

“Juana Change” exposed at the Vargas Museum

by Marian Roces

Mae Paner, the performer and social critic behind the outrageous character “Juana Change” is the subject of a major exhibition at the Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman. Thirty-six artists are presenting paintings, drawings, photographs, prints, and sculptures of Paner in the nude in PANGATAWANAN MO NAH!, an exhibition that magnifies her up-front, stun tactics.

The obese Paner personalizes the political in the resolve to get thin: she says that if she is to continue criticizing greed and excess in the national life — particularly among Filipino leaders— she should start with herself. She says, she should not spare herself her own critical eye. PANGATAWANAN MO NAH! is the first of 2 exhibitions. The forthcoming opening on November 5, 2009, at 5 p.m., marks the beginning of her journey towards better health, reasonable consumption, and tempered appetites. Posing in the nude provides the absolute measure of honest self-appraisal. Paner literally reveals the problem. The exhibition’s second edition, to be scheduled before the coming elections in 2010, is intended to be a bare-faced display of whatever success she achieves or failure she suffers.

The multi-generational gathering of artists in this exhibition, is also an unusual assembly of incompatibly-minded individuals. They are — Leo Abaya, Alfredo Juan Aquilizan, Ernesto Aquino, Jr., Carlo Aranton, Elmer Borlongan, Charlie Co, Reynold de la Cruz, Kiri Dalena, Thomas Daquioag, Gilbert Daroy, Roger Dio, Cecilia, Brenda Fajardo, Egai Talusan-Fernandez, Karen Flores, Dennis Gonzales, Kawayan de Guia, Ings Isungga, Nap Jamir II, Winner Jumalon, Mark Justiniani, Irma Lacorte, Nina Libatique, Julie Lluch, At Maculangan, Joy Mallari, Norlie Meimban, Lee Paje, Jim Paredes, Benjie Reyes, Don Salubayba, Ioannis Sicuya, Christine Sioco, Boldy Tapales, Wig Tysmans and Boy Yñiguez —persuaded by divergent intellectual passions and positions towards art and politics. Their participation in PANGATAWANAN MO NAH! rests on a shared faith in Paner’s brand of social criticism, her over-the-top humor, and the project’s bare-all motivations.

PANGATAWANAN MO NAH! is a fund-raising event to enable Paner to produce more of the “Juana Change” videos that have rocked YouTube and through it, the political landscape. “Juana” has lampooned Cha-Cha, spoofed presidentiables, and satirized gross displays of power — but also gave Paner to self-mockery. In each video, Paner presents a turned-up version of a hideous persona, who has a goody-goo, morally assaulted double. The impact of “Juana Change” on Philippine politics continues the long historical lineage of political satire in print and broadcast media in this country. But the persona is also an unprecedented invention: “Juana” is coarse, vulgar, politically astute, quite unpleasant and love-able at the same time, and exquisitely intelligent.

“Juana” is a complex character possessed of dozens of personalities. The woman behind “Juana,” Mae Paner, is even more rivetting, as this forthcoming exhibition will reveal.

PANGATAWANAN MO NAH! is curated by Marian Pastor Roces, Paner’s principal collaborator in this project; and presented by the museum development corporation she heads, TAO INC. For more information on this event, contact Glenda Puyat at 0917 350 1720 or Monchito Nocon at 0920 283 4393.

For available works, please contact Tin-aw Art Gallery at 8927522 or contact Marya: 09165636687 or Dawn: 09175341378.