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# Agents of Place:

## Negotiations between Artist and Government in Philippine Public Art

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PRISTINE L. DE LEON

The term collaboration calls up an appearance of solidarity between agents with a shared objective. Deployed loosely, it implies a degree of consensus that tends to conflate divergent modes of coming together: through alliance, collective authorship, co-ownership, commissioning and patronage. Art scholar Grant Kester points to an aspect of the term that is often overlooked—that of betrayal or treasonable cooperation.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I inquire into public art produced by artists and government authorities, and interpret collaboration as a site of negotiating various interests where agents enter into relations fraught with risks. Where uncertainties are shared, collaboration holds possibilities for both disruption and complicity, in other words antagonism and amelioration. I trace artistic agency in this situation as the awareness of where one stands and the resolve to negotiate readings and ways of making.

The research considers two art projects in the Philippine context: first, the Paoay sand dunes sculpture park made between 2012 and 2015 in the Northern Ilocos region; and second, the ongoing Pasig River Art for Urban Change, beginning with *Bakawan* in 2015 in the Philippine capital Metro Manila. As both involve the artist Leeroy New (b. 1986) working with different

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government agencies, I attempt to track inconspicuous shifts not only in ways of working, but also in how the works and the sites themselves are conceived. New refers to his practice as urban intervention, which implies creative strategy, and this preference draws from his earlier attempts at executing unauthorized graffiti and performances within urban sites.<sup>2</sup> The intent to claim space or interrupt its routines by way of guerilla tactics carries over to his collaborations with the state, wherein he sees intervention, at its most potent, as disruption of government routine. As tactics are recalibrated into strategies when working with government, the artist's imagination of site proceeds from a physical space to the site of relations.

These two projects function largely within public art models that rely on state support and confer relative authority to artists. I'm interested to see the ways in which governmental imagination and artistic agency work to negotiate readings of place. The two physical sites, the sand dunes and the river, are both natural formations whose sensuous presence has been evoked in other cultural texts and forms of speech. How does the artist thicken these readings, and complicate the essentialist view of place that banks on heritage? While it doesn't figure centrally in this paper, equally crucial is the question of how these interventions encourage or obscure the agency of residents. A hierarchy of authority continues through many public art projects. In each case, I attempt to tease out strands of how residents are, if not directly engaged, then at least tangentially affected, as fellow creators, as spectators, or invoked as owners of space.

This analysis draws from discourses on public art and collaboration, and it places New's work in dialogue with historical precedents and other cultural texts. Data was gathered mainly through separate interviews in order to access the artists' and state agents' firsthand experiences and positionalities, which are often not legible when one reviews documentary traces. While publicity materials and media coverage forward an appearance of consensus and amiable relations, Miwon Kwon reminds us that conceptual and theoretical differences are often "embedded in the specific (invisible) processes of their respective community collaborations, in their enactment of the necessary institutional and individual exchanges and compromises".<sup>3</sup> The method of interview was also chosen in response to urgencies and distancing protocols during the ongoing pandemic. I relied on the structure and flexibility of conversation by phone and video call. In different circumstances, interviewing the agents onsite might have better allowed for spontaneity, impulse and chance encounters that could open up unexpected trajectories for dialogue. Visiting Paoay and interacting with the locals who collaborated with New might have also breached the difference in dialect; without the

opportunity, their voices are regrettably not included in this research. It is nonetheless hoped that what is begun by the study could contribute to the developing literature on public art and site-specificity in Southeast Asia, as well as to the ongoing effort of scholars to consider more intensely the idea of site as a network of relations.

### **Mediating Spaces: Between Experimentation and Institutionalization**

How does an assembly of objects and bodies come to be perceived as a situation? In a seminal text on installation, the artist, curator and writer Raymundo Albano theorizes an experience of space cultivated in a locality and evoked in emergent exhibitionary practice. Referring to experimental pieces in the 1970s, he describes ways of working with non-traditional art objects—sand, stones, wood, rope, rubber tires—that eschew convention or design, and instead by attaching, assembling or scattering, “pursue the logical lines of tendencies the materials would go”.<sup>4</sup> Installation here is acknowledged as “open sculpture”, but aesthetic autonomy defers to sociality when it corresponds, in Albano’s imagination, to the Filipino experience of space: not “a static perception of flatness but an experience of mobility, performance, body participation, physical relation at its most cohesive form”.<sup>5</sup> Albano posits roots in the local environment: in jeepneys, jungles, community festivals such as the Pahiyas of Lucban, and religious traditions. It’s appealing to think of these as convivial situations set up by communal making. The installative impulse in what was broadly conceived as “experimental art” in the Philippines is helpful here in assembling a lineage of site-specific practice.

At the same time, this formulation of “an innate sense of space” speaks to the period’s preoccupations and anxieties, particularly to the search for a Philippine identity—premised on turning inwards, on renewal or revival—after colonial conquest. Its resonance with nation-building as a narrative of return was likely influential in soliciting the support of the state. The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), where Albano served as visual arts director from 1970 to 1985, provided substantial institutional support to experimental practices. Built by first lady Imelda Marcos, the CCP launched high-budget cultural productions that harboured internationalist aims while stoking the cult of nationality. As architecture critic Gerard Lico described it, the CCP “assumed the role of synergistic stage where spectacle and surveillance converged”.<sup>6</sup> The history of experimental art at the CCP summons the fraught links between progressive art and state patronage in the Philippines, as it simultaneously shows how artists have positioned themselves and mediated the tension in that uneasy in-between. Amid critiques of co-option

and complicity, and the state's censorship of art with explicitly political content, we may discern artistic agency as a calibration of positionality within the field.

The term “developmental art”, coined later by Albano, most acutely indexes the tension between art and state imperatives. Looking back on this phrase, scholar Eva Bentcheva notes its resonance with the “government's rhetoric around the drive to ‘develop’ the Philippines' economy and infrastructure”,<sup>7</sup> while simultaneously referencing the fast, process-based projects produced with ready-made and industrial materials. It is within this discourse that Bentcheva invites an understanding of experimental art “not only as an expression of ‘pure’ concept, but also as a politico-poetic gesture”.<sup>8</sup>

When viewed in these contexts, the experimental could be read as that which inhabits a space of continuity and indeterminacy, as much as it generates it. In its interface with institution, artistic agency tightens the attachments between poetics, politics and aesthetics. And while it isn't as fleshed out in this paper, it might also be compelling to probe the affinities between urban intervention and theatricality,<sup>9</sup> understood as dressing up space, staging a scene through communal making and calibrating spectatorship. The impetus to conjure a fluid theatrical space is a possible common ground between experimental art crafted with found objects and urban experiments done outside CCP.

Among the earliest examples of experimental artistic activity staged in urban space are the collaborations between Judy Sibayan, Huge Bartolome and Albano. Among them is a work titled *Thanksgiving, Mirrors*, performed at the Liwasang Bonifacio on 21 September 1978. It saw the artists placing 12-by-12-inch mirrors on the ground in a curved arrangement, done as “a gesture of thanks for the lifting of Martial Law imposed by Marcos”.<sup>10</sup> The mirrors were left and taken away by the public, rendering the spectator as participant in a short-lived situation.

