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HIGH PROFILE / SPRING 2010

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Known for the gentleness of its people, the Philippines is still the land where the martial art called *arnis* was born. We explore the many facets — and names — of this fight, as well as its elevation to a national sport and the interest it has aroused internationally.



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Only an hour's ride away from Manila, the town of Tagaytay hangs on a ridge above a volcano. It offers not only stunning views but great food and a healthy dose of outdoor sports.

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Writer Jullie Daza takes an amusing and personal look at what it means to be of Chinese descent in the Philippines.

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Previous page - Gold Photo:
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courtesy of the Ayala Museum.

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LET US HEAR
FROM YOU!
PLEASE SEND YOUR LETTER TO:

EDITORIAL



This spring a major event is taking place in Asia: the World Expo 2010 opens its doors in Shanghai in May and is set to receive millions of visitors from all over the world.

The Philippines will have its own pavilion, a pavilion which follows the theme Better City/Better Life but is dedicated to the human side of the urban, to the men and women who build cities and make them what they are through their work and their network of relationships.

We've also decided to keep with the "city" theme by creating a "metropolitan" issue. In Urban Landscapes we present several different looks at Metro Manila by photographers and writers. It's an unusual take on this megalopolis: its busy streets look deserted on a Good Friday, its billboards are stripped, its constructions look ghostly. Like many urban centers in the world, Metro Manila is a place of contradictions which visitors – and locals – love to explore.

Other exciting developments are taking place in the Philippines that will change life in Metro Manila and its skyline: one of the most interesting is the building of the Entertainment City, a PAGCOR project that is bringing some of the top international names in entertainment and gaming to invest in the country. It will create a new dynamic hub in Manila Bay to rival with similar projects in Macau, Las Vegas and Singapore.

Shanghai also inspired us to present the dual heritage of actress Heart Evangelista through several layouts by top photographer Mark Nicdao: whether she plays the coy Chinese lady or the modern Filipino woman, Evangelista makes hearts beat faster and is a fitting cover for the first issue of 2010.

This is the year of the golden tiger, a year of change, intensity and daring. We believe that the artists, personalities and places in this issue represent all that.

Marco Venditti
Managing Editor

CONTRIBUTORS



Mark Nicdao

Open almost any major magazine in the Philippines and you'll find Nicdao's work. Between shoots in the US and flying up to Batanes he finds time to photograph actress Heart Evangelista for the cover and an editorial piece with portraits that reveal her Chinese-Filipino heritage.

Wesley Villarica

Whether photographing fabric, noodles or a troupe of artists and dancers, Villarica has a talent for making a difficult shoot look nothing short of fantastic. In this issue he does an off-stage take on PAGCOR's spectacle *Flow*.



Raffy Tesoro

Tesoro's realm is behind the scenes. He's the guy making everyone – and everything – look great in front of a camera. Having done fashion and product design, creative and art direction, styling and advertising work, he now likes to say that his work has become his hobby, and he only takes assignments that inspire him.

Paolo Lorenzana

After almost three years as a liquor-fueled, no-topic-is-too-shady lifestyle columnist for major daily *The Philippine Star*, Paolo Lorenzana was recently promoted as editor of its Friday youth section, *Young Star*. "Covering young people plus their passions and buzz minus bull is right up my alley," admits Paolo.



Audrey Carpio

Her job has taken her to the cliffs of Batanes and the depths of the Mindoro seas, where Carpio has learned about her country through writing. She is always happy, however, to return to Manila. She foresees a better city, better life right where she is, and as an editor for *Metro* magazine and *The Philippine Star*, she continues to explore the ways the metropolis grows and changes.

HIGHLIGHTS

The latest. The newest. The best. The brightest.

