

SPOTLIGHT: The artists in residency and their exhibited projects at Art Fair Philippines 2023

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Through the residency programs, artists receive funding to pursue a project in five sites of residencies across the country, from Cavite to Palawan. In photo: work from Ian Carlo Jaucian's "Resaonlabe Uneertainty." Photo by JL JAVIER

Now on its second edition, the ArtFairPH/Residencies is a significant addition to the programming of one of the largest and anticipated fairs in the country. This year, the output from the five residency programs culminates in a special presentation at The Link in Makati City, from Feb. 17 to 19.

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An installation view of some of the ArtFairPH/Residencies project this year. Photo by JL JAVIER

Through the residency programs, the artists received funding to pursue a project in five sites of residencies across the country, namely: Manila Observatory in Quezon City, Linangan Art Residency in Cavite, Emerging Islands in La Union, Butanding Barrio in Palawan, and Orange Project in Bacolod City. The different residency programs allowed the artists to develop a particular project that may be specific to the place, community-based, or using archives and collected data.

In an interview with CNN Philippines Life, some of the artists shared details about their respective works that are now up for viewing at the fair.

"Resaonlabe Unecrtanity" by Ian Carlo Jaucian

Ian Carlo Jaucian, a recipient of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Thirteen Artists Awards in 2021, is a media-based artist and works around technology, science, and data to further challenge and speculate on the function of art through his seemingly “nonart” creations in the form of robots, machines and installations.

“The Manila Observatory has always been directed by a Jesuit priest. I found this very interesting because science and religion are often pitted against each other,” says Jaucian. “I just [dove] in and thought I'd see where it would lead me. My hypothesis was that magic was the key between the two, because at some point in history it is arguable that both practices were one and the same.”



Artist Ian Carlo Jaucian during the ArtFairPH/Talks of the residency artists. Photo by JL JAVIER

Integral to Jaucian's practice is his method of deconstructing concepts and ideas and reconstructing them using his own mechanism which is the case for his stained glass work that depicts the scribe of god, archangel Metatron — a piece that is actually based on climate data report found in the book "Philippine Climate Extremes Report 2020" and a result of experimentation through coding that would scientifically make sense by applying the principles of sacred geometry and knowledge on some magic spells. "Resaonlabe Uncertainty" proposes that science, faith, and knowledge as well as the fields of cosmology, mathematics, and ritual magic co-relate through sacred geometry.

"I think fundamentally, mathematics being able to describe the physical world is like finding shapes in the clouds," says the Rizal-based artist referencing Eugene Wigner's "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences." "I'm not demeaning math more than I am elevating the act of looking at coincidence as being more profound than random."

While doing his research, he describes that he's most fond of the process of "writing a Java program that could look into a spreadsheet of hundreds of numbers [in order to tell] which combinations would give [him] a specific average."

He is an exhibitions consultant for the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) in Manila and presently teaches Visual Studies and Interactive Art courses at his alma mater the University of the Philippines Diliman College of Fine Arts.



James Clar focused most of his efforts in lobbying and obtaining permission from the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) to transport the seized chainsaws used for illegal logging to be exhibited in the fair. Photo by JL JAVIER

"Where There's A Will, There's A Way" by James Clar

Light and media artist James Clar tackles environmental issues such as deforestation and illegal logging that he became aware of over the course of his stay in Barrio Butanding, Puerto Princesa in Palawan. The United States-born artist, who moved back to the Philippines in 2021, applied for the residency to familiarize himself with the landscape in the region.

"During the residency I became aware that local agencies (both non-government organization and government sponsored) have been cracking down on the trade of illegally obtained natural resources and deforestation," says Clar in an email exchange.

Clar focused most of his efforts in lobbying and obtaining permission from the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) to transport the seized chainsaws used for illegal logging to be exhibited in the fair. Through the symbolic display of the seized chainsaws as sculptural pieces, the artist hopes to "spark conversation and bring awareness on the delicate balance between development and sustainability," he notes.

Clar, whose visual expression entails creating his own system that merges light and technology, will have his solo exhibit in March at the Silverlens outpost in New York.

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Works from Nicolei Gupit's "We Carry What Carries Us" installation. Photo by JL JAVIER

"We Carry What Carries Us" by Nicolei Gupit

Water becomes the object of contemplation for 32-year-old multidisciplinary artist and researcher Nicolei Gupit at the Linangan Art Residency in Alfonso, Cavite, a province she has personal connection to.

