THE COMPETITIVENESS ISSUE

62 Filipino ASEAN Architects.
0 cross-border projects.
What we need to get started.

The Supremes
Supreme Court design entries we love but didn’t make it

4 architects out of 66 National Artists
Why we need more.

WHEN YOU ASK FOR AN ICON

Reviews of the BDCA iconic design competition entries

PLUS

Design Education The University of San Carlos seeks critique to make their architecture program better
Furniture Design Kenneth Cobonpue sustains growth in the global market through collaboration • Schema galvanizes international partnerships
Awards Haligi ng Dangal can grow into the Filipino architecture prize if it does things right
Firm & Function BAAD Studio runs on practices learned through pilgrimages abroad
Carpe Diem No problem unsolvable and no walk too far for Cathy Saldaña of Arco Group and PDP Architects
Italian Masterpieces

MAMY BLUE ARMCHAIR. DESIGNED BY ROBERTO LAZZERONI.
REGGIA VENARIA, TORINO.

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TO BREAK THE RULES, YOU MUST FIRST MASTER THEM.

THE VALLÉE DE Joux, FOR MILLENNIA A HARSH, UNYIELDING ENVIRONMENT; AND SINCE 1875 THE HOME OF AUDEMARS PIGUET, IN THE VILLAGE OF LE BRASSUS. THE EARLY WATCHMAKERS WERE SHAPED HERE, IN AWE OF THE FORCE OF NATURE YET DRIVEN TO MASTER ITS MYSTERIES THROUGH THE COMPLEX MECHANICS OF THEIR CRAFT. STILL TODAY THIS PIONEERING SPIRIT INSPIRES US TO CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE THE CONVENTIONS OF FINE WATCHMAKING.
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Come Together

We had been on a roll for six years, steadily rising in the global competitiveness rankings, from 87th out of 138 countries, climbing our way up to 83th, 75th, 65th, 59th, and finally reaching 47th place in 2016.

This year, however, we slipped ten notches down to 57th place. The biggest culprit is the corrupt quagmire that is the Philippine government, which makes the Philippines the second worst country in the world (second to North Korea) to try to start a business, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report.

We need not look far for examples. In the local architecture community, architects trying to make an honest living know just how much of a pain it is to renew one's license. Just a couple of weeks ago, BluPrint received inquiries about whether one might avail of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) points for attending or giving talks at our BluPrint Circles. Another complained about how the professional organization does not hold regular CPD seminars in his province, making it impossible to comply with license renewal requirements unless one were to fly several times a year to Metro Manila.

It’s not that professionals don’t believe in CPD—who in his right mind would profess he is perfectly developed and needs no further education? The pros just don’t trust the organizations tasked with overseeing and accrediting the CPD program. Fifty thousand of them signed a petition for the good Senator Antonio Trillanes to reconsider the recently passed CPD Act.

If our professionals don’t trust their leaders with the most basic service of helping them develop relevant skills and core competencies, why would they trust these same leaders with their growth and development in an integrated ASEAN? These leaders have done nothing for years but push an exclusivist and protectionist agenda. They have fought the notion of cross-border and multi-disciplinary practices tooth and nail, and promoted strife between architecture and its allied disciplines.

The distrust is so prevalent, even the awarding of the title ASEAN Architect is suspect. A former UAP officer wrote BluPrint: “About 25 of those [62 Filipino] AAs were apparently mere awardees for loyalty to the UAP administration of 2014–2016. I did not want to join that loyalty club as I considered that UAP administration as probably the biggest failure (and potentially the most corrupted) in the annals of UAP history.”

Another UAP officer wrote us: “The conferment is done by a select few, whose nomination to the council did not go through stringent qualifications. Sitting as leader of organizations gets you the seat…Something nags me I’d better get this ASEAN Architect card while it is being awarded like a club, and it is easier to secure.”

The idea behind ASEAN integration is for ASEAN to unite so we could have the economies of scale to give us a fighting chance to compete in the global arena. How can the Philippines integrate with ASEAN when we Filipinos are unable to integrate with one another?

Surprisingly, the word “compete” does not have the dog-eat-dog, slugfest meaning that the word conjures for us today. It comes from the two Latin words com and petere, which mean “with, come together, agree, in common” and “aim for, strive, seek, be qualified, be suitable.” When will we Filipinos come together to strive for the same lofty aims? When will we work with each other so we may be suitable for the higher purposes for which we are intended?

Thankfully, we need not look far for examples. Brother Bela Lanyi of the University of San Carlos blew our editorial team away when he shared how his school’s Architecture department humbly submitted themselves to an informal appraisal by accreditors of the Canberra Accord, to find out how they might improve their standards of education and be a world-class architecture school. Then, there are design firms who offer their work up to scrutiny in local and foreign competitions, so that they may stretch their creative and problem-solving muscles, and test the quality of their ideas against that of others. And, there are other design firms like Schema and Cobonpue, who, without prompting by government or international treaty, have been actively collaborating with designers from different parts of the world because they want to be exposed to fresh perspectives and new techniques.

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Who should be nominated as the next National Artist for Architecture?

In My Opinion

Ed Calma. I want somebody younger because you want the younger people to relate, to get the millennials engaged with architecture. And Ed is daring with design, hindi aiy ehat, eh. He is worthy of the award.

Chat Fores, Principal,
Chat Fores Design Studio

Alex B. Medalla. His practice is one of the few to take progressive architecture here in Cebu and the Philippines to the next level. He inspires younger architects to do the same. His designs always make me look with greater scrutiny than I would with other projects.

Charisse Seniedo-Osmeña
Principal, CSO Architects

There are few no-brainers in architecture. One of them is Francisco "Bobby" Mañosa, and it should have happened long ago. Past controversies aside, you would be hard-pressed to find someone who has done as much for our country in terms of a nationalistic approach to design and practice. When it comes to our lexicon of what characterizes truly “Filipino,” we might not share the exact same views (and really, who does in this field?), but his work and legacy are an undeniable treasure in the discourse of what it means to create great Filipino architecture. Francisco Mañosa deserves the honor, and he deserves it now.

Alexander Dominic Mayoralgo
Architect, Leandro V. Locsin Partners

Francisco “Bobby” Mañosa’s name has been equated with Filipino architecture for many years now. He is one of the few—if not the only one—who has been steadfast about Filipino design. I once read that he is so devoted to his vision he declined lucrative projects whose owners wanted a foreign design for their buildings. I think of him as the great Renaissance architect Michelangelo who stubbornly stood by his design principles. Mañosa’s ethos is legible in his renowned works like the Coconut Palace and Amanpulo.

Karl Aries Emerson F. Cabialo,
Architect, Writer, and Faculty,
University of San Carlos School of Architecture

One thing that we haven’t had as a National Artist is a planner and that’s my bias because of my practice. One of my mentors in planning is the former dean of the UP College of Architecture, Ronnie Manahan. Not too well known, but his influence on people, architects, planners, and the profession is huge. He would have my vote.

Joel Luna, Architect,
Environmental Planner,
Principal, Joel Luna Planning and Design

Bobby Mañosa for exploring the spirit and form of contemporary Filipino architecture, and never compromising that to satisfy the whims of potential clients who wished him to service their desire for other international styles. For staying true and unwavering to his principle, and suffering for it: Thank you, Bobby! You showed us how it’s done.

Edwin Barcia, Partner, T.I. Vasquez Architects & Planners, Inc.
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IN MY OPINION

Bobby Mañosa deserves the next award. It is long overdue. Because of political issues last time, it did not happen. It should push through now. It would be good to see him personally receive the award.

Kevin Nieves, Principal, Headroom

Lor Calma should be nominated. He produced iconic works in the fields of architecture, industrial design, and interior design. He is one of the best yet he remains so down to earth. I met him at a furniture exhibit once and asked if I could have my picture taken with him. Instead being a snob like some known personalities, he was so welcoming and even said it was an honor to be photographed with a lovely lady. That really made my day!

Cai Lim Regala, Principal, CRL Designs

Carlos Arguelles. His immense contribution to Philippine architecture paved the way for the International Style in the country. He designed efficient structures suited to local conditions such as the Philam Life Bldg and the PNB Building in Escolta. In other words, he appropriated the International Style for the tropical context.

Paolo Quizon, Senior Architect, Primea Design Group

A National Artist is one who has made compelling and meaningful contributions to the advancement of Philippine arts and architecture. Notwithstanding the controversy of Bobby Mañosa’s being accorded the award and then being stripped of it, he deserves to be recognized for his pioneering spirit in defining Filipino architecture. His designs have been the benchmark of many Filipino architects for years. And his substantial body of work continues to make an impact on today’s generation of designers.

Choie Funk, Principal, Atelier Funk and Associate Dean, School of Design and Arts, DLS - College of St. Benilde

Without naming anyone, someone driven and continues to push for the Filipino practice of architecture, not necessarily the bahay kubo, but someone who can merge our heritage with how we live today as well as the social aspect of architecture. That person deserves the award.

Nikki Buensalido, Principal, Buensalido+Architects

If the 1972 cut-off year for the life of the architect were not in place, I’d nominate Juan Arellano. He contributed prolifically to the architecture of our Commonwealth era and interpreted international styles to reflect Filipino values. For example, for art deco flourishes he used mangoes and other local fruits. He helped plan Quezon City and architecturally represented the country all over the world. He was a renaissance man full of hope and vision for the Philippines.

Stephanie Tan-Branquinho, Principal, SpaceFabrik

Francisco Mañosa would be the top of mind. But I would like to make a case for Alex Medalla. His oeuvre exudes a high degree of quality and a relentless attention to detail and excellence. His work has inspired a new generation of architects. If the selection of the recent Pritzker Prize awardees is any indication, the juries placed greater emphasis on quality over quantity of work. That should also be the case in the selection of our National Artists.

Joel Ong, Design Director, urbanshiftstudio

In BluPrint Volume 3 2017, there were words missing in our edit of the response of Heidrun Milan. We republish it here in its entirety: Should architects without interior design licenses be allowed to design interiors?

“No, because Interior Design is a specialty that should be studied. You can tell when an interior designer designed a space because it has warmth and a sense of completeness. Interior Designers are concerned with creating memorable environments.”

Bobby Mañosa deserves the next award. It is long overdue. Because of political issues last time, it did not happen. It should push through now. It would be good to see him personally receive the award.

Kevin Nieves, Principal, Headroom
THE ITALIAN SENSE OF BEAUTY

KITCHENS, LIVING AND BATHROOMS

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ast June 8 2017, BluPrint Circles was held at the Smeg Park Terraces, Makati City with Royal Pineda, principal architect of BUDJI+ROYAL Design+Architecture, presenting the firm’s vision for NAIA Terminal 1. “It’s like inviting visitors into your home without sprucing up your house before the visit,” Pineda recalled the push to take on the project. He also shared the lessons and the issues of taking pro bono work. In 2011, Pineda along with Budji Layug and Kenneth Cobonpue proposed schemes for the rehabilitation of the terminal, then considered in public polls as the world’s worst airport. The schemes focused on decongesting the floor area, improving the atmosphere, and developing a park.

Smeg Philippines president Tom Concepcion welcomed the guests that evening. He also reiterated the wide range of price points their products cover. After the program, some lucky guests won polished steel kettles and toasters that were raffled off.

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The theme of the BluPrint Circles event on July 6, held at the ABCDE Lounge of the Wilcon IT Hub, Pasong Tamo Extension, was le parti pris or the big idea in architecture. Anna Sy (CS Architecture) and Dominic Galicia (Dominic Galicia Architects) were both invited to explore the notion of parti in the context of their previous projects. Anna Sy acclimatized the audience to the abstract idea of the parti by presenting three house projects—Real Residence, Cypress Residence and Balai Taal Residence—predominantly through floor plans to reinforce the firm’s approach of designing inside out. Sy also presented their De La Salle University Law School project, which was originally designed as the business school. The project sparked the question of whether the parti is inflexible in such cases to which Sy reaffirmed the parti as being the guiding principle towards an outcome.

Whereas Sy calmly makes no distinction between the parti and the concept, claiming they are one and the same, Dominic Galicia postulated whether they are actually separate entities. Galicia’s ecclesiastical oeuvre provided the focus of his talk, as his effervescent presentation style illuminated the second part of the evening’s discourse. The St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori Church allowed Galicia to enter a soliloquy-like meditation of the parti. Galicia formulated his definition of the parti as he walked the audience through plans, sections and elevations of geometrical balance with a constant reference to Christian iconography. These divine design drivers were also explored through the Church of St. Benedict, the Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Loyola Memorial Chapels and Columbary. Galicia also presented the Persian vernacular-inspired Shabestan House and the firm’s much-anticipated National Museum of Natural History project. Throughout his presentation Galicia was keen to stress that whilst the architect’s parti may not be fully comprehended by the client or end user, they implicitly experience the effects of the parti.

The contrasting yet overlapping attitudes towards the parti was most apparent when the architects in the room chipped in with their interpretations during the Q&A session. Sy further explains that preconceived ideas are acceptable but become problematic when preconceived forms arise. Galicia then metaphorically compared the parti to a set of steel rebars reinforcing the conceptual concrete.

The healthy debate was enlivened with views from SpaceFabrik’s Stephanie Tan-Branquinho (the concept is the language, the parti is the grammar to express the language), De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde’s Associate Dean Maria Cynthia Funk (how does the architect reconcile with a client who has their own parti?) and Joson Design’s Ge JASON (the parti as a discovery process through repeated diagram drawings in the UP Diliman studio he teaches). The definitions of parti rebounded as quickly as the microphone was passed round—in a way, an analogy of the multitude of directions any given project can head towards.

With the heady theoretical dialogue reaching a zenith, Anna Sy and Dominic Galicia concluded with some advice that they both could wholly agree on—the parti should be led by the set of cumulative decisions made along a project’s path towards appropriate architectural expression.

**Joining the Parti**

Architects gather round to discuss the ‘big idea’ in BluPrint Circles’ event in Wilcon IT Hub, with speakers Anna Sy and Dominic Galicia.

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COLLABORATIVE COBONPUE

To keep growing in the global market, Kenneth Cobonpue’s been getting designers from around the world to design for his brand.

Photos courtesy of Kenneth Cobonpue
At this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, Cebu-based Kenneth Cobonpue launched several new designs, including a third collaboration with London-based Italian furniture designer Federica Capitani.

“I work hard to avoid getting boxed into a personal aesthetic, so I collaborate with other designers to explore new possibilities and integrate points of view from the region and other parts of the world. There’s still so much beauty out there to discover, and learning from my peers is one way to do that,” Cobonpue told BluPrint.

How does he choose whom to work with? “I don’t pick out personalities based on their marketing potential but on the strength of their design. Among them are our very own Leeroy New, Stanley Ruiz, Luisa Robinson, and Christy Manguerra; as well as Ross Lovegrove from London, Hertel & Klarhoefer from Berlin, London-based Federica Capitani, Hong Kong-based Dutchman Danny Fang, and, most recently, Sérgio Matos from Brazil.”

What these designers bring to the table are originality, new techniques, and a different perspective, says Cobonpue, who provides direction, selects the materials, and determines the best course to execute their designs in his Cebu factory. He points out, however, that the designers he collaborates with need little introduction to what his brand stands for. “Since they are already aware of my brand, I allow them to incorporate their own vision and creativity to produce something beautiful, contemporary, and global. Yes, I choose the materials. We don’t compromise their designs because our production process is primarily handmade, and there is nothing that a pair of skilled hands can’t work with. We also have comprehensive engineering and design teams that execute these designs well. It’s vital to work together to make something great.”

Kenneth Cobonpue’s booth at the 2017 Salone del Mobile in Milan was a collaboration with Federica Capitani.

Below: Whimsical, long-legged *Kala* vases and *Mermaid* chaise lounge by Hertel & Klarhoefer

**Opposite page:** *Fandango* Pendant Light by Danny Fang

While Cobonpue’s 2017 collection was unveiled at the Fiera Milano, his classic designs, like the much beloved *Bloom* chair, *Chiquita* ottoman, and his *Trame* collection, an earlier collaboration with Capitani, served as centerpieces and accents at Vivienne Westwood’s Milan showroom. To see pictures of Cobonpue at Westwood’s store, Download a free QR code scanner on the App Store or on Google Play.
Schema may seem like a new presence in the local design market, but the brand taps into a well of industry wisdom. Mother company Kalikasan Crafts has over 24 years of experience in home décor exportation. And owners Jerry Jiao and Celia Gamboa-Jiao, through the prompting of their sons, are eager to share their wire objects with a new generation of purveyors.

At least two new collections will be gracing and rearranging their new showroom in Ortigas Center every year. The timeline for product development is dictated by the two major international furniture and design shows the brand plans on joining. Besides Manila FAME, Schema has exhibited at Salone del Mobile in Milan, Maison et Objet in Paris, and the International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York. New products are developed in the four months before a show. On top of being a venue for marketing their products, the Jiaos consider international fairs as platforms to meet creative people. “It’s different when you showcase abroad. You meet buyers, designers, and, more importantly, people who would critique your product. They ask questions and give suggestions. It’s good for you as a designer,” says Jiao.

Galvanized iron wire is the fabric of Schema designs. However, its soul and siren call is the dedicated team of craftsmen creating each piece by hand. Schema’s young catalog is built on founder Celia Gamboa-Jiao’s designs and peppered with international collaborations sparked by attraction to the tactile process. “I think Europeans are tired of the machine-made. When you go to a European factory, there are only a few workers left. Most products are mass-produced, perfect, and uniform. Objects are losing the connection with their makers. So when exhibition goers see our booth, they can sense that it’s different,” says Gamboa-Jiao.
Schema products are handmade in the Kalikasan Crafts factory in Antipolo. The brand began with lighting products, which were launched in Salone del Mobile’s Euroluce in 2013, but has since expanded their range to furniture.
“What I like about young designers is they start with a story. Because a chair will always be a chair, so what sets it apart is a story of how the design came to be,” says Jiao.

Collaborations date back to 2013, the year of Schema’s conception and its first European tour as part of Design Philippines, a Department of Trade and Industry effort to exhibit local manufacturers abroad with the hope of developing globally-recognized brands like Kenneth Cobonpue. Ten manufacturers were asked to develop brands just for the initiative, and the government facilitated and subsidized the Design Philippines booth in the shows. Three of the ten Design Philippines brands carry on today.

Intrigued by the material and know-how (the intellectual property is registered under Kalikasan Crafts) that goes into a Schema object, designers like Anon Pairot and Segolene Aebi-Faye offered their services. “Partnerships are important because we can’t be present in the entire world by ourselves. The designers we work with introduce our product to their countries. In return, they are introduced here in the Philippines and wherever Schema is present,” shares Gamboa-Jiao. Schema is distributed in The Netherlands, Poland, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, and the USA. The founders are also on the lookout for like-minded local designers. Their Filipino roster so far includes interior designer Budji Layug and New-York-based industrial designer Stanley Ruiz, whose Petiolé suspension lamps were launched in the most recent Manila FAME.