Site-specific works attend closely to the physical contours of space—or the phenomenological, experiential understanding of it—as much as to the routines, habits, forms and materials that flourish in the locality. Entanglements between place, found object and activity could also be gleaned in outdoor installations from the 1980s. In the works of Junyee and Roberto Villanueva, debris reappears not as a device for provocation or disruption, which previously marked experimental practice, but rather as part of the poetics of courting intimacy with place. In *Site Works*, a 1981 project<sup>11</sup> curated by Junyee in Mt. Makiling, Laguna, artists crafted installations from discarded raw materials such as bamboo, vines, twigs and rocks sourced onsite, with the intent of achieving cohesion between art object and surroundings.

It bears noting, however, that while the title alludes directly to discourse on site that proliferated in the West, in the Philippines public art scholar Tessa Guazon recalls that the terms “site-specificity”, “site-oriented art”, “socially engaged art practice” and “new genre public art” were not circulated in the texts of the period, but rather “the emphasis was more on identity and indigeneity”.<sup>12</sup> These latter concerns could be seen, for instance, in Villanueva’s 1988 work *The Labyrinth*, an installation of runo reeds, river stone and wood propped up and arranged in a spiral in Baguio’s Burnham Park in the Cordillera region. The structure was built with the Ifugaos whom Villanueva regarded as collaborators, and he drew from the ethnic group the idea for a *dap-ay*, a sacred communal ground, that became the spiral’s centre. Initially constructed for a 1988 arts festival in Baguio, the installation was activated by participation through convivial gathering. Attendants walked through the maze, shared food, played music and danced by a fire. When an iteration of more monumental scale was constructed at the CCP grounds in Manila, there was the palpable polarity between the indigenous and the urban, through which the work assumed a stance of reclamation. In both Junyee and Villanueva, we might discern how furnishing ground with found materials announces a narrative of reclaiming, perhaps in the register of amelioration, towards nature, indigenous identity, or broadly, ways of being that the urban is seen to dislocate.

These various points in Philippine art history suggest the emergence of aesthetic tendencies and working relations that inform what we refer to today as site-specific, public art or urban intervention. Its roots in the installative, the theatrical and the festival are telling, and the relationship between object and space teases out artistic strategies for provocation and disruption as well as for intimacy, cohesion and conviviality.

### **Changing Paradigms: Spatial and Relational Discourse**

To join art and everyday life was largely an impetus for the historical avant-garde’s aesthetic experiments, to which the developmental artist was clearly allied. Yet as Sibayan herself reflects, this instinct reaches a limit in the refusal to challenge the very autonomy of the field. She writes, “But eventually for the avant-garde, art could not be integrated into the praxis of everyday life for the simple reason that for anything to be considered art, it has to be socially constituted as a symbolic object or act.”<sup>13</sup>

Similar desires to intersect art and the everyday are thus being negotiated in the contemporary. Artists such as New envision art to activate space and

engage the quotidian. This might lead us to read collaboration in contemporary art as an effort to engage those who govern and inhabit the place of the everyday. What drives it is a greater willingness to consider art's porousness or elasticity. Kester attributes the proliferation of collaborative practices to a cyclical paradigm shift: "As the history of modernism has repeatedly demonstrated, the greatest potential for transforming and re-energizing artistic practice is often realized precisely at those points where its established identity is most seriously at risk."<sup>14</sup>

What attends this risk, too, is a more ubiquitous threat of slippage. To collaborate with the state and intervene in space through site-specific and participatory strategies obliges artists to confront dimensions of place that constitute the governmental, ranging from the pragmatic; policy and frameworks for development; to the abstract: ideology and the poetic imaginary. Claire Bishop poignantly states that when artistic labour is channelled towards culture industries and creative placemaking models, "What emerges here is a problematic blurring of art and creativity: two overlapping terms that not only have different demographic connotations but also distinct discourses concerning their complexity, instrumentalisation and accessibility."<sup>15</sup> This persistent tendency to conflate the artistic and the creative results, according to Bishop in "the reduction of everything to a matter of finance", and festers in the desire to approach placemaking as place marketing, as anthropologist Rafael Schacter notes.<sup>16</sup> Thinking about site, Miwon Kwon echoes these concerns when criticizing how originality and authenticity—qualities disavowed in site-specific art—are then relocated, or rewarded, to the place of art's presentation.<sup>17</sup>

These complex interests undeniably pose challenges to theory and critique. In a long-running debate between Kester and Bishop, the two advance contradicting approaches to collaboration: Kester advocates amelioration, or repairing conditions through art based on durational, dialogic exchange;<sup>18</sup> while Bishop calls for antagonism, or harnessing art's capacity for critical negation, dissonance and rupture.<sup>19</sup> Evaluating collaborative projects based on "concrete achievements and the fulfillment of social goals"<sup>20</sup> needs to be rethought, according to Bishop, since when amelioration transfers the state's responsibility to artists, it waters down any subversive gesture to the imperative for social provision. This logic ultimately pursues a critique of co-option by the state, echoing earlier apprehensions of public art critics Patricia Phillips and Rosalyn Deutsche.<sup>21</sup> Deutsche referred to it as the technocratic advocacy of public art: Artists align with the state's response to social problems by providing facilities, amenities, humanizing and beautifying the city rather than problematizing social structure.<sup>22</sup>



The generative potential of collaboration is presumed to defer to complicity. In Phillips, Deutsche and Bishop's critiques, where artists are seen "joining the ranks of the city's technocrats",<sup>23</sup> the consensus is to advise distance and antagonism. What this critique might miss, however, is a possibly productive undertaking of risk and unease, and the largely unseen labours of dialogue and negotiation carried out at that point of embeddedness. In the Indonesian context, research by scholars Elly Kent and Frans Ari Prasetyo reconsiders this paradigm of the state's transferal of responsibility.<sup>24</sup> They look at the work of two artist-run social initiatives, Jatiwangi Arts Factory (JaF) and Trotoart. Both collectives collaborate with government (for instance, JaF has taken in local government officials as core members), and seek to ameliorate conditions within their partner communities. Nonetheless, Kent and Prasetyo point out that their practices challenge the view that amelioration and antagonism towards the state are incompatible. Where the collectives usurp government roles and re-appropriate space to build community capital, their work could instead be studied as a subversion or co-option of state authority.

### **Paoay Sand Dunes Sculpture Park and the Himala sa Buhangin**

Paoay is a municipality in the province of Ilocos Norte, in the north-western part of Luzon Island. It is possible to trace the understanding of art-making in the locality to cottage industries and folk art, where form typically arises from functional need, as well as to communal cultural events aligned with religious celebrations. A phone conversation<sup>25</sup> with Paoay Mayor Jessie Galano, who was raised in the municipality since childhood after having moved from Cagayan, provides a brief yet telling description of arts and culture's links to religious practice. Galano cites the abiding importance of the Church as city centre and gathering place, a view that invokes roots in the Spanish colonial structure where the orchestration of religious worship plays a part in the governmental.