A PAVILION TO THE HUMAN URBAN

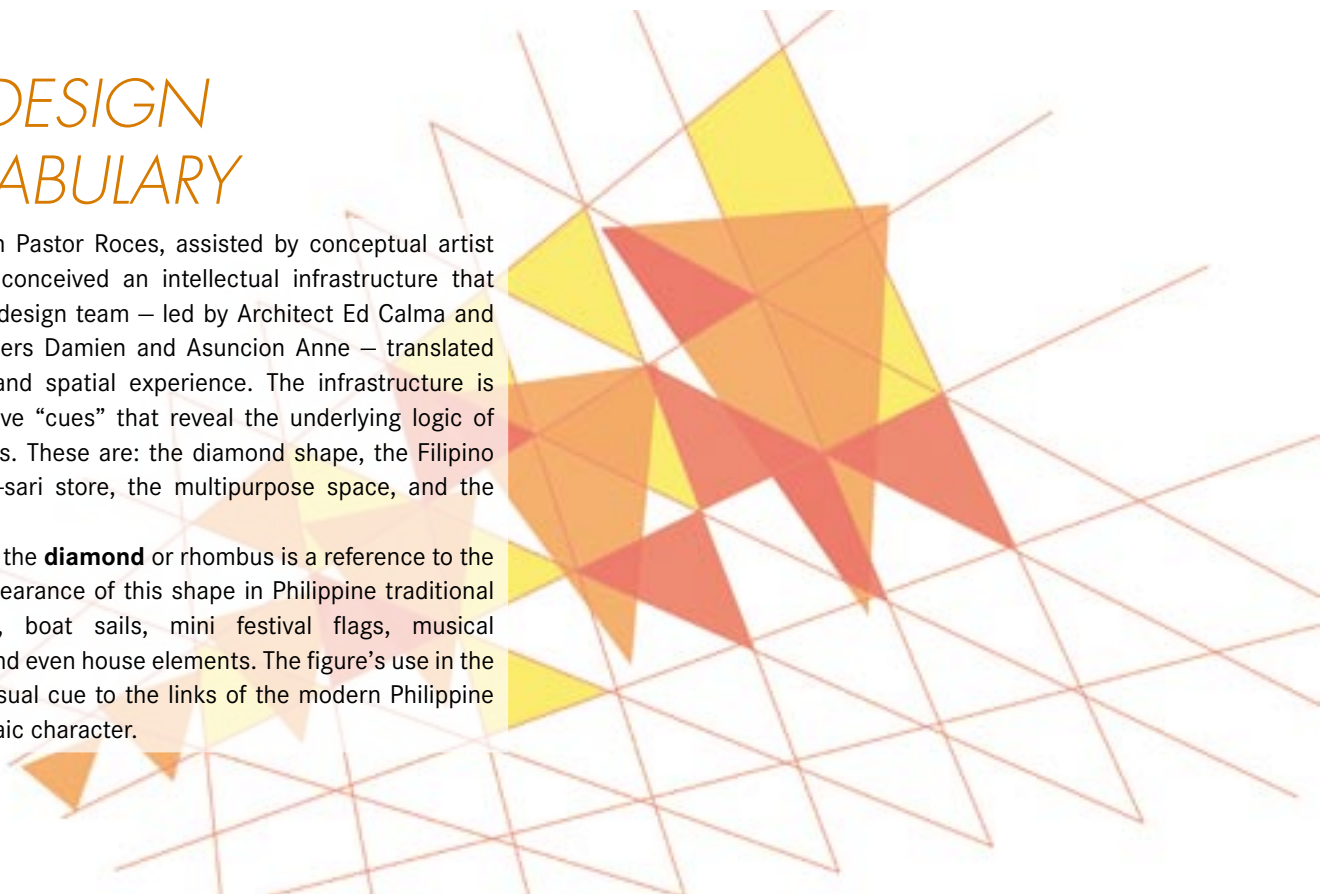


The World Expo 2010 in Shanghai is starting this spring and the Philippine pavilion evokes organic, people-made cities. Celebrating the idea that cities are made by the people who live in them – in ways that transcend and overwhelm the work of planners – the pavilion is designed as a free, animated, multipurpose space. The performing artists inhabiting it for the duration of the Expo stand in for all Filipinos: a people who constantly take over their streets to use them as markets, festival sites, procession itineraries, and outdoor salas. And while there are many other countries where city streets serve as vast theaters, the Philippine version has a distinctly intricate association with family and community relationships. It is these dynamic relationships that are expressed – or rather performed in hundreds of thousands of daily hand gestures – in music and dance, careful professional work, and the widest repertoire of care-giving skills in the world.