Working with independent designers involves a lot of back-and-forth feedback, especially with the ones based abroad. Since Schema crafts objects by hand, management of expectations is crucial. At the start of every project, the Jiaos are quick to ask what the designers want to achieve and figure out how far they can execute the design. Every partnership so far has added a story to Schema’s catalog. “What I like about young designers is they start with a story. Because a chair will always be a chair, so what sets it apart is a story of how the design came to be,” says Jiao.

A collaboration with Atelier Oï is expected this year. The Swiss design studio, whose portfolio includes work for Foscarini, B&B Italia, and Louis Vuitton, hunted and got in touch with Schema after seeing their products at a fair in Europe. The Jiaos were pleasantly surprised because they could never afford the atelier on their own. Attracting such high-calibre designers was all the doing of Filipino craftsmanship.

When asked how else they keep their brand competitive, the founders tell us their products meet international standards for electrical components. The certification process is an investment they consider worthwhile. While other companies would only export the caja (exteriors) of products, Schema is permitted to ship complete lamps.

They also tell us that our local designers can grow by being intentional with the collaboration process. When young designers encounter commission briefs like “Basta, I want ten chairs by this date,” they should seek out more thoughtful parameters and an exchange of ideas with their clients. It’s a way to incite better design thinking—something the Jiaos are constantly developing one collection at a time.

The A Coté table lamp by Segolene Aebi-Faye is the outcome of the French designer’s visit to the Siargao after Typhoon Haiyan. She saw the stilted houses askew and liked the details of the fishermen’s cone-shaped hats, which served as inspiration for the lamp. Top: Schema’s most recent collaboration, the Petiolé suspension lamp by Stanley Ruiz, is the brand’s first experiment with integrating another material with galvanized iron wire. In this object, they used natural marble with an electroplating termination for the body shell.
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Casa Europa - Porcelanosa Philippines
Dornbracht gives the kitchen’s wet working area more freedom of movement. The German brand intertwines design and functionality with its latest product, Sync, a pull-down fitting faucet with spray function. Sync has a wide projection and the ability to swivel 360 degrees. The tall spout can be extended downwards and has a flexible pull-out hose that can be easily directed for whatever task at hand. It also has a matt-black, heat-insulated grip that fits the hand perfectly.

The 28-millimeter-wide spout, developed in-house, offers two flow modes: a regular, clear, laminar flow and a powerful spray. A button located on the rear of the black pull-out element allows easy switching between laminar flow and spray flow. The long lever and ergonomic 90-degree opening angle make it easier to dispense the right amount of water. Lime scale can be cleaned off the jet face by simply wiping it.

Sync’s dynamic design language skillfully combines Dornbracht’s first-class functionality with iconic high-quality aesthetics. The fitting’s visual elements are characterized by the tapered transition between the body and spout, and the inner contour of the groove-free lever running parallel to it.

Sync is available in plated polished chrome and platinum matte finishes. A design variant with a circular spout is also available. Like all the other fittings from the premium manufacturer, Sync is 100% Made in Germany, a mark of high-standard quality.

Dornbracht is exclusively distributed by Focus Global Inc. located at 11/F Twenty-four Seven McKinley, 24th St. corner 7th Ave., McKinley Parkway, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig City.
Dornbracht introduces Vaia, a new series of fittings in the bathroom. VAIA is a result of Dornbracht’s engagement with current design trends. Its delicate spout picks up a classic shape and transposes it to a new and more open silhouette. Vaia’s clear design language blends elegantly into the mix of present-day living styles, and at the same time, maintains the progressive attitude that characterizes all Dornbracht design series.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

The Tyranny of Memory

BY TOBIAS GUGGENHEIMER
Life comes into existence with the knowledge, instinct, and functional skills necessary to maintain and reproduce itself. The instructions required by each of our billions of tiny cells are encoded in DNA—our helical inventory of inherited memories. They are not induced by thoughts or images and don’t represent shadows of stored events. They were not triggered by a flood of emotions. They are as real—even more real—and perhaps more reliable than are memories constructed from our interactions with the world.

When designing, we see, and we look, and we remember, all the while under the impression we are consciously aware of and in control of the process. But are we unknowingly influenced by powerful, yet hidden urges that promote the safely familiar over the dangerously experimental? Is that our (hidden) nature?

In design school, we glibly promote the mood board as the logical beginning point for design investigation. I worry this is a lazy approach to the initiation of a design problem—one that inadvertently pushes students to seek ‘inspiration’ from the work of others and encourages plagiarism. If our nature predisposes us to follow established patterns, this kind of exercise can frustrate the search for existential authenticity.

At SoFA Design Institute, we initiate problem-solving with a number of exercises that reorient the investigation inwards. Students hold a mirror to themselves, identifying issues that are personally meaningful. They write stories, compose song or poetry, examine fears, resuscitate dreams, and identify ambitions. They are encouraged to seek inspiration that is unique and meaningful.
We are born in architecture. We live in architecture. We die in architecture. From the cradle to the grave, we are rarely disconnected from her ubiquitous presence. We seem compelled by an irresistible urge to distance ourselves from the invigorating chaos of nature. Even when we are not in or around buildings, we are likely ensconced within environments adhering to a familiar order. Driving on a highway, sitting in an airplane, or relaxing in a park, our quest for a temporary distancing from the order of design may be frustrated by her extensive reach.

I was recently in Israel to perform an ocular visit for an upcoming SoFA Design Institute tour. (We will be exploring that country’s art and design scene in April 2018.) Within the walls of Jerusalem’s old city, where the ghosts of antiquity inspire contemporary designers, I chanced upon an ancient street. The Cardo Maximus, excavated and rehabilitated just a few years ago, was the main commercial boulevard of Jerusalem during roughly 300 years of Roman rule.

What struck me was how profoundly familiar the scene felt. A broad, column-lined street, the raised sidewalk, congested shops—just how a commercial avenue is organized today. The prototype of our contemporary mall is almost 2,000 years old.

The experience made me wonder. Can we demand both creativity and originality at this moment in the unfolding of civilization? To what extent is the designer obligated to seek originality? Is originality even possible at this stage of design evolution? Is our fate and destiny to live at a moment in time when everything has already come before us in some shape or form? Are we living in a giant mood board from which there is no escape?
NEVER TOO WANTED
A NEW TAKE

Antonio Cittero veers from his usual process with a Maxalto collection

A ntonio Cittero makes a prominent appearance at Milan Design Week 2017 with his Maxalto collection incorporating new pieces Caratos and Astrum. After years of presenting products that use artisanal materials and processes, Cittero felt the need to create something new. "I felt the need to offer a "moulded" product, a chair with a fusion structure, thanks to a significant industrial investment by the company,” says the designer.

Caratos is a contemporary chair designed with the elegance of basic, geometric form, with closely calibrated thickness and detailed graphite paint or amber paint die-cast aluminum. This chair is visually light due to its linearity and lightweight for easy handling. The seat and backrest is finished with leather, recalling “the memory of some twentieth century objects.”

Astrum, on the other hand, is the latest in the family of tables, modeled by the special "sawhorse" base-frame. The triangular base acts as support that gives the structure both lightness and solidity. The tabletop is available various finishes of wood, marble, or natural wenge with the possibility of a central marble section.

Together Caratos and Astrum form a dining set that perfectly matches any interior space - from classical to modern.

Maxalto is exclusively distributed in The Philippines by Focus Global Inc. at Twenty-Four Seven McKinley Building, 24th Street corner 7th Avenue McKinley Parkway, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. The Astrum table is available in rectangular and round forms. The Caratos chair is available in Koto, Gamma, Beta, Kasia, Kora, and Alfa leather.
Italian design company Boffi's bespoke division unveiled Cove, a new kitchen collaboration with Zaha Hadid Design (ZHD) at this year's Salone del Mobile.

Equipped with areas for cooking, washing, and conviviality, the sculptural monobloc boasts of curves that are indisputably Zaha. Cove by ZHD is available in two sizes and a variety of materials including hand-finished natural stone, selected wood and high-performance surface material Corian®.

Inspired by their late founder's projects, the firm referenced the fluidity of MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome and the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku. Hadid's signature is evident in the sinuous cavity in front of the island, which functions as an area for stools. Appliances and cabinets with seamless handles are placed on the other side.

Cove was originally conceived and produced for 520 West 28th Street condominium in Chelsea, Hadid's first New York building and one of her last projects. This product won at the Muuuz International Awards 2017 held in Paris and NYC x Design Awards held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.

Boffi is exclusively distributed by Focus Global Inc., located at the Ground Floor of The Residences at Greenbelt, Esperanza Street in Makati City.

Cove by Zaha Hadid Design is available in two sizes and in all finishes of the Boffi range.
MAKING THE GRADE

The University of San Carlos gets out from its comfort zone to become a highly competitive international school for architecture and design

By Br. Bela Lanyi SVD

Just as the Department of Education’s K-12 program aims for educational reform attuned with 21st-century realities of trade liberalization and the growth of global markets—architectural education in the Philippines likewise needs reform. I am pleased to share here some of the experiences of the University of San Carlos (USC) Department of Architecture where I have been an architecture instructor for over ten years. The university’s successes abroad (at the World Architecture Festival in Singapore) and at home (top ten in recent licensure examinations) may be attributed to the school’s openness to innovation.

Today, we are systematically preparing for 2018, our first year with full enrollment after 2016 and 2017, when Philippine universities were deprived of freshmen as a result of adopting the K-12 program. According to the government, credentials of universities will be revisited in 2018 and those that do not fulfill the Department of Education’s requirements regarding physical facilities and faculty qualifications may be disqualified.

Before the K-12 program took effect, the USC’s Architecture Department was proud of a growing number of applicants: every year 320 to 350 new students and around 60 to 70 graduates. But because of the construction boom in Metro Cebu, few architects could dedicate themselves to teaching, and we had to employ instructors not fully versed in the discipline and the content of university education. USC is now making efforts to update the professional and educational profile of our instructors, including graduate studies abroad. Thus in 2018, freshmen will benefit from well-educated instructors.
The Educational Realities

The excellent performance of the USC thus far is based on the school’s ability to recognize areas for improvement and on its determination to directly address challenges, which are the following:

Entrance examinations

To improve the Architecture Department’s competitiveness, the USC has invested significant funds, time, and effort into redesigning our entrance exams, which are unique in the whole university. Still, our selection process of student applicants is not design-based or portfolio-based.

Impersonal design teaching

The large class sizes in design subjects (and other courses as well) minimize the opportunities for personal instruction. Furthermore, the students have expressed the sentiment that their teachers just teach “their own stuff” and there is little commonality among them. Thus, not much is learned from one teacher that is valid for the next teacher. Also, students think only Building Code rules can be taken from teacher to teacher—but even their interpretation of these rules are very different. There is also the perception that “to survive” a course, one must slavishly comply with the teachers’ instructions. Those who think this way do poorly in departmental examinations and contests.

Weak detailing skills

What foreign visitors notice in our students’ thesis designs is that despite great ingenuity, the authors do not know how their proposed special features will be executed. Detailing skills are hardly present. Even among practitioners, there is a lack of understanding and recognition (and willingness to pay) for detail planning, which in the global design industry is a field of creativity and specialization.

Poor communication skills

Big group sizes prevent students from discussing their designs and developing their communication skills. Although the students believe juries prefer “ideas” to working drawings and want to incorporate “ideas” into their entries, they don’t know how. While they may have studied “architectural ideas” in Theory or History of Architecture subjects, most have only memorized the textbook definitions of these ideas, and not understood them. With poor communication skills, student contestants do not grasp that extravagant renderings do not constitute awardable ideas.

Reflection considered as waste

The thinking of many third-year design students is not process-oriented. Concerned primarily with “survival,” they look to the end product only for fear of losing time. Most students look only at the pictures of architectural books and magazines without reading the text, which would explain how the designer realized the design. Furthermore, too much is demanded from students regarding drafting. The faculty’s emphasis on drafting-intensive plates is perhaps a reflection of decades of the demand by foreign firms for draftsmen, rather than problem-solving architects.

Lack of competitive skills

More and more of our students have been participating in design competitions recently, but they are not sufficiently supported by the school, which prioritizes regular school activities and is concerned about treating students “equally.” We need to review this policy and support our best students without turning our backs on “average” students.

The Needs of The Profession

As I see it, the following educational outcomes should be produced by our University to meet the needs of the global architectural profession.

First, better programming skills are required to estimate building volumes correctly. Second, the architect must be aware of how manipulating a given building volume will affect the building’s reality. Third, the design should incorporate knowledge the students learned in other subjects. Fourth, better communication skills should be achieved. Fifth, education should lead to a bigger number of specialized architects taking masteral, doctorate, and other postgraduate training courses.

In other words, as advanced planning, presenting, and execution technologies flood the Philippines and Filipino architects are invited to other countries as professionals, we must prepare our graduates for the challenges of 21st-century borderless practice. The problems listed above prevent us from preparing our students for real life in all its complexity and undermine the competitiveness of even our most talented students. Not only the University of San Carlos but the entire Philippine architectural education system needs structural change! We are willing and determined to be the country’s flagship of it.

Proposed Change Towards Studios

The subject “Architectural Design” (10 semesters) is the synthesis of skills and knowledge coming from other courses. Such an integration needs tremendous support from the school, faculty, and student peers, particularly in later years. The studio, as a working community of learners, will provide the intellectual, creative, and psychological support students need, in high contrast to the present situation where professors pressure students unnecessarily by overemphasizing diligence and demanding (and glorifying) all-nighters. In the studio set-up, students may focus more on the meaning behind the work they do because studios are communicative.

Idea-focused design teaching

Many students do not grasp what it is that “pushes a design through.” Exposure to the opinions of others, being taught to think critically, better teachers, and an awareness of global standards, will establish in students a solid foundation to find deeper values beyond the personal preferences of particular teachers. Students will also discover their strengths, learn how to mobilize their resources for success, and dissolve the fear of what I call “design irrationality”—a disbelief in rational criteria for judging design.

Many students feel that design grades are subjective—that a design plate praised by one teacher would well be rejected by another. The first step to achieving idea-focused education is a design-based and portfolio-based entrance examination.

Next, design subjects should introduce buildings in their multi-dimensional complexity. Design teachers who focus only on floorplans following the dictum, “form follows function” do not do the students a service.

Teaching History of Architecture should not be rote memorization of facts or limited to drafting exercises, but should serve as an eye-opener to ideas—the vision and the thinking that make individual buildings outstanding. The same should be true of all other subjects, like Building Technology and even Visual Techniques. The Theory of Design, a subject at the very beginning of architectural studies, must imbibe in students basic form-giving rules. Later, another subject, Theory of Architecture, should be taught in the higher years in a pristine and purely theoretical way (with practical exercises not compromised), through reading the writings of famous architects.

Teaching detailing based on research

Detail planning should be strengthened in subjects like Building Technology, in response to the new materials and technologies, as well as the competition—able designers from other countries.
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We cannot assume that traditional building materials will automatically work with new technologies and vice versa, without proper adaptation. Imported new materials and technologies may also be inappropriate in the local context. Teaching architectural details demands competent research by the professor. Competence in research distinguishes the professor from an instructor who only teaches what is given to him to teach.

The humane factor
This count! Working for human integrity recognizes the person behind the assignments. Good time management is based on a correct understanding of the human person. Filipinos, who with their value system would be culturally predisposed to being sympathetic and humane, could use a more professional attitude towards work and zeal for excellence.

Promoting Competitiveness
One of the new ways the University of San Carlos is trying to raise the competitiveness of our architecture students is the Experimental DESIGN 7-8 Studio. In a recent experiment, the USC separated one section of fourth-year students and assigned them to a studio room. While other Design 7-8 teachers are alone with their classes in a huge drafting hall, the studio is not only guided by their home instructor, Architect Marsha Presas, but is also frequently visited by consultants in various fields: Structural Science on the load-bearing structures, Building Technology with Utilities, Landscape Architecture, and Interior Design. The 30 students of the studio are divided into smaller groups to ensure cyclical meetings with each consultant. In contrast to the regular classes, studio students regularly have to defend their designs. This initiative is a huge step forward. For even bigger steps, we strive for international accreditation.

The Canberra Accord
In January of 2015, four universities met at the University of the Philippines in Diliman with representatives of the Korean Architecture Accreditation Board (KAAB): UP-Diliman, Far-Eastern University, Mapua Institute and University of San Carlos. We wanted to find out how to be recognized by the Canberra Accord, an agreement signed by seven accreditation bodies or validation agencies in architectural education in Canada, China, Korea, Mexico, South Africa, the USA, and the UK. The purpose of the Canberra Accord is “to facilitate the portability of educational credentials between the countries whose accreditation/validation agencies signed the Accord.” It does not address matters related to professional registration or licensure but “recognizes the substantial equivalency of accreditation/validation systems in architectural education” of the signatory countries. (See canberraaccord.org.)

The accredited signatory system of the Accord serves as an “external quality assurance agency.” The goal is for the accredited countries’ architecture educational systems to “be reflective of the core principles of the UNESCO-UIA Charter for Architectural Education.” (See uia-architectes.org.) Said Charter emphasizes curriculum development in 16 fields, including:

1) Awareness of responsibilities toward human, social, cultural, urban, architectural, and environmental values, as well as architectural heritage
2) Adequate knowledge of the history and theories of architecture and the related arts, technologies and human sciences
3) Creative competence in building techniques, founded on a comprehensive understanding of the disciplines and construction methods related to architecture
4) Adequate knowledge of project financing, project management, cost control and methods of project delivery
5) Training in research techniques as an inherent part of architectural learning, for both students and teachers

Among other newly accredited countries (currently of “provisional status”) are Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Spain. Our hope is that the Philippines also be accredited. After the first meeting in Manila, representatives of the KAAB made an informal visit to Cebu at the University of San Carlos. In preparation for this visitation, we submitted our curriculum and the transcripts of students so the accreditors could compare them with their Student Performance Criteria (SPC).

Informal feedback from the accreditors
The unofficial visit of the Korean accreditors (KAAB) raised several discussion points:

The accreditors said we had too many irregular students. They wanted to ensure their criteria (SPC) are met through compulsory courses, but the USC covers them only in elective courses. They criticized the big group sizes in all our subjects, preventing one-on-one mentorship.

Except for the USC’s new experimental studio, the accreditors remarked on the absence of the studio approach and proper physical facilities in our design classes. In their view, studio classes should be supported by communicative skills and individual tutoring of at least 40 minutes of “contact time” weekly. Fulfilling such a requirement would require a radical transformation of our department because the USC at present provides students only 15 minutes weekly at best (600 minutes of design class weekly, shared by 35 students).

