

ALM 19 Philippines

Coming into President Rodrigo Duterte's fourth year in office, the Philippines continued to lag in corruption and human-rights related indices. Deaths in the anti-drug operations which have killed thousands to count have slowed down. Vice President Leni Robredo accepted her new role in a leadership position of the war against drugs, vowing instead for rehabilitation instead of death. On the other hand, the president's "Build Build Build" infrastructure program was called out for a terrible performance, including slow disbursements and delayed implementations.

Meanwhile, Duterte signed the Republic Act 11333 renaming the national museum to **National Museum of the Philippines**, strengthening its role as the primary institution of the government for management and development of museums and collections of national significance in the areas of arts, cultural, heritage, and natural history. The **National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)** acknowledged the role of museums and galleries in the national consciousness by inaugurating the Museum and Galleries Month in the Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA) (10/1), the first museum in the Visayas region dedicated to modern and contemporary art, holding the Philippine Museums Summit "Plotting Points" (10/7-9) in Yuchengco Museum, opening the first Mindanao Art Fair, Exhibit and Conference "Mindanao Art" (10/4-6), and continuing The National Art Fair "ManilArt 2019" (10/9-13).

The country's premiere arts institution, the **Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP)**, celebrated its 50th anniversary with a series of exhibitions including "POSTER/ITY: 50 Years of Art and Culture at the CCP" (3/21-5/26) showcasing the institution's archive of 2000 posters of exhibitions, performances, and events; and "Scenes Reclaimed: CCP 50 x Cinemalaya 15" (7/30-11/24) which interrogated independent cinema in the context of the national narrative for independence. The CCP also presented the two-man show "Normal Programming Will Resume Shortly" (8-21-11/3) with Poklong Anading's and Neil Fetting's multi-media works and installations capturing the idea of city in flux in urbanization and congestion.

Private museums continued to support modern and contemporary art. To pay homage to female artists in the forefront of art in contemporary societies in the region, the **Metropolitan Museum of Manila (MET)** mounted "Gendered Bodies in Southeast Asia" (1/25-3/9), curated by Tessa Maria Guazon and Fang-Tze Hsu, with works by Brenda Fajardo, Amanda Heng, Wu Mali, showing their historical legacies. The museum also held parallel shows "100 Years Deutscher Werkbund 1907|2007" (4/4-5/25) and "Art By Design: The Filipino Modern" (4/13-5/11), communicating both German and Philippine turning points in modern design. At the beginning of the year in **Ayala Museum**, all-National Artist for visual arts pieces from the Bank of the Philippine Islands' private art collection were showcased in "Images of Nation: National Artists in the BPI Collection" (2/12-5/19). The museum closed for building renovations in the

middle of the year, to re-open in 2020. The **Lopez Museum & Library** remains closed in preparation for its relocation to Makati City.

Three universities boast excellent contemporary art museums and galleries. The **Vargas Museum** at the University of the Philippines presented “1,976 Objects | Noel Ed De Leon” (8/9-9/7) gathering old and new found assemblages, installations, readymades, paintings, multi-media sculptures, and photographs in the London-based activist’s first exhibition in his home country. In “Visualizing Sound” (2/9-3/7), Gerardo Tan, Felicidad Prudente, and Sammy Buhle collaborated through video and audio documentation intersecting tradition. In “Poems from the Wind” (6/29-8/2), Constantino Zicarelli conversed the home and the museum by assembling found materials.

De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde is home to the **Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD)**, which held “The Center Will Not Hold” (3/7-5/5) featuring works by Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan, Shilpa Gupta, Heecheon Kim, Manny Montelibano, and Tintin Wulia, which critiqued the state of power and political structures in the contemporary present.

At Ateneo de Manila University, the **Ateneo Art Gallery (AAG)** through the Arete Creative Hub opened the Ignacio B Gimenez Ampitheater for outdoor installations with “Everywhere, There You Are” (4/7-9/8) by Christina Quisumbing Ramilo and Wawi Navarozza, which featured a kinetic wall of fluorescent fabric. The AAG also held its first collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona (MACB) through Catalan conceptual artist Domenech’s “Not Here, Not Anywhere” (2/17-5/26) curated by Teresa Grandas, featuring photographs, videos, archives, and installations which delved into the politics of urban planning. The coveted annual Ateneo Art Awards, now in its 16th year, was given to street artists Archie Oculos and Doktor Karayom, visual artist Constantino Zicarelli, and new-media artist Keb Cerda. The AAG later staged Agnes Arellano’s retrospective, “Inscapes” (10/13–1/20/19), showing the artist’s major sculptural works about the divine feminine, religious, and mythological themes.