"I was drawn to returning to Cavite mainly because I sought to gain insight into my cultural roots," she says. "It made the most sense to me to begin a discovery of my roots within the region I was already familiar with, which is Cavite."

Gupit taught art courses at Michigan State University where she also received her master's degree in Studio Art and is currently a U.S. Fullbright scholar. Born to Filipino immigrants in Los Angeles, California, she touches on ideas that surround diaspora, identity and their direct and indirect link to local climate. "Whereas my original intention was to address ideas around colonialism and diaspora, I ended up focusing on what I found to be strange (and yet commonly accepted) about the Philippines: the overabundance of water in the form of rain, typhoons, and flooding which contrasts with the challenges I found in access to (potable) water."

Titled "We Carry What Carries Us," the work is an installation that comes in three parts and is made from plaster, newspaper, and blue light. Gupit reflects on the interrelation between crises: climate and water. The works, consequential pieces she made upon finishing her residency, are molded after water containers using porous materials which become incapable of carrying fluids, removing their essence and primary usage.

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Installation view of "Dancing from the North and towards an Archipelago" by Aaron Kaiser Garcia. Photo by JL JAVIER

"Dancing from the North and towards an Archipelago" by Aaron Kaiser Garcia

A dance major graduate of the Philippine High School for the Arts in Los Baños in Laguna, performance-maker Aaron Kaiser Garcia embarks on a spiritual and experiential journey for his residency under Emerging Islands in La Uñion.

Garcia is an alumnus of the Intercultural Theatre Institute in Singapore. He trained in different traditional dances and performances such as Philippine Folk Dance, Odissi, Chhau, Kuttiyatam, Beijing Opera, Wayang Wong, and Noh Theatre.

Opting to explore the idea of "archipelagic thinking" in relation to the island's inhabitants, geography, and history, Garcia collaborated with fellow artists and creatives: Genavee Lazaro, Jao San Pedro, JD Yu, Joar Songcuya, Kristone Capistrano, and Wendell Garcia. They performed "collaborative rituals" as Garcia would call it, manifested in the form of ceramics, paintings, objects, sound, and photography which will be showcased in the exhibit.

He says, "The process started by meeting and observing different indigenous communities in San Gabriel, La Union, and Baguio City, Benguet... I endeavored to cast a larger web of belonging and solidarity with peoples and ecologies, to tell a more empathic story that included rather than separated, the vast ecological realities of a surf town sandwiched between the mountains and the seas."

According to Garcia, their collaboration "is an attempt to position dance and performance (as folk in my practice) as a starting point for the creation of a countermyth set in La Uñion."

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Detail from E.S.L. Chen and Jonathan Baldonado's Orange Project residency installation. Photo by JL JAVIER

E.S.L. Chen and Jonathan Baldonado for Orange Project

Manila-based photographers Jonathan Baldonado and E.S.L. Chen collaborate for their residency at Orange Project in Bacolod in Negros Island.

“E.S.L. and I are displaying series of works taken around Negros during our residency. We have initially set out to ascertain the feasibility of opening a community darkroom. With the embracing welcome of Orange Project, we are now collaborating in opening a community darkroom in the Art District,” stated Baldonado in the Art Fair Philippines website. “Being immersed in the Art District has allowed me to develop relationships and collaborations with Negros artists. This has encouraged me to expand my perspective.”

Baldonado works for Silver art print studio which is responsible for the fundraising effort “Shelter Fund” that aimed to provide assistance to photographers and artists during the pandemic. Baldonado, through the studio, also produced the prints of the works of Arturo Luz. He is also a member of the Fotomoto PH Team, a community of photographers.

Chen, on one hand, describes that traveling informs how he perceives himself. His body of work includes portraits with focus on women subjects and photos that capture scenes in Manila and Cutud in Pampanga.

“I find meaning in documenting my constant desire to move, both physically and mentally. When my work is at its most honest, you might begin to see shadows where there are none. Some artists pride themselves in knowing exactly how an image or a work of art was created. I am the opposite. I like it when I lose myself in the moment,” he describes his practice as posted on his website.

Both artists recall that significant part of their residency is informed by their exposure to the environment and lifestyle in the Art District as well as their encounters with Negros artists, hence the idea to collaborate and work on a community darkroom.

“Seeing each other face to face and talking, conversing gradually, there’s a certain power to that... What we’re most excited about right now is that we’re involved in the Orange Project to build a community dark room and probably will morph into something else,” shares Chen. during the artists’ talk of the six participants held last Feb. 17.