THE DESIGN VOCABULARY

Curator Marian Pastor Roces, assisted by conceptual artist Adrian Jones, conceived an intellectual infrastructure that the Philippine design team – led by Architect Ed Calma and graphic designers Damien and Asuncion Anne – translated into a visual and spatial experience. The infrastructure is anchored by five “cues” that reveal the underlying logic of Philippine cities. These are: the diamond shape, the Filipino hand, the sari-sari store, the multipurpose space, and the billboard.

The figure of the **diamond** or rhombus is a reference to the consistent appearance of this shape in Philippine traditional ware, textiles, boat sails, mini festival flags, musical instruments, and even house elements. The figure’s use in the pavilion is a visual cue to the links of the modern Philippine city to an archaic character.

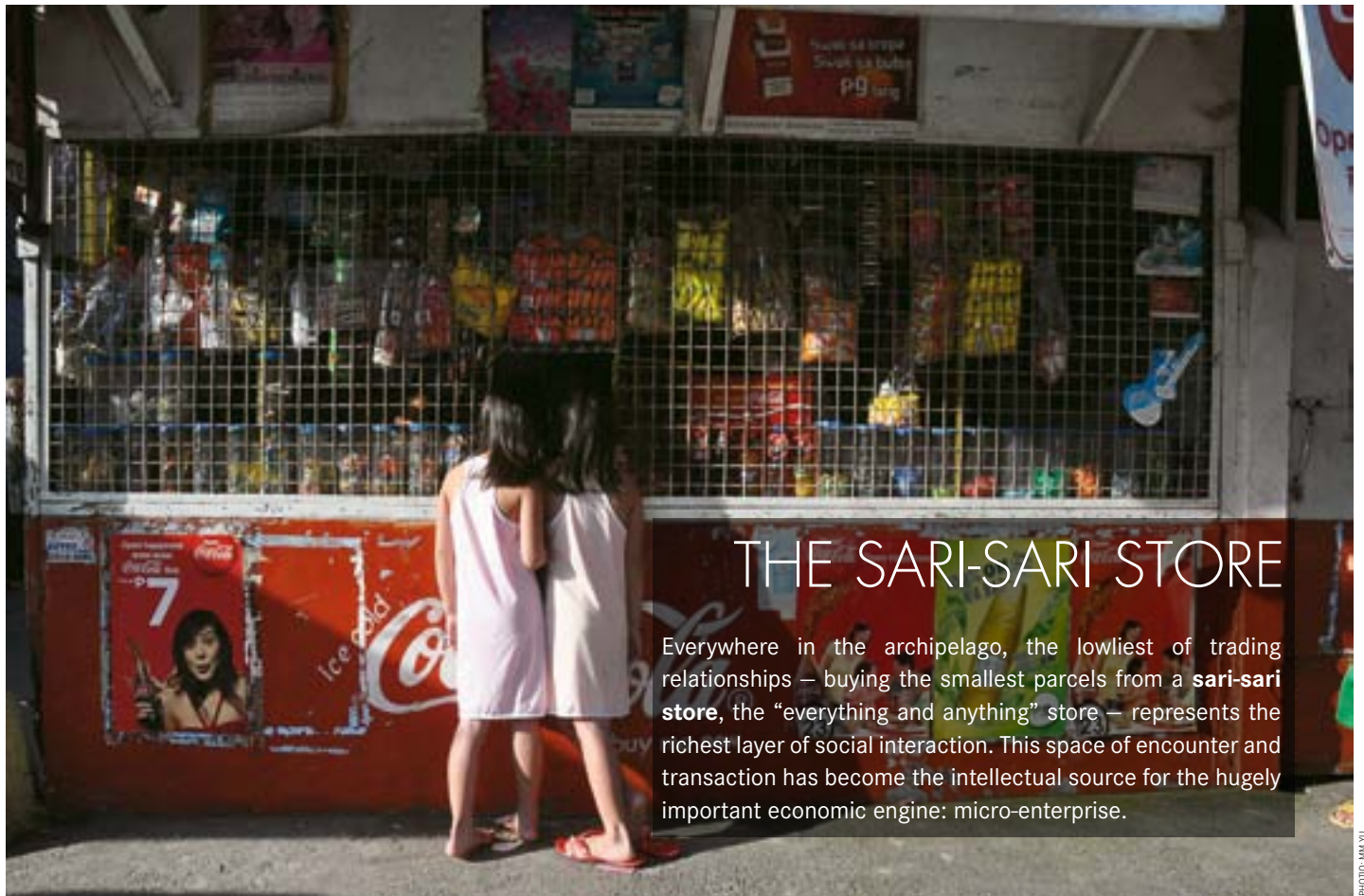


THE HANDS

The **Filipino hand** gestures towards the millions of acts of kindness, creativity, and intelligence that literally build Philippine cities, with, over and above the work of planners and architects. These hands perform the magic that all visitors recognize as Filipino love for home and community.



IMAGE: NEAL OSHIMA



THE SARI-SARI STORE

Everywhere in the archipelago, the lowliest of trading relationships – buying the smallest parcels from a **sari-sari store**, the “everything and anything” store – represents the richest layer of social interaction. This space of encounter and transaction has become the intellectual source for the hugely important economic engine: micro-enterprise.

PHOTO: MAM YU

THE MULTIPURPOSE SPACE

Basketball courts metamorphosing into festival venues, streets becoming markets and markets becoming performance areas, restaurants evolving into theaters, and plazas used as outdoor salas: Philippine cities do not abide by single-use dictates. **The multipurpose space** is a hallmark feature of cities that are made by the people living in them.