The contemporary gallery scene in Metro Manila is buzzing with exhibition spaces along the Chino Roces Extension in Makati: at Makati Cinema Square, Karrivin Plaza and La Fuerza Compound. In Makati Cinema Square are the galleries **Underground, Eskinita** and **Kanto**. At the Alley in Karrivin Plaza is **The Drawing Room**, which showcased works by artists Bonifacio Rizal, Christina Quisumbing Ramillo, Cian Dayrit, Dominic Mangila, Kelly Ramos, Kolown, Lee Paje, Leo Abaya, and Roan Alvarez whose works manifest restrictions in contemporary society. In the same complex is the Manila space of the Bataan-based organization **Bellas Artes Projects**, which hosted the first solo exhibition of American artist Lucy Raven in Asia, “Internal Properties of the Earth” (1/29-4/13). The group exhibition “Fairest of the Fair” (5/7-7/27) by Pio Abad, Frances Wadsworth Jones, Analivia Cordeiro, Köken Ergun, and Jose Enrique Soriano perused vintage photographs of beauty pageants from the colonial era as departure points. At the same compound is **1335 Mabini**, which hosted the group show “City of Bawal” (4/27-6/8) with works by Brisa Amir, Datu Arellano, Kristoffer Ardeña, Jan Balquin, Lesley-Anne Cao, Miggy Inumerable, Czar Kristoff, Celine Lee, Cris Mora, Indy Paredes, Mark

Salvatus, Jel Suarez, and Isola Rosa, who explore urban questions concerning the complexities of the city, and later, showed video, installation, photography, drawing, and painting works by Poklong Anading depicting the rhythms of the body and the city in “Current” (6/22–8/3). **Artinformal**, in the Greenhills shopping center, and at the Karrivin Plaza featured “Recent Works” (6/22-7/27) by Oca Villamael, showcasing assemblages which reflect on taking hold of nature’s rhythms, as later, “On the Benefits of a Crowded Space” (9/14-10/12), Rodel Tapaya’s first gallery exhibition in the Philippines in almost a decade, showcasing paintings of spaces of congestion.

Also on Chino Roces Extension, **Silverlens** gallery posthumously exhibited Santiago Bose’s assemblages communicating folk consciousness in “Estate of Santiago Bose” (8/17-9/14) and Ray Albano’s archive of graphic design posters in “Ray Albano: Special Exhibition” (2/21-24) at Art Fair Philippines. In Malate, the art house **Calle Wright** presented sound, photography, and video works reflecting on architectural weathering by Nap Jamir II, Robin Rivera, and Tapio Snellman in “Underbelly” (3/22-6/23), and a two-person exhibition of paintings by Lao Lianben and videos by Lesley Anne Cao which expressed the artists’ quiet fixations and passions.

In the warehouse complex, La Fuerza, **Finale Art File** exhibited recent works in acrylic paintings and metal sculptures by Gus Albor in “Encompassing” (7/31-8/28), “One Hundred Still Life Paintings, 1947-2019” (2/15-3/8), a retrospective of paintings by Alfredo Roces, “Oh Baby Baby It’s A Wild World” (6/28-7/25), repurposed media works by Pete Jimenez, and “22ESB75CC” (9/5-30), autobiographical solo exhibition of Dex Fernandez.

“Back to Nature” (7/4–28) by multimedia artist Oscar Villamiel, and “Untitled Pantone” (9/11–29) by photographer and painter MM Yu. **Vinyl on Vinyl** had the group show “Composite Circuits” (6/7–30) featuring sound-emitting mechanical objects by eight emerging artists including Lesley Cao and Datu Arellano. **Archivo 1984** exhibited the works of conceptual photographer Nap Jamir II in “Images 1974–2015” (9/19–10/10) and archival materials in “Documents for Performance Art” (11/14–12/5).

