

Venice Architecture Biennale Exhibition

Consultancy / Professional services

Location : Venice, Italy
Date : February - May 2018
Client : Metropolitan Museum of Manila Foundation, Inc.

Project partners

- Arch. Edson Cabalfin, Ph.D.
- National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)

Funding support

- Metropolitan Museum of Manila Foundation, Inc.

Contract / agreement value

- PHP 112,000



TAO executive director Arlene Lusterio with exhibition curator Edson Cabalfin at the Philippine Pavilion during the opening of the 16th Architecture Biennale in Venice, Italy

Project brief

Architect Edson Cabalfin's winning curatorial proposal, entitled "The City Who Had Two Navels", was the Philippine representative to the 16th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. The global architecture exposition ran from May 26th to November 25th 2018 with the theme "Freespace" as conceptualized by Biennale curators Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara. The Philippine Pavilion curated by Cabalfin tackles this theme, inspired by Filipino National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin's 1961 novel "The Woman Who Had Two Navels". It focuses on two "navels" or paired forces that shape the architecture of Philippine cities – colonialism that impacts the formation of the built environment; and the process of neoliberalism that alters the urban landscape.

A think tank consortium was formed by Cabalfin to explore the emerging post-colonial anxiety and respond to these two "navels". The pavilion collaborators were comprised of TAO-Pilipinas, representing the work of technical assistance NGOs, and four academic institutions including De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde; University of San Carlos – School of Architecture, Fine Arts and Design; University of the Philippines Diliman, College of Architecture; and University of the Philippines Mindanao, Department of Architecture. The central part of the exhibit featured a multi-channel video installation of contemporary artist Yason Banal that weaved together fragments of historical, modern and contemporary Philippine architecture.

TAO-Pilipinas' work was presented as "Architecture as Participatory Design" and was highlighted as a voice of resistance to neoliberalism. TAO-Pilipinas' contribution to the exhibit is a showcase of technical interventions to address security of tenure issues in Metro Manila and post-disaster response in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. Interventions employing participatory planning and design approaches strongly engage target users in the planning and design process. Developed designs served as tools for negotiation with local and national governments for communities under threat of demolition in Metro Manila. Designs developed in Guiuan, Eastern Samar served as basis in finalizing designs for construction of shelter and evacuation centers as part of the post-Haiyan reconstruction project. The vignette on TAO-Pilipinas also featured two videos created by filmmaker Ellen Ramos, one about the TAO group of architects doing development work as an alternative professional practice; and another on TAO's participatory approach to shelter assistance for and with its partner communities as end users of space.

Project outputs

- Exhibition materials (including video presentation and scaled models)