Moreover, the Korean accreditors found our curriculum demands too many credits, resulting in the superficial teaching of too many topics, rather than in-depth study of subjects that matter. Again, for the USC to comply with such a standard presents a real conflict because we are obliged to follow the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which demands so many more subjects than the Koreans. Hopefully, with the introduction of the educational reform program (K–12), several minor subjects may be designated to the high schools.

Finally, the accreditors consider our teachers overloaded and in need of higher degrees and better qualifications. In their view, subjects should have head teachers who in fact coordinate the development of each subject. Right now, our department has clusters for groups of subjects, but the cluster heads are mere coordinators without jurisdiction.

Out of Our Comfort Zones
The University of San Carlos is glad to enjoy the CHED’s thrust towards transforming our architectural education to meet international standards of competence. The formation of a Philippine Architecture Accreditation Board (PAAB) would be a major task vital to the future of the local profession. The incoming amendments of the CHED’s mandatory curriculum should be compatible with the expectations of respected accreditors. Although the USC is one of the top architecture schools in the Philippines, we have much more work to do to achieve international standards. I believe our mandate is not only to provide better opportunities for our graduates abroad and to compete with ASEAN architects coming into the Philippines, but also to compete on the global stage—not merely as reliable draftsmen, but as creative problem-solvers and thinkers. We have already created many international linkages. Our instructors and students study abroad and our partner universities have been sending us exchange students and teachers. But we need even more transformation. For this, we must get out from our comfort zones!
Axor One - All-in-One

Axor’s first all-in-one interactive shower control element is a masterpiece of intuition, a confident, and yet unobtrusive statement in the shower. With its monolithic but soft form, Axor One creates a new spaciousness in the shower – a pleasant feeling of clarity and tranquility. Plane surfaces, rounded edges, and an integrated mechanical interface, constitute a clearly structured concealed thermostat that eliminates distraction from a soothing shower experience.
The intricate geometries and rounded forms of the furniture pieces were made possible by using specialized cement capable of withstanding pressure even in thin shell form as raw material for the construction extrusion 3D printing. This system forms the shape of the pieces through the injection of liquefied material in layers which eventually hardens.

Umbrella cement is given surprising grace and polish in SCG’s latest collaboration with award-winning Thai artist and industrial designer Anon Pairot, resulting in an eye-catching collection of outdoor and landscape furniture pieces. Officially unveiled in the Architect 2017 Fair in Bangkok, Thailand, the furniture collection named “Fluctuation in Precision” is an industrial design collaboration that couples SCG’s thorough knowledge of cement with the design know-how of Anon Pairot, who has done multidisciplinary work for a wide clientele that included Smirnoff, Fendi and Toyota. Construction extrusion 3D printing and a specialized cement formula enabled the creation of more flexible, freeform shapes without sacrificing structural strength. The collaboration brought to life a host of cement furniture pieces, whose curves, edges and intricate geometries took four months to produce. The pieces are all made for outdoor settings, and are divided into the furniture and rock garden components.

The furniture component inspires nostalgia with two seating models: a 2-meter-long sofa set and statement chair that derive inspiration from the tufted leather seats from one’s childhood home, only this time rendered in waterproof and durable cement. The rock garden component is comprised of three organically-shaped vases that range from 1 to 1.7 meters in height. The geometric interpretation of rock formations serve as a compositional foil to the organically-shaped seats.

The furniture set is now available for viewing at the SCG Experience showroom at Crystal Design Center in Bangkok, Thailand.
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I am now an ASEAN architect.

What’s next?

Faced with cultural diversity, internal restrictions, and opportunity loss, local organizations collaborate with other ASEAN member states to surmount regulation challenges and seemingly impossible standards.

Written by Carla Frances Perez
Photographed by Rommel Aguirre and Yuki Daigo
The ASEAN Declaration states its primary purpose is to establish and promote equitable economic growth, social progress, cultural development, and peace in the region. To achieve these aspirations, the ASEAN member nations ratified the ASEAN Charter in 2008. They founded a community of opportunities called the ASEAN Community, supported by three pillars: the ASEAN Political Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community, and ASEAN Socio Cultural Community. Each pillar has its blueprint outlining the future direction and common interests among ASEAN member states.

The architect and ASEAN integration
Creating employment opportunities through skills mobility within ASEAN is one of the thrusts of integration under the ASEAN Economic Community pillar. Initially, member states focused their energies on “integrating goods”—reducing trade barriers, hammering out free trade agreements, and exploring the possibility of an ASEAN Monetary Union. Later, the key players turned their focus to “integrating services,” crafting Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs), with Architecture as one of the several professions identified for the free flow of labor.

The MRA for Architecture signed by ASEAN Economic Ministers in November 2007 aims to facilitate the borderless practice of architects within the region. Article 3 of the MRA enumerates the qualifications and skills required to become an ASEAN Architect.

“How do you survive the competition? You embrace integration. You accept the fact that we learn more in life through variety than singularities. You learn effective practices and embed those practices into a larger system and contribute positively.”

Alfred C. Carandang, Chairman, United Architects of the Philippines Special Committee on APEC, ASEAN, and Global Practice
Qualifications for Mutual Recognition of ASEAN Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mutual Recognition of Professionals</th>
<th>Licensure and Certifications</th>
<th>Professional Experience</th>
<th>Education and Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Practice</td>
<td>Is granted a Medical Qualification</td>
<td>With valid license/certificate from country of origin</td>
<td>At least 5 years of continuous active practice as general practitioner of specialist in country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Is granted a Nursing Qualification</td>
<td>With current and valid license/certificate from country of origin</td>
<td>At least 3 continuous years prior to application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Meets the host country’s requirements</td>
<td>With valid license required from government or regulatory body other than the professional regulations authority</td>
<td>Must meet the host country’s requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>With accredited engineering degree</td>
<td>With current and valid license/certificate from country of origin</td>
<td>At least 7 years after graduation At least 2 years responsible of significant engineering work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveying</td>
<td>Meets the country of origin’s requirements</td>
<td>Passes the host country’s examination</td>
<td>At least 2 years after graduation. May complete prescribed experience in host country prior to eligibility for recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>With accredited or equivalent architectural degree</td>
<td>With current and valid license/certificate from country of origin</td>
<td>At least 10 years of continuous practice after graduation At least 5 years after licensure At least 2 years responsible for significant architectural works</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Requirements
- Complies with continuous professional development requirements
- Is certified as not having violated any professional or ethical standards
- With no pending investigation or legal proceeding
- Complies with any other assessment or requirement as may be imposed by the host country

Source: National Economic Development Authority

The ASEAN Architect
Filipino architects desiring to become an ASEAN Architect must apply through the Professional Regulation Commission-International Affairs Division, which validates compliance with requirements. The Professional Regulatory Board of Architecture then evaluates whether the applicant may move forward to an interview with a panel of experts composed of members of the ASEAN Monitoring Committee on Architectural Services of the Philippines (AMCASP). After passing the interview, the applicant is assigned a Philippine ASEAN Architect number and endorsed to the ASEAN Architect Council for conferment by the AMCASP.

The Philippine ASEAN Architect may then apply at the professional regulatory authority of the host country to become a Registered Foreign Architect (RFA). The ASEAN Architect is, however, still bound by the code of ethics and conduct of his or her country of origin, as well as the domestic laws of the host country. Furthermore, he or she is still required to collaborate with a local architect of the host country to practice there.

These limitations, among others, have built an imaginary border, dampening the growth of ASEAN Architect and RFA numbers, and discouraging the development of the borderless practice envisioned by ASEAN integration’s authors and advocates. The general impression among local professionals (and that of our ASEAN neighbors) seems to be that integration will create employment and business opportunities for only a few, to the detriment of many. Thus, member states have been reluctant to relax protectionist regulations.

According to the chairman of the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP) Special Committee on APEC, ASEAN, and Global Practice, Alfred Carandang, “The business of architecture of ASEAN Architects is still confined to their own countries. However, we the ASEAN Architects are encouraged by the ASEAN Architect Council’s efforts to create mobility by collaborating with our counterpart ASEAN Architects who will serve as the host in their countries. This mode of mobility, we believe, will be best in creating the positive atmosphere, which is beneficial for all of the stakeholders. The Registered Foreign Architects, the ASEAN Architects, and the domestic system of the host country will be embraced, nurtured, and protected from being exposed to the risk of violating domestic regulations, code of ethics, local standards, and, especially, from taking over the host country architects’ potential jobs.”
To transcend what seem to be impossible standards, there should be unceasing efforts to create genuine mobility, which will eventually move member states towards authentic integration. Here are some of the initiatives of Philippine architecture agencies and organizations:

**Increase the numbers**

The Professional Regulatory Board of Architecture (PRBoA)'s priorities are to:

1. Increase the number of ASEAN Architects
2. Grow the number of RFAs
3. Expand specializations; and
4. Create more diverse groups of experts across different typologies

In the ten years since the signing of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for Architecture, the Philippines has conferred 62 ASEAN Architects, with six more for conferment in 2018. The PRBoA, led by chairman Robert S. Sac, and the UAP, headed by Guillermo H. Hisancha, have been working together to promote the vision of ASEAN integration through various conventions. They have set benchmarks for the annual growth of the ASEAN Architect population so that if things fall into place, there will be well over a hundred Filipino ASEAN Architects by 2020.

**Align qualifications**

Increasing the numbers should not only equate to more architects qualified to become ASEAN Architect, but also to the extension of assistance to those who lack the qualifications. Private and government institutions need to join the effort. This entails:

1. Crafting quality practicum opportunities
2. Beefing up and making more accessible review programs for the licensure exam; and
3. Increasing the number of seminars available for earning Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education & Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Department of Labor & Employment (DOLE) have been working on the Philippine Qualifications Framework to eliminate job mismatches by studying the curriculum in light of skills required by employers. Meanwhile, the PRC and architectural organizations have been attending roundtable discussions with the CHED pertaining to the preparedness of graduates for ASEAN integration in terms of the knowledge, skills, and aptitude. The UAP participated in the data gathering of the Asian Development Bank and Migration Policy Institute on skills mobility and implementation of the MRA.

**Foster collaboration**

One cannot only envision collaboration; one must commit to it in writing to guide the vision into fruition. The “Collaboration Template” drafted by UAP core ASEAN members in concert with the PRC was presented to local and foreign delegates at the 1st ASEAN Architect Congress held in Manila last April 27, 2017. The template prescribes the flow of procedural requirements needed to collaborate effectively.
Marie Stephanie N. Gilles, a member of the UAP Special Committee on APEC, ASEAN and Global Practice said the template details matters such as “the types of contracts and agreements, local code regulations, taxes and professional fees, the liabilities of an architect-of-record, the various positions of other member states on the idea of collaborating with foreign architects, and the like.”

After several suggestions and revisions, the template is currently under review by the PRC’s legal department. The official revised document is expected to be presented at the 2nd ASEAN Architect’s Congress in January 2018.

A forum for dialogue and consultation
The very first ASEAN Architects Congress hosted in Manila earlier this year is a step towards creating an environment conducive to collaboration and establishing trust among ASEAN architects, who must learn to overcome cultural and business practice disparities. More than 50 architects from the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia were present. They were asked to select their field of interest and were seated with others who selected the same. The congress is expected to take place annually so more ASEAN professionals can share best practices and methods, explore opportunities for collaboration, and network.

“We have yet to see the first ASEAN Architect officially cross borders into another member state. This Congress is a step in fulfilling that dream. Let’s join hands to make sure that this moves,” said PRC commissioner Yolanda D. Reyes during the event.

...And more
More aggressive approaches in the promotion of ASEAN Architects in multinational companies and government institutions have been proposed, and are currently being assessed for feasibility. One such proposal is for ASEAN member states to include in their procurement codes the ASEAN Architect status as a selection criterion in the bidding of services for infrastructure projects. Another proposal for each country is to

40,000+
Number of Registered Filipino Architects as of July 2017
One cannot only envision collaboration; one must commit to it in writing to guide the vision into fruition.

identify one project per year wherein solely ASEAN architects and engineers shall be qualified to render the services.

Moving forward
“Having satisfied the requirements to become an ASEAN Architect, it is a professional recognition, achievement, and accomplishment that is vital in the manner you present yourself as an actively practicing architect and as a professional ready and able to perform and satisfy the thrust to practice locally, internationally and globally.”
- Donato B. Magacale, Member, UAP Special Committee on APEC, ASEAN, and Global Practice

The numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements to establish a consensus regarding skills mobility and to create significant benefits in being a Registered Foreign Architect have yet to be realized. Through the initiatives discussed above, however, integration advocates are optimistic accredited professionals will soon break the barriers set by internal regulations, professional practice, and cultural differences.

ASEAN Architects should put heart and soul into their title. They must embrace diversity in all aspects, knowing that strength, growth, creativity, and vitality are not only possible but are also upheld, enhanced, and reinforced by diversity. In the age of globalization, the path to progress for all lies not in protectionism and isolationism, but as positivist philosophers would argue, in embracing unity in diversity—unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation.

1st ASEAN Congress participants, photographed by Edu Cortez
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ASEAN Collaboration—is it working?

62 Filipino ASEAN Architects, 0 ASEAN collaborations. Designers take stock of the value of becoming an ASEAN Architect

By Carlito Lorenzo
It was all looking so promising. ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) were implemented since the end of 2015 to herald a new era in intra-regional practice across ASEAN countries. The initial wave of interest in signing up to the ASEAN registry gave the ASEAN Architect Council reason to be optimistic—there are currently 417 registered ASEAN Architects (as of July 2017), 62 of which are Filipino, with six more to be conferred in 2018. All signs pointed toward a future full of enterprise and productivity.

This gusto, however, belied a widespread apprehension among many local architects about the increase in competition, as outlined in BluPrint’s Who’s Afraid of 2015? Special Issue in 2014. The hesitancy of local architects to engage in collaboration, the lack of interest from foreign architects to enroll as Registered Foreign Architects in the Philippines, and the absence of collaborations struck since its inception raise serious questions about the effectiveness of ASEAN integration. Have the efforts of the Council been in vain thus far? Moreover, does the ASEAN Architect registration process, which is supposedly designed to transition local architects into pan-Asian collaboration smoothly, actually hinder such desired practice?

It is timely, therefore, to gain insights not only from those who have registered as ASEAN Architect, but also those with working partnerships abroad without the accreditation. Having been put to the sword about the pros, cons, and even necessity of ASEAN integration, a number of established and emerging Filipino practices share their two cents about the ASEAN Architect registration process and the extent of its value moving forward.

On paper
“While it is well and good that we are taking steps to promote ASEAN, we need to come out with a clear picture on the mechanics. This kind of clarity may actually attract more to the ASEAN endeavor.”

– Bong Recio, Principal Architect, Architects Inc.

The ASEAN Architect Council responded earlier this year with the genesis of the ASEAN Collaboration Template, first presented at the 1st ASEAN Architects Congress on 27 April 2017 in Manila. Although the guideline document is still under review and is anticipated to resurface in January 2018, the intervening period gives eligible architects the chance to further mull over the benefits of entering the ASEAN arena.

From the outset, the triumvirate of eligibility requirements for ASEAN Architect accreditation appear to be less inclusive: one may only be considered ASEAN-worthy at least ten years of continuous practice after graduation, at least five years after licensure, and at least two years with a significant architectural project under one’s belt. Whilst this does guarantee a certain pedigree of architect on the register, it closes the door on younger architects who wish to cast the project net wider.

Even for established firms, the technicality of the criteria restricts their ability to commit to the ASEAN cause fully. Jumax Morgia of Zubu Design Associates (ZDA), acknowledges that whilst her partner Buck Sia is eligible, she herself cannot apply. Along with their activities as a busy practice, this constraint has deprioritized their need to apply for the registry. For such cases, Tateng Djajasudarma, chairman of the Council, recommended that the Collaboration Template be extended to an agreement between two companies rather than two individuals.

This hasn’t stopped firms such as ZDA from attempting to procure projects abroad themselves, having secured work abroad without ASEAN Architect and APEC Architect accreditation. As Jumax proclaims: “The opportunity presented itself, and we were more than happy to accept the challenge.” As ever, word of mouth and meeting the right contacts remain the best way of acquiring foreign projects, however infrequent they are. If they are few and far between today then the hope is that the hit rate for a firm will increase as ASEAN linkages become ubiquitous.

In light of the multi-stage nature of the application process, there is a consensus that the registry should act as a quality assurance, instilling mutual confidence between potential collaborators. Joseph Javier, founder of Javier Design Studio Manila (JDSM), envisaged the ASEAN Architect Register to be representative of a benchmark. The register should be “useful for the consuming public that your practice, reach of professional work, and competence has been screened—something like a seal of good quality.”

From the inside
“Increasing awareness on the need for competitiveness and the MRA through aggressive indoctrination at academy level and continuing education at industry level will increase the demand for entry into the registry.”

– Joseph Javier, Principal Architect, JDSM-Manila

As the construction industry awaits the ASEAN Architect Council’s next move, firms in the Philippines continue to face challenges closer to home, putting blinders on the enthusiasm for pan-Asian collaboration. It is no secret that many of the leading architects keep lamenting the convoluted and restrictive procedures in the Philippines. Neither is there a shortage of recommendations in order to enhance the Filipino architect’s competitiveness, from educational level all the way up to project management. These industry-pervading concerns, as extensively discussed in BluPrint’s “Titans Talk” roundtable in 2014, create a disparity in outlook between the playing field in the Philippines and as seen from the headquarters of ASEAN.

Aside from making Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses more affordable and accessible to all architects, prospective seminars need to address the implications of ASEAN guidelines on future practice. Again, progress on this front can only be judged once the current framework of CPD is up to speed with not just domestic practice but also the evolving discourse of Southeast Asian architecture.

Amendments to CPD provision will take a significant effort to get going, as the Senate has recalled the CPD Act (Republic Act 10912) after over 50,000 professionals signed a petition for lawmakers to review its terms.

Armando Alli, a former Professional Regulation Board of Architecture member and chair, says he is all for CPD, particularly in light of ASEAN integration, but campaigned at the House and Senate against RA 10912 because “that law is defective...it vests private entities with the power to collect vast sums without accounting for those funds, which partake of the nature of public monies.” Joel Rico, a past national president of the Philippine Institute of Architects echoes Alli’s opinion, saying the law as it stands, “will become a potential source of corruption within accredited professional organizations.”
Elevating the pedigree of the Filipino architect through improved educational initiatives, whilst simultaneously celebrating their strengths, will go some way to closing the gap between the Philippines and other ASEAN member states.