In Fort Bonifacio, the artist-run **MO_Space** presented “no title (umbrellas)” (7/21–9/16), comprising Roberto Chabet’s installation of black umbrellas, stones and wood planks hung from the ceiling. In the adjacent space was Lani Maestro’s “Strange Thirst” (7/21–9/16), featuring framed drawings. For “What Is to Be Done?” (9/29–10/28) Nilo Ilarde packed dried-up pigments into four hollowed-out walls. Located in Quezon City, **Blanc Gallery** showed Buen Calubayan’s reconstructions of his household environment (9/15–10/6) and the mixed-media works of Arturo Sanchez Junior (11/10–12/1). **West Gallery** screened Cocoy Lumbao’s dense, multilayered video installations of public spaces (6/7–7/7), and Maria Cruz displayed her abstractions, referencing coins (11/10–12/29) at **Galleria Duemila** in Pasay.

Among independent initiatives, **98B Collaboratory** organizes artist talks and runs Hub: Make Lab for designers. **Project 20** is an artist-run space in Quezon City formed by Gail Vicente and Robert Langenegger. **Artist Playground** is a performance and art space with

its own exhibition area called the District Gallery. Artist-run collective **Thousandfold** focuses on contemporary photography with workshops and talks. **Better Living Through Xeroxography** holds an annual independent press expo for writers, musicians and artists. Since 2000, **Green Papaya Art Projects** operates a creative multidisciplinary platform that explores alternative approaches in the arts. **Project Space Pilipinas** in Lucban, Quezon, is run by artists offering opportunities for exhibits, residencies and collaborations.

The country's main art fair, **Art Fair Philippines** (3/1–4) held its sixth edition with 51 participating galleries from the Philippines and abroad. The organizers also host the annual **Art in the Park** (6/2–3) with more accessibly priced artworks. In Intramuros, the first Manila Biennale kicked off with the theme “Open City” (2/2–3/5) and the installations of 44 artists and collectives.

Outside the business districts, the **Pintô Art Museum**, in the Silangan Gardens in Antipolo, showcases Filipino contemporary art. In Cebu City, painter Sio Montera presented his distressed abstract paintings in “Un/Painting” (7/14–8/12) at **Qube Gallery**.

Elsewhere in the country, the focus of the Baguio art scene is the **BenCab Museum**, with other spots for art including **Gallery ErGo** in the Tam-Awan Village, and restaurant and art gallery **Oh my Gulay/ VOCAS**. In Bacolod, **Gallery Orange**, run by artist Charlie Co, organized “UnreningSugarlandia” (9/1–11/30), hosted at the newly renovated **Negros Museum**. The exhibition features more than 20 contemporary Negrense artists grappling with the province's sociopolitical and economic realities. In Roxas City, **VIVA ExCon**, the country's longest-running biennial, included talks and the show “Don't Even Bring Water (BisanTubig di Magbalon)” (11/8–1/31/19), involving artists from the Visayas region.

Philippine artists left their marks abroad. Maria Taniguchi participated in the 21st Biennale of Sydney (3/16–6/11). The main exhibition at the 12th Gwangju Biennale (9/7–11/11) featured Pio Abad and Maria Taniguchi. As a Gwangju Biennale Pavilion Project, the Philippine Contemporary Art Network held “Hothouse” (9/7–11/11) at the Leekangha Art Museum, with contributions by Indy Paredes, Renz Lee, Dominic Mangila and Mark Salvatus, as well as Korean artists. The Taipei Biennial, “Post-Nature – A Museum as an Ecosystem” (11/17–3/10/19), featured Martha Atienza's video installation, *Our Islands 11°16'58.4"N 123°45'07.0"E* (2017). In Brisbane, the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (11/24–4/28/19) included the works of Roberto Chabet, Martha Atienza, Kawayan de Guia and Nona Garcia. Pintô International, an arm of the Pintô Art Museum, organized two international exhibitions. In Tokyo, “Pintôkyo” (6/19–24) highlighted works by 56 Filipino artists, and in New York, “Pintô Manhattan Manila II” (10/4–15) showcased the diverse practices of more than 30 emerging and veteran artists. YasonBanal's video installation was part of the Philippine Pavilion at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale. In Lyon, Nikki Luna took part in “Deviations” (9/18–10/23), the 2018 Festival International des Textiles Extra Ordinaires.

There's much to look forward to in 2019. The Philippine Pavilion presentation at the 58th Venice Biennale in May will be Mark Justiniani's “Island Weather.” Curated by Tessa

Maria Guazon, the show will investigate the symbol of the island in fiction and reality. The Ateneo Art Gallery will launch the Ignacio B. Gimenez Public Art Program in amphitheater of Areté to encourage artists to pursue outdoor installation projects. Vargas Museum curator Patrick D. Flores will be the artistic director of the 2019 Singapore Biennale, opening in November.