Cultural events, narrates Galano, are planned according to Catholic feast days. Religious festivals held in various parts of this predominantly Catholic country provide structure for the performative practice not only of folk Catholicism, but of communal identity that is rooted to place. The mayor recounts that parish priests do not always approve of or appreciate these folk practices of belief, but support comes from local government officials. Galano's standpoint as both long-time resident and town mayor could be instructive, as it extends a glimpse into the significance the local government places on cultural events held within the frame of a religious festival. Gatherings in this context, where public space is occupied or activated and

movements are choreographed, operate as technologies of governing. Albeit momentary, these gathering spaces produce social sites that invest place, material and making with shared symbolic charge.

Leeroy New's sculpture park could be understood as having emerged from this ecology. The invitation to make art at the Paoay sand dunes, according to the artist, came in 2011 from the provincial government. They were in the process of establishing the Ilocos Norte Tourism Office. A 2011 provincial ordinance, which was to take effect the following year, states the policy of "the Provincial Government/Province to develop, promote and enhance Tourism as a step towards the attainment of socio-economic progress that will redound to the welfare of the people", thereby creating the tourism office that would "disseminate, in coordination with local government units, non-governmental organizations, and all concerned...distinct cultural, religious, etc. events".<sup>26</sup> New's collaborators were locals, mostly fisher folk, mobilized by the provincial government, with the help of the mayor and *barangay* captains, to take part in production.

In a province that is primarily agricultural, Galano regards cultural arts as the lifeblood of Paoay.<sup>27</sup> Tourism harnesses culture and heritage as development tools, and government officials envision revenue to trickle down to communities. Here, the Ilocos Norte Tourism Office provides an interesting locus for forces spanning the political, economic and cultural. Aian Raquel, who has served as supervising tourism operation officer since its inauguration and now leads as department head, points out in our interview<sup>28</sup> that the office becomes the default arts and cultural management office in the province. It was then-provincial governor Imee Marcos, eldest daughter of the former Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos, who conceived of and initiated the province-wide La Milagrosa festival. Its launch in 2012 was contemporaneous with the establishment of the Ilocos Norte Tourism Office. Local lore and religious belief in the region's adopted patroness *La Virgen Milagrosa*, an icon of the Virgin Mother that arrived in a Spanish vessel, grew in scale and was washed ashore, frame the narrative of the inaugurated fiesta. Its highlight is the Himala sa Buhangin, which translates as "miracle on the sand". On its own, it is a day-long art-and-music festival held at the Paoay sand dunes, dreamed up by the tourism office to convene the traditional and contemporary.<sup>29</sup>

There is intricacy to the term *himala* (miracle). It could evoke, on one level, a popular Christian belief in divine intervention, re-interpreted in this locality through the lore of the icon performing a miracle. Perhaps in a more secular sense, *himala* connotes spectacle, the impossible event transcending, and at the same time taking place within, the everyday. The title of the



FIGURE 1: On the hill, Elsa (Nora Aunor) is seen rapt in prayer while winds blow audibly in Ishmael Bernal's *Himala* (1982). Still from the film. Image courtesy of ABS-CBN Film Restoration.

festival here is also a direct reference to Ishmael Bernal's film *Himala* (1982), which was shot at the Paoay sand dunes, and to which the festival now pays spectacular homage. With these, place is thickened and textualized as it hosts a proliferation of readings that attend to various levels of image. If publicness points to shared and popular understandings of place, this analysis of New's public art proceeds to consider how it activates and confronts these stratified imaginaries.

In the 1980s, films were being shot successively at the Paoay sand dunes. Galano and Raquel in separate interviews recalled that before this decade locals would refer to the sand dunes as "cursed land". With a local economy heavily reliant on cultivating crops, the vast stretch of sand across 88 square kilometers of space would translate, based on this logic, as arid, infertile earth, or an immense lifelessness that burdens livelihood and economy. All the same, this very quality of place, said to arouse affects of unease and aversion among locals, also cultivated a sensuous atmosphere of mystique that appealed to filmmakers like Bernal. The plot in *Himala* offers an uncanny parallel to this local narrative that pits the *himala* against the backdrop of an abiding *sumpa* (curse)—both unexplainable occurrences that owe their actuality to belief in a shared lore.

Place in Bernal's *Himala* is sensuous and affecting. The story is set in a fictional rural town called Cupang, filmed at the Paoay sand dunes, which appears as a barren landscape with spare growths and leafless trees. The



FIGURE 2: Devotees, tourists and journalists head towards the hill where Elsa will later deliver her address disavowing the miracle. Still from Ishmael Bernal's *Himala* (1982). Image courtesy of ABS-CBN Film Restoration.

vastness of place, conjured in wide shots, is heightened by sounds of a desert gale, or as one character Nimia describes it, a howling wind carrying with it cries from a distant gathering. Yet, this desolation that embodies the curse also sets the scene for the miraculous to irrupt. In the *burol*, a hillock or a section of sand and stray grass presumably set on higher ground, the protagonist Elsa encounters the voice of the Virgin Mother. Like the lore of *La Virgen Milagrosa* that flourished in Paoay, the Catholic maternal figure once again propels the miraculous experience. Her apparition in the film is not shown, but made known to us through its sole witness, and through the technology of story that gains traction among believers. Elsa acts as medium; it is her supposed capacity to perform miracles at will that draws throngs of the faithful into the dunes.

The *himala* put forth in the eponymous film is questionable and it thrives in articulating this uneasy ambiguity. Trust in the apparition is in conflict with the corruption of image and imagination: Faith is on one hand *palabas* (a show, hoax or false image), evidenced in the male characters' suggestion that Elsa merely acts out an invented tale, and in Elsa's famous proclamation, "*Walang himala!*" ("There are no miracles!") that disavows the miraculous in the end. There is, on the other hand, the realization that image, in this case the apparatus of film, is incapable of inscribing the truth of an inner faith. In this difficulty, characters at times resort to associating the *himala* with transformations that are immediately visible and knowable, finding it

evinced in rain relieving drought and desolation, or as one character, the mayor of Cupang put it, *himala* comes with economic profit, such as the town's growth in revenue ensuring his re-election. The spiritual and the economic are harnessed for political gain.<sup>30</sup>

Art historian Patrick Flores, in his essay that tracks various contexts around the film and its actress Nora Aunor, finds this transformative force within the technology of the cinema itself. Flores writes, "The film's livelier legacy might in the long term be overlooked: that it is not so much about an outside or elsewhere as it is about its fraught becoming, its sheer mutation—or miracle—from within."<sup>31</sup> It is tempting to extend this speculation to include the turning of place. While *Himala* does avoid an ethnographic reading that refers back to Paoay, the cinema in itself has motivated the inscription of new affect and meaning. Mayor Galano relates that in their locality, *himala* is now regarded as the transformation of a cursed land into a cultural setting propelling economic growth. "The *himala* is for us to remember that the sand dunes gave life and help to people here," says Galano in Tagalog,<sup>32</sup> and interpreting Elsa's line, continues that it is indeed people who create the miraculous.

