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An Exceptional Inclusion:

On MoMA's Exhibition Recent American Prints in Color and the First Exhibition of Southeast Asian Art

KATHLEEN DITZIG

The exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition in Manila in 1957 was one of the first post-war events that sought to bring together the then contemporary art from the region.¹ What is unusual and worthy of study about this exhibition is that not only was it the first survey exhibition of Southeast Asia, it also included the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) International Program's travelling exhibition, Recent American Prints in Color.² Little is known of the history behind the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition. There have been no studies which recount in detail how the conference and competition came to be, who it served and what it represented.³ Even less is known about how the MoMA exhibition came to be included in this unprecedented platform. However, its inclusion as a participant in the one-room survey exhibition complicates an indigenous art organisation's attempt to present Southeast Asia as a cultural region within an exhibitionary frame. The inclusion raises questions as to how Southeast Asia was perceived as a cultural region by those who lived

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within its geographic boundaries and, equally importantly, questions of how American diplomacy and culture fit into such a construction of South-east Asia.

In addressing such questions, this article examines Recent American Prints in Color as a case study of the complicated factors conditioning art's role in constituting soft power during the Cold War. Focusing on the active inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color by an indigenous art organisation, the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP), this article is indebted to a legacy of revisionist studies which have criticised the export of American art during the 1950s and 1960s as US Cold War propaganda and, in the process, contributed to research that uncovers the complexities and conflicting agendas that constructed the cultural offensive of the United States during the cultural Cold War.⁴ This article does not examine the incongruence between the players seeking to promote American art, though this is an important background to how MoMA's exhibitions came to be unevenly circulated across the world. Instead, this article offers a different perspective: that of the receiver of the cultural products of American cultural institutions and policies of the US, namely the AAP. This is the perspective which the United States Information Services (USIS) sought to convince of American liberal modernism or, as Greg Barnhisel has suggested, a "Cold War modernism"—a redefinition of modernism as an "affirmation of Western bourgeois liberal values that were considered particularly integral in the American self-construction", that through its proliferation knit the parts of the world it touched into America's "Free World".⁵

A Case Study of Exceptionalism: Recent American Prints in Color in Manila, 1957

Among the first exhibitions developed in the early years of MoMA's International Program, Recent American Prints in Color was one of five new exhibitions launched in January 1957 and one of seven exhibitions of contemporary American prints organised by the international programme.⁶ Curated by Walter Lieberman, then curator of prints at MoMA, the exhibition brought together a range of artists who had recently begun to experiment with print-making, or begun to use colour in their prints. According to its press release, the exhibition "focus[ed] on the increased emphasis on prints in colour, the technical ingenuity in woodcuts, [and] the great advance in the art of serigraphy and to a lesser extent in lithography" across a range of styles. It included works inspired by German Renaissance drafting, as well as forms of neo-romanticism, expressionism, realism, surrealism and abstractions

based on calligraphy and geometry.⁷ The exhibition foregrounded the latest technological developments in printmaking and artistic experimentation coming out of the USA.

A relatively small exhibition requiring only 66 square feet of exhibition space, *Recent American Prints in Color* included 25 prints and a panel of wall text. As such, the exhibition was not a grandiose presentation of American art, but was geared towards presentations in small centres for educational purposes and the fulfilment of the International Program's self-mandated role to provide for the "systematic encouragement and organisation of the flow of the arts across national frontiers".⁸ The small scale of the exhibition did not suggest any lack of commitment on the part of USIS or MoMA's International Program; rather, it was a practical adjustment to available infrastructures. The International Program deliberately scaled travelling exhibitions to be easily adaptable to a variety of spaces, however small and limited in resources. The goal was to make art accessible to international audiences and also to further American national welfare through international understanding.

In order to reach new audiences in Manila, Porter McCray, Director of the International Program at the MoMA in New York, wrote to the Country Office of USIS in the Philippines to request their assistance in securing a suitable space and local partners to host the exhibition.⁹ McCray requested that the exhibition be presented by an important cultural institution in collaboration with the USIS, and proposed the National Museum, the University of the Philippines or the Santo Tomas Museum as ideal partners.¹⁰

Instead, the USIS selected, as the host of *Recent American Prints in Color*, the AAP, a private artist association and the organiser of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition. While there is no archival evidence to account for this selection, it was possibly a result of the network of AAP founder Purita Kalaw-Ledesma. Kalaw-Ledesma was known to be close to the Exhibits Officer of the American Embassy in Manila, Harold Schnaiderman, who is noted in correspondence with the MoMA International Program, and who would later approach Kalaw-Ledesma to set up a cultural centre under the auspices of the Philippine–American Cultural Foundation.¹¹

Heralded in the Philippine press as the biggest foreign participation in art ever gathered in the East, the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition set a precedent for the Philippine art scene, and for the communities that it sought to map and with which it sought to build regional ties.¹² The exhibition was envisioned as a vanguard political and cultural event due to its representation of Southeast Asia as a cultural region. This contextual exhibitionary frame, a new regional rubric, was ultimately not what McCray had initially requested, let alone aspired to,

when he requested USIS support to have Recent American Prints in Color travel to the Philippines.¹³

Once Recent American Prints in Color arrived in the Philippines in 1957, the exhibition's discursive framing left MoMA's control and was, instead, overseen by the USIS office in Manila. Crucially, the exhibition ultimately served the interests of the AAP, and was repositioned with a more local discourse within Southeast Asia, in which it can be supposed that USIS in Manila and AAP sought to present the best possibilities of a regional alliance of art and cultural scenes.