On the horizon
“Countries should not employ foreign architects for projects local architects can do very well, but the participation of foreign architects should be welcomed to bridge the gap between the current market needs and the capabilities of local firms. There is opportunity in this for everyone.”
- Barbra del Castillo, Senior Associate, Casas+Architects

For a considerable number of architects who have already established working relationships with clients and foreign architects alike, jumping through the hoops to wear the ASEAN pin badge doesn’t seem enticing enough a prospect. What further advantages do architects have to gain by registering as ASEAN Architect than merely being on a pan-Asian roster and declaring themselves available for striking up partnerships abroad? If a firm is already occupied with work from abroad, as Joseph Javier, Jumax Morgia and also Sudarshan Khadka from Leandro V. Locsin Partners (LVLP) have revealed, it leaves minimal time to explore the possibility of registering ASEAN.

The notion of Filipino architects entering partnerships with foreign architects without the ability to market their services fully (one of the more restrictive guidelines in the UAP Code of Ethics) will inevitably peg back their readiness to compete abroad. Indeed, a key factor in setting apart architects from Singapore and Hong Kong, for example, has been their fervour for showcasing their work and hence attracting some of the very best international practices to work with them. Sudarshan Khadka of LVLP, who is presently working with local architects in Vietnam, quite rightly suspects that many will use the ASEAN accreditation as a marketing tool. If the title becomes a way to get a foot in the door then the participation can be seen as a positive. Conversely, if it becomes a masquerade for quality, then it becomes a problematic venture further down the line. Shortcomings in internal practice must be acted upon prior to registration.

More importantly, Filipino architects must be able to engage from a business standpoint in order to claim ownership of their services within the design stages. Recent cross-border projects have shown that foreign architects prefer to invest their time in the first two design phases and leave the bulk of the remaining phases to the architects-on-record. The ASEAN Collaboration Template aims to iron out this imbalance of workload and responsibility by defining the roles of each party more clearly. For now, Filipino architects must steer clear of complacency in their domestic projects, as Jumax reiterates, “We just need to work harder with our current projects here so that our contacts will feel we are worthy of a collaboration”.

Looking in, looking out
“Opening up the ASEAN doors means opening our doors too. And soon enough Filipino architects will see how huge the difference is in quality of work. And a number of them will be challenged to do better considering how tough competition will be. And this is great. This hopefully pushes everyone else to compete and do better.”
- Jumax Morgia, Managing Partner of Zubu Design Associates

It remains to be seen how much of a catalyzing factor the impending ASEAN Collaboration Template will be, come 2018. The rate at which Filipino architects have applied to become ASEAN Architect is slow but steady and, whilst this indicates progress to an extent, the number is still proportionally diminutive to the number of registered architects in the country (less than 0.02% versus Singapore’s 6.1%, for example). It is evident from the ASEAN Architect Register that the principals of successful firms and the officers of professional organizations seem to be the only ones making the most of the current situation. Those who have made a name for themselves here in the Philippines but are not yet eligible must further hone their skills within these shores and mobilize themselves as best they can before applying.

Elevating the pedigree of the Filipino architect through improved educational initiatives, whilst simultaneously celebrating their strengths, will go some way to closing the gap between the Philippines and other ASEAN member states. William Ti, principal of WTA Design Studio, who plans to register as an ASEAN Architect, sees little value in the application process and possessing the title if more is not done at an institutional level to encourage more local architects to sign up and to promote appreciation for the
profession among the wider public. William urges, “We need to
celebrate the Filipino architect more. That way we can compete
globally. If we ourselves don’t do it, no one will.”

The possible shoehorning of ASEAN Architect selection
into procurement codes and even the prerequisite that one
government project a year be exclusive to ASEAN Architects
and ASEAN Engineers may threaten to undermine the rhetoric
around openness and inclusivity. Bong Recio, founder of
Rchitects, forewarns: “I think I agree with concerns about a
new elite if this proposal goes ahead. However, the new elite, in
all likelihood, will still be the old elite.”

JDSM’s Joseph Javier urges that the ASEAN Architect status
not be misappropriated as an elevation of the professional license
in the Philippines: “ASEAN Architect status being required
to design the projects of your own government seems to not
make sense for me. I understand the registry to be the access
to projects in other ASEAN countries, and not as a barrier
to practice architecture in your own country, particularly if
the project is government sponsored. I feel the local license is
enough to enter government projects.”

**Aspiring towards an integrated ASEAN**

“We have yet to see the first ASEAN architect officially cross
border to another ASEAN state. This is a step in fulfilling that
dream. Let’s join hands to make sure that this moves.”
- Yolanda Reyes at the 1st ASEAN Architects Congress,
April 2017, Head of ASEAN Monitoring Committee, Philippines

The culture of collaboration must start from within. Architects,
engineers, and project managers in the Philippines need to
cultivate a collective sense of purpose. Individual champions of
local projects must forge meaningful exchanges with each other
to consolidate the Filipino identity in the ASEAN sphere.

**Actions:**

1. As the ASEAN Architect Council continues to develop
guidelines to cater to the entire ASEAN region, it is incumbent
on the professional bodies here in the Philippines to reform
their organizations. The organizations must disentangle their
overly territorial and protectionist outlook (and even legislation
they have lobbied for) in order to embrace collaboration
wholesomely. Collaboration must be open and reciprocal even
down to internal decision-making, without idiosyncratic or
hidden agendas.

2. These organizations must build upon the competence of their
members by drastically improving the way CPD courses are
disseminated across the whole country. Digitizing and making
courses available online would increase outreach and allow
architects to better integrate learning into their busy schedules.
The architects paying their hard-earned money must view these
courses as a long-term investment in knowledge and less a box-
ticking, point-gaining exercise. Weighting points should also
be redefined to reflect the difficulty level of topics.

3. The recent outcry against the PRC making CPD mandatory
for license renewal and the subsequent decision for the Senate
of the Philippines to review this legislation speaks volumes
about the distrust and dissatisfaction of members of current
institutional practice. Professional bodies should be held
accountable and equally hold substandard professionals to
account. Instituting accountability and transparency would be a
big step towards this goal.

Within ASEAN and APEC, only the Philippines requires
membership in the professional organization—the UAP, in the
case of architects—for the issuance and renewal of a license.
This mandate gives the UAP tremendous power and potential
to be a force for good. Sadly, the compulsory membership and
membership dues have resulted instead in complacency and
a culture of narcissism. The opposite is true abroad, in which
counterpart organizations embody a duty to protect the rights
and benefits of their members in order to retain them. Our
professional organizations need to reorient their thinking and
adopt an attitude of servant leadership.

4. The curriculums of architecture schools must be moderated
by professional bodies and the courses and teachers rated
against the highest of international standards. Where possible,
moderators and accreditors from credible, international
professional bodies should be invited to examine all aspects of
pedagogy and assessment. This would help to acclimatize the
Filipino architect to design approaches transferrable to foreign
contexts.

The path to ASEAN integration requires proactive engagement
at all levels of the architectural profession in the Philippines to
help Filipino architects comprehend a brighter future. Without
such initiative being led from the top, architects here will be left
contemplating what could be for a lot longer.

Delve deep into the extensive ‘Titans Talk’ roundtable with
Edwin Barcia, Meloy Casas, Willy Coscolluela, Edward Co Tan,
Jun Palafox, Jonathan Gan, and Jojo Tolentino on BluPrint.ph

BluPrint 49
n theory, competitions encourage excellence, innovation, and creativity as participants are challenged to do better than the rest. The glory of winning and the attendant respect and recognition, can be a potent driving force. At worst, competitions are expensive, demanding an enormous amount of time and resources. Teams producing renders, plans, and collaterals must commit hundreds of man-hours and often go unpaid and unrecognized. The larger the playing field and the greater the number of participants, the less one’s chances are of victory.

So why join? Why should a practice devote itself to a project that may end up not even being seen? What do we get out of competing?

Design exercise
Competitions usually demand design concepts to be submitted in a limited number of boards or pages. Preparing a presentation and defending it at a client meeting is challenging enough as it is. It is even harder to create a story board that articulates one’s vision in only so many words and images, without the benefit of face-to-face communication. This forces a designer to edit—to select the most powerful means to convey his message through a board (or book) that speaks for itself.

Competitions also demand the designer to think differently from past formulas and strategies that involve constant discourse with a client. In a competition, the client gives a brief and then stays silent. The designer is on his own to interpret and to make sense of what the project needs.

Win or Lose, We Win

The reasons SpaceFabrik joins design competitions

By Stephanie Tan-Branquinho
This silence can encourage creativity and innovation. Research becomes all the more vital; process and concept development take center stage.

In the typical project, budget and ROI are key considerations. In a competition, these may be part of the guidelines, but for the designer competing against hundreds of others, the focus is seldom on the “economics” but on concept and visualization instead. The result is often vastly different from the design a budget-sensitive focus produces.

**Teamwork and culture**

When done right, joining a competition brings a team together in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. It builds confidence and character into the collective. The short timeline and the intensity of the work require members of the team to collaborate and communicate ideas through discussions and workshops. Such a process brings the team together to work as one unit with one clear goal. The design process of the project is in parallel with the process of building the team: knowing each one’s strengths, improving skills, and pushing people to do more than they thought they could.

There is magic when things come together in harmony—design, teamwork, people, and passion. The team exercise gives the practice a good workout, and could define, test and exemplify the culture of the practice beautifully.

**Varied portfolio**

Competitions offer opportunities to work on projects different from what the practice usually does. Competitions, particularly for civic structures, give design briefs that are unique. The development of a different design typology can showcase the flexibility of the practice to adapt to challenges and different requirements. A competition entry is useful for showcasing one’s skills and insights on the company website or blog. Furthermore, documenting the design process may serve as a reference for the culture of the practice.
Joining international design competitions encourages Filipino designers to think global. Thinking global calls for seeing a problem with fresh eyes—with a new way of seeing.

Contribution
Being part of a design competition with a respected jury and intelligent selection process is a way of giving back to the profession. It elevates the process of design and fosters an exchange of ideas and debate within the community of professionals. Sharing one’s narrative and design process can create ripples in design education, foster discourse, and encourage critical thinking. Win or lose, it can add value to the profession.

Thinking global
Joining international design competitions encourages Filipino designers to think global. Thinking global calls for seeing a problem with fresh eyes. It challenges a practice to find a clear and universal way of communicating with a bigger audience that may not speak the same language and have the same culture. Thinking global asks a local practice to compete with the rest of the world. This challenge can drive innovation, creativity, and, most importantly, focus on communication that transcends borders, language, and culture.

It’s not just about winning
In joining a competition, it is good to ask whether the competition goals align with your values, design philosophy, and aesthetic. Winning is more than just the exhilaration of accepting an award. It is in knowing strength, determination, and excellence. It is learning about your practice and building a team culture that gives 100 percent. It is in improving skills, stretching one’s limits, and surpassing personal bests.
Take your bathroom experience up a notch with HCG’s newest smart bathroom fixture: Superlet (AF230H). Sculpted especially to suit all kinds of bathroom styles, the fixture has earned multiple awards for its exceptional design. To complement its straightforward yet elegant look are impressive functions that make even early morning trips an enjoyable occasion.

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SCULPTED ESPECIALLY TO SUIT ALL KINDS OF BATHROOM STYLES, THE FIXTURE HAS EARNED MULTIPLE AWARDS FOR ITS EXCEPTIONAL DESIGN
I have always believed that architecture is an increasingly global practice and to be truly part of the conversation, we must continue to push boundaries and search for new ideas on how we develop our built environment. As the principal architect of WTA Architecture and Design Studio, I strive to avoid a literal and slavish adherence to vernacular traditions in our studio and, instead, encourage a program-based design process that seeks to create socially relevant architecture. The reason for this is, ideas do not observe geopolitical boundaries, nor are they limited by economics and technology. As architects continue to evolve from craftsmen to artists, to builders, and to planners, we must see the next step in our evolution into thinkers. This, for us, is the reason we join architecture and design competitions. If we want Philippine architecture to be relevant, we must have representation, and representation means being visible and contributing to the global zeitgeist.

Another reason we join local and international competitions is to compete with the best. By doing so, we can gauge the quality of our work and how we measure up to broader and critical judging. The constant and relentless exposure allows us to test the quality of our ideas. Exposure to global critique also makes us conscious of our work and the need to always strive to explore ideas that matter.
We have just submitted projects to the World Architecture Festival and the German Design Awards. To date, we have been finalists at the World Architecture Festival twice, a finalist for the WAN Awards and the American Architecture Prize, and garnered two awards at Architizer A+Awards. While we have lost far more competitions than won, the wins and being shortlisted allow us to join the global conversation and refresh our passion for architecture.

Aside from earning recognition, competitions train us to look beyond the obvious design solutions. We always search for competitions for projects that will be built and stay away from “ideas” competitions. “Real” competitions allow us to be openly creative and explore possibilities within an actual context. They enable us to develop our theories on social architecture and refine them in a crucible.

Another way for Filipino architects to be globally competitive is to be aware of the playing field. Joining events such as the Venice Architecture Biennale, forums, and symposia expose us to new ideas that inspire us and spark new possibilities. Engaging with architects from diverse backgrounds and cultures enriches us and allows us to join a global network of intellectually critical practitioners who push the boundaries of architecture.

While we have lost far more competitions than won, the wins and being shortlisted allow us to join the global conversation and refresh our passion for architecture.
Singapore is the second most competitive country in the world because they made design excellence a national priority and their competitive edge. There is no reason a country of 100 million Filipinos can’t do as relevant and excellent design as 6 million Singaporeans. While we often bemoan the lack of appreciation for good design in our country, we can and must change this by encouraging participatory design practices that engage the public. We must create a more positive perception of architecture’s importance in nation building and development by promoting a deeper understanding of architecture amongst our architect brethren and among the general public. This is our raison d’être for organizing the annual Anthology Festival. The three-day festival seeks to create an atmosphere of collaboration and sharing and to link together architects from the Philippines and abroad. We share ideas and present them for open and constructive critique to the public. Lastly, the festival showcases architecture to the public and calls attention to its importance and beauty.

I believe all architects would be better served by participating in more competitions. While doing so entails a significant investment of time and effort, the creative freedom it gives is of equal or greater benefit in the end. Exploring and searching for solutions to various problems is an effective and enjoyable way to develop new ideas that branch off into new solutions for problems not initially considered.

There are numerous competitions available online for any architect willing to give it a try. It has been quite encouraging to see more opportunities in the local industry as the economy continues to grow. There have been far more competitions in the last few years than before, and these competitions have produced a great collection of fantastic ideas from some of the country’s best architects—ideas that will permeate into the industry and hopefully contribute a bevy of exciting possibilities to our architectural landscape in the years to come.
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Competitions

The Supremes

The best non-finalists of the conceptual design competition for the new Supreme Court Complex

By Nick Ramos
Not in recent memory has a commission been granted for the construction of a purpose-built cornerstone of Philippine democracy. It was with great enthusiasm, excitement, and interest then that the general public first heard news of a design competition for the new Supreme Court Complex.

The Supreme Court is at present housed in an iconic neoclassical building along Paseo de Roxas, Manila, on land owned by the University of the Philippines. The Department of Budget and Management issued a multi-year obligation authority in the amount of P32.8 billion to fund the design and construction of the New Supreme Court Complex over the course of four years. In 2015, the Supreme Court and the Bases Conversion Development Authority executed a contract for the acquisition of a 21-hectare lot of the former Philippine Army Security Escort Group in Fort Bonifacio to serve as the site of their new complex.

The vision for the competition called for “a culturally iconic building and a legacy for generations to come.” The brief also required that the design be for “a green and resilient building for the effective and efficient dispensation of justice.” In keeping with long-standing tradition, the rules stipulated that the scheme had to incorporate the traditional “four pillars of justice,” namely: prosecution, law enforcement, corrections, and the community.

The winning design proposal was chosen from a shortlist of five narrowed down from a longlist of ten selected from a field of 68 submissions. The 13-person jury for the longlist and shortlist was comprised of six representatives from various offices of the Supreme Court: five officers from the United Architects of the Philippines, Philippine Institute for Interior Design, Philippine Institute of Environmental Planners, Philippine Association of Landscape Architects, and the Council of Deans and Heads of Architecture Schools in the Philippines; a director of the Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts at the University of the Philippines—Diliman; and the Executive Director of the Philippine Green Building Council. The final jury, on the other hand, was made up of the 15 Supreme Court justices.

The announcement of the winning entry from Mañosa & Company was greeted with a measured satisfaction that everything is right in the world—that things make sense, as they always did. This firm was closely aligned with the firm’s accustomed design preoccupations and driving motivations. The firm’s reputation today is for modern sustainable practices such as natural lighting, passive cooling, water reuse and recycling, and the use of locally-sourced building materials.

The feeling of justice having been properly served, however, was tinged by some doubt upon examination of entries that did not make it to the shortlist of five. Their non-inclusion begs the question of whether or not the jury was fully capable of reading the plans or of distinguishing the merit of one scheme over another. Were they properly able to consider what ought to constitute architecture not just for the present but for generations to come? Was the shortlist a shortsighted selection of preconceived ideas of civic architecture?

It would be remiss of us, if some displaced and overlooked yet notable submissions were not given the recognition they deserve.\n
To view other non-finalist submissions, visit Blueprint.ph.
VISIBLE JUSTICE

Gravitas graciously steps aside for civitas in Lor Calma & Partners’ egalitarian showcase for justice

Concept
The idea of “justice as a treasure” was the driving concept behind Eduardo Calma’s design for the new Supreme Court Complex. The building was conceived not as an insular, closed edifice but a transparent envelope, looking outwards to the surrounding Bonifacio Global City. It is a scheme that embodies the democratic values of openness and participation. The proposal reflects a vision of the city as a humane and egalitarian place with a commitment to the enrichment of urban life.

The organization of the building exemplifies the concept of justice as a precious thing worthy of both protection and exhibition. An open public plaza is organized from the western point of the triangular site moving east to cover just about half of the entire area. From the vantage point of the plaza, both the vista and the complex composed of three buildings widens with the site. A trapezoidal roof covers the buildings and provides partial shelter over the plaza, providing a spatial transition between the public and restricted zones.

The scheme is also devised to support and enhance the function of the Bonifacio Global City area using carefully considered placemaking, a landscaped public green space, and sustainable, high-performance building systems.

Design
The entire complex is presented on a plinth built upon the natural contours of the terrain. An expansive public plaza faceted by steps and ramps welcomes visitors to the site. North of the plaza, the ground tilts at an angle to become a green roof, revealing the location of the auditorium below. This plaza foregrounds the internal spaces of the compound.

A lightweight metallic roof supported by a multitude of slender columns shelters both the interior spaces and the public plaza. The shimmery, reflective ceiling dissolves the materiality of the structure. The lean columns give the roof weightlessness as if to signify the upholding of the justice system by the citizenry without it being a burden on any individual.
Eduardo Calma’s design for the new Supreme Court Complex embodies justice as a treasure, a noble human value to be protected and exhibited. The complex was envisioned as a symbol of the dignity, equality, transparency, fairness, and stability of the justice system as well as a positive contributor to the public life of the city.
This canopy ensures that at pedestrian level, the courthouse—the representation of the judiciary and the physical and thematic center of the design—has the greatest visual impact.