This ecology, a fraught lifeworld where belief and ideology are inscribed upon terrain, forms the site of New's intervention. With technologies specific to tourism, the Himala sa Buhangin festival renews this gesture of inscription that places the miraculous alongside the mundane. New's sculpture park is remarkable in how it engages the phenomenological qualities of this site. The daunting vastness of the dunes and the impression of stasis and non-location are countered by familiar found objects inviting traffic: Spiral stairways cue audiences to move upwards, and discarded water tanks, turned sideways, afford reprieve from heat and a different vantage. Much like a playground as the artist intended, the park is activated by bodily experience and participation. In his view, anything placed within the dunes appears small and surreal. One gets a similar impression from looking at photo documentations. Discarded objects, emptied of use, provide cues for activity and offer backdrops for human figures. This juxtaposition of recognizable entities against uncharted expanse echo the surrealists' instinct for defamiliarization.

Far from producing an autonomous space, the park derives its signifying capacities from the habits, beliefs and imaginaries that cultivate senses of place. A large-scale structure made of bamboo and abaca represents the fabled galleon that carried *La Virgen Milagrosa*. Interwoven iconographies of the alien and Christian furnish place-markers. While the alien archetype has been present throughout New's body of work, here, it speaks directly to the post-apocalyptic theme of George Miller's *Mad Max*, shot onsite in the 1970s.



FIGURE 3: Artist Leeroy New working on one of the bamboo structures for the Himala sa Buhangin festival, 2014. Image by Alaric A. Yanos, Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, Communications and Media Office.



FIGURE 4: The bamboo structure is part of the Paoay sand dunes sculpture park constructed by Leeroy New in collaboration with the fisherfolk community, 2012. Image by Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, Communications and Media Office.



FIGURE 5: Himala sa Buhangin festival 2014: Fire dancers perform in front of the bamboo installation constructed by Leeroy New in collaboration with the fisherfolk community. Image by Alaric A. Yanos, Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, Communications and Media Office.



FIGURE 6: The sculpture park made use of discarded materials such as fountains, jeeps, water tanks and window frames found at the provincial engineering compound. Image courtesy of Leeroy New.



FIGURE 7: This structure at the sculpture park made use of traditional fish traps attached to rods, 2015. Image courtesy of Leeroy New.

At the same time, the trope of the alien corresponds to the logic of *himala*, as it announces a vision of the otherworldly within the sphere of everyday life.

How an aspect of the everyday comes to be engaged by New invites discourse on materiality, and subsequently, on relational aspects engendered by working with found objects. The sudden presence of junked manufactured materials—concrete fountains, window frames, jeepneys and various other steel structures—prompts wonder through disruptive incoherence, while the use of natural materials courts affinity with place and the locals working within it. The park's construction indexes collective labour, wherein hierarchies of knowledge seem to be breached among makers. Having had little experience of working with bamboo, a material cultivated around the area and used for making houses, New conducted a process that relied on the intuitions of a local community working in agriculture. The large-scale bamboo structure, then, while made to represent an alien vessel, echoes the vernacular design of a *bahay kubo* (nipa hut). Strips of bamboo strung tightly in binds comprise the central body raised above ground, on several posts that recall a *bahay kubo*'s functional *silong*, or the area beneath a hut on hardwood stilts. The latticework handles wind current, while the materials



are durable enough to stay upright on unstable terrain and allow audiences to climb in.

This mode of making operates on pragmatic intuitions, vernacular knowledge of material, and labour that is communal, yet often invisible. The sculpture park works as bricolage, which cultural studies scholar Gay Hawkins describes as involving “an active reappropriation of things in different contexts that not only produces new meanings but also reveals the social logic of imagination.”<sup>33</sup> Materiality here mediates relations, and the capacity to reanimate junk and assign new use is not, reminds Hawkins, “an activity restricted to leisure and aesthetics, [but] a field of everyday social practice.”<sup>34</sup>

It is thus unfortunate that publicity materials do not stress the centrality of the local community’s knowledge and labour; these are framed only as supporting the vision of the festival’s featured artist. The production of the sculpture park hews closer to that of theatre, which, according to Bishop, has a richer vocabulary to “describe co-existing authorial positions”<sup>35</sup> than visual art. It is clear, however, that the production lacks the more progressive aspect of collaborative art today, wherein not only hierarchies of knowledge, but hierarchies of capital are actively unsettled. The government pays for community labour, but if it is to fulfill the agenda promised by its publicity rhetoric—to provide an alternative source of livelihood for communities—it needs a more long-term engagement that is invested in developing the community’s capacities. Without which, labour seems to have been spent only for conjuring and marketing the singularity of the place.

Through art’s embeddedness in tourism, Paoay gains economic revenue and attracts media attention that consecrates it as a Creative City. An interesting similarity between the film *Himala* and New’s sculpture park is that both projects were supported by state agencies under the auspices of Imee Marcos, director-general of the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines at the time it funded Bernal’s film. The invocation of the experimental,<sup>36</sup> the new or the contemporary in this present venture confers cultural capital to both city and artist. Yet, the trouble with this accumulation is the equivalence it assumes between capitals granted to all agents.

Critiquing the Creative City model, Schacter describes the way artists come in and “create the vibrant veneer disguising the existence of an indigenous community, the colorful cladding camouflaging all complexity.”<sup>37</sup> In the same way, the Creative City’s linear narrative of progress obscures strands of poverty that do not fit in its arc. It would have been productive for this research to see how the community of fisherfolk regarded their participation in the festival. Did their authority as New’s collaborators urge them to claim

ownership of the park? And how did the experience of working on an alien form benefit them in more practical situations? These points are worth pursuing in future research.

All told, it is clear why in arrangements such as these, Bishop would advocate an antagonistic or interrogative stance. The rupture and ambiguity that animate the film *Himala* collapse when text is depoliticized in a rhetoric that promotes positive developments. If publicity in tourism orients consensual readings of place, antagonism in art is seen to restore degrees of difficulty, to surface social contradictions, and to delay co-option into a logic where art is made palatable as entertainment.

Bishop warns that to evaluate a project solely on immediately demonstrable outcomes (tourist count, city revenue) risks adopting a similar technocratic lens. Systems that organize bodies and beliefs influence public reception. Perhaps this translation of complexity to naturalized conviviality can be gleaned in how fictionist and lifestyle writer Yvette Tan described the festival: “Instead of repeating Aunor’s famous words, ‘*Walang himala*’, everyone was encouraged to say the opposite, ‘*May himala!*’ (‘There are miracles’).”<sup>38</sup> This again echoes Galano’s sentiments. For the festival to foreground only one kind of possibility for the *himala*, and negate the other—that the *himala* is a hoax; the festival, necessarily fiction; or that religion yields ideology and simulacrum—is a political technology. While the sculpture park cleverly engages the phenomenological qualities of space and its artistic imaginaries, it shies away from engaging the sand dunes as a field for the reproduction of social and political relations.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Bakawan* and the Pasig River Art for Urban Change**

As natural formations, the Paoay sand dunes and the Pasig River are perceived as ecological heritage. This conception insists on a shared history, an invocation of enduring commonality amid the discernible fracture of the local. All the same, the dunes and the river are seen to contribute little to industry. Perhaps it is this incongruity that solicits the mediations of policy and tourism.