This shift was most visibly articulated by the conference "Art in the Southeast Asia and Today's Problems", which ran alongside the exhibition from 27–30 April 1957 at the Philippine Women's University. The conference emphasised the importance of art in addressing the most pressing issues of the time. Based on a competition to judge the best art from the region and to learn from each participating nation's contribution, the exhibition reiterated this project. The exhibition and conference brought together, for the first time, what was then contemporary art from Southeast Asia, with participation from the Philippines as well as Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand and South Vietnam.

The artworks in the exhibition were considered to be exemplary of their respective nation-states, with all foreign entries selected by a committee appointed by the participating country prior to submission. It is worth noting that the definitive paradigm of what was considered the best art from each country was not recorded. However, a survey of the selected works betrays a tendency towards the representation of nationally specific motifs or styles. Furthermore, while there are no known resources of how the selection of artworks was made or who sat on the selection committee, the artworks had to be endorsed by the respective nations that sponsored them through their embassies. These respective countries assumed responsibility for transporting the work to and from Manila, and their embassies were responsible for receiving and returning the work from and to their country of origin. In addition, each country had to provide a representative to act as a member of the jury in the competition.

Participation in the exhibition and competition was a highly stratified and bureaucratic process, which ensured that each participating country had a stake and part to play in determining the best art from Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the logistical demands of realising such an exhibition required the participation of state bodies that endorsed the artwork on show and imbued the event with diplomatic legitimacy and, if not by extension, artistic legitimacy as well.

Recent American Prints in Color was an American exhibition that was ultimately contextualised within a survey of Southeast Asia. The US participated as the only “Guest Country” and, unlike the other participating countries, its artworks were not considered competitively. Notwithstanding its exclusion from the competition, the US contributed an American representative to judge the competition, Mrs Horace Smith, identified in the *Manila Times* of 30 April 1957 as the wife of the American *chargé d'affaires* Minister Horace Smith, who was not related to MoMA and had not contributed to the development or presentation of Recent American Prints in Color. She was a political representative, most likely chosen by USIS in Manila. As such, Recent American Prints in Color was an exceptional inclusion in the exhibition, and did not conform to the rules of participation to which the other countries adhered.¹⁴

Its inclusion was an anomaly that positioned Recent American Prints in Color as above judgement, in spite of its inclusion within Southeast Asia. Was this inclusion meant to position American art as peripheral within the cultural frame of Southeast Asia, or was it a benchmark by which the rest of the works in the exhibition were to be compared? Given the lack of archival evidence, we cannot know what its inclusion was intended to mean; it was, nonetheless, significant.¹⁵ In the evaluation report of the print exhibition sent to McCray at MoMA'S International Department, John E. Reinhardt, Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer at the American Embassy in Manila, an officer of USIS, reported an enthusiastic response to the work presented and that many people enquired of the possibility of purchasing the prints. Press coverage on the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, while limited to one-liners in articles, would also cover the exhibition as presenting “rare prints”.¹⁶

For its audience at the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, Recent American Prints in Color was valued more as a cultural object than as a MoMA exhibition. The *Manila Chronicle* would, on 8 May 1957, go so far as to inaccurately credit the exhibition and museum as “rare prints from the Museum of Contemporary Arts of the United States”,¹⁷ a response far from the aspirations of McCray and the International Program in profiling American art from the MoMA.

Recent American Prints in Color was an object of ideological significance. While not originally created as a representation of the US, it came to represent the country on a nationalistic platform in a foreign region. Though not the main feature of the exhibition of Southeast Asian art, it was still noticed by a receptive audience, an audience that was open to and found value in it being included in a discourse on the pressing issues of Southeast Asia.



FIGURE 1: Image of the First Southeast Asia Art Competition Exhibition, Manila, 12 May 1957. Courtesy of Vanessa Ban. Original source can be found in the MoMA Archives, New York IC/IP I.A.408

Of Subtexts and Agendas: What Recent American Prints in Color Offered AAP

The significant decision to place Recent American Prints in Color in the first exhibition of Southeast Asian art was made by AAP and not by USIS or MoMA.¹⁸ The only known installation image of the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition (Figure 1) presents a one-room exhibition of “the foremost works of Southeast Asian artists” in the Northern Motors showroom.¹⁹ Thus, the decision to include Recent American Prints in Color in the exhibition’s one-room schema was not just to include it in the platform but to physically encapsulate it within the exhibitionary frame of Southeast Asia.