The four Supreme Court offices and functions (adjudication, support to operations, general and administrative services, and parking and utilities) are grouped within the three volumes to address adjacency and proximity requirements. These three rectangular blocks are arranged according to size, with the smallest (the courthouse) at the center of the site, and the supporting facilities contained in the two larger blocks behind it. Building the complex on the natural terrain allows for the use of platforms to create physical barriers with varying layers of access control in accordance with security imperatives.

The dominant horizontal elements of the roof plane and the landscaped plinth define an enclosure that extends beyond the immediate confines of the site. The roof fixes the principal spaces within the building while the plinth rises out of the site to define the public realm. This horizontality renders the entire design a concise expression of the egalitarian new Supreme Court Complex, a spirit that would have been de-emphasized in a more vertical expression. The placement of the courthouse on the same footing as the public plaza further democratizes the complex and allows for connections to be made between visitors and users of the judicial workspaces.
Clockwise from top:

The visual accessibility afforded by the relationship between the sheltered plaza and the courthouse emphasizes the idea that justice is for all; The En Banc Session Hall is the heart of the court’s operations. Sessions in which cases are heard by all fifteen justices of the Supreme Court, rather than by a panel of justices selected from them, are to be held here; The atrium between the two rear office blocks provides opportunities for daylighting, natural ventilation, and contact with nature.

**Auditorium**

The auditorium features a retractable seating system lending great versatility to the space.
**Functionality**

Adjudication
Support to Operations

General and Administrative Services
Parking and Utilities

Zoning
The four Supreme Court offices and functions—adjudication, operations support, general and administrative services, and parking and utilities—are grouped with the three volumes to address adjacency and proximity requirements.

**Circulation Matrix**
Circulation within the three volumes is arranged along the primary circulation axis for inter-function access. The secondary circulation axis links both visitor and staff flows, converging towards the En Banc Session Hall, the core of the whole complex.

**Materials**

- **9x9 meter structural grid**
  Modular structural system for ease of construction

- **Acacia wood**
  Interiors of the courtrooms, courthouse offices will utilize engineered/bamboo walls

- **Local Zambales granite**
  Stone available locally

**Security**

- **Alternative means of egress**
  Underground tunnel to adjacent army camp

- **Plaza**
  Varying platform heights to filter public access to security checkpoints

- **Access levels**
  Existing topography allows changes of levels through platforms, creating physical barriers with varying layers of access

**Sustainability**

The Supreme Court building is configured to minimize energy and water consumption and to harness daylight and windflow while minimizing heat gain.

**Vertical Air Displacement (termoDeck slab system)**
Hollow core concrete slabs instead of traditional steel ducts distribute cold air from air-handling units (AHU) into the building via air displacement. The system saves on energy by using the thermal storage capacity of the building’s structural mass to regulate internal temperatures.
Material transparency is employed in the scheme to extend sightlines well into the restricted areas, thus making palpable the inner workings of the nation's highest court and encouraging public interest in its processes.

The idea of competing political concepts within a democracy is translated into a scheme where different building materials are not made to oppose each other but made to coexist in ensemble, producing synergetic effects of functionality and spatial richness. The courthouse is expressed through perforated metal panels delivering prerequisite security concerns while expressing openness and impartiality. Opaque and inflexible materials readily communicate solidity and stability.

A low-energy services strategy is fundamental to this project. The scheme was designed to capture the natural resources and energy flows of its surroundings and employ them to optimize environmental conditions for its occupants. Daylight is used to optimum effect, natural ventilation is supplemented by low-velocity ventilation for the hearing rooms, and rainwater is recycled. The unique configuration of the building form, the optimization of the building envelope, and the use of renewable energy sources ensure an energy-efficient design that reduces reliance on fossil fuels.

**Conclusion**
The project delivers openness, flexibility, and technological efficiency, yet with a dignity that reflects the spirit in which it was created. It mirrors the setting which it occupies as well as defines. In a country where precious few concessions are given over to public space, Calma shows how a rational, highly organized, and often forbidding building can be dazzling, generous, and even friendly. It is a masterful demonstration of how something often perceived as monolithic and inscrutable can be made human. Gravitas gracefully steps aside for civitas.
COMPETITIONS

A MAGISTERIAL CONVERGENCE

Jorge Yulo Architects & Associates delivers the desired impact of a Supreme Court Complex without recourse to devices of the past
Throughout history, Supreme Court buildings have been associated with certain styles of architecture due in most part to the values they seem to embody, such as wisdom, democracy, and justice. As such, these buildings tend to be monumental, trabeated, and formally composed. For his competition entry, Jorge Yulo explored the communicative possibilities of architectural form to create a contemporary design where these values are conveyed by a subjective and democratizing experience.

Yulo’s proposal allows for public engagement while addressing contemporary security and safety concerns. The structure does not have a single objective form but is rather a composition of vertical members that collectively create an optical illusion.

The design strategy capitalizes on juxtaposing opposing concepts to compose an equilibrium implying non-partiality, equality, and fairness. The result is an enigmatic assemblage endowed with a dynamic sense of purpose.
Design
Classically inspired Supreme Court buildings worldwide project an acropolitan and commanding image—a declaration of influence, immovability, and authority. In contrast, Yulo’s concept proposes a structure with semi-permeable façades to convey transparency and accountability.

A series of vertical, equidistant slats make up the structure, giving it a compelling sense of openness and forthrightness. The graduated heights of the parallel members outline the forms of the architecture. In the same way that our cognitive system interprets optical illusions, our brain “reads” the series of vertical lines as a single mass. The active participation of the viewer to perceive the complete form of the building in his mind’s eye, as opposed to seeing a readily recognizable image, reflects the participatory nature of democracy.

Another optical effect happens as one gazes at the vertical slats while moving. Seen from an angle, the parallel lines of one façade crisscross with the lines of another, creating a moiré pattern, and give the illusion the surface of the building is in motion. The notion of movement imbues the Supreme Court with a sense of life, pronouncing its agency in the analysis of human issues and the carrying out of justice. Instead of one large building, five chunks converge, like pieces of a puzzle, into a spherical plaza. This compositeness facilitates grouping related functions and their adjacencies so access by different users may be filtered with greater ease. The spaces and orientations are designed for various levels of engagement with the public: from the casual visitor, organized tours, lawyers, students, liaisons transacting with the different offices, to the different employees, judges, and dignitaries.

The spherical void is the plaza enclosed by a portion of each of the five masses, where the public can see parts of each department. The public space is situated on the north side of the site, ensuring that most of the open space will be in the shade all day. The slats at the south aspect of the building are significantly deeper than the east and west-facing slats, as they function as brise soleil against the southern solar path.

The narrow ground level openings funnel air into the plaza, where the air cools down as it passes over the water feature at the center before moving through the rest of the space. The hot air escapes through the oculus above. The enclosed spaces that require mechanized cooling will be compartmentalized into microclimates adjacent to the passively cooled spaces.

Conclusion
Jorge Yulo explores a new dimension of public engagement in a proposal as visually stimulating as it is magisterial. The crisp exterior bears the weight of history without adherence to established stylistic lexicon. Instead, it allows for connections to be made with each visitor on a distinctly human level, in much the same way that music can overtake words to communicate more directly. The form evokes permanence and is yet able to portray the expectations, hopes, and contradictions of its own time. It is an architecture that respects humankind by not talking down to it. Jorge Yulo delivers a satisfying rebalancing of the relationship between the citizenry and the system of justice forged to protect it.
VIEW THE VIDEO
Scan to see an animated visualization of Jorge Yulo’s proposed design for the new Supreme Court Complex.
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A TEMPLE TO HARMONY

The Supreme Court Complex proposal by Dominic Galicia Architects is an idealizing crystallization of permanence, stability, and providence.
Concept
Dominic Galicia’s scheme intends to impart the majesty of the law and its clear link to the public realm. Introduced by a terraced open-air plaza, the proposal consists of a central pyramid from which two rectilinear wings of offices are hinged. The seal of the Supreme Court is a source of inspiration for the scheme. It contains images of the Ten Commandments as well as of scales in balance. The seal expresses the values of precedence and fairness in the exercise of the law. The pyramid thus suggests the image of the mountain from which Moses descended carrying the Ten Commandments, a universally recognized emblem of the law symbolized by the ten round columns at the main entrance at the base of the pyramid. The equality of the two wings symbolizes the law’s fairness. The manner in which they frame the open plaza suggests that the integrity of the law is meant to protect the people.

Design
The central pyramid shades a covered plaza or lobby, whose main feature is the En Banc Session Hall set above the auditorium and approached via escalators and a grand stairway. Above the En Banc Session Hall are the three Division Session Halls. From the rear, the central pyramid evokes the roof of a large bahay na bato, thus creating an intimate approach suitable to the residential nature of the neighborhood it faces. The view from Campus Avenue, on the other hand, is of a scale that befits the institutional and commercial nature of that district.

The two office wings are accessible to the public at the base and become increasingly restricted with each ascending floor. Offices for the justices occupy the topmost floors. The elevation facing the plaza is colonnaded and provides sheltered access to the lobby while shielding the offices from view. From a distance, it isn’t difficult to identify the rectangular wings, angled as they are to meet with the triangular geometry of the central volume, with the blue and red color fields from the Philippine flag.

The harmony of the design establishes the clear relationship between beauty and justice. The equality of the two wings symbolizes the law’s fairness, their framing gesture a pronouncement to protect the people.
The proposal exudes gravitas and while quietly monumental, is lightened by the sun-shading screen facades. This response to climate creates a Filipino sensibility of diaphanous façades, which, like the *barong tagalog*, help to minimize heat gain on interior surfaces. The park-like setting creates a welcome gesture to the public realm and provides an appropriate setting for a building of such civic stature. Its stately sun-lit clarity is a crystallization of reassuring permanence, stability, and providence.

Shading and passive cooling are essential principles of this proposal. Galicia has found that the language of sustainability is primarily the language of architecture; meaning, the elegant means of passive cooling result in striking and meaningful form. Although solar panels are present, the general principle put into practice in this scheme is to minimize the need for electricity by maximizing opportunities for natural daylighting and ventilation.

As an urban response, the celebration of the public realm in the form of the open plaza is a rarity in today’s metropolis and should help to make this building attractive to people who will in turn help sustain its long usable life.
In the Session Hall, a lawyer presenting before the court experiences its essence. He or she sees only the justices and their potential to fulfill the promise of the law.

Top: The central atrium shelters an expansive lobby. Escalators and a grand set of stairs allow access to the En Banc Session Hall and the three Division Session Halls further above. The auditorium is accessed directly from the lobby floor.

Galicia has found that the language of sustainability is essentially the language of architecture; meaning, the elegant means of passive cooling result in striking and meaningful form.

VIEW THE VIDEO
Scan to see an animated visualization of Dominic Galicia’s proposed design for the new Supreme Court Complex.
The park-like setting provides a convivial public space for both day and night. Left: After dark, the complex transforms into a lantern providing a stunning backdrop for evening activities in the plaza.

But the building does something even more important. Its radiant harmony speaks of the ordering of both environment and society. The carefully considered cadence of its elements expresses the idea that the extent of the individual’s rights is defined by that of each and everyone else’s, and how these commonly held boundaries form the very fabric of a civilized society. A clear relationship between beauty and justice is thus established.

More than any other proposal, this edifice seems to possess an idealizing ambition that had traditionally motivated the designs of buildings of its type, from Schinkel’s Berlin to Burnham’s Manila. In a contemporary culture that has all but disposed of the niceties of daily living in favor of graceless expediency, the need to elevate the quality and appreciation of existence has never been more pressing. Dominic Galicia in his proposal presents a calm, dignified, and achievable vision that ultimately reinstates the pursuit of beauty and justice as the highest and noblest demonstrations of civilization.

Dominic Galicia presents a calm, dignified, and achievable vision that ultimately reinstates the pursuit of beauty and justice as the highest and noblest demonstrations of civilization.
WHEN YOU ASK FOR AN ICON

The BCDA Iconic Tower Competition—a missed opportunity to build more than a shiny new bauble?

By Nick Ramos

From left: Kalasag Tower by DP Architects, BCDA Iconic Tower by JDS Architects, BCDA Iconic Tower by NSI+CAZA, Icone by Henning Larsen Architects, and Cascadia by Collaborative Architects and J. Mayer H. Architects
he Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) recently held a competition for the design of an icon to represent Bonifacio Global City and act as its new headquarters. The winning entry, the **Icone** by Henning Larsen, a building already drawing comparisons to Renzo Piano’s London *Shard*, was selected from five entries. In the introduction by a BCDA officer at the awarding ceremony, the “Bilbao effect” was emphatically invoked as the desired model for the new building. Just about every struggling post-industrial city has had egos and money, architects have been employed to design incredible creations to celebrate the rich and their gods. Contriving an icon is all about imagery and nothing more. In the quest to concoct one (can there be a more presumptuous pursuit?) more often than not, spaces are forced to fit into predetermined forms sacrificing function, efficiency, comfort, and therefore, relevance and longevity. A greater balance between architecture as an object and architecture as something inhabited needs to be found.

The valuable lesson learned from all this is that these opportunities to build must not be squandered. In a moribund culture already ensnared by acres of printed tarpaulin, are buildings as publicity images really what we want? In a land where billboards outnumber examples of good architecture, is it so impossible to beat the pedestrian that joining them becomes the only recourse for buildings?

We don’t need hollow spectacle. We need spaces for meaningful human experience. Architecture at its heart is about problem-solving, and architects should be encouraged to prioritize tackling larger social and environmental issues over making things that look good. They should be given every opportunity to rethink our relationship with the places where we live, work, and play; and give us buildings that can inspire and motivate, improve our connections with the past, and pave the road to the future. Competitions ought to give architects the opportunity to relight the fire that made them want to be architects to begin with. Competitions ought to sharpen the contrast between how things are and what they could be. Architects can use their design skills on a local scale to solve global problems with innovative design solutions. The results of competitions increase the understanding of the profession. Within the architecture realm, other firms and students can learn from the various approaches. For the general public, competitions provide a way for the non-architect to relate to what architects do, and to become excited about architecture. Competitions enlighten the public about the true nature of their built environments.

Four of the five entries to the BCDA Iconic Tower Competition are featured here and discussed within the parameters of the contest. As explorations into new and exciting architectural possibilities can often be at odds with manufacturing a self-proclaiming icon, we can only wonder how much better all the entries could have been if the contest parameters and brief had been more enlightened.

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**DESIGN GUIDELINES**

- **Lot area:** 7275 sqm
- **Land use:** 40% buildable
  60% open area
- **Gross Floor Area:** 40,000 sqm max
- **Floor Area Ratio:** 5.5
- **Construction cost:** P45,000 - P50,000 / sqm
The treehouse at the core of the Jastia residence is not simply the plaything its name suggests. This intervention by Jim Caumeron is a great example of retrofit for small spaces. It addressed the problems of the claustrophobic structure and encourages family time. Did we mention it's also a lot of fun?
Henning Larsen proposes an eye-catching pyramidal form for the BCDA headquarters to lend distinction to Bonifacio Global City’s skyline.

**Concept**

The Henning Larsen design team wrestled with the challenge of how to distinguish an edifice amidst the density created by other tall buildings surrounding the site. It was deemed crucial to construct a skyscraper taller than its neighbors to achieve one such separation. Spaces accessible to the general public were positioned at the base of the tower where offices would not benefit from enough daylight and at the very top where conditions wouldn’t allow for efficient work areas. The façades were then slanted to merge the programs into one form, arriving at a steep pyramid, or as the team dubbed the proposal, an inverted “Icone.”

To create a street level plaza, setting the tower apart from the existing surroundings likewise needed to happen in plan. An elliptical footprint was employed as this liberates peripheral space for paths to crisscross the site freely. The resulting routes at the pedestrian level allow the surrounding neighborhood to relate to the plaza as a new center for public activities. The expanse created by the ellipse facilitates greater wind flow to help cool the area and also minimizes the obstruction of views and daylight from the surrounding buildings, keeping the neighbors happy. The elliptical plan shape combined with the pyramidal profile resulted in the conical form of the tower. In a region where earthquakes and typhoons are the prime concerns for all construction, the cone presents the optimal form with which to address these forces.

The need to distinguish itself from its context resulted in a soaring elliptical spike that enlivens the BGC skyline. The building takes the form of a funnel of light projected from above to concentrate focus on its place as a new city center. 

**Opposite page:** The tower pinnacle is accessible to the public as an observation deck set within a lofty, cathedral-like volume where visitors can enjoy 360-degree views of Manila and its environs. From above, a revolving beacon, The Light of Manila, will scan the evening skies over the sprawling metropolis.
**Design**

The structure is supported by a series of pointed arches arranged along an axis, each angled inward to intersect with its opposite number. These arches grow successively taller as they reach the midpoint of the axis, thus creating the apex of the conical tower. Diagonal cross bracing provides added strength and stability, resulting in a pattern of rhomboids that spiral throughout the entire surface of exoskeleton.

The recurring idea of the cone was encountered long before the site demanded it. One Philippine icon, the Mayon Volcano with its perfect cone, was an early inspiration to the design team.

An encounter with the works of Francisco Mañosa introduced the team to another national icon, the bahay kubo. An analogy drawn between the native hut (specifically, the Ifugao variant known as the fale, with its pyramidal form and three functional levels) and the intended skyscraper helped to sharpen the definition of the tower program. The underside of the hut identifies with the tower base to create a grand, open-sided public space. The central communal area of the hut is analogous to the tower's middle section where efficient workspaces are made comfortable and pleasant by means of views, natural lighting, generous social spaces, and access to green terraces and atriums. The loft beneath the hut roof equates to the topmost level of the tower and is made accessible to the public as an observation deck.

The plaza around the base of the tower evokes the sun-dappled ambiance of a tropical rainforest. A canopy filters the views to the surrounding buildings while providing shelter from heat or rain.

This breezy space is equally informed by the bahay kubo's organic response to the environment as well as the sheltering arcades introduced by the Spanish. In a district that hardly has enough public space in proportion to its population or building density, this comes as a most welcome gift indeed.

**Conclusion**

Emerging from the Bonifacio Global City skyline, the conical spire is distinct in form and materiality from all other buildings along the cityscape. The exoskeleton, the most expressive part of the design, employs brise soleil resulting from the interplay between the pointed arches, cross bracing, and the playful rhythm of parallel slats. The decidedly vertical thrust intensifies the celestial effect of the skyscraper, just as in Gothic cathedrals and is an elegant crystallization of the upward aspiration of Filipinos. At night, the tower apex will project a revolving beacon of light over the city, acting as a kind of lighthouse for the metropolis. The Light of Manila and its maritime associations is a reminder of the vast oceans that surround the archipelago—perhaps the most defining aspect of Filipino identity.