IMAGE: NEAL OSHIMA



THE BILLBOARD

Anyone driving through Philippine cities at night is transported into an over-the-top landscape of illumination. **Billboards** are like giant lanterns puncturing the dark and offering an entrée into fantastic worlds. The Filipinos, so given to fantasy and optimism, have transformed the ordinary consumerist instrument into a major communal cultural statement.

PHOTO: TOTO TARRASA

An aerial photograph of the Entertainment City development in Manila, Philippines. The image shows a tall, slender tower with a circular observation deck at the top, surrounded by modern, multi-story buildings and a large body of water. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The tower is the central focus, with other buildings and a parking area visible in the foreground and middle ground.

A TIME TO BUILD

THE ENTERTAINMENT CITY IS THE MOST AMBITIOUS TOURISM PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES TO DATE. IT WILL CHANGE THE SKYLINE OF METRO MANILA AND RIVAL OTHER BILLION-DOLLAR DEVELOPMENTS IN MACAU AND SINGAPORE.

Text: TINA ARCEO-DUMLAO

REINVENTION. CONSTANT REINVENTION.

Without it, everything from celebrities to brands, companies, cities and even countries become as passé as last season's fashion and become vulnerable to more aggressive players who are out to achieve a single goal: to get a sizable chunk of their market or territory.

The Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) is well aware of this irrefutable truth, especially with the rise of billion-dollar developments in neighboring Macau and Singapore that are already siphoning precious tourism and gaming dollars away from the Philippines.

PAGCOR, however, has an ace up its sleeve – the Bagong Nayong Pilipino Entertainment City Manila complex along scenic Manila Bay that promises to put the Philippines on the minds of not just high rollers but also locals and tourists looking for a good old time.