This framework of inclusion, subsuming American printmaking inside Southeast Asia, was not just desired and acted upon by AAP, but also by USIS. The image of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, sent by USIS to MoMA presents a perspective of the “local” entries of the competition, implicitly equating them with the MoMA exhibition.²⁰

This gesture of inclusion, taken almost to the point of occlusion, was reiterated in the production of the catalogue of the First Southeast Asia Art Competition's exhibition, which USIS designed, producing a total of 3,280 copies, of which USIS distributed 3,000 copies. Sent to MoMA along with the image, the catalogue inspired a tactfully written response from McCray on 28 May 1957 expressing the International Program's pleasure at the exhibition being included at the invitation of the sponsoring organisation, but also highlighting the concern that MoMA was not properly acknowledged and credited.

Although the catalog makes no reference to it, I hope that it was possible during the exhibition itself to retain proper identification of The Museum of Modern Art as the organiser of *Recent American Prints in Colour*.²¹

McCray received a response only days later from William Copeland, an exhibition officer of the USIS, stating that "The American prints were properly identified when they were displayed at the recent Manila exhibition of Southeast Asian Art."²² No additional material would be sent. While the incident likely suggests a mere oversight in crediting, it also reveals the agency that AAP and USIS had in the representation of Recent American Prints in Color. These organisations were able to sideline the intentions of MoMA's travelling programme to represent collections from New York internationally, so as to include the exhibition firmly inside the rubric of Southeast Asia.

In order to understand the interests invested in realising such a gesture of inclusion that neglects to credit MoMA, one has to begin by looking at the narrative of American printmaking offered in Recent American Prints in Color and, specifically, what it invested under the rubric of "American" and the medium of printmaking. While the exhibition travelled, MoMA sent with it images of a selection of works to be used in all printed material, whether for advertising or the development of a catalogue. Reading this selection of images provides an insight into the common thematics that defined this exhibition and its works, beyond them being made in the US. The images included: *Nativity* (1949) by Andre Racz, *Monument to a Butterfly* (1952) by Eugene Berman, *Birds* (1952) by Irving Kriesberg, *Inscription of T'Chao Pae* (1952) by Seong Moy, *Third Avenue Elevated* (1952) by Ralston Crawford, *Memory Machine* (1947) by Dorr Bothwell and *Italian Landscape* (1953) by Irving Amen.

As an exhibition on the advancements made in serigraphy and lithography in the fine arts, the foremost defining thematic of the exhibition was its focus on American innovation. This focus was not only technological, but also

reflected experimentation across artistic mediums. Ralston Crawford, painter, printmaker and photographer, is one of the more well-known of the exhibited artists, and his *Third Avenue Elevated* is today perhaps the best-known work from the exhibition. Crawford had only taken up printmaking in 1949, beginning by exploring lithography. Known for his abstract representations of urban life and industry, *Third Avenue Elevated* was based on a photograph he took of a painted steel support for an elevated railway. The work is often discussed with regard to its cross-medium exploration.

American innovation was also present in the literal subject matter of some of the work. Dora Bothwell's *Memory Machine* is a key example of this: the work is representative of "indigenously American" innovation in its focus on the television set. Colour television was a distinct product of American innovation during the Cold War and would later figure in the Kitchen Debate as one of the key symbols of the virtues of American democracy and capitalism.²³

In addition to emphasising the technological prowess of American printmaking, the exhibited works reflected cultural diversity. Speaking to an "American" identity as a culturally accepting and diverse construct, most of the artists were immigrants. Andre Racz, for example, was a Romanian American artist who came to the US in 1939. The artworks themselves were also reflective of cultural diversity, such as Seong Moy's *Inscription of T'Chao Pae*, which uses archaic Chinese calligraphy and draws from the methods of formal self-expression in abstract expressionism.²⁴

The artworks in the exhibition also highlighted the position of the artist as a liberal subject. Most, if not all, the works are guided by a self-reflexive subjectivity. Irving Kriesberg, for example, was an American painter whose works combine elements of abstract expressionism with figural human and animal forms, and who made his debut with Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko in the canonical 1952 exhibition titled *15 Artists*, at MoMA. Even the most figural of the exhibited works, Racz's *Nativity*, is inspired by personal experience. Printed in sanguine on gray paper, *Nativity* celebrates the birth of the artist's son.

While most of the works are guided by the radical subjectivity that abstract expressionism proposed through its ambiguous, non-objective imagery, some of the works are indebted to other abstract traditions of subjectivity, such as surrealism. Eugene Berman was a leading surrealist and neo-romantic painter, while Dorr Bothwell's *Memory Machine* recalls a surrealist television set. While this was not surprising for an exhibition from a museum built on a collection of European modernists, these inclusions linked developments in American printmaking to the Parisian art scene. Creating such a relationship with Paris was a key strategy of the programme that sought to validate

American art internationally. In the years after World War II, Paris seemed poised to regain its status as the capital of the art world, as it was imagined by artists in the US and Europe. European artists previously exiled to New York or elsewhere returned to Paris, and many young American artists still considered Paris to be the place to study and become an artist. As such, with a cultural elitism from the pre-war era still intact, many artists based in Paris, and those exiled in New York regarded American art as a poor imitation of what they did. This was particularly important because many pre-war artists in Asia were also educated in Paris and Europe, and still referred to Paris as an art capital. In order to validate American art, it was necessary that American art be seen as equal with the avant-garde practices of Paris and Europe.²⁵