Henning Larsen founded his eponymous firm in Denmark in 1959, which rose to become one of Europe’s leading architecture companies. They now have offices in Riyadh, Munich, Oslo, Istanbul, and Hong Kong. Notable projects include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Riyadh, the Copenhagen Opera House, and Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, Iceland. The BCDA competition was joined by the Hong Kong office with a team lead by Claude Godefroy.
Emerging from the Bonifacio Global City skyline, the conical spire is distinct in form and materiality from all other buildings along the cityscape.

**Left:** The plaza at the base of the tower evokes the atmosphere of a tropical rainforest. The bahay kubo’s organic response to climate, and the breezy sheltering arcades introduced by the Spanish inspired this setting for popular activities.

**Right:** An elliptical footprint was used to distinguish the building in plan in a densely built area. The resulting surrounding expanse invites paths to freely crisscross the area, allowing the neighborhood to coalesce around it.

**Below:** Emerging from the BGC skyline, the conical spire is distinct in form and materiality from all other buildings in the area, imparting to the city an unmistakable new profile.
For the BCDA Iconic Building design competition, DP Architects Singapore draws upon a historical narrative of Bonifacio Global City to create a scheme rich in analogy.

**Concept**
The Bonifacio Global City’s beginnings as the national headquarters of the Philippine Armed Forces and its development into one of the country’s prestigious commercial business districts provided the germ of DP Architects’ concept for its entry, the Kalasag Tower. Elements distilled from this storyline make up the components of the tower, namely: The Rubble, The Rising, and The Shield. The “chaos” at the base represents the turbulent times out of which the nation was born and the Philippine Army tested. The core of the structure symbolizes the district’s delicate potential that must be nurtured, while the “shields” stand for the protective elements that safeguard the core.

**Design**
A pair of curved façades parenthesize the Kalasag Tower’s rectangular office block. These bowed elements are protective in both function and character. Affixed to both of the broad surfaces of the block, the placement of the shields results in an elliptical plan. The building core represents the nation’s and the CBD’s potential for limitless growth and lasting progress, alternately described by the designers as a “seedling” requiring protection. The composition is set up on a base comprised of cacophonous elements to embody the turbulence from which the culture was born.

The designers oriented the elliptical tower floor plate with the two narrow ends aligned to an East-West axis to minimize solar heat gain and glare on the building façades. The longer curved sides of the tower, on the other hand, present themselves to the North East and South West.

Two separate layers of skin make up each façade. The inner layer is formed of a curtain wall system with low-E laminated DGU glass. The outer layer is a patterned aluminum lattice screen offset from the glass building skin. This outer layer acts as a sun...
The crystalline form of the glass-encased gallery alludes to the ruinous chaos out of which the nation was born. The story of the tower is built upon this foundation. **Opposite page and right:** The protective gesture of the curved façades is inspired by the traditional Filipino war shield, the *kalasag*. The shields pay homage to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and acknowledge the military origins of Bonifacio Global City.

shading device that keeps the glass curtain wall under shadow. The reduced heat load on the glass thus optimizes thermal comfort to the building occupants and minimizes energy consumption as well as strain on the mechanical cooling system.

The shields take advantage of inherent martial associations to pay homage to the Armed Forces of the Philippines as well as to acknowledge the military background of Fort Bonifacio. These most expressive elements of the proposal take on the curvilinear form of the traditional Filipino war shield, the *kalasag*, from which the proposed tower design gets its name.

The *kalasag* is a large rectangular, curved hardwood shield used by pre-colonial Filipino warriors during battle. Each shield was distinguished with three prongs along the top and two at the bottom and was decorated with elaborate abstract carvings.

**Building Concept Diagram**

The chaos at the base represents the turbulent times out of which the nation was born. The core of the structure suggests the Filipino’s potential that must be nurtured, while the shields safeguard the core and give the building its distinctive shape.
The lattice pattern on the Kalasag Tower’s outer skin is a modern interpretation of batek, the ancient tradition of Filipino tattoos. Historically, batek motifs are abstract and figurative designs that appear in geometric repetitions, and imbued with hidden meanings and the magical protective properties of talismans to repel enemies and malevolent spirits. These patterns not only adorned the warrior’s face and chest; but also their shields, with the prime purpose of inciting fear in the enemy. Batek were worn as badges of honor, symbolizing rank, prestige, and accomplishments earned by their warrior bearers.

In the same spirit, the Kalasag Tower’s façade pattern evokes the celestial symbols that adorn the Philippine flag. The image of the eight-rayed sun finds further expression in the landscape at the base, using the interplay of stepped landscaping and reflection pools. These steps lead to a glass-encased gallery, the crystalline form of which is inspired by rubble, symbolizing the aftermath of war and aggression. The story of the tower is built upon this foundation.

**Conclusion**

The elegant overall expression of the Kalasag Tower owes much to its rigor and discipline. By contrast, this seems to render the intentionally discordant tectonics at the base unnecessary, even gratuitous. The idea of chaos could perhaps have been relegated instead to the already cacophonous and dissonant surrounding city, thus allowing for the plinth to set the building up in a more fittingly cohesive manner. Viewed from certain angles, the tower composition in its entirety bears testament to the benefits of restraint that could push the design towards being a truly iconic statement. 

In line with the aspirational gestures of the tower, the office main lobby projects a sleek and progressive image. Below: Airy, sun-filled interior spaces such as the café and restaurant resonate with Philippine custom within a distinctive new landmark in the city.

Celebrating its 50th year in 2017, Singapore firm DP Architects was established two years after the declaration of the country’s independence and grew alongside the Garden State, designing many of its iconic structures: the Esplanade, Marina Center, Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore Sports Hub, and the Singapore Flyer, to name a few. The team for the BCDA Iconic Building Design Competition was lead by Ti Lian Seng. The final presentation was given by Singapore-based Filipino architect and project consultant Leo Mauricio.
Viewed from certain angles, the tower composition in its entirety bears testament to the benefits of restraint that could push the design towards being a truly iconic statement.

Façade System
The shield façades are made up of two layers. The inner skin is of a curtain wall system with low-E laminated DGU glass. The outer layer, a patterned aluminum lattice screen, reduces the entry of direct sunlight.

Site Development Plan
The elliptical tower floor plate is oriented with the two narrow ends (as opposed to the longer ends) aligned to an east-west axis to minimize solar heat gain and glare on the building façades.
NSI+CAZA’s proposal for the BCDA Iconic Building design competition imparts the vision of an emerging eco-conscious future.
Concept
For their competition entry, NSI+CAZA created an office building that doubles as green infrastructure. The edifice sustains life at different levels. Like a mountain, its strata support a variety of habitats for the cultivation of native landscapes, enabling users to experience the natural diversity of Philippine flora while working in a modern urban office building.

Recognizing that the contemporary office building today need no longer be a hermetic box, workspaces are envisioned as environments with as much complexity and nuance as natural eco-systems. Office workers have access to a range of services that enable productivity through dense networks of group affiliations. Places of work are not only made to meet global performance standards but are also ecologically sustainable through open networks of system exchange. The digital revolution has transformed the concept of work, making it possible to be productive anywhere, and necessitating that such freedom is enabled by robust connections to nature and technology.

Design
The building occupies only ten percent of the site, opening up over 6,000 square meters to the public as a park with gardens, art pieces, play spaces, and an outdoor amphitheater. The park will be the largest privately-managed public space at Bonifacio Global City and will connect to a cultural facility called the Cities Lab.

The building is rooted in a park and stands on what appears to be a pair of limbs that unite into a trunk as the tower ascends. Upon this, the structure is crowned with a twisting crystalline vessel, the new headquarters of the BCDA.

The vertical slit forming the limbs drapes to one side to create a generous clearing at the base, thus providing a distinction between the lower and upper trunk, and, together with the building, helps to communicate an underlying tripartite organization. The parting also allows for the bean-like interior volumes of the Cities Lab to be expressed externally to the surrounding community.
The building’s vertical arboretum which rolls its way up from park to crown is accessible at each floor and offers users the opportunity to meet in a green setting in the sky with panoramic views of the city beyond. The green pods that make up the arboretum represent an ecological equivalent of today’s interconnected networks of communication. Each pod is a bowed balcony extension of the floor slab and connects to another using self-supporting spiral stairs. Peering through the veil-like permeable skin of the façade, they make for unique urban experiences.

The façade is a steel-rod lattice screen that provides an open-air framework for creeping plants that furnish shade at each level, producing microclimates for the cultivation of native species in an above-ground environment.

The arrangement of pocket gardens articulates the surface with a pleasing, reassuringly regular pattern while unifying the divergent elements of the tower under one thematic flourish. This underlying order allows for supported plant life to thrive in wild profusion, maintaining a reassuring sense of structure while breezes cause the vegetation to sway and ripple in verdant waves. The noteworthy elements of the proposal are:

- The Cities Lab is an educational center with a museum, auditorium, and gallery featuring interactive exhibits dedicated to the topic of urbanization. It will be a resource center where people can learn about the changing urban environment as more and more of the world’s populations become city dwellers.

- The first rooftop urban farm in the Philippines supplying fresh produce to on-site restaurants and weekly farmer’s markets.

- The BCDA’s tightly clustered office environment located at the crystalline crown of the building with 360-degree views and dedicated elevator access.

- The wellness center, a community facility designed around the arts of holistic healing, offering cooking classes, fitness sessions, and spa treatments.

- Sky Gardens: a vertical arrangement of publicly-accessible garden pods highlighting the rich tropical diversity of Philippine flora. A microcosm of the plant life found in the archipelago, these cascading pockets are organized in four different strata, namely (in descending order), Elfin Forest, Cloud Forest, Deciduous Forest, and Lowland Evergreen Rainforest.

- The commercial offices’ wide-floor office layout with floor-to-ceiling windows and ample amenity links.

**Conclusion**

The outward appearance of the proposal, born organically from the issues the designers felt important to investigate, is overly cluttered to constitute an immediately legible icon. This entry, though, among all the others, explores more than superficial image-making to present a viable possibility for how architecture may rebalance the evolving relationships between work and leisure, between technology and nature, and define 21st-century humanity’s place in the natural world. It is hoped that the ideas explored here find full fruition in future CAZA projects.
The building is rooted in a lush public park with gardens, art pieces, play areas, and an outdoor amphitheater. The many different functions and spaces of the building may be glimpsed through the framing branches of the sheltering tree canopy. CAZA’s proposal provides a welcome contrast to the hard surfaces of BGC’s glass and steel canyons. The verdant façades emphasize the building’s ecological intent while enlivening the urban experience.

CAZA, founded by Filipino-Colombian Carlos Arnaiz, is a Brooklyn-based design studio with offices in Manila and Bogotá. The studio is known for the 100 Walls Church in Cebu and the recently completed City Center Tower in Bonifacio Global City. For the BCDA design competition, CAZA collaborated with Philippine company NSI, with Luis Santiago as team lead, Arnaiz as architectural consultant, and Edvin Santiago as landscape consultant.
Opposite page: The treehouse at the core of the Jastia residence is not simply the plaything its name suggests. This intervention by Jim Caumeron is a great example of retrofit for small spaces. It addressed the problems of the claustrophobic structure and encourages family time. Did we mention it’s also a lot of fun?

Resulting from interrogations of form to deliver an appropriate neighborhood-friendly expression, Cascadia Tower by Collaborative Architects and Jurgen Mayer evokes humanity’s most primal constructive impulse.
For their Cascadia Tower, Collaborative Architects and Jürgen Mayer explore an ancient place-making practice to create a new center for culture and commerce.

**Concept**

Throughout history, verticality has been the most-often used means to achieve stature in buildings. Exceptions that deliver the same ends via horizontal means provided inspiration for the team of Collaborative Architects and Jürgen Mayer. They felt the latter strategy would be more suited to the narrow site sandwiched between existing tall buildings. Although still a tower, emphasizing the horizontality of the elements rather than the verticality of the structure would deliver a neighborhood-friendly expression.

Likewise, the team recognized the dynamic transformation of Bonifacio Global City as an opportunity to introduce a new urban environment dedicated to culture, resilience, and sustainability. The proposal for the Cascadia Tower sits in an urban park that sets the project apart as a unique public space and experience. The park is intended to accommodate a collection of public art by known local and foreign artists, making it an important cultural destination. The new plaza also complements the urban vision of the linear park along the east-west axis in the new city.

The Cascadia Tower is a structure with various programmatic intersections. The stacked volumes recall ancient landmarks of stones stacked one upon another. This particular ordering establishes orientation and a sense of place. In a work of architecture, it evokes man’s most primal constructive impulse. There is something elemental in this arrangement of forms, as if tracing a path back to rudiments in search of evidence of human existence or of civilization. The volumes can be seen as pebbles stacked to create a vertical park for work, recreation, retail, and culture.
smart building could be designed by virtue of little solar intake. Embedded photovoltaic panels in the façade system on the sun-exposed east side shall be explored to generate power on site.

Conclusion
The designation of the forms may come across as somewhat arbitrary as the pebbles bear little correspondence to any relevant zonal or functional separations. No distinction is made between the building blocks in the interest of hierarchy outside of what ends up on top as a matter of course. The size and shape of the pebbles remain largely consistent throughout, and perhaps the opportunity to create greater visual excitement over the equilibrium achieved has been missed. Although the structure cannot be read as anything other than a tower, the move to emphasize the horizontality of the building blocks does much to create an amiable relatability to the immediate surrounding neighborhood and should make for a vibrant new place in the city.

The grand lobby filters visitors into the museum galleries, and specialty and luxury retail outlets for a multitude of recreational experiences. Below: The museum functions as a contemporary showcase of culture and art. A part of it is dedicated to permanent exhibits relating to the Philippine Armed Forces once based at Fort Bonifacio.

Design
Each “pebble” is an orthographic approximation of a natural form. The edges and corners of each are curved but its vertical and horizontal planes flat. The resulting crispness of form is an attempt to bring a Neolithic expression into a contemporary urban context. Glass became the automatic choice for the building skin to ensure much needed visual expanse for occupants while taking advantage of the self-shading conditions.

Each pebble of the tower has specific programmatic definitions: The ground floor podium mitigates changes in scale to create a satisfying sense of approach and entry. It contains the main drop off, café, entrances to retail shops, museum, office floors, and access to the basements for public parking and mechanical rooms.

Pebble 1 contains a grand lobby, museum galleries, and spaces dedicated to specialty and luxury retail outlets. The museum is organized on two floors and is designed to function as a contemporary showcase of culture and art. A part of the museum is dedicated to permanent exhibits relating to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, its history, and lasting legacy.

Pebbles 2 to 4 contain typically planned office floors that comprise the new BCDA headquarters.

Pebble 5, the topmost pebble, holds additional office and conference floors and offers great views, a sky restaurant, as well as mechanical areas.

The park is envisioned as a new meeting place in the city. Sculptures and art installations for the area, embedded in the overall layout of the public spaces, offer various settings for meditative relaxation. The grand stairs that provide access to the retail floor also work as terraced seating area for outdoor performances. A large lawn provides maximum flexibility for gatherings, performances, or impromptu activities. Paved avenues define crisp lawn segments and provide access to adjacent pathways for easy circulation.

The site context flipped the general green norms and presented a unique opportunity to explore an innovative glass structure with no additional carbon footprint. Owing to shadows cast upon the site by surrounding buildings, a sustainable and

J. MAYER H., founded in 1996, is a Berlin-based architecture studio whose notable works include the Metropol Parasol in Seville, Spain, and ADA1 office building in Hamburg, Germany. For the BCDA design competition, the studio worked with Mumbai-based firm Collaborative Architecture with Jürgen Mayer as team lead, and Mujib Ahamed and Lalita Tharani as consultants.
In September of 2012, Joel Rico helped BluPrint organize a roundtable of architects at the Meralco Theater at the Lopez Building to remember its architect, Jose Maria Zaragoza. Photographed by Mike Cuevas

**O P I N I O N**

**The End of A Long Dry Spell**

Recognized in 2014, José María Zaragoza is the fourth architect out of 66 National Artists since 1972—may we have more architect honorees, please?

Written by Judith Torres
Twenty-four years passed before a fourth National Artist for Architecture was recognized since Leandro Locsin’s induction to the Order in 1990. When José María Velez Zaragoza (1912-1994) was conferred the country’s highest honor to servants of culture and the arts in 2014, the long dry spell for Architecture had been broken. It was a season that had turned particularly bitter in 2009 when Francisco Mañosa was conferred and then later stripped of the honor in controversial circumstances not of his making.

Nominating a National Artist
The man who nominated Zaragoza to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and Cultural Center of the Philippines was Joel Vivero Rico, then national president of the Philippine Institute of Architects (PIA). He describes the nomination and selection process as straightforward and uneventful. Together with May Lyn Cruz, who drafted the rationale for Zaragoza’s nomination, Rico and others in the PIA worked with the Zaragoza family to piece together the grand old architect’s curriculum vitae and list of works and strategized how best to represent him to the NCCA-CCP’s panel of experts.

Among students of architecture today, Zaragoza is probably best known for the Meralco (Lopez) Building on Ortigas Avenue, with its elegantly restrained and sweeping 12-storey-high brise soleil.

Zaragoza designed 36 office, government, and commercial buildings, many of them icons of their time—the semi-circular Commercial Bank and Trust Company headquarters in Escolta, the proud Delgado Brothers Building in Manila’s Port Area, the optimistic Soriano Building in Makati (demolished), and the futuristic Virra Mall in Greenhills, San Juan City (also demolished).

Most articles and websites cite Zaragoza primarily for his ecclesiastical architecture. He designed 45 churches and religious centers, among them, the Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City (proclaimed a National Cultural Treasure in 2012), the impeccable Union Church of Manila in Escolta, the proud Delgado Brothers Building in Manila’s Port Area, the optimistic Soriano Building in Makati (demolished), and the futuristic Virra Mall in Greenhills, San Juan City (also demolished).

We need more NAs for Architecture
Rico, who for many years has been a staunch advocate for Mañosa’s recognition as National Artist, says Zaragoza and Mañosa are entirely different from one another but equally deserving of the state’s highest award in the same way National Artists Carlos “Botong” Francisco and Federico Aguilar Alcuaz come from two entirely different schools of art but have both contributed significantly to the development of Philippine art.

“You cannot compare the two. Mañosa was a nationalist through and through, and he expressed this by relentlessly pursuing and promoting the use of vernacular materials, forms, and functions in contemporary settings. Zaragoza, by contrast, was a modernist. His contribution was in creating modern architecture suited to our context that was expressive, sculptural, and symbolic, and in that manner, he produced architecture that was Filipino and iconic,” Rico opines.