If in Paoay the tourism office mobilizes government units and addresses tourists as the central public, with the Pasig River the government mandates overlap, but no unit serves as the primary cultural platform. In this vein, I analyse site in the Pasig River project not as a coherent totality, but one that assembles disparate agencies.

The river basin covers eight cities and three municipalities mostly in the Philippine capital, Metro Manila. At 26 kilometers, it straddles multiple

locations, lived histories and hybridities. Leeroy New and collaborator Julia Nebrija initiate the project by invoking heritage, to which is attached a particular narrative of abundance lost to urban life. Publicity materials reinforce heritage by citing the Pasig River as an important transport route during the Spanish colonization until American industrialization. Urban waste and pollution eventually eroded these habits of place, culminating in the declaration of the river as biologically dead by the 1990s.

The affective here is entwined with the environmental. In popular culture, perhaps what best crystallizes this state of the river is the 1990s song “Anak ng Pasig” (“Child of Pasig River”), popularized by singer Geneva Cruz. Describing its reek and filth from the perspective of a child raised in the vicinity, the song bemoans the relentless disposal of garbage and contrasts this ambient waste with an old photograph of the river that is presumably unspoiled. Significant here is the appeal, as the lamenting voice addresses an anonymous populace and urges accountability. Affects of disgust ratify the moral imperative of cleaning the river. Gay Hawkins argues that framing waste disposal as moral, instead of technical, easily aligns with governmental technologies that work to guide citizen conduct and justify interdictions.<sup>40</sup> River rehabilitation efforts have included clean-up, waste management, and eviction and displacement of thousands of urban poor families, who are presumed to contribute to its pollution.<sup>41</sup>

New and Nebrija assumed an ameliorative stance at the outset by aligning the project with these efforts to revive the river, or at least to redeem its salience. As an urban planner, Nebrija was similarly invested in the river’s potential as an alternative transport route. She intended to shift the strategy from cleanup and beautification to creative placemaking. Central here was the trust placed in “the ability of artists and creatives to look at longstanding complex problems and [find] an entry point that engages wider audiences to care about the issue”.<sup>42</sup> The two approached the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), the government agency in charge of traffic systems, waste disposal and public safety among others, where Nebrija had been serving as consultant prior to the project. Publicity also stressed this partnership. The project was billed as an artistic effort to rehabilitate the river and to decongest road traffic through the ferry system.

Years before, when New was an undergraduate, he painted walls along Epifanio de los Santos Avenue without permission, while wearing shirts that looked like MMDA uniforms. What urged this later collaboration with the MMDA was a desire to veer from a momentary disruption into what was seen as a more durable form of urban intervention. Michel de Certeau’s distinction between tactics and strategies could help expand the implications of this

shift. Tactics depend upon time; with no spatial base to build its position, agents rely on isolated circumstances to take hold of opportunities. By working with the MMDA, the strategy lets New assume a base to generate relations with agents bearing different motives.<sup>43</sup> While this can be read simply as an assumption of power or co-option into which, we may also interpret collaboration here as treasonable position-taking. In such a negotiation, the weight that Kester assigns to “treasonable cooperation” is much more pronounced than in Paoay. Media and public relations reveal little of New’s motivation to disrupt government routine if only to make public art a technique of artists’ integration and participation in society. He explains this impulse in our interview:

Government entities are here to serve the people, and we are just reclaiming the right to harness the systems for the benefit of the people... A government [might be] interested to keep itself in power, but it should be reclaimed by the people somewhat, and this can happen with [their] involvement.<sup>44</sup>

This logic of collaboration unsettles, or at least delays, an outright critique of public art as pandering to the rhetoric of the Creative City. While intention is not always manifest, it speaks to possibilities, and precisely among the difficulties in research is locating these unseen labours of dialogue and negotiation. In separate interviews, New and Nebrija struggle to identify rubrics for evaluating their initiative, but both are in agreement that the initial goal was only to actualize a model of working with the MMDA, which could be operative in future projects. It is a model built on constant dialogue prone to misunderstanding. When Kester looks at artistic practices where social situations are central, he interprets site as “a generative locus of individual and collective identities, actions, histories”.<sup>45</sup> Following this prompt, we may also consider site as the relation between government and artist, where negotiations happen continuously, although often hidden from view.

New recalls a level of resistance on the part of the MMDA to allow or support the initiative. Nebrija attributes this reluctance to the unit lacking a clear incentive, given the practical hazards and the time-consuming mobilization of manpower. It’s instructive to recount the MMDA’s roots in state-led urbanization, and particularly in the consolidation of Metro Manila in 1975. The Metropolitan Manila Commission (MMC) was created by then-president Ferdinand Marcos as the capital’s managing public corporation, of which his wife Imelda was appointed as governor. Throughout shifts in structure and commissions—MMDA was created in 1995 from the former MMC—the

agency retained its mandate of urban renewal, which Nebrija suspects, has been “interpreted in many of the administrations as beautification”.<sup>46</sup>

The slippage is salient for how it points at image-making as foundational to city-building. What fulfils beautification are repetitive acts of projection and concealment, evident in many of the MMDA painting projects in recent years. Its partnership with Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines, Inc. interpreted urban renewal as eco-friendly city rebranding. In another project which it dubbed MMDA Art, it censored unsanctioned graffiti by covering them up with geometric patterns. Approaching place with fixed administrative solutions—to cover, clean up and conjure a kind of order that denies ambiguity and antagonism—is symptomatic of what Kester describes as development agencies’ “teleological orientation” to site,<sup>47</sup> and leads to what Rosalyn Deutsche critiques as a technocratic advocacy. Mural commissions are thus beset by these difficulties. Nebrija recounts how New’s alien trope has been seen as incongruous with the imagery sought by one national agency, which was rural scenes expressing both the nostalgia and aspiration for clean water, green trees and wildlife.<sup>48</sup>

New’s first project accomplished with the MMDA combined these tendencies as he restaged the alien with a mythical undertone. Its title *Bakawan*, a Tagalog word for mangrove, articulates a wish for natural regeneration. In 2015, the artist designed a structure built with sturdy material that would float across the river. Pipes were welded together to form a wide cage-like enclosure buoyed by drums at the base, painted green as if to suggest animate matter at once alien and vegetal. The structure carried across a performer from the Daloy Dance Company, covered in green paint to resemble an extra-terrestrial being, as one journalist suggested.<sup>49</sup> The dancer moved within and climbed atop the pipes, negotiating bodily movement and balance with the water’s instability. As a state of disciplined play, theatricality here comes under the sign of the alien to interrupt the order of the commonplace. The ephemeral performance is billed to re-activate the river, but implicitly, it also gestures at re-appropriating space and system to serve artistic ends.<sup>50</sup>

Looking at the video documentation of the performance, it could be said that the primary limitation of this short-lived scene was the mode of reception the space engendered. As the surrounding stream isolated performers and discouraged participant experience, the site restricted the audience’s role to that of spectator. Where bodily absorption might have roused more invested contemplation, involvement here appeared difficult from a distance. It must be noted nonetheless that the floating island still encouraged engagement, as when New described a young viewer chasing the moving structure.