Related to such strategies of validation, the selection of artists and artworks also suggests that the exhibition was developed to represent the innovations of American printmaking in relation to modern painting. Advancements in lithography and screen-printing were used for realising works with pop and minimal aesthetics, as well as the more painterly approaches of expressionism. All of the artists represented in the exhibition were also accomplished painters. Irving Amen was a muralist who had his first woodcut show in 1949. With the development of silkscreen printing, artists at the time had specifically begun to experiment with colour in printmaking, lending itself to translation across media, including painting or photography to print. Until the 1940s, most American artists viewed print as a lesser medium, practised by those who were concerned solely with the technical aspects of making art, rather than with the importance of creative expression. The development of print studios and printmaking programmes in American art schools in the 1950s lent validity to the medium as a fine art form. This validity was based on a relationship of the medium to painting, which was taught at these schools.²⁶

The exhibition also represented MoMA's recent acquisitions in relation to American culture and values, demonstrating the relevance and virtues of the museum's collection and, more importantly, the value of American connoisseurship.²⁷ In defining the prints as "American", the selection of artists was validated by the elite of New York's art scene or by the State Department. The artists were Guggenheim Fellowship recipients or recipients of equally prestigious awards such as the Fulbright Fellowship, and belonged largely to two generations, those in their thirties and those in their fifties and sixties. The prints were recent acquisitions, made between 1945 and 1952.²⁸ Firmly rooted in the validating structure of New York as an art centre, the rubric of "American" that brought together this selection of prints was defined as a concept that was innovative, culturally diverse, inclusive and

liberal. Printmaking was a stand-in for technological advancement and a wholly American modern development of painting, seen as the highest form of modern art. Printmaking, in the exhibition, was representative of a new, advanced and validated modern medium.

Beyond being a significant international event, the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition was also the tenth annual exhibition of AAP. Consequently, the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color should be read also as being folded into AAP's annual exhibitions in addition to being folded into a rubric of Southeast Asia. Founded in 1947, AAP developed from the initial desire of Purita Kalaw-Ledesma, Alfredo Pestaño and Antonio Dumlao to hold a reunion of the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Fine Art (Escuela de Bellas Artes).²⁹ However, the association was not confined to UP alumni, as its membership also included self-taught artists and those from the University of Santo Tomas (which was the only other school offering the arts at that time).³⁰ The UP alumni gathering grew from Sunday meetings in which artists met and exchanged ideas, to an incorporated organisation with a constitution and a membership that included "artists in the graphic and plastic arts, art collectors, persons giving material support for the maintenance of the association and those who were lovers of the fine arts". From its inception, then, AAP aspired to build a broad audience for the fine arts, "bringing art to the people, or vice versa" through education. It aimed to provide artists with an audience and sustainable commercial galleries to support them.³¹ To do this, it sponsored and developed exhibitions, art classes, lectures and other public activities.

Of all AAP's activities, it was the annual exhibitions which were the most successful in furthering artists' interests. Established in 1948, the exhibitions were competitions that offered incentives to artists as a strategy to improve the quality of art in the Philippines. This was significant as AAP was only one of the few art associations geared towards providing artists the means of developing financial sustainability for their practice at the time. AAP's annual exhibitions brought together a cross-section of artistic practices in the Philippines as well as a large audience that comprised political, educational and artistic circles under one roof. It was reported that 3,000 people visited the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Competition, which included delegates to the conference, diplomats, civil leaders, local and regional press, and student groups. The local art enthusiasts who provided the funding for the annual prizes were well-established business people or high-profile members of society who were invested in Filipino politics. The first annual exhibition included a pencil sketch of the Filipino flag by then President of the Philippines, Elpidio Quirino, who officiated the event. The annual exhibitions

in the early years of AAP were officiated by the Philippine presidents who were personally invested in the art platform. For example, President Carlos P. Garcia headed up the fundraising committee for the First Southeast Asia Art Competition and Conference and donated generously to the organisation.³²

In galvanising participation from a broad spectrum of artists in the Philippines, each annual competition and exhibition registered the varied artistic climate of the Philippines of its time. For example, the first AAP competition evidenced the undercurrents of antagonism between conservative and modernist artists. According to Kalaw-Ledesma, conservative artists were seen as being “bound by a strict tradition. They painted what they saw and as closely as possible to the original. They painted from one point of view, adhering closely to the rules of perspective and composition, not to mention propriety.”³³ Often narrative-based and employing symbolism, their palette was known for the use of brown, sombre and neutral colours. Eventually, they would be associated with commercial and poor quality of art, founded on mere variations of a uniform style. The “Moderns”, as Kalaw-Ledesma would refer to them, painted from different points of view, demanded freedom from tradition, rejected the view that a painting must be as close as possible to the original and advocated artistic integrity. The Moderns asserted that “(h)aving gone through a war and having known the meaning of suffering, it was impossible for Filipino artists to paint idealised pictures of the masses toiling happily in the fields ... painting was not an escape from daily problems; it was an interpretation of life”.³⁴ For the Moderns, subject matter was secondary; what counted was the impact and total effect of a work of art. They wanted to develop new colours, shapes, textures and perceptions in art.³⁵