With a successful National Artist nomination under his belt, Rico is hopeful Zaragoza’s acceptance will keep the door open to a fifth architect (not counting landscape architect Ildefonso P. Santos) when the NCCA and CCP submit their recommendations to President Rodrigo Duterte after their deliberations late this year to early next year.

“We need more National Artists for Architecture. I think it is the least appreciated of the arts and disciplines yet it is probably the most intimately tied to identity building, nation building, and the well being of people. More importantly, we need dialogue about our artists and design heroes to permeate the public consciousness.”

Photographed in the late 1960s, Zaragoza’s new 14-story Meralco building and its subordinate structures are complemented by the elegantly modern landscape architecture of Dolly Quimbo Perez. In the immediate background, the future residential subdivision of Corinthian Gardens is presumably not yet a thought.
If the country’s design landscape seems arid compared to the blossoming of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, it has everything to do with the Philippine government’s indifference to culture and the arts.

Discussions about art, design, and architecture, Rico argues, need to come down from their high horses. Imagine the impact of awarding Zaragoza and discussing the brilliance and the value of his architecture two decades ago. Imagine if discussion and debate among school children and in the media took place every time National Artists were inducted faithfully and with integrity into the Order every two years, instead of infrequently and irregularly, every five or six years, and in the case of Architecture, after 24 years of being ignored or passed over. How many of Zaragoza’s buildings—and that of Lindy Locsin, Pablo Antonio, and Juan Nakpil—might have been saved from demolition?

Awarding design heroes for nation building

If the country’s design landscape seems arid compared to the blossoming of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, it has everything to do with the Philippine government’s indifference to culture and the arts. There is much to be said for Singapore’s gung-ho promotion of the arts, and Malaysia’s “Boleh!” (We can do it!) battle cry when the government says they want to erect the tallest skyscraper, construct the most modern ministerial center, and build the widest highways.

I remember friends in art and theater circles snickering back in the late 1980s when Lee Kuan Yew’s government announced it would focus efforts on turning Singapore into an Asian hub for design, culture, and the arts. No one could picture the repressed, unimaginative, and wooden automatons excelling in design and the arts. “Singaporeans aren’t creative!” they rittered. But with an almost grim resolve to be spontaneous, fun, artistic, and out-of-the-box, Prime Minister Lee launched the Singapore Design Awards and Singapore International Design Forum in 1988, and empowered the Designers Association Singapore (now the Design Business Chamber Singapore) and relevant agencies to plan a 30-year blueprint to transform the state into a design-centric economy by 2020.

In their manifesto, the Design Business Chamber declared: “To be a Nation of Design by 2020, our mission is to champion design business: designers must embrace design as their core competence; enterprises must engage design as business solutions; and the public must esteem design as a life quality enhancer.” When the Singapore government said, “The role of designers is to make the world a better place,” they meant it and demanded it of their design professionals and organizations. Peppered with quotable statements like, “Design is a game changer especially for cities that have no natural resources except human talent,” their design manifesto is an endearing combination of humility, earnestness, and breathtaking ambition.

Filipino designers I interviewed in 2013 scoffed at the idea of exhibiting at design fairs in Singapore. “Why would buyers go there? They have nothing compared to our displays at Manila FAME!” one said. Then, when Singapore not only hosted the first...
Singapore Design Week (à la Milan Design Week and its Salone del Mobile) but also the first Maison et Objet Asia in 2014, these designers lamented, “It should have gone to us.” Others comforted themselves with the fact that M&O Asia’s Designer of the Year Award went to a Filipino, Kenneth Cobonpue. That was all for starters, of course. Singapore was never ashamed of acknowledging they weren’t the best and never begrudged handing out awards to others so long as they had a plan and timetable to become the best.

By all indications, Singapore will meet their goal to be a design-centric economy right on schedule. Not content with having the world’s best airport; being among the world’s best in infrastructure, safety, cleanliness, eco-friendliness, and livability; and having one of the world’s best architecture schools and some of the world’s biggest and most admired architecture firms, the Design Singapore Council has drawn up a blueprint for a new goal for 2025: to be a thriving innovation-driven economy and a loveable city through design!

In the period 2009 to 2015 alone, the Design Singapore Council launched or co-sponsored no less than 11 annual design awards. It was all part of the blueprint to recognize, uplift, and encourage designers, and more importantly, to create occasions to push design excellence in the public consciousness not only as desirable but critical to the state’s survival, growth, and competitive edge. The awards weren’t easy to come by. They were not meant to give Singapore’s citizens a false sense of superiority and accomplishment. They weren’t excuses to parade in finery and to legitimize the mediocre work of a beloved leader’s cronies and toadies. The objective was to say: “This is excellent design. This is what our country needs. And we need to get better still.” Which they did.
As early as the 1980s, Singapore had the gumption to hold international design awards with an international panel of credible jurors—including people like Kerry Hill, Paul Finch, Sou Fujimoto, Lyndon Neri, Lord Richard Rogers, Thom Mayne, and Kengo Kuma—which Singapore always lost. And then Singapore designers started winning, not only distinctions and competitions of their making but, eventually, honors from such prestigious bodies as the RIBA, the Chicago Athenaeum, and many more. Tai Lee Siang, head of the Singapore Design Business Chamber and a past president of the Singapore Institute of Architects, told BluPrint he and his colleagues aspire for a home-grown Singapore architecture firm to win the Pritzker Prize. They project this to happen in the next 10 to 15 years!

Meanwhile, the Council recently announced its most prestigious award, the annual President’s Design Award would take this year (2017) off and adopt a biennial cycle with new judging criteria. The new standards “will emphasize designs that have demonstrated a transformational impact on society, businesses or the public sector, in addition to the usual criteria of excellence in design craftsmanship,” the Council said.

Awarding design heroes to value values

It’s been three years since the end of the long dry spell for Architecture in the National Artist Awards. In an uncommon show of cooperation and solidarity, Philippine architectural organizations sat down and agreed that the 2018 Order of National Artist should not go by without an architect included in the shortlist of nominees. On July 28 this year, the Philippine Institute of Architects (PIA), the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP), the College of Fellows of both organizations, the Council of Deans and Heads of Architectures School in the Philippines (CODHASP), the Guild of Philippine Architects in Conservation, and the Architectural Archives Philippines Center for Filipino Architecture, with the support of the Profession Regulation Board of Architecture (PRBoA), signed a unified nomination of Francisco Mañosa for National Artist in Architecture.

“Mañosa is one of the great Filipino architects of the 20th century,” said architecture historian Gerard Lico, who curated Mañosa: Beyond Architecture, a retrospective of Mañosa’s work at the National Museum earlier this year. “He staked out the ground for a vernacular consciousness to flourish in the post-colonial architectural scene. Highly regarded as the pioneering figure of neovernacular architecture in the Philippines, Mañosa designed buildings of primal beauty, revealing the vital virtues of Filipino identity and its tropical context.”
Mañosa vowed he would design Filipino and nothing else. In a 2009 interview with BluPrint, months before the National Artist Awards fiasco, he told us why: “I have always believed that to be a good architect, you must love your country first. If you don’t believe in your country, then fine, buy this property in Portofino and feel like you’re in Venice. Filipino architecture captures the Filipino psyche. Anything of our own is less expensive than something borrowed, and anything of our own is also more fitting. We must remove the mantle of inferiority that foreign domination has placed on us. We must believe in ourselves, our capabilities, innovativeness and creativity, and stop imitating alien cultures and architecture. We must believe that in accepting what we are and what we have—both our limitations and our potentials—we can finally emerge as equals.”

How do we not cherish these values?

Awarding design heroes for transformation design
To persuade our countrymen, barangay captains, councilors, and mayors of the value of design to society, the highest bodies of the land tasked with preserving, developing, and promoting Philippine culture and the arts must demonstrate a constancy and transparency in honoring our art and design heroes. The regular and credible conduct of the National Artist Awards is one potent means of stimulating appreciation for the power of creativity and design to make life better. To engender a culture of design excellence, we must prize and pay tribute to excellence here at home, and raise the profiles of those who meet the bar to our neighbors abroad.

To compete on the global stage, we raise the bar while upholding our values. We train, we spar, we practice for the big leagues!

To design a better Philippines and to transform society, we evolve our recognition programs to reflect the pressing challenges of our time—the depletion of natural resources, climate change, disaster resiliency, deteriorating infrastructure, a maturing population, health, security, crime, and inequity.

The first step to breaking out of a dry spell is to take responsibility for it. Let us not bemoan or make do with a scanty harvest. Instead, let us cultivate and nurture the ecosystem for our creative talent to grow and prosper.

The works of our National Artists for Architecture and Landscape Architecture—Juan Nakpil, Pablo Antonio, Leandro Locsin, Jose Maria Zaragoza, and I.P. Santos—represent a legacy we can be proud of. There are many more whose contributions to the nation are of inestimable value. Let us honor more like them at their prime and expose our young to their stories, their creativity, innovation, and wisdom!
Pillars for Pillars

In order for the Haligi ng Dangal to rise as the Filipino architecture award, its pillars must be dug down deep

Written by Angel Yulo
Six designers were crowned with gold-colored laurels and bestowed with medals at the first *Haligi ng Dangal* (Filipino for “Pillar of Honor”) awarding ceremony last 17 June 2017, at the Ayuntamiento in Intramuros, Manila. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), through the National Committee on Architecture and the Allied Arts, launched the prize to honor exemplary works of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Interior Design, and Urban and Environmental Planning.

The call for nominations was made in September 2016 and over 60 nominations came in from across the country for the different categories. A nominee must be an outstanding work of architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, or urban planning created by licensed Filipino professionals. Deliberations were made on 2 June 2017 by a jury composed of: professor and past dean of University of the Philippines College of Architecture Jose Danilo Silvestre; NCCA architecture subcommission head Rogelio Caringal; architect, urban planner, and Cultural Center of the Philippines board member Maria Cristina Turalba; magazine editor-in-chief Rachelle Medina; professor and landscape architect Susan Aquino-Ong; curator and art critic Dr. Patrick D. Flores.

“The endeavor calls for exemplary works that push the envelope of Filipino design. We are seeking for designers who understand the essence of what it means to be Filipino and translate this into built form. The designs must innovate our materials and processes—utilizing indigenous knowledge or modern methods in response to contemporary Filipino behavior and context,” shared Gerard Lico, consulting architect of the NCCA and project director of *Haligi ng Dangal*.

In addition, a People’s Choice category was opened in May 2017, in which the public nominated projects built in the last ten years. The top 20 nominees were eligible for online voting from 23 May to 4 June 2017.

The following projects and their respective designers are the pioneer *Haligi ng Dangal* honorees: Church of the Gesu by Jose Pedro Recio for Institutional Architecture; Arnaiz Residence by Dan Lichauco for Residential Architecture; Lumot Lakehouse by Budji Layug for Interior Design; U.P. Town Center by Eric Estonido for Landscape Architecture; and RONAC Art Center by Sonny Sunga and Arnold Austria for the People’s Choice.

The awards also serve a pragmatic purpose. “We recently resumed our participation in the Venice Biennale after decades of hiatus. *Haligi ng Dangal* can help the NCCA identify the vanguards of our culture and our best bets for international competitions and exhibitions,” added Lico.

Although it is the first stand-alone architecture award under the care of the NCCA, *Haligi ng Dangal* is not the only architecture prize present in the country. The Philippine Institute of Architects founded the Gold Medal of Merit in 1958 with Andres Luna de San Pedro as the first awardee and Ramon Orfina, Jr. as the twenty-fourth and most recent in 2012. The United Architects of the Philippines bestows distinction in the form of the Likha Gold Medal, which has been given thirteen times since it was established in 1982. Likha awardees include the likes of Locsin, Formoso, and Mañosa. There are also the Professional Regulation Commission’s Outstanding Architect of the Year and the Office of the President’s National Artist Award.
Haligi ng Dangal could have a lot going for it. Just entering its second year, it does not lug around the controversial and politically-tainted baggage that weighs down the National Artist Award. Many can remember and perhaps still carry the suspicion caused by the annulment of the 2009 proclamation which included architect Francisco Mañosa (and, for a larger populace, the 2014 exclusion of actor Nora Aunor from the final list). The NCCA must be diligent in guarding against name insertions and unexplained exemptions if it doesn’t want the awards to be troubled by notoriety in succeeding years.

Moreover, the jury selects winners on the basis of a single project rather than a body of work. (Think of it as a “Building of the Year” award for different typologies.) And rendering distinguished service to a professional organization—which the Gold Medal of Merit, Likha Award, and Outstanding Architect of the Year all take note of—is not part of the judging criteria. These factors open up the list to a younger and under-the-radar set of designers, those who have less or prefer less attention in occasions of pomp and parade. The architectural work can be allowed to speak for itself.

If there is anything we can take away from 2017, a year of iconic design competitions in the country, it is this: a prize is as good as the jury that deliberates it. An award only one year old and with no other local award-giving frameworks as models may look to some of the top architecture prizes in the world. Haligi ng Dangal can emulate the Pritzker Prize, the highest honor in the architecture world, by carrying over some jury members to the next year and decommissioning some to balance old and new voices. The jury is composed of five to nine members who are recognized professionals in the of architecture, business, education, publishing, and culture. Past Pritzker laureates have also served the jury. It can also take the RIBA route, wherein a completely new jury is built every year—a mix of architects, artists, academics, and others with weighty opinions in the design world—to panel for the Stirling Prize.

There is already one set of winners to draw jury members from for the 2018 deliberations. A Filipino may have not won the Pritzker or RIBA International award yet, but the NCCA can build a jury by inviting local architects who have been shortlisted...
The award must pierce public consciousness and recognition of it among the Filipinos, designers and non-designers alike, must grow every year.

Leadership of a design practice
Going through the design process yourself and moving up to guide others through it puts you in a good place to discern and articulate the value of a building. We can take our cue from the advertising world, in which major awards are juried by executives of local and international firms. For the past ten years, the highest accolade design accolade in Singapore, the President’s Design Award, has been juried by a large panel (14 to 17 members) of design principals from all over the world. There is also much to be gained from international jury members, especially if they are from top-notch practices. It allows us to see our local output in relation to global standards, temper insular thinking, and, more importantly, push design to get better.

The discipline for critical discourse
Choosing projects worthy of discourse among the Filipinos will require discourse among the jury members themselves. A clashing of opinions (done civilly, of course) will serve the awards better than a table of bobbing heads. Critique is a discipline. A jury member who regularly practices it in a studio set up, in the academe, or as a profession will be of great value to the deliberation process.

The entrance to the church is at the base of the tetrahedron/pyramidal structure.
BAAD World

BAAD Studio may be housed in a small white space, but the principals run it with the best practices learned on pilgrimages to their idols’ offices around the world.

Written by Miguel R. Llona | Photographed by Ed Simon

Additional Photos by BAAD Studio
While on a two-hour train ride en route to Okayama from Osaka, Benjamin Mendoza and An Bermejo of BAAD Studio listened to talks of architects, the recordings keeping time with their progress through the fields and mountains of the Japanese countryside. “We do that everywhere—while riding trains, waiting at the airport. Even at one in the morning, we’re still listening to talks of whoever,” says Mendoza. Mundane as it may seem, it paints a clear picture of the kind of architects they are—learners eager to soak in as much knowledge as they can, even in their down time.

The pair treats every trip they take—about five to seven every year—as an educational tour. Often the highlight of their itinerary is a visit to the office of an architect they admire, which they liken to a life-changing pilgrimage. They scour the city for the building the office is in, knock on the door, politely ask to be toured around, and, if they’re lucky, meet the principal architect. The purpose isn’t to meet architects they idolize—who don’t have much time to spare for visitors anyway—but to gather information on how foreign offices run and, if they can, apply it to their practice.

Mendoza and Bermejo established BAAD Studio in 2010. They have since grown into a 14-strong team, necessitating the move to their current office at the Zaragoza Building in Makati, a 65-square meter space that reflects their design philosophy. Their office consists of a small lobby displaying photos of the firm’s projects, two long tables that make up the architects’ work stations, and a conference area for meetings with suppliers and clients. Walls, ceilings, and tables are painted white, the lack of clutter and ornamentation giving the space the appearance of no-nonsense efficiency.

The two principals pride themselves on efficiently interpreting a client’s program. Simplicity and functionality define the firm’s work, each project vastly differing in style and appearance. “We don’t believe in styles,” says Mendoza.
“We want each project to bring out the essence of our clients.” The all-white color scheme of the office represents this “clean slate” approach to design and prevents them from being influenced by trends. “We believe being direct and to the point is the best communication skill, so we apply that to our design approach as much as possible. We always try to simplify,” says Mendoza.

This simplified approach extends to their organizational structure as well. While there is a clear hierarchy in the office—Mendoza and Bermejo as the principals, with senior and junior architects under them—an egalitarian dynamic exists in the firm. “There’s a ‘flat’ organization here in the office. We don’t want hierarchy to be an issue since, in terms of age, we’re not all that far apart,” says Mendoza. “Though we all have official designations, we just call each other ‘architects.’ It makes for more relaxed and easier collaboration with each other.” The principals have delineated their managerial duties with Bermejo in charge of administrative work and Mendoza, client coordination.

Despite having visited several foreign offices, including Foster+Partners’ London office and the studios of Kengo Kuma & Associates and Ai Weiwei, how Mendoza and Bermejo run BAAD Studio comes mainly from Lor Calma & Partners, where Mendoza previously worked. As with Eduardo Calma, says Mendoza, BAAD places a premium on collaboration and discussion, with the staff developing the initial concepts generated by the principals. When new clients come in, Mendoza and Bermejo meet with them first to “read” them and interpret the client’s program. They then formulate the concept, which they assign to one of their architects.

“Though we all have official designations, we just call each other ‘architects.’ It makes for more relaxed and easier collaboration with each other.”

BENJAMIN MENDOZA
The blank walls and surfaces of the BAAD office offer a clean canvas for architects to help the principals come up with fresh ideas, uninfluenced by trends. The floor finishes demarcate each area, with wood paneling for the lobby and conference area in anticipation of foot traffic from visiting foremen and suppliers, and carpeting for the work stations. Right: Meetings with suppliers and staff are usually held in the conference area. After the first session with the client, Mendoza and Bermejo draw an initial model, which they discuss further with the architects assigned to the project. The architects are chosen based on their personality, skills, level, and work experience.
While their management style is geared towards producing well-rounded designers, Mendoza and Bermejo's ultimate goal is to mold their staff into individuals who value learning and pursue passions outside of architecture.

At the first design meeting, the designated architect is expected to respond to and challenge Mendoza and Bermejo's schematic concept. The architect does further research and programming, creates the presentation, and joins the second meeting with the client. Throughout the project, the assigned architect coordinates with the client directly, all while developing and refining the design accordingly.