FIGURE 8: *Bakawan* performance: A member of the Daloy Dance Company performs within and atop the moving structure designed by Leeroy New. Screen capture from Brandon Relucio's video documentation, 2015. Courtesy of Brandon Relucio.



FIGURE 9: The *Bakawan* floating structure was designed by Leeroy New and was towed across the Pasig River by a boat provided by the MMDA. Screen capture from Brandon Relucio's video documentation, 2015. Courtesy of Brandon Relucio.

The support New and Nebrija asked of the MMDA was mainly logistical. The agency provided resources such as storage space, moving platforms and the boat that pulled the structure across the river. Nebrija held meetings with at least seven government agencies to acquire permission. Classifying the project was difficult, in that it involved safety hazards and appeared to the agencies neither functional nor beneficial. The interruption of government routine that New referred to is conceived here as an unexplored route, a possible way forward treaded through dialogue, persuasion, diplomatic negotiations and administrative tasks. It is not so much antagonistic, meaning manifestly interrogative, but rather an effort at a slow pivot. New imagines this as a way to transfer control to the culture sector and to have the MMDA support artist-initiated public art projects. Similarly, Nebrija asserts the need to show a model for public participation in a context where city-building remains engineer-led and commercially driven.

New sees this process of working with the MMDA—or as he puts it lightly, of “hijacking the system”—as the first project’s central outcome. Such a collaboration works towards legitimizing intervention, and sustaining it as strategy. In his words, “The goal was for it to gain independence, gain its own sentience.”<sup>51</sup> It was to their advantage that, after *Bakawan*, Nebrija was offered a managerial position in the MMDA, where she resolved to continue



FIGURE 10: Leeroy New and Janno Abenoja, *Symbiotes*, mural at Escolta pumping station, part of Pasig River Art for Urban Change, 2016. Image by Alvin Zafra, taken in 2020.



FIGURE 11: Leeroy New and Janno Abenoja, *Symbiotes*, mural at Escolta pumping station, part of Pasig River Art for Urban Change, 2016. Image by Alvin Zafra, taken in 2020.

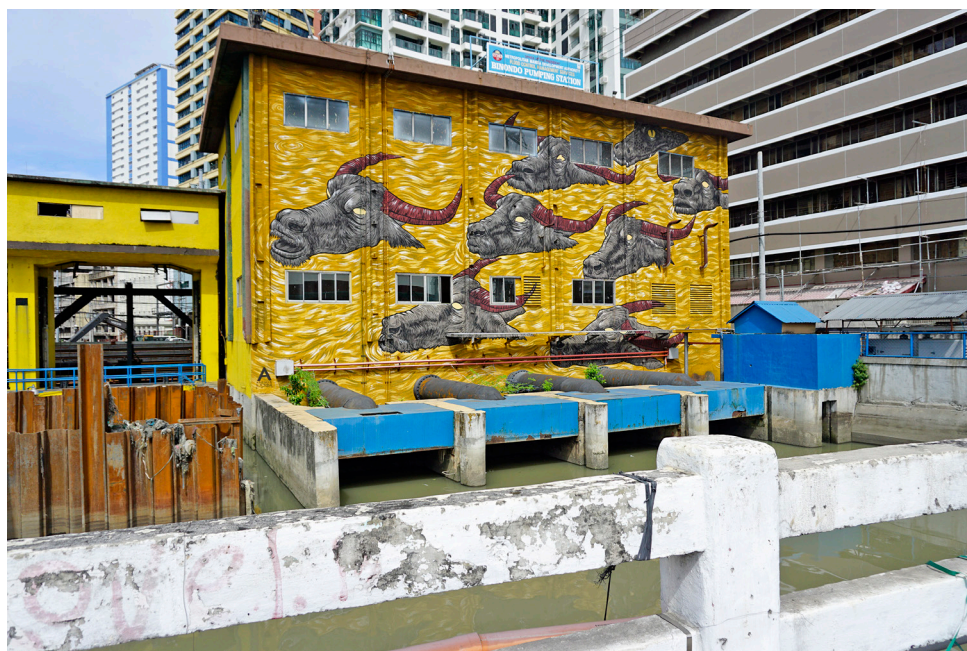


FIGURE 12: Archie Oculos, *Suong, Sulong*, mural at Binondo pumping station, part of Pasig River Art for Urban Change, 2017. Image by Alvin Zafra, taken in 2020.



initiatives integrating creatives. *Bakawan* thus began a series of art projects that would eventually be clustered under the title *Pasig River Art for Urban Change*. Subsequent mural projects proceeded with an open call and offered a monetary grant. The decision to partner with the British Council, and to establish a selection panel which included art historian Patrick Flores and the British Council head of arts and creative industries Lai del Rosario, were congruent with New and Nebrija's desire to sidestep the state's partiality towards certain visual tropes, and grant relative autonomy to the culture sector.

'Regenerative' pertains to the environmental in *Bakawan*, but in public art debates the term is also imbricated in the rhetoric of gentrification and the creative city. As Schacter argues, a nostalgic foregrounding of the locale's singularity, in order to attract tourists, creatives and investors, will in the long run be counterproductive if it masks the complex problems that beset its dwellers.<sup>52</sup> Murals in this project assert individual authorship, unlike graffiti that thrive in anonymity, and without direct community engagement, they are generally perceived as fulfilling beautification imperatives. Dexter Opiana, who lives along the river in Baseco Compound, and who is part of the Pasig River Warriors,<sup>53</sup> states in our interview that painting murals is beneficial so long as it impacts the residents: either by raising awareness of the environmental issue or by enticing them to help maintain the river's cleanliness.<sup>54</sup>

In press materials, one discerns the tendency to frame the effort through the lens of New and Nebrija, that is, art and urban planning, or jointly, creative placemaking, but it is equally necessary to consider how activism might figure in this state-supported project. Among the murals made in the second phase, I focus on the work of Ralph Eya, in order to locate what Guazon describes as "conceptual re-workings of ideas of the public as well as marked activist engagement with communities"<sup>55</sup> in public art today. As a practice that is largely antagonistic towards the state, activism done through community organizing relies on reparative processes of building solidarities among disenfranchised groups. Since 2012, Eya has integrated his work in education, in art and in advocacy as a member of Dakila, a human rights organization and artist collective, to pursue a community-based art practice he aligns with new genre public art. Whereas Miwon Kwon has attributed the genre's emergence to "a revitalization of the historical avant-garde's efforts to integrate art and everyday life" and to a "belated turn in [its] institutional reception",<sup>56</sup> a proposal of lineage that this paper has followed thus far, the present case lets us retrace the genre's emergence within the sustained practice of activism and grassroots organizing.