The first competition awarded all the prizes to this emerging group of Moderns. This was a historic event as it was the first time that the Moderns, an emerging group of artists, were recognised so publicly. When the winners were announced, the conservatives protested the results. Before the competition, the antagonism between the conservatives and the Moderns was confined to newspaper articles or forums. The outcome of the competition was a public defeat and raised the profile of this antagonism. In the following years, the Moderns continued to win the annual competition, leading to growing discontent among the conservatives. The tensions were, in part, due to the conservatives’ fears that the art market was going to the Moderns. Hostilities were based on concerns that they were losing their livelihood. Modern paintings, which were formerly bought only by foreigners and artists, were being purchased by an increasing number of people.³⁶ The following year, in 1949, AAP made efforts to quell tensions by mounting two kinds of competition: one for the conservatives and another for the Moderns. However,

the intense rivalry continued to grow and came to a head when the Rotary Club of Manila, in celebration of its anniversary, awarded Galo B. Ocampo a cash prize for best painting. At the 1955 annual exhibition, the conservatives, in retaliation, took down their paintings. They carried them across the street from where the exhibition was being held and placed their work on display on the sidewalk. This walkout of the conservatives from AAP signified a turning point in the history of Filipino art. The conservatives formally withdrew from the association, allowing AAP to consolidate its community and direct itself more specifically to the support of Modern art.³⁷ AAP dropped its dual classification of prizes and adopted only one set of awards. Kalaw-Ledesma, in recollecting this period, states that “in effect this acknowledge(ed) the superiority of modern art ... and [subsequent] winners [of the annual competition] were considered simply ‘the best in contemporary Philippine painting’”.³⁸

The First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition was the second annual AAP competition after this significant split following the walkout of the conservatives. Kalaw-Ledesma notes that, in addition to focusing on championing modern art, “the most significant medium of this period was the then untapped field of the graphics arts [or printing making] ... spearheaded by Manuel Rodriguez Sr”.³⁹ From its inception as an organisation, AAP made it a policy to encourage the graphic arts. However, following the split, AAP applied itself to furthering the influence of this medium. The graphic arts were not generally studied or understood during the late 1940s and early 1950s in the Philippines. Graphic arts were, for the most part, considered a lesser form, a hobby, because materials were inexpensive and one could print as many copies as one wished.⁴⁰ Kalaw-Ledesma, as one of the leaders of AAP, was particularly invested in printmaking and supported the work of Manuel Rodriguez Sr, who would come to be regarded as the “father” of graphic arts in the Philippines.⁴¹ Rodriguez made his name by winning AAP awards and designing silkscreen Christmas cards. One of the few artists invested in the medium at the time, he conducted hobby classes for wives of military personnel at the Clark US Air Force Base in Pampanga, north of Manila. Rodriguez had learned the medium from his American supervisors, who included Robert Windquist.

Kalaw-Ledesma considered printmaking the “wave of the future, the medium of the general public” and was strongly invested in seeing it develop. She sourced a printing press from Carmelo and Bauermann Company, which printed AAP’s invitation. The printing press, the first lithograph press brought to Manila during the 19th century, was installed in a garage rented by the Association before Rodriguez was allowed to bring it to his studio where,

with his etching press and other equipment, he began to teach printmaking.⁴² With growth in art students over time, Rodriguez began teaching the medium in schools and, by 1956, a year before the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, AAP organised its first Inter-Asian Graphic Arts exhibition in recognition of the growing number of printmakers in the Philippines.⁴³ Thus, in many ways, printmaking, as it came to be practised as a Modern art form, had American origins through Rodriguez Sr, who would teach a new generation of Modern artists, including his sons. It is perhaps worthy to note in this regard that the exhibition for the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition featured a total of 16 pieces, outside of the MoMA contribution, that were woodcuts or serigraphy across a range of painting categories, namely “graphic arts”, “representational painting” and “abstract painting”. Most of the contributions were from members of AAP. However, two woodcuts were contributions from India.

In addition to focusing on printmaking, the break from the conservatives meant that AAP became an art organisation particularly invested in developing a greater understanding and sympathy for the position of the Modern artist. This was apparent with the first fundraiser that AAP ran: a screening of *Lust for Life* (1956), a million-dollar Hollywood production centred on the life story of Vincent Van Gogh, played by Kirk Douglas. The film was, according to reports of the time, selected for the narrative it presented of the struggling, unrecognised artist, which resonated with what AAP described as the lack of social recognition and commercial sustainability that faced Philippine modern artists. In addition, the film reproduced 200 of Van Gogh’s original paintings, sourced from hundreds of museums and private collections, in a new colour process called “metrocolor” that presented the paintings in vivid detail.⁴⁴ AAP saw the screening as an educational opportunity for its Manila-based audience to encounter Van Gogh’s paintings. The premier of the film in Manila included an art exhibition in the theatre lobby of masterpieces by local modernist and conservative painters and the distribution of unique souvenir programmes designed by leading AAP members, inspired by Van Gogh’s style of brushwork.⁴⁵ Adopting a similar strategy to that employed by MoMA and USIS in *Recent American Prints in Color*, AAP’s decision to screen a Hollywood production based on Van Gogh showed that the association aligned itself with a narrative of European modernism. Focusing on Van Gogh’s life story and creativity, AAP highlighted the image of the heroic artist as a maverick outsider championing a reflexive subjectivity in the appreciation of art and, by extension, modern Philippine art.