The project that will rise on a 150-hectare reclaimed property near the SM Mall of Asia – the second largest in the continent – is grand by any measure. It is envisioned to have as many as eight hotels, a museum, various theme parks, shopping malls and other recreational establishments. “With the Entertainment City we want Filipinos to be proud of Manila and their country as a whole for initiating a project of this magnitude,” says Efraim Genuino, Chairman of PAGCOR. “These world-class establishments will change the skyline of Metro Manila forever and we feel confident that once the project is fully operational, the sense of belonging to this city will also improve as a consequence,” he continues.

According to sector analysts, over one million additional tourists a year could flow into the Philippines, while the complex could create as many as 200,000 new jobs.

Genuino explains how: “We expect to provide at least 50,000 new jobs, especially among card dealers and gaming experts whose experience is valued in companies overseas. Through synergies with other sectors such as construction, furniture, food industry and services, we expect the number to escalate to 200,000 when it comes to indirect job creation,” he says. “If you think that all these people will also be part of extensive families, as is customary in the Philippines, the socio-economic impact of this project will be enormous.”

The development of the Entertainment City will complete the shift in PAGCOR's growth strategy from just casino operations and gaming to wholesome, family-oriented recreation and entertainment. There are reasons for the state-run gaming corporation to be optimistic about fulfilling the lofty promise of the Entertainment City as big investments have already been committed.

In June 2009, three major investors — the SM Group of retail magnate Henry Sy Sr., Genting Group of Malaysia and Universal Entertainment (formerly Aruze Corp.) of Japan, a partner in the Wynn group, deposited a combined \$300 million in earnest money to assure PAGCOR of their commitment to pursue their plans to take part in developing the reclaimed property into the country's flagship integrated gaming and entertainment complex. As each group is required to invest a minimum of \$1 billion according to the terms of reference, PAGCOR is already banking on \$3 billion in investments, and that's just the start.

“On June 30, 2010, Universal Entertainment will break ground at the Entertainment City and they will start construction immediately after,” says Genuino. “This is



»»



a very important event, as it shows that the investors are serious about their commitment.”

Even more important in the long run is the recent denomination of this mega project as a special economic zone. Under existing Philippine regulations, businesses that are operating within the economic zones are entitled to fiscal incentives and are exempt from most national and local taxes, except real estate taxes and a five percent tax on gross income. According to Genuino, the local government has created a win-win scenario for both itself and investors. “Providing a sound business landscape for the investors will assure the success of this venture. This means more jobs, increased productivity, higher income and a better quality of life.”

Companies like Universal Entertainment or Genting Group are not attracted to the Entertainment City by just a fancy blueprint. Like all capitalists, they know when and where profit is to be made and they believe that they will find it there. Their sanguine outlook is due in part to rosy projections of economic growth in the Philippines and the rest of Asia, which will mean higher disposable income that will go to fun and entertainment.

Already, real estate companies are building high-rise developments in Metro Manila’s own Bay Area on expectations of the people and the investments that will come to the Entertainment City.

“At the moment there are 14,000 hotel rooms available

in Metro Manila,” says Genuino. “With this project we can double the total number.” Genuino’s arguments are echoed also by Secretary of Tourism Joseph Durano who stated that the influx of investments means that tourism is bound to be a major growth driver in the coming years.

The \$700-million Resorts World project, which has already become a landmark in the city, is a smaller example of what the Entertainment City will become. Built a stone’s throw away from the busy Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Resorts World is fully licensed and regulated by PAGCOR.

Behind the venture is Travellers International Hotel Group Inc., a joint venture between the Genting Group of Malaysia and Alliance Global Group Inc. of Filipino-Chinese real estate magnate Andrew Tan.

It doesn’t take a stretch of the imagination to see that many Filipinos who have become prized employees of gaming companies abroad will be able to return and make a fresh start at the Entertainment City or at developments like Resorts World in the near future.

“I believe no other projects so complete and similar in scale will appear anywhere in the world in the near future, at least not for the next 10 years,” says Genuino. “We can make history with the Entertainment City and dramatically change the perception of the Philippines abroad, as well as the quality of life of many of our citizens.” □

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