Responding to the open call, Eya's proposal was to produce a mural in collaboration with the orphaned and abandoned youth of Hospicio de San

Jose. This social welfare agency sits in Isla de Convalecencia, a small island in the Pasig River. As it was the artist's second project with the agency, it would be helpful to note the difference in approach between the prior self-initiated engagement in 2016 and the latter one for Pasig Art for Urban Change that had the theme of regeneration. For both engagements, Eya created modules based on Hospicio de San Jose's core values. Once approved by the agency, the modules created the structure for drawing workshops and processing sessions. The difference lay in the thrust and the presentation. The first was oriented along charity: organizing a free workshop that would culminate in the presentation of individual works; while the second intended to reinforce in the participants "the value of self in terms of rebuilding or the idea of regeneration".<sup>57</sup> Eya's background in education and community organizing informs this rights-based approach to engagement. He allotted more time for processing in the second series of workshops, during which he introduced cultural practice as a human right, and through dialogue on identity and plurality, he invited participants to reflect on their stake in society and urban life. When Eya received the Social Impact Initiative Prize from Megacities Organization Paris, Hospicio de San Jose also accepted a portion of the prize.

Eya finds the index of collaboration, which he reads as co-creation and co-ownership, primarily in dialogue, as when a participant refers to the mural as "ours", or one that "we created together". The mural itself takes and patches up sections from the children's drawings: Blocks of bright color, wavy lines, and the recognizable doodles of hearts, stars and candy wrappers are bounded within outlines of the children's faces. These render the mural iconographically legible. Enlarged to cover the pumping station's façade, the mural symbolically asserts the youth's capacity to inscribe surface and take up space within the city. Their sightline activates the work; as the image stands directly across Hospicio de San Jose, its intimacy of address prompts the youth's identification with and ownership of both the mural and the urban structure.

Kwon argues that the underlying goal of community-based site-specific works is to produce the "culturally fortified subject rendered whole and unalienated".<sup>58</sup> This rubric too is central in Guazon's analysis of what succeeds in participatory approaches to public art. "It is only when community members and city residents are made to claim ownership of space that artistic strategies can work", writes Guazon, as she encourages a shift away from state narratives of shared history and prescriptive modes of planning.<sup>59</sup> Pasig River Art for Urban Change, when it began with *Bakawan*, was buoyed by the rhetoric of heritage. This invocation of a shared land with a common meaning works to instill pride in its citizens, yet with it comes the invocation

FIGURE 13: Drawing workshop with the youth of Hospicio de San Jose, conducted by Ralph Eya in 2017, for Pasig River Art for Urban Change. Image courtesy of the artist.



FIGURE 14: Drawing workshop with the youth of Hospicio de San Jose, conducted by Ralph Eya in 2017, for Pasig River Art for Urban Change. Image courtesy of the artist.



FIGURE 15: Participant's drawing at the workshop conducted by Ralph Eya in 2017, for Pasig River Art for Urban Change. Image courtesy of the artist.



of unity, the cohesion of the social body. What this leaves out is the detachment of residents who wield little agency in city-building processes and capital transactions. By acknowledging fragmentation, Eya's work is reparative in that it advances the youth's rights and capacities to reintegrate with urban life. The work reframes regeneration as cultivating community agency. Here, the artist acts as facilitator. It is apparent that this pedagogic framework retains hierarchies in decision-making, as Kwon and Bishop point out.<sup>60</sup> Eya therefore suggests that in these engagements, the artist's role must be mutable, bending according to the needs of relation. The interpersonal aspects of facilitation are key; the artist here acts not as a leader, but as a *kuya* (elder brother), friend or confidante.

## Conclusion

The intent to take back space persists in these case studies. This space may be seen as physical or relational, and the ways this reclamation is attempted are also understood differently by agents. These cases show how artists exercise their agency when negotiating with the government through collaboration. Such an exercise opens up the risky possibilities between complicity and disruption.

In this situation that cannot sustain outright antagonism, the artists here are hardly provocateurs but mediators of space. Traces of artistic agency can be seen in how they unsettle the state's unitary reading of ecological heritage. In Paoay, the film *Himala*, New's sculpture park and publicity for the festival have all worked to textualize place in ways that are often at odds with one another. While New's work productively troubled hierarchies between makers of the park, framing the alien as accumulation of local knowledge, it has also placed art at the service of tourism and city capital that clears out traces of complexity.

A model of collaboration as interruption of state routine took shape in the Pasig project. Here, New, Nebrija and Eya separately talked about collaboration as a practice of democracy. They envision working with government as an exercise of opening up space for citizen participation. Yet, just as the routine of government must be unsettled, so too the role of the artist. In performing democracy largely without resident involvement, artists inadvertently displace them to become their representatives. Among all projects, it was Eya's that attended to site as lived place, collaborating with a sited youth community to strengthen their sense of agency. The public was engaged as spectators in Bakawan and in Paoay; additionally, we might stress the projects' interests in attracting a new public, the tourists and creatives.



FIGURE 16: Ralph Eya in collaboration with the youth of Hospicio de San Jose, *Anak Ka Ng* (detail), mural at Paco pumping station, part of Pasig River Art for Urban Change, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.



FIGURE 17: Ralph Eya in collaboration with the youth of Hospicio de San Jose, *Anak Ka Ng*, mural at Paco pumping station, part of Pasig River Art for Urban Change, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

Existing communities, such as the fisherfolk that New regarded as collaborators, had authority in the course of making the sculpture park, but it remains to be seen how this strengthened their sense of ownership of both work and space.

Disagreements persist around this participatory model of development, wherein critics suspect the deployment of participation in “a primarily symbolic capacity”.<sup>61</sup> In the end, the practice might endorse state decision-making and produce an appearance of consensus that masks disputes. If work with government is durational, as New’s artistic trajectory has shown, how might antagonism be more operative in this performance of democracy? Collaboration in public art sees artists mediating place and drawing contact points between citizen and government. Such a practice bears great potential if only the former can more palpably interrupt and affect the latter.

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**NOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> Leeroy New, “Paoay Sand Dunes Sculpture Park”, interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 22 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 116.
- <sup>4</sup> Raymundo Albano, “Installation: A Case for Hangings”, in *Raymundo Albano: Texts*, ed. Patrick D. Flores (Quezon City: The Philippine Contemporary Art Network, 2017), p. 17.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>6</sup> Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth and Marcos State Architecture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003), p. 48.
- <sup>7</sup> Eva Bentcheva, “From Ephemeral Experiences to Lasting Legacies: Discourses on Experimental Art in the Philippines during the 1960s and 1970s”, *Tate Papers* 32 (Autumn 2019), <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/32/discourses-experimental-art-philippines-1960s-1970s> [accessed 13 Nov. 2020].
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Roberto Chabet, another pioneer of experimental art in the Philippines, created the work *Hurdling* (1970). It made use of found scraps of metal and served as spatial intervention when it was exhibited at the CCP. This marked his foray into immersive installations which he called “environmental works”. According to Bentcheva, “Chabet’s use of ‘environments’ to describe such works evoked a fluidity between art and life, and a theatrical encounter which required movement on the part of the viewer in order to experience the work’s interplay on space, perspective, light and mass. This piece, along with a number of subsequent installations, not only drew on architectural forms but also on principles of perspective and illusion from the world of theatre.” See Bentcheva, *ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Judy Freya Sibayan, *The Hypertext of HerMe(s)* (London: KT Press, 2014).
- <sup>11</sup> Los Baños Site Works was presented as a project of the Thirteen Artists Program of the Cultural Center of the Philippines in cooperation with the University of the Philippines Los Baños and co-sponsored by the Brotherhood of Plebeians.
- <sup>12</sup> Tessa Guazon, “Art, Space and Public Spheres in the Philippines”, *Koganecho Bazaar: The Transfer and Rebirth of Asian Art: Art and Artists in the City and Region*, 22 Nov. 2020, <https://koganecho.net/koganecho-bazaar-2020/seminar>.
- <sup>13</sup> Judy Freya Sibayan, *The Hypertext of HerMe(s)*.
- <sup>14</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, p. 7.
- <sup>15</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 16.