Given these existing investments and the trajectory of AAP by 1957, this article’s earlier contention that the inclusion of *Recent American Prints* in

Color should be read also as being folded into AAP's annual exhibitions bears revisiting. Recent American Prints in Color emphasised modern art practices that together privileged narrative frames of innovation, technological prowess and radical subjectivity, and some of the AAP artworks submitted and included within the exhibition were also sympathetic to these positions. In his article "Filipinism in Art", Ricaredo Demetillo explains the contextual demands upon the modern artist (of which he regards Hernando R. Ocampo as the epitome):

Technical discoveries in the arts are being shared more widely than ever today by a community of artists. All our artists have been influenced one way or another, some more pronouncedly than others, by certain recognisable influences: thus cubism, surrealism, futurism, expressionism, expressionist abstraction, impressionistic pointillism and other influences may be traced directly into the world of our various artists, with the important reservation that these artists have managed to keep their individuality, their signatures ... The machine age, with its attendant complexities, has changed the tempo and the tenor of our ways. Depth psychology has given us a world no longer wholly ordered by the rational mind but lashed by the egoistic urges of the Id of the subconscious. The rise of corporate loyalties has tended to shrivel the individual and his erstwhile freedom. The artist should, but until a decade ago, did not respond to this responsibility.⁴⁶

In principle, Demetillo's description could be applied to many of the works of Recent American Prints in Color, which betray European modernist influences and champion technological innovation in art, and radical subjectivity. In this regard, Arturo R. Luz's *City*, Fernando Zobel non-objective *Painting*, Cesar F. Legaspi's *Carousel* and Hernando R. Ocampo's *Fiesta* and *Sacramental*, paintings submitted and exhibited as part of the exhibition of the First Southeast Art Conference and Competition, all betray the same stylistic and subject matter investments of Eugene Berman, Irving Kreisberg, Dorr Bothwell, Irving Amen and Ralston Crawford.

However, this relationship begins to become slightly more tenuous when it comes to the prints submitted to the exhibition, which allow for a deeper insight into the complex relationship of adaptation that arises out of presenting both practices—American modernism and Filipino modernism—alongside one another. The prints are based on subject matter that privileges a representation of the everyday Filipino person. This is evident specifically

in the prints submitted by AAP members, such as *Two Women* by Anita Magsaysay Ho and *Girl with Flowers* by Chua Keng Keng. Though the prints are figurative and more impressionistic than abstract, they do share an affinity with Andre Racz's representational practice that focuses on the everyday and domestic. Magsaysay Ho's style was credited by critics at the time as a creation of a more "expressive, more powerful, indigenous art".⁴⁷ In the above mentioned essay by Demetillo, he refers to Magsaysay Ho art as "folksy".⁴⁸

This "folksy" style was identified also in the work of another artist who submitted a painting. Vicente Manansala's *Give Us this Day* is an everyday scene with religious overtones, depicting a family eating at a table. Demetillo writes of Manansala's work as being "rooted in his rural backyard, where he watches the vegetables grow and the chickens cluck ... in the love of his wife and children and friends ... and in the cacophony of deepness on the highways and boulevards. All these create the soil where his creative spirit receives nurture; and they are real, human and cultural roots." Where Demetillo is critical of Zobel's "iberian temperament" and praises Ocampo's canvases as "abstract renditions of our tropicality", Demetillo reserves for Manansala the high praise of making a "vital" art that is not patriotic but expresses the "soul of a people". Demetillo further elaborates that "Our roots are planted in the soil of our past, in the sod of our time and place, in our modernity. Who takes sustenance from this soil creates vital art."⁴⁹

Within such a discourse, the everyday scenes by Magsaysay Ho and Manansala represent a marked deviation from the narratives of Recent American Prints in Color. These works are more socially specific and embody an attitude wherein artistic innovation is meant to serve the soul of a people, an aim paralleled by lofty intentions of the MoMA International Program in crafting the exhibition, but not one inherent to the prints and artistic practices that Recent American Prints in Color put on display.

In this regard, it is important to note how different the political projects of modern art were, as framed by MoMA on the one hand, and by art discourse in the Philippines at the time on the other hand. These differences are evident despite the seeming affinities in style and artistic media. Demetillo wrote at the time of the exhibition that "Since our artists are Filipinos, they will express themselves as Filipinos, unless their sensibility has been made phoney by imbibing the foreign indiscriminately."⁵⁰ The point in encountering American or European modernistic practices was not necessarily to emulate but to co-opt forms, styles and designs towards a Filipino artistic identity. It is in this frame of reference that Recent American Prints in Color resonated with the AAP artistic practices with which it shared exhibition space. It may have served a contextual function in AAP's definitive annual exhibitions to not only

provide an “international” frame for the practices of AAP artists but also to highlight AAP artists’ discriminate co-opting of “the foreign”.

