruz.

The nine participants selected and surveyed buildings, structures, landmarks, boroughs, and urban landscapes. Evaluating their cultural merit and analyzing their potential within the national heritage, they created three sets of abstracted models built for each of the subjects corresponding to their original state, their current condition, and conjectures regarding their projected future.

The intent was to abstract and distill the essence of these *muhons*

or markers in order to explore the presence or absence of significant value. The three rooms of the Philippine Pavilion have been categorized as -- (1) Imprints, (2) Markers and (3) Projections, and the three abstractions of each subject will be placed accordingly.

The individual architects and firms are Eduardo Calma, Jorge Yulo, 8x8 Design Studio Co., CIS Design Consultancy, Lima Architecture, and Mañosa & Co. Inc. The internationally recognized Filipino contemporary artists, represented by 1335 Mabini—Poklong Anading, Tad Ermitaño and Mark Salvatus—complete the list.

The subject buildings and urban elements featured in the Pavilion are KM 0 in Luneta (Anading), the Pandacan Bridge (Ermitaño), Chinatown (Salvatus), the Philippine International Convention Center (Calma), the Mandarin Hotel (Yulo), the Magsaysay Center (8x8 Design Studio Co.), the Pasig River (CIS Design Consultancy), the Makati Stock Exchange (Lima Architecture), and the Coconut Palace (Mañosa & Co.).

With the main impetus being the destruction of post-war brutalist buildings and important urban features, LVLP aims to underscore the urgency of inclusive public conversations about the relationship of the built environment and the identity of the city.

Muhon aims to extract conjectures that reconcile the diametrically opposed vectors of progress and of permanence in relation to corresponding notions of modernity and an emerging identity. Simultaneously, it aims to make sense of the implications of the destruction of signifiers of built heritage and the relative lack of social consciousness about the issue. LVLP's exhibit aims to be a venue for a collaborative and collective act of contemplation

regarding the built environment on the edge of the precipice.

The 2016 International Architecture Exhibition, organized by the La Biennale di Venezia presided over by Paolo Baratta, is curated by Alejandro Aravena and titled *Reporting From the Front*. In 2014, the exhibition had a duration of six months and attracted 228,000 visitors, in addition to the 12,214 visitors who attended the preview.

Architects and Artists and their selected Muhon:

Poklong Anading - KM0

Location: Across the Rizal Monument in Luneta Park

Anading continues his investigation of the social condition through three video installations slated for the Venice Biennale Architectural Exhibition. The individual projects surround varied conceptual frameworks – from proverbial and literal convergence points, notions of malformed progress to predicaments in urban mobility – but nevertheless and seamlessly stitched together a single reality that is the omnipresent force known as Metro Manila. Revisiting notions on identity and unearthing questions about the collective mind and memory, Anading presents us with a standpoint that is at once ubiquitous and particularly characteristic of his world view.

Tad Ermitaño - Pandacan Bridge

Location: P. Zamora bridge

Ermitaño's work for the Venice Architecture Biennale tackles how the notion of iconic architecture becomes paradoxical in a Philippine context where informal settlements abound. The artist points out that even though the two are intuitively opposite, iconic

architecture and informal settlements are in fact each other's shadow-twin. This relationship is rooted in the brute fact that the businesses and endeavors housed in iconic structures need staff to operate. Personnel requirements and the lack of affordable housing means that all large enterprises -- factories, malls, gated communities and so on -- effectively generate informal settlements within their vicinity. Through the use of three video installations in the shape of iconic monuments, Ermitaño is set to explore this duality, examining the peculiar socio-economic reality that nurtures their symbiotic growth.

Mark Salvatus – Chinatown

Location: Manila City

Year Established: 1594

For the Venice Architecture Biennale, Mark Salvatus once again draws his inspiration from Manila, particularly Chinatown, which is held to be the oldest settlement of Chinese emigrants in the world. The district has been the center of trade even prior to the Spanish colonial period, and is currently a microcosm of commerce in the Philippines, where huge industries are owned and controlled by family-run conglomerates. The cyclical course that the city has charted for itself -- from the destruction wrought by war, the construction of an identity bent by unbridled power, to the deterioration of social security by capitalism -- is the subject of Salvatus' work, in line with curatorial concept that initiates discourse on the lack of social consciousness (or blatant utter disregard) for the balance between economic, cultural, and humanitarian development.

Jorge Yulo – Mandarin Hotel

Location: Makati Avenue, Makati, 1226 Metro Manila

Architect: Leandro V. Locsin

Year Established: 1976

For Yulo, the Mandarin Hotel stood as the pivotal urban element sitting in the cradle of Makati's urbanization. It is a crossroad of two major streets of the central business district and its geometry pre-dated the CBD. Leandro Locsin's "Brutalist" expression and interpretation of that junction's urban significance set the DNA for the rest of the CBD's development. While the building is in the process of being chipped down to rubble, and the embers of preservation sentiments are still warm, it is an opportune time for Yulo to internalize the 40-year-old structure with whatever bit of connectivity he has left with its historicity. Yulo aims to be able to get a peek at the author's initial thoughts and exploratory processes.