- <sup>16</sup> Rafael Schacter, “The Ugly Truth: Street Art, Graffiti and the Creative City”, *Art and the Public Sphere* 3, 2 (2014): 166.
- <sup>17</sup> Miwon Kwon, “For Hamburg: Public Art and Urban Identities”, in *Public Art is Everywhere*, exhibition catalogue (Hamburg, Germany: Kunstverein Hamburg and Kulturbehörde Hamburg, 1997), pp. 95–109.
- <sup>18</sup> For further reading, see: Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* and *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (California: University of California Press, 2005).
- <sup>19</sup> For further reading, see: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*.
- <sup>20</sup> Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents”, *Artforum International* (2006).
- <sup>21</sup> Patricia Phillips’ and Rosalyn Deutsche’s critiques are summarized in this overview of public art debates: Tim Hall and Iain Robertson, “Public Art and Urban Regeneration: Advocacy, Claims, and Critical Debates”, *Landscape Research* 26, 1 (2001).
- <sup>22</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, “Alternative Space”, in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism*, ed. Brian Wallis (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), p. 49.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> Elly Kent and Frans Ari Prasetyo, “‘Siasat’—Artistic Tactics for Transgression on State Authority”, in *Paririmbon Jatiwangi (Katalog Tahun Tanah)*, 2015.
- <sup>25</sup> Jessie Galano, “Himala sa Buhangin Festival and Paoay Culture”, interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 19 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>26</sup> Provincial Ordinance No. 042-2011: Ilocos Norte Tourism Ordinance of 2011. Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, 2011.
- <sup>27</sup> Jessie Galano, “Himala sa Buhangin Festival and Paoay Culture”.
- <sup>28</sup> Aian Raquel, “Himala sa Buhangin Festival and Ilocos Norte Tourism Office”, interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 27 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Himala*. Directed by Ishmael Bernal, Experimental Cinema of the Philippines and LVN Pictures, 1982.
- <sup>31</sup> Patrick Flores, “Fall of Grace: Nora Aunor as Cinema”, *Kritika Kultura* 25 (2015): 49.
- <sup>32</sup> Jessie Galano, “Himala sa Buhangin Festival and Paoay Culture”.
- <sup>33</sup> Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2006), p. 87.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- <sup>35</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, p. 9.
- <sup>36</sup> The Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte’s website cites New’s installation as avant-garde. See: PGIN-CMO, “Art Installations by Int’l Artist Leeroy New



- to be Refurbished for ‘Himala sa Buhangin!’”, *Ilocosnorte*, 5 May 2016, <https://ilocosnorte.gov.ph/news/art-installations-by-int-l-artist-leeroy-new-to-be-refurbished-for-himala-sa-buhangin-2016> [accessed 12 Nov. 2020].
- <sup>37</sup> Rafael Schacter, “The Ugly Truth: Street Art, Graffiti and the Creative City”, *Art and the Public Sphere* 3, 2 (2014): 168.
- <sup>38</sup> Yvette Tan, “Paoay Sand Dunes Come Alive with Music and Art at ‘Himala sa Buhangin’”, *Gma Network*, 21 May 2012, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/artandculture/258927/paoay-sand-dunes-come-alive-with-music-and-art-at-himala-sa-buhangin/story/> [accessed 29 Aug. 2020].
- <sup>39</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, “Alternative Space”, in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism*, ed. Brian Wallis (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), p. 55.
- <sup>40</sup> Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish*, p. 31.
- <sup>41</sup> A case study has tallied approximately 60,000 urban poor families: Ted Anana, Denis Murphy, “Pasig River Rehabilitation Program”, *Habitat International Coalition*, archived on 12 Oct. 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20071012123338/http://www.hic-net.org/document.asp?PID=197> [accessed 12 Feb. 2021].
- <sup>42</sup> Julia Nebrija, “MMDA and Pasig River Art for Urban Change Project”, interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 28 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>43</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).
- <sup>44</sup> Leeroy New, “Bakawan and Pasig River Art for Urban Change Project”, interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 29 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>45</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, p. 139.
- <sup>46</sup> Julia Nebrija, “MMDA and Pasig River Art for Urban Change Project”.
- <sup>47</sup> Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, p. 136.
- <sup>48</sup> Julia Nebrija, “MMDA and Pasig River Art for Urban Change Project”.
- <sup>49</sup> Devi de Veyra, “Leeroy New’s Latest Project Highlights the Beauty of the Pasig River”, *Spot*, 16 April 2016, <https://www.spot.ph/arts-culture/art-exhibits/65966/pasig-river-bakawan-floating-island-project-a1107-20160416> [accessed 29 Aug. 2020].
- <sup>50</sup> Leeroy New and Julia Nebrija did not receive funding from MMDA. They applied for and received a grant from Burning Man to fund the project.
- <sup>51</sup> Leeroy New, “Bakawan and Pasig River Art for Urban Change Project”.
- <sup>52</sup> Rafael Schacter, “The Ugly Truth: Street Art, Graffiti and the Creative City”, *Art and the Public Sphere* 3, 2 (2014): 161–76.
- <sup>53</sup> The Pasig River Warriors are composed of river residents who facilitate the collecting and removal of garbage from the Pasig River and its tributaries. They worked under the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC). When the

- commission was dissolved in Nov. 2019, the River Warriors worked under the Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office (PRCMO), launched under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Central Office.
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- <sup>55</sup> Tessa Guazon, “Creative Mediations of the City: Contemporary Public Art as Compass of Metro Manila’s Urban Conditions”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, 3 (2013): 864–78.
- <sup>56</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 106–8.
- <sup>57</sup> Ralph Eya, “Ralph Eya’s practice and collaboration with Hospicio de San Jose”. Interview by Pristine L. de Leon, 30 Oct. 2020.
- <sup>58</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, p. 97.
- <sup>59</sup> Tessa Guazon, “Creative Mediations of the City: Contemporary Public Art as Compass of Metro Manila’s Urban Conditions”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, 3 (2013): 864–78.
- <sup>60</sup> In the same book, Kwon offers four models of community-as-site. Eya’s collaboration with Hospicio de San Jose can be classified under “Sited Communities”. See also: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, pp. 241–74.
- <sup>61</sup> Grant Kester offers an overview of criticisms on participatory planning. See: Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, p. 137.

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