

9 Must-Know Filipino Talents In The Arts And Culture Scene This 2021

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15 March 2021



1/9 Wawi Navarroza



“I love [and sometimes detest] the Do-It-Yourself passionate insistence to bring out the idea no matter what,” says the ever-inquisitive Navarroza. She dives into her art with this mindset, believing that “for as long as [creators] maintain our right to freedom of expression in our views and opinions in whatever our chosen metier and art form is, the future holds for Filipino art”. To her, visual literacy is the ultimate goal. “In order for this to take place, exposure to art should be normalised, present in our everyday lives, or at least available around us,” she says.

Navarroza launched Thousandfold, a platform and library for contemporary photography and photobooks, with this goal in mind. As a multi-disciplinary artist, she is most popular for her photography. Her works have been seen around the world from the CCP, Singapore Art Museum 8Q, Hangaram Museum Korea, Museum Belvedere Netherlands and so many more.

Navarroza has won the Cultural Center of the Philippines’ Thirteen Artists Awards, Ateneo Art Awards, and Lumi Photographic Art Awards Helsinki. She was distinguished as a finalist for the Singapore Museum Signature Art Prize, the WMA Commission Hong

Kong and the Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2018 too. On top of that Navarroza is also a published author of two books and is an educator.

Navarroza is part of a group exhibition titled “Tonight the Air is Warm” ongoing until 27 March, 2021 at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London featuring key artists working with photography from South East Asia, curated by Tolla Duke Sloane. She is also working on a future solo exhibition set for November 2021, in London. Wawi Navarroza is represented by Silverlens Galleries and is currently based in Istanbul.

2/9 Toff De Venecia



He is a director, artistic director and a politician who strives to protect and promote the arts in the Philippines through initiations like The Sandbox Collective, which he founded. A member of the House of Representatives, De Venecia is the lead convener of the Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Bloc (ACCIB) and the chairman of the Special Committee of Creative Industry and Performing Arts.

No stranger to the stage, he was previously an actor for many productions. In his mission to support the arts, De Venecia says, “What we need is a comprehensive approach to industry growth and development, assessing all areas of the value chain from research, development and ideation, to production, distribution and even improving our export of both creative goods and services.”

With a future full of opportunities and promise, he envisions “Filipino art and culture as moving towards the German concept of *gesamtkunstwerk* or the total art that makes use of all or many art forms or strives to do”.

3/9 Jenny Jamora



Photo: JC Inocian

As a teacher, director, actress and producer, Jamora is no newcomer to the performing arts. As co-founder of Red Turnip Theater she has a passion for stagecraft but also continues to act on screen. On top of that she spearheads the Talent Development and Training Committee of the Philippine Theater Actors Guild.

For her, the search for what is Filipino is ever exciting. “It never ends. It’s a constant debate. It keeps us moving. It’s never stagnant,” Jamora says enthusiastically. Although the theatre is only burgeoning here, it is her dream for us to grow into a theatre-going society where children and adults alike eagerly seek out live performances. For this to happen, she believes that “there needs to be a robust relationship between government and the arts, with sound cultural policy [so that artists can be] supported and encouraged”.

4/9 EA Torrado



Dancer, choreographer and art director, EA Torrado lives to perform. “The emergence of independent arts practitioners is quite exhilarating,” she says. With 17 years of professional dance experience, Torrado founded the Daloy Dance Company which has presented *Walang Hiya* Festival, *Sayaw Galaw*, *Ugnayan* Community Program and *Tanghal at Talakay*, all of which are projects that tapped diverse Filipino communities by utilising dance as a tool for personal and social change.

She is also the creator of the Daloy Movement which champions healing dance practices that originated in the Philippines. With a wealth of experience on stage and behind the scenes, Torrado would love more artists to remember that their bodies are not machines, meant to solely keep producing work to please institutions, win awards, get accolades or wins grants. “I would love more artists to come from inspiration rather than social pressure,” she says. What does the country’s creative scene need more of? To her: “open-ended conversations around helping performance artists clarify their purpose”.