Kalaw-Ledesma never accounts for the exhibition in *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, yet this occlusion is not an unproductive one art historically. Recent American Prints in Color as a selection of artwork was not important, rather what is significant is what it represented and what it provided as an exhibitionary moment—a particularly pivotal moment in AAP’s history. In light of the walkout of 1955 and the developments leading up to the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, the decision to include Recent American Prints in Color in its annual exhibition can be read as a reiteration of AAP’s investment in the development of art, which included a focus on printmaking and on developing a greater understanding and sympathy for the position of the modern artist. Furthermore, AAP’s mission to bring art to the people and to develop opportunities or tools for art education should not be overlooked.⁵¹ With the end of World War II, Europe’s economies were devastated and cultural products from Europe were not being travelled extensively. Instead, with the onset of the Cold War, cultural products from the Soviets, such as the Russian ballet, and from the Americans, such as exhibitions like Recent American Prints in Color, travelled more widely, allowing Filipino artists exposure to these cultural products. American art resonated with them, and with more scholarship opportunities in the US becoming available to Filipino artists, the early 1950s in the Philippine art scene saw a shift in influence from the school of Paris to the school of New York. In addition, due to a dollar shortage, few foreign art magazines could enter the Philippines except those from the United States. As a result of the exposure to American art criticism, the Philippine art scene began to be influenced by what was happening in New York. Given this, the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color spoke to an emergent Philippine modernism that was influenced by and open to consuming products of an American modernism.

However, this tie to American modernism was also a tie to an infra-structural framework of internationalisation. The Moderns were not just the future, as Kalaw-Ledesma states, but they represented a means to connect the Philippine artist to the world. In a published interview from 1956, the American art critic Elizabeth Lyons observes that:

[In the Philippines] it is the young artist who is the modern artist. In the West, it is mostly the older artists who take to abstract, subjective painting. The world’s most admired contemporary artists are all old and mostly French, among them Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Dufy

and Rouault – the geniuses of the “School of Paris” ... there is no ebb in sight for the tide of abstract expressionism in this area, the modern Asian artist has to face up to the fact that he [*sic*] is just as neglected, misunderstood and crucified as his counterpart in the West. Lack of public encouragement and economic insecurity is a problem the artists of today still share.⁵²

This quote, while taken from a Philippine magazine, shines a light on what caught the eye of the travelling curator and how the lineage of abstract expressionism that ties Recent American Prints in Color to European movements such as surrealism also ties Philippine modern art in the same way. The cultural Cold War led to greater educational opportunities for Filipino artists, either through the exposure that American travelling exhibitions provided, scholarships from American patrons, cultural content that the USIS library provided, and also through education which connected them to a new international art scene, crafted as part of the American “free world”. In the early 1950s, the Philippine Moderns were aware that “time had stood still for Philippine art” and were anxious to raise artistic standards to what they deemed a more “international” level. They relied on illustrations in the American magazines *Time* and *Life*, and read the limited art books at USIS libraries to learn more about an assumed international style. There were no museums that presented international contemporary art, and reproductions of masterpieces were unavailable. In fact, Recent American Prints in Color was MoMA’s first exhibition in the Philippines and *Lust for Life* among the first opportunities for Filipinos to see reproductions of famous masterpieces.⁵³ As an educational opportunity, Recent American Prints in Color not only epitomised AAP’s push for modern art practices, but also aligned the Philippine art scene to an international art scene it was determined to become a part of.

The Rubric of Southeast Asia in an International Art World:

What Southeast Asia Provided AAP

In *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, Kalaw-Ledesma explains that AAP’s drive towards an international perspective reflected a desire to compete with the rest of the world, in effect to “crash the international scene”.⁵⁴ To achieve this, it was widely believed that one had to paint in an international style, in other words a style determined by a “Cold War modernism”. It was believed that the Filipino artist was “as good as anyone”. Filipino artists sought recognition towards such ends by competing on international platforms.⁵⁵ The exhibition of the First Southeast Art Conference and Competition was not only part of

the effort to make Philippine art international, but was also an attempt to make Manila the artistic centre of Southeast Asia. These efforts were primarily motivated by a desire to improve art education and infrastructure in the Philippines, a key tenet of AAP's mission. In effect, the First Southeast Art Conference and Competition built an international community around the Philippine art scene through the rubric of Southeast Asia.

AAP's definition of "Southeast Asia" can be seen from the international exchange partners that were identified as part of the region and were invited to attend the conference. This group initially included Australia, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaya, Pakistan, South Vietnam and Thailand. From this initial selection, it is clear that AAP aspired to map the region of Southeast Asia geographically, as well as include nations with which it had a strong relationship, such as China, Japan and India (all of which have diasporic communities in the Philippines) and Pakistan (which was geographically on the borders of South Asia and Southeast Asia). Ultimately China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Vietnam and the US attended, providing delegates to the conference to represent the "national art" of their countries, speaking to their histories, contemporary art and trends.⁵⁶ The US was the only exception and did not provide a participating conference delegate.⁵⁷ In lieu of such representation, *Recent American Prints in Color* stood in for a delegate to speak to the history, contemporary art and trends in American printmaking. Its Manila-based audience would already be familiar with representations of the "national art" of the US from USIS libraries throughout the region, and other travelling American exhibitions. Besides printmaking being taught at Clark Air Base in Manila, *Recent American Prints in Color* was the second exhibition of serigraphy that USIS had presented.⁵⁸