Each architect handles two to three projects at a time, with the principals guiding and assessing their progress. New hires are usually given interior design projects for their first assignment. “When you come in, and you’re pretty young, we’re going to give you something to design and handle, coordinate, build, and turnkey in three months,” says Mendoza. The experience is meant to fast-track the architect’s proficiency in time management, coordination, and material finishing, which will serve them well when they are assigned large-scale projects later on.
A gigantic expletive greets visitors to Ai Weiwei’s studio. When Mendoza and Bermejo knocked on the door, the wary staff asked if they were members of the media. Ai Weiwei was imprisoned for three months in 2011 for his political activism.

Below: Ai Weiwei, with the two BAAD Studio principals

The culture of collaboration within the office ties in with Mendoza and Bermejo’s passion for continuous learning. While the two assess staff performance on efficiency, they place greater value on creativity and initiative in developing initial concepts. “We encourage individuality,” says Bermejo. “We give our architects the freedom to develop a project on their own. It’s a way for us to know what individual designers are good at, because we want their specific skills to elevate the quality and standards of the office, whether it is through design, drawing, coordination, or speed of delivery.” Whenever an architect displays a sensible habit, even something as small as a more organized way of keeping the drawing register, Mendoza and Bermejo make it standard for the office.

While their management style is geared towards producing well-rounded designers, Mendoza and Bermejo’s ultimate goal is to mold their staff into individuals who value learning and pursue passions outside of architecture. After-hour activities such as team dinners, badminton, or bowling are organized for the staff. They go on field trips from time to time, with Cebu and Hong Kong among previous destinations.

“We don’t want our staff to be zombies, so we encourage them to engage in their passions because it gets them out of their shell,” says Mendoza. “For An and I, it’s traveling because it helps us know what type of architects we are. We find out what we value, which we, in turn, apply to our design approach.”
For Cathy Saldaña of Arco Group and PDP Architects, each day is a revolving door of client and staff meetings, site visits, and new challenges—and she loves every minute of it.

Written by Miguel R. Llona  Photos by Miguel Abesamis

It is 9:30 AM. Cathy Saldaña heads straight to the conference room of her Makati office. An HR associate enters, talks to her, and leaves after five minutes. Another staff member enters and leaves a few minutes later. Three more meetings follow, five minutes each. Next, Saldaña is walking to a nearby building for her next appointment. Ten minutes later, she’s crossing Makati’s streets for yet another meeting at the Makati Shangri-la Hotel.

This dizzying series of meetings all happens in an hour. Saldaña’s mantra is “Let’s make it happen,” so it’s no surprise her days are a whirlwind of meetings, consultations, phone calls and site visits. “I like the flexibility and excitement a packed day brings,” she says. “I enjoy the diversity and multi-disciplinary task of dealing with different clients and projects.”

This has been her mindset since becoming an architect in 1992 and building a reputation in retail, mixed-use, BPO, hospitality, and resort design. She is now the co-Managing Director of two firms—PDP Architects, a local hospitality design studio, and Arco Group, a local design and architectural outsourcing company that she founded with Gigi Eala and Monsie Koh. Saldaña acts as a designer, mentor, recruiter, and business strategist. Her current priority, however, is finding "creative people with leadership capabilities" and molding them to lead the firm one day. “I believe in building people,” she says. “Architecture is like a game of catch. To deliver a good project, there has to be another partner who can catch it. That’s how I train people—when I throw something your way, you have to catch it. Don’t let it slip through your fingers because that’s when a project fails and a client becomes unhappy.”

Finding the right personnel is vital to the business, since their local and international projects are growing in number and becoming more diversified. Apart from hospitality projects and mixed-use developments, they are now designing logistics facilities, warehouses, and large-scale, industrial-type storage. It’s a departure from what Saldaña’s people are used to doing and she relishes the myriad challenges they bring. “In all my years managing the office, I have learned that there is no problem you cannot solve,” she says. “There’s always a solution—you just have to face up to the problem with integrity.” Confident words from a confident woman, one determined to seize opportunities in any way she can—but always with integrity.
Saldaña wakes up as early as 7 AM to prep for the day, sometimes reading through email or exercising. She has breakfast with her husband, Alex Siegle, an hour later. “Breakfast is sacred for us because it’s our catch-up time,” she says. Siegle works for a New York-based company that requires him to travel often. Unlike her unpredictable daily schedule, Saldaña always eats egg and avocado for breakfast, while her husband has ham and cheese. Breakfast is also a time for Saldaña to “re-organize” her schedule for the day, which she writes down on a piece of paper. While eating breakfast, she usually gets phone calls from clients, much to her husband’s annoyance. “I normally have a very packed day. There are always inserts in my schedule—sudden meetings with staff or clients, mostly. You just have to be prepared always,” she says. Today, Saldaña will have two client meetings, two site visits, and meetings with various members of her staff in between.

She calls over Denise Oblena to the conference room. Saldaña briefs her on a project they are bidding for in Cebu. Saldaña briefs her on the details of the Grantland project, which they are bidding for. The project is a mixed-use development with up to 40,000 square meters of retail space, with two towers atop a podium base. “I think now that you’re a newly licensed architect, you’re ready to lead a project, not just in a supporting capacity. So let’s get you working on a building,” Saldaña tells her.

Saldaña and Alex recently bought a 30-year-old house in a Makati village and are currently renovating it. Before leaving for the office, Saldaña checks in with the workers and informs them of deliveries to expect within the day. She talks to Mel, a craftsman she has worked with for eight years, about the metal grillwork being done for the windows.

Next to meet with Saldaña is Marc Vocal, the associate principal of PDP Architects. The two often hold design meetings to discuss the status of projects. “He’s my phone and pen pal, because we talk almost everyday!” she says. Because she’s the one clients call, she must always be up to speed on their projects. After discussing the Grantland project with Vocal, she invites him to lunch so they can discuss other matters further. Saldaña meets with more architects, among them JJ Estacio and Hajji Ansay. All her meetings follow a pattern: she asks what the status of the project is, how they can move forward, and what the staff needs her to do. Her direct and measured approach leads to very short meetings that last only 5 to 10 minutes. “I don’t like long meetings because I don’t like wasting people’s time,” she says. “I’ve already reviewed their commitments and submissions through email, so they should just be validating or answering questions when we meet.”
The Arco Design Group’s office is at 88 Corporate Center along Sedeño St., a 10-minute drive from her house. Because of the short drive, she always arrives early in the office. She doesn’t mind being stuck in traffic, however. “Traffic is the best. Instead of wasting time on Facebook, I just go through emails. I believe we should always make productive use of our time.”

The minute Saldaña arrives in the office, she heads straight to the conference room where she holds meetings with staff. “In the morning, it’s a revolving door of people for me,” she says. Her first meeting is with Harvey Inedanio from their HR department. She oversees the hiring of people, constantly reviewing applicants. She is currently focused on finding business development people who can handle the firm’s foreign accounts so she doesn’t have to fly out as much anymore.

While waiting for her next meeting, she wanders over to Danilo Babol, one of the design staff, and tells him to initiate the coordination on a delayed project. She receives three phone calls in the middle of this meeting—two from clients and one from home. After Babol, she talks to his seatmate, Rochelle dela Cruz, and asks her about the status of her assignments.

Next on her agenda is a meeting with Jones Lang-LaSalle (JLL), a lease consultancy firm Arco frequently collaborates with. With their office only a few blocks away, she walks it. “I love walking,” she says. “The urban environment of Makati is very nice, and it’s good exercise. It’s also a nice time to take a breather.” Apart from helping her stay fit, walking helps Saldaña think through strategies and her daily schedule. The meeting commences right away. Arco Group and JLL are collaborating with the European Chamber of Commerce on an event called “Women in Business for Wellness,” where Arco Group will be a sponsor. The event will also tackle gender equality and awareness of women’s rights in the workplace.

The JLL meeting lasts ten minutes. Saldaña’s next stop: Makati Shangri-La Hotel, where she will meet a client about an office interiors project. While walking through a Makati Avenue underpass, she bumps into Verde Corpuz, Arco’s senior manager for quality assurance, whom she invites to lunch at the office later.
Estacio joins her at the hotel entrance and they meet the clients at the lobby. Midway through the meeting, an unexpected guest joins them—Patric Figueroa, Saldaña’s two-year old godson whom she hasn’t seen in weeks. The meeting runs for more than an hour, with Saldaña’s attention seamlessly switching from talking to the clients to attending to her godson. Saldaña heads back to the office, bringing Patric along with her. “He calls me Nang-nang (for ninang). His mother is one of my best friends, and she sometimes leaves him with me,” she says with a laugh. While waiting for the car, Saldaña educates him on the floor tiles used for the lobby and other architectural details, something she does whenever they’re together. “He’s going to be an architect and real estate mogul someday!” she says.

Back at the office conference room for more meetings. Next is the design team for the renovation of the VRPMC Hospital along EDSA. Ansay and Jems Javier update Saldaña on the status of the project, which they will all visit after lunch. She points out the contractor’s misinterpretations in the toilet orientations and miscalculations in hallway widths (“Siksik o, parang longganisa”). Even with Patric demanding attention and care, Saldaña remains poised and unflappable during the meeting.

Saldaña and team arrive early, and they wait at the lobby of their meeting venue. Arco was hired to renovate the VRPMC Hospital. Together with a supplier from Diamond Interior Furniture, they will be presenting their plans for the hospital’s executive floor to the VRPMC owners. While waiting, Saldaña makes a call to AboitizLand to set up a client meeting later in the week. Minutes later, she calls an associate in Dubai, recommending a London-based branding team to help with his project.

The supplier arrives. They discuss their plans for the sixth floor corridors, furniture colors, and the lighting color for the executive floor. When the meeting ends, Saldaña asks the supplier to provide the acoustic board samples, material swatches, and stock availability summaries. For the façade renovation, Arco installed ACPs in the hospital’s colors that act as brise soleil and help with noise insulation. They added more rooms and wards for the interiors. The project will be finished in a month’s time.

After the VRPMC meeting, Saldaña heads home to change into her exercise clothes for her after-work stroll with Eala later. She plays with Wesson, their Golden Retriever. “We initially planned on having two dogs named Smith and Wesson,” she says.

Saldaña eats homemade avocado ice cream and fruits for merienda. A cancer survivor, she only eats organic food that she painstakingly sources from various stores. A half hour later, she leaves for another site visit in Bonifacio Global City.
A visit to the VRPMC site is next on the agenda. Before leaving, Saldaña bumps into Gigi Eala, her co-Managing Director. “Are you up to walk around Dasma later?” Saldaña asks her, referring to their routine of strolling around a neighborhood after work. Eala says yes.

Saldaña drops Patric off at his condo in Rockwell first. Minutes later, she receives a text message from Vanessa, Patric’s mother: “He says ‘I enjoyed my day with Nang-nang!’”

Saldaña holds court with members of her business development and design teams: (from left) Cynthia Diaz, Angelo Tan, Arwen Capucion, Marc Vocal, and Paul Chan. “One of my key roles in the office is strategic business direction,” she says. “We always want to be set apart from other firms locally and internationally, so we look at ways we can disrupt the industry and change the way things are being done.” After going through proposals with Tan, she instructs Vocal to guide Oblena on the Cebu project. Saldaña’s helpers bring tapa, chopsuey, and longganisang hubad for the team’s lunch. The staff are used to their Managing Director treating them to homemade food in the office. While eating, Saldaña makes a conference call with Albert Alvarez, an architect partner in Cebu and a good friend, proposing that they create the detail drawings of a Maria Luisa residence project for him. He agrees.

She meets with Angelo Tan at the Inoza building in BGC, where they are designing an office for Traveloka, a travel company from Indonesia. The brief was to develop a fun, experiential design for their office space. The building’s chief engineer updates them on the construction progress. Saldaña says the space is ready for interior fit-out, but stresses that the windows be boarded up for workers’ safety.

Done with work for the day, Saldaña meets up with Eala at Dasmariñas Village for an evening walk around the neighborhood, an activity they call “Walk the Talk.” It’s another productive use of time for Saldaña and Eala—they get much-needed exercise while talking business. “It’s a different venue and atmosphere for meetings because no one’s listening to you,” says Saldaña. They run into their friend, Cristina Bautista, who invites them to dinner at her house after their walk. Saldaña and Eala are later joined by partner Geoffrey Blanco, one of the firm’s Directors. Blanco, together with Monsie Koh, handles the project delivery and management arm of the firm. “ ‘Walk the Talk’ is also my way of getting Gigi and Jeff some exercise,” says Saltana, laughing. For these partners, however, walking the talk doesn’t just refer to their evening walks—it’s their daily mindset and approach to work, a reason they have achieved the success they have had.
First Place Flops

Name the architects (or artist) behind these unbuilt competition-winning entries

Written by Patrick Kasingsing  Illustrated by Cesar Ramirez, Jr.

Freedom Tower

The competition to redevelop the site of the former World Trade Center Complex was influenced by a strong desire of New Yorkers to rebuild bigger and stronger. In 2003, the honor went to a Polish immigrant architect, who proposed access to the foundations of the original towers through a museum, with a landmark 1,776-foot twisting tower: the height, a nod to the year of American independence, and the form, evocative of the Statue of Liberty. Come 2005, the original design was scrapped for a simpler replacement by David Childs of SOM. Ironically, the scaled-back design ended up costing $3.9 billion to build by 2012, making One World Trade Center the most expensive building in the world at the time.

Guggenheim Helsinki

Besting 1,715 entrants from 77 countries is a Herculean feat. More so if your client is the Guggenheim, a proud patron of daring architecture—from the original Frank Lloyd Wright museum to the Frank Gehry’s parametric fireworks in Bilbao. The winner, a small Paris-based studio, tried a different tack for their entry, with a calm composition of low-slung, charred timber-faced pavilions topped with wavy roofs, anchored around a lighthouse. Awarded in 2015, the design’s quiet beauty met with great acclaim. A year later, the Guggenheim sadly abandoned its plans for a Helsinki outpost when the city council rejected its request for funding in a 53-32 vote.

Tokyo National Stadium

The Tokyo National Stadium competition for the Tokyo 2020 Olympiad attracted global attention when it announced its winner in 2012. The winning London-based firm was selected from an elite pool of 11 final round entries. However, their futuristic stadium design was unfavorably compared to various objects ranging from bicycle helmets to manta rays. It didn’t help that the 80,000-seater mega-project came with a $2 billion price tag. Eminent Japanese architects Toyo Ito and Fumihiko Maki decried its scale and incongruence with the location. A victim of ballooning costs and bad publicity, the winner’s ambitious design was eventually scrapped and replaced by a more modest entry by Kengo Kuma.
Cebu Megadome

The Cebu Megadome was planned as a world-class sporting arena capable of seating 20,000 spectators. The competition-winning design was by a Cebuano studio, whose entry took on the form of a ‘spinning disc.’ However, politics got in the way of its realization. Repurposing the design as a convention center was momentarily considered when Cebu was to host the 12th ASEAN Summit in 2007. Politics reared its ugly head once more and a cheaper, substandard design got built in its place. Renamed the Cebu International Convention Center, it was an endless source of embarrassment as it leaked on ASEAN delegates from the rains during the Summit. The CICC has since fallen into worse disrepair, especially after the 2013 Bohol earthquake.

Rizal Monument

After the 1898 Philippine revolution, there was a growing public clamor to pay tribute to José Rizal, martyred in Bagumbayan (Luneta) in 1896. This prompted an international competition held between 1905 and 1907. The winning entry was by an Italian sculptor from Carrara, who submitted a plaster model depicting an elaborately sculpted 18-meter high marble monument. In a surprising turn of events, the monument we now know in Luneta Park was actually the work of the competition’s second-placer, Swiss sculptor Richard Kissling. Rumors abound as to why the first place entry was snubbed, from his failure to appear on the date of the contract signing, to quoting a higher fee than Kissling.
What song best represents your design philosophy or manifesto?

Illustrated by Meneer Marcelo

[Image of caricatures with songs and architects' names]

“Redemption Song” by Bob Marley
Sonny Sunga, Principal
Jagnus Design Group

“I believe in interdisciplinary, multi-scalar and human-centered architecture. In the academic and in my private practice, there is much to hope in this possibility. Finding myself however in a mix of characters in the Philippine architecture scene, it is not always easy. But I welcome the challenge because I want change to happen. So I keep going no matter what. “You Gotta Be” by Des’ree inspires me to keep positive through all of it. To say it with the artist’s words: “You gotta be bold, you gotta be strong!”

Gene Alfajaro, Architect
228 Design Studio

“I think about the relationship between a giver and a receiver. No matter how much the giver gives, it seems like it’s not enough so one must just set boundaries.”

Stephanie Tan-Branquinho
Principal, SpaceFabrik

“Imagine” by John Lennon
Arnold Austria, Principal
Jagnus Design Group

“I find the song both simple yet utterly memorable. I always hope that whatever I do will stand the test of time just as these songs have. Lyrical, Burt Bacharach and Hal David’s “I Say A Little Prayer” says it all. I do what I can to keep the worst at bay, while praying for the best results.”

Maureen Araneta, Architect and Professor, University of the Philippines Diliman

“Happy” by Pharrell Williams
Dan Lichauco, Principal
Archion Architects

“Talk is Cheap” by Chet Faker. The song I chose expresses what I want to convey to my users through my designs. “These spaces are created to ignite conversations; as mundane or world changing they may be, talk is cheap, give it a try.”

Gene Alfajaro, Architect
228 Design Studio

“Where is the Line” by Bjork. It’s about the relationship between a giver and a receiver. No matter how much the giver gives, it seems like it’s not enough so one must just set boundaries.

Stephanie Tan-Branquinho
Principal, SpaceFabrik

“Everlong” by Foo Fighters. Technically, everything is “just about right” in the song. The tones are superb. The delivery is slick and tight. And the song is melodic while having an aggressive tension that doesn’t let up. It’s been 20 years since it was released, but I don’t get tired of listening to it. That’s exactly what I want to achieve in our work. It should be “just about right” to the existing context. The execution is technically impeccable. The design is aggressive yet something many can relate to even years down the road.

Joel Ong, Design Director, urbanshiftstudio

“Good Vibrations” by The Beach Boys
Bong Recio, Principal
Architects Inc.

“I believe in interdisciplinary, multi-scalar and human-centered architecture. In the academic and in my private practice, there is much to hope in this possibility. Finding myself however in a mix of characters in the Philippine architecture scene, it is not always easy. But I welcome the challenge because I want change to happen. So I keep going no matter what. “You Gotta Be” by Des’ree inspires me to keep positive through all of it. To say it with the artist’s words: “You gotta be bold, you gotta be strong!”

Choie Funk, Principal, Atelier Funk and Associate Dean, School of Design and Arts, DLS - College of St. Benilde

“How Can You Swallow So Much Sleep” by Bombay Bicycle Club. This song is my ode to people who have yet to embrace technology in their lives.

Richie Serrano, Architect
228 Design Studio
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