5/9 Jorge Wieneke



similarobjects

An electronic music educator, DJ and producer from Metro Manila, Wieneke (aka similarobjects) aims to create and express himself intertwining technology, video games, art and music. Best known for his music and soundscapes, he co-founded BuwanBuwan Collective record label, Manila Community Radio and Club Matryoshka, an international digital venue hosted in the game Minecraft. Club Matryoshka is designed to be an experimental environment for a diverse set of artists to perform freely.

Wieneke has even established his own electronic music school called Cosmic Sonic Arts where he also teaches. “I think a lot of us keep waiting around for a ‘saviour’ to save Filipino music,” he says. “A lot of us tend to wait on a foreign label or entity to notice us; but I feel like this kind of thinking can devalue ourselves.” Instead of waiting for that external validation, he says to take things into your own hands.

Wieneke is most interested in “the path of Filipino art and music that awakens to its own power, the type of music that isn’t afraid to wear its hardships on its sleeve, the type that doesn’t hesitate to express”. To him, there’s a certain grit and weight to living and being an artist in the Philippines that affect them.

6/9 Cian Dayrit



Photo: Veronica Lazo

Dayrit is an artist who expresses himself through paint, sculpture and installation while often exploring themes of colonialism, ethnography, history and mythology. His creations have been exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, UP Vargas Museum, Bellas Artes Outpost and internationally in New York, Hong Kong, Los Angeles and Berlin. To him, the art world is filled with contradictions between creator and buyer, a relationship he often ponders.

Furthermore, he believes that art should be shared and that “should not be isolated from the rest of society. For as long as the common idea of art is encapsulated in the confines of galleries and institutions, inaccessible to and alienated from the masses and unresponsive to the conditions of society, then it is doomed”.

7/9 Antoinette Jadaone



Breaking the glass ceiling seems to come naturally to this lady. She won Best Director at the Metro Manila Film Festival 2020 for her film *Fan Girl* which subsequently also grabbed awards for: best screenplay, actor, actress, cinematography, sound and editing. Jadaone also directed the film *That Thing Called Tadhana* (one of the highest-grossing

independent films of all time). For the Filipino film industry to make more of an impact she says that you must “know your audience and be self-aware”. In her mission to promote film and tell stories, she and Dan Villegas founded production house, Project 8.

8/9 Leeroy New



This artist who works in a variety of mediums allows his playful mind to speak through sculpture, fashion, street art and more. His conceptual, textural and often immersive practice has led him to do large scale installations and even product design. “I think the growing variety of creative practices, artistic intentions and platforms for representation are what makes a healthy art ecosystem,” he shares.

New iconically created the silicone bustier that lady Lady Gaga wore for Marry the Night and has shown in exhibitions throughout the globe such as Pintô International in New York, PDNE in Los Angeles, Palais de Tokyo in Paris and was part of the Singapore Biennale.

He received the CCP 13 Artist Award, the Ateneo Art Award, and undertook the Asian Cultural Council residency in New York. “The artistic endeavours that I find interesting are the ones that respond or harness the unique socio-cultural positions of the Philippines, which is the result of a variety of historical intersections, as well as actively participate in the transformation of our country for the better,” he says.



Baby Ruth Villarama, Jewel Maranan, Kara Magsanoc-Alikpala and Monster Jimenez are award- winning documentary filmmakers and founders of Fildocs or Filipino Documentary Society, which launched DaangDokyu, a festival that pays homage to the hundred years of documentary filmmaking in the Philippines.

To Magsanoc- Alikpala, the rise in documentary work has “led to a diversity in points of view coming from different parts of the country, with more filmmakers telling their own stories unique to their personal experience”. Villarama shares: “I remember the great scriptwriter Armando “Bing” Lao saying, ‘Do not aim for perfection ... Aim for excellence and be the best at what you do ...’ These words stayed with me. As long as there are filmmakers and producers who continue to strive for excellence in their purpose to elevate each other more than the ego, the industry will be in good hands”.

Tags

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