

Resilience they say is the saving grace of a downtrodden nation. We are accommodating people. We are adapting people. When things are difficult we know how to laugh it off. We become accustomed to our situations and positions. We revolt then we forget. We complain but we forgive. We get used to how things are. We are backed into a corner and told to escape our realities. We stay the course until we are stuck. Stuck in 3-hour commutes. Stuck in rising floods. Stuck in the recesses of our minds. How do we navigate through these situations without progress?

## I.

We live in an archipelago at the center of biodiversity. That means our lands have one of the richest and densest areas on this planet. The Philippines is also the third largest plastic pollution producer in the world. We live in the epicentre of the biodiversity and the epicentre of the world's deadliest typhoon. According to the 2015 Global Climate Risk Index, it is one of the most affected areas by climate change. There is a climate crisis so drastic that micro plastics are found in the fish we eat, the salt we use, and the water we drink. In the *Untitled* work of Olivia D'Aboville, viewers face blurred reflections against a mass of condensed plastics as a way to look at the proof of our inhabitation. Planks created from condensed plastics as metaphor of what we have accumulated and disposed of. D'Aboville sourced the boards from an environmental recycling facility which collects, cleans, shreds soft plastics that make up 50kg of the planks. These are consumptions that Joanna Arong's *Sampit sa Dagat (Call of the Sea)* evokes as she gathers visualisations of the seas which remind her of her childhood. Dreams of vast oceans, pristine seas, multiple sea creatures, and a myriad of idyllic sceneries spliced and stitched that is close to an intertwining memory and present life. Arong shows us ideals beyond our imagination. The opposite of which Russ Ligtas projects in the hopes to protect and build a shelter in the artwork *There's no place like home* that makes use of repurposed materials. Damages of man and losses of the sea are expanded in the shadows that are illuminated by the work. In his words, "from the depths of my rumination, aberrant creatures from the sea rise to the surface. Some herald a cataclysmic doom, others foretell of a new ecology that emerges after." It is this after, the uncertainty of our ecology, that Kolown's *Amazon Botanical Garden* is warning us about. The artist collective Kolown creates a website link, accessible through cell phone or computer, that simulates the concept of gardening in a dystopian environment. This link connects viewers to a virtual garden that does not function or perform as a garden. To some extent, this dystopic future garden could be a reality. These objects are results, observations, warnings on the effects and shifts caused by the current climate crisis -- an imminent condition to be addressed.

## II.

Filipino streets, Filipino homes, Filipino lives, and the essence of being Filipino are concepts constantly being grappled and grasped. How does the Filipino resilience transform hardship into acceptance? In *Scratchings*, Mark Salvatus discusses Manila's congested and contested streets and pathways. Bold black paint abstract and obscure the cityscape in an attempt to conceal, to silence, to hide the chaos that is contemporary Manila life. Salvatus

parallels this work with *News*, a pair of shoes stuffed with a bundle of cable tied newspapers. The news, the artist, the people of Manila are walking and swerving. To where? We don't know. For Ella Mendoza, the *Tabo* or Water Dipper is a distinct object in the household primarily used for cleansing, bathing and cleaning. In the *Tabo System (Water Dipper System)* the artist created pieces that do not serve its purpose thus creating a dysfunctional system. She patterns pieces from the makeshift dippers such as repurposed water carriers, jugs, jars, and plastic bottles used in ordinary homes. A commentary on the repurposing, rebuilding, and reconstructing of our people to fit a system that is unable to deal adequately with social and societal needs. We are a self-sufficient people backed into a corner by a system that we cannot rely on. Instead, we get by on our own -- a position of learned helplessness that we practice even when our very people are dying.

Kiri Dalena documents Maria as she walks through the cemetery in search for the remains of her two sons Aljon, 23 and Danilo, 34 in a video documentary entitled *Tatlong Taóng Walang Diyos (Maria, Aljon and Danilo)*. The two were killed six days apart in September of 2016 in the ongoing story of Philippine police killings in this war on drugs. It began on September 20 when Aljon was detained, beaten and blindfolded by masked armed men along with a local drug dealer. Six days later, September 26, his brother Danilo was rounded up. Aljon had no involvement as he suffered from pulmonary disease and Danilo was an occasional user to make it through endless hours of demanding labor work in the ports. Two Filipinos bound and punished by the very system that created to serve them. A system that falls apart. An *Unraveling* that Cris Mora confronts by framing tattered royal blue, crimson red, golden yellow, and white threads. The blue associated with peace, truth, and justice; the red for patriotism and valour, and the golden yellow symbolising unity, freedom, people's democracy, and sovereignty that are present in the found object.

### III.

Contemplations of how we see the world around often end with who we are and how we settle in the world around us. Gab Ferrer's *There's the Rub* are banners of her predicament. How does one cope with the realities of the world such as the plight of sugarcane workers in Sagay City, Negros Occidental and the existences within? The artist as this is written is still in between. A situation not far from Nicole Tee's dilemma as she manoeuvres between the work and play. In *When I Grow Up*, Tee attempts to balance the responsibilities of work as a contemporary artist with the interests of homemaking and dressmaking. A balancing act premised in Mariano Ching's *Mobile series* that was initially inspired to bring together easy-to-find materials and create a sculptural form. Ching's piece is inspired by architectural structures embarking on the predicaments of how to balance seemingly imbalanced objects. These restraints carefully thought through by artist Ryan Villamael in the *Study series*. His paper cuts become ways to expand and explore how he sees the world. Abstracted images showing through his carefully slit paper cut outs one side mirroring the other. Navigating through paper just as we navigate through the spaces, silences, and soft tones of the mind.

*Impasse* documents and discusses personal, political, and philosophical circumstances

that appear impossible to look beyond. Experiences and observations gathered and contemplated on to exhibit in an art platform that surprises, engages, and provokes. This is an assembly of these kinds of discussions traversing between the personal and the social, the external and the internal. *Impasse* is a compilation of perplexities, of restrictions, of various realities that we are facing. How do we negotiate when things seem to have reached an impasse?