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LIFESTYLE

'Galleon Trade,' Fil-Am exodus back to the motherland, sets sail

By Pedro Dumancas
Contributor

AFTER A YEAR IN PLANNING, the first batch of "Galleon Trade" ships finally docked in Manila last week despite typhoons and tsunamis that nearly spoiled the ambitious maiden expedition across the fast, modern, jet-cyber Pacific high seas.

The "ships" were actually nine Filipino-American visual artists who made it out of the 15 participating artists.

These artists, who are now exhibiting in three locations, are Julio Morales, Jaime Cortez, Gina Osterloh, Johanna Poethig and Eliza Barrios in Mag:net Gallery Katipunan; Richard Godinez and Enrique Chagoya on The Wall in Mag:net Bonifacio High Street; and Michael Arcega, Reanne Estrada, Stephanie Syjuco, Megan Wilson and Christine Wong Yap in Green Papaya Art Projects.

Instead of spices and stoneware and undeclared *contrabandos* in the olden days, the ships brought in contemporary art in every form: paintings, sculptures, photography, installations, video art, performance art and, yes, *contrabandos*.

The artists also brought their hungry second-generation souls to immerse and rediscover the Motherland, which is the other objective of the "Galleon Trade" concept.

The main objective is to initiate a continuing art-exchange program between the Fil-Am and local artists and to find some "updated connections" between the old galleon-trade routes which included Mexico, California and Manila. This is the reason why there are three art exhibits in three venues.



INSTALLING a work on The Wall in Mag:net High Street



FORUM AT UST. American artists Lucy Burns, Jenifer Wofford and Jaime Cortez; INQUIRER arts editor and UST professor Lito Zulueta; artist Megan Wilson; and UP professor May Datuin

The Mag:net Artgrill interactive preceded the exhibition opening and was attended by both visiting and local artists.

The term "brain drain" connected to their migrating parents is no longer applicable to these Fil-Ams. "Galleon Trade" proposes instead the use of the word "integration." It's amazing that the project took off despite the lack of government funding from both ends.

Captain of the expedition is Los Angeles-based curator and main organizer Jenifer Wofford.

The untimely closure of Mag:net Paseo and ABS, which

were supposed to host two of the three simultaneous exhibitions, a month before the opening didn't break Wofford's spirit. Green Papaya generously hosted the component meant for Mag:net ABS. The Wall in Mag:net Café High Street absorbed the Mag:net Paseo component.

The shows had three separate openings last week, all jam-packed with people. All openings were festive and lively.

At The Wall, the Fil-Ams were warmly welcomed with sound works by Sabaw and percussions by Pinikipikan. At Green Papaya,

"sculpture pieces" were distributed. An art talk/dialogue took place at Mag:net Katipunan.

Musician-composer Chris Brown from Mills College in Oakland, California, spouse of participating artist Joanna Poethig, performed a live computer music piece, "Transmissions," at Mag:net Katipunan. His performance opened the student-produced night gig, "Jeepney Stop," which featured eight bands.

Aside from the exhibitions, roundtable art discussions, organized by "Galleon Trade" co-organizer and curator Lucy Burns,

Dumancas, continued



were held at University of Santo Tomas, Ateneo de Manila University and The Living Room.

Teachers from the UP College of Fine Arts were invited to attend the nearby Katipunan Art-grill, but no one came. Gone are the days when the likes of art teachers Joya, Abueva, Chabet and others participated in such discourses. Could it be that the new breed of artists think they have already learned what there is to learn?

The ships have arrived, the exhibitions launched. Though it is only the beginning, the "Galleon Trade" art exchange has already brought us "shipments" of hope and inspiration, which the art community and the country as a whole need in order to promote and deepen art and culture interactions between the Philippines and the Americas, North and South. What is good about this art exchange is that it will be a continuing one.

The "Galleon Trade" runs in The Wall in Mag:Net Café High Street (The Fort, B:3 Bonifacio High Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig) until Aug. 11; Mag:net Gallery-Katipunan (Agcor Building, 335 Katipunan Ave., QC) until Aug. 16; and at Green Papaya Art Projects (124A Maginhawa St., UP Teachers Village East, Diliman, QC) until Aug. 14.



CHRIS Brown performs experimental music.



"IMPORT/EXPORT," by Eliza Barrios, a site-specific installation



CHRISTINE Wong Yap's glitter-covered balikbayan box