8x8 Design Studio Co.– Ramon Magsaysay Building

Location: Quintos St, Malate, Manila, Metro Manila

Architect: A.J. Luz Associates, Pietro Belluschi, Alfred Yee Associates

Year Established: 1967

Built in 1967, the ingenious and unique structural design was done by A.J. Luz Associates in consultation with Italian-American designer Pietro Belluschi of Boston and Alfred Yee Associates of Honolulu, a pioneer in designing pre-cast, pre-stressed concrete building structures. The building designers decided to employ the use of a novel structural system -- the pre-cast, pre-stressed concrete beams and multiple in-place floor slabs and wall panels. The main structural element of the building is the cast-in-place concrete shear wall core over deep concrete piles. The structure has resisted lateral forces from earthquakes or wind load. It is designed like a big tree with the columns as its deep-rooted trunk that sways with the wind and movement of the ground. 8x8 will

study the Ramon Magsaysay Building as it becomes a center of economics and trades, as well as Manila's congested development.

CIS Design Consultancy – Pasig River

Pasig River is one of the most important environmental features of the city of Manila. It flows right through the heart of the Metro, anchored on one end by Manila Bay and Laguna Lake on the other. Historically, it was where trade among the pre-colonial tribes and kingdoms of Manila with its Chinese and Arab neighbors flourished, establishing *Ilog ng Pasig* as a main transportation artery. It was central to the daily activities of colonial Manila.

In modern times, its significance has sadly faded, with cities developing inland and motorways proliferating as the main mode of transportation. Shanties and factories have replaced the mansions of old, and its waterways have been polluted with filth. The Pasig River deserves its place as a landmark, as a "muhon", surviving despite indifference and neglect. These sculptures are intended to ignite contemplation of the potential role of a river in the life of a community. The sculptures are envisioned to serve as a reflection of our relationship with the Pasig River, through which one can compare its significance in history, in modernity, and project our hopes for its desired reality. If context is to be celebrated, the river can be perceived not only as an element that bisects a landform but also connects the urban fabric and the landmarks surrounding it. The country may find in its relationship with the river a unique identity that has been lost.

Lima Architecture – Makati Stock Exchange

Location: Ayala Avenue, Makati

Architect: Leandro V. Locsin
Year Established: 1971

According to Don Lino and Andro L. Magat of Lima Architecture, the issues of heritage preservation and moving forward to stir economic growth have been at the center of an on-going battle in the field of architecture: retaining cultural identity and creating the future. Lima Architecture explores the Makati Stock Exchange (MSE) building and deconstructs it to discover if it merits preservation without hindering new developments that help the economy to move forward. The firm's process considers if it is possible to "remove" heritage structures such as the MSE while retaining its "essence" to protect our cultural identity and memory. Lima asked, "Is it possible to design something new but still have heritage and cultural identity without sacrificing modern day solutions?"

Mañosa & Co. Inc.– Tahanang Pilipino
Location: CCP Complex Manila
Architect: Francisco Mañosa
Year Established: 1978

Tahanang Pilipino also known as the Coconut Palace is valued for its unique and locally sourced construction, the building utilizes the coconut tree for its architectural and design components. Its creation symbolized the beginning of many dimensions -- launching a design and materials revolution, exploring a flexible and democratic geometry, and developing into cultural icon -- while harnessing the power of people coming together in common cause, a concept known locally as *bayanihan* or community effort.

Akin to the concept of *binhi* (seed), the *Tahanang Pilipino* paints a picture of life and growth, planting the seed of innovation and

creativity that evolves through the decades. A statement of Filipino ingenuity, design and art, it is a work in progress - a myriad of the endless possibilities of indigenous materials in the spirit of discovery and collaboration. More than being a relic of the past, it is an iconic building whose soul has shined through the decades- and will continue to do so in the future, leaving an indelible imprint on the pages of history.

Eduardo Calma – Philippine International Convention Center

Location: Vicente Sotto St, Pasay, 1700 Metro Manila

Architect: Leandro V. Locsin

Year Established: 1976

According to Calma, there is no guarantee that built architecture will be preserved. As population increases in highly developed urban areas, structures are destroyed and neighborhoods erased to make way for much needed infrastructure, housing, institutional and commercial developments. New structural codes and building guidelines often conspire to make it more economical to demolish and rebuild than to preserve old buildings.

Calma chose the Philippine International Convention Center as one of the few remaining Leandro Locsin buildings surviving. Yet there is still no guarantee that this building will survive in the future. If the inevitable happens, the only hope is to preserve a memory of its presence and its architectural qualities in a new proposal.

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