The outcome of the conference was that seven countries (Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaya, South Vietnam and the Philippines) formed the permanent secretariat of the Pan Asia Art Conference and Exhibition, with Manila as the site of the next biennial. In the establishment of this permanent body, it is recorded that:

the conference adopted a number of resolutions advocating 1) Exchange of literature on art and culture between member nations 2) Inclusion and emphasis on the teaching of oriental art in the curricula of fine arts and humanities 3) Exchange of art exhibits 4) Exchange of personnel and 5) Free flow of cultural and art material between member nations. The conference also adopted resolutions on a) a code of ethics among asian art and b) the adoption of copy-right laws for the protection of Asian artists.⁵⁹



FIGURE 2: Patrick Ng Kah Onn, *Batek Malaya*, 1957

Source: Private collection of the estate of the late Gregorio Lim (President of AAP in 1957).
Image courtesy of Patrick D. Flores

In addition to being unified by this set framework in which the countries and their respective art scenes would collaborate, the competition brought together an “international panel” of judges to decide on the best of Southeast Asian art.⁶⁰ The panelists selected winners from the local and international participants of the competition and, in effect, determined a standard for Southeast Asian art. The competition covered a range of media for local participants, including sculpture, photography and painting. While foreign participants were only allowed to contribute paintings, this was taken broadly and some paintings were painted on wood or silk. In addition, the Indonesian participation included wood carvings. There were three cash prizes awarded for overall winners that the local and foreign participants competed for.⁶¹ *Batek Malaya* by Patrick Ng Kah Oun of Malaya won the first prize (Figure 2). Filipino modern artist Vicente Manansala’s *Give Us this Day* won the second prize, and the third was won by *Village Family* by India’s Shanti Dave.⁶²

Reporting on the participation in the competition, *Cultural News from Asia*, a bulletin published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in New Delhi,

emphasised the distinct styles of each country which, it claimed, represented the “realities” or conditions of the lives of their citizens.⁶³ While international, Southeast Asia was described as made up of distinct cultural and national representations:

“Batek Malaya” (The winning painting of the competition) in oil, is a flat design of a “batik” pattern showing familiar surroundings in Malaya. The Filipino and the Indian prize winners had both chosen family themes for their oil paintings. Many schools of painting were represented. The entries ranged from the simple bamboo paintings of Chinese style to the tapestry style paintings of Indonesian artist. The ebullient though poetic outpourings of the modernists jostled along with the quiet compositions of the conservatives... Some of the Indonesian paintings were reminiscent of Van Gogh’s flat canvases. The Japanese entries were distinguished by an exquisite handling of colour and a bold formalism each acting as a foil to the other... Malaya displayed the comparatively new medium of art that of “batik painting.” The Vietnamese collection though small was interesting. It included four paintings depicting four seasonal flowers “Ladies in the Garden” executed in lacquer on wood and the doll-like “Trung sisters” (Joans of Ark of Vietnam) made of embossed silk.⁶⁴

In effect, this competition, selected by representatives invested in Southeast Asia, was a means to lay the work for a collective Southeast Asian aesthetic, despite perceived differences. A Southeast Asian aesthetic was one that reflected the shared conditions of the nations of Southeast Asia, that used modern terms or methods, while still being specifically Asian. *STM*, a magazine in Manila, in reporting on the conference, chose Malaya’s Chuah Thean Teng’s painting *Batik of Boats in the Wharf* to represent the conference and competition, on account of the subject matter being highly characteristic of all the participating nations. In this particular case, the binding condition of the nations was maritime trade. Furthermore, Chuah’s oil painting used a Western medium to represent batik, a Southeast Asian art form. It was the same method employed in the winning artwork *Batek Malaya*, in which a traditional art form is represented through the “newer” modern Western medium.⁶⁵

While “Southeast Asia” was being defined on aesthetic terms by AAP, it was primarily a rubric of political value. A recent concept that had only emerged as a significant political term in the summer of 1943, the construction of

“Southeast Asia” was a response to the Japanese military army effectively controlling the entire stretch between British Burma and the Hispano-American Philippines (British Burma, Malaya and Singapore, the American Philippines and the Dutch Indies all fell to direct Japanese military assault) and with the creation of Louis Mountbatten’s South East Asia Command, an offshoot of the more traditional India Command. The concept of “Southeast Asia” was not normalised until 1955, with the publication of former British colonial civil servant D.G.E. Hall’s *A History of South-East Asia*.⁶⁶ While there were early inklings of a Southeast Asian formation in 1947 with an attempt of the prime minister of Siam’s to launch a Southeast Asian League to build regional networks of mutual help against imperialism, Southeast Asia at this moment in history has been argued to be a concept primarily built on the prevailing American interests that the diversity of political positions and states from the Philippines, Malaya, Vietnam and Indonesia were not “lost” to communism.⁶⁷ Towards this end, SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), based on the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty or Manila Pact signed in Manila in 1954, would act as an umbrella over an area of the world defined under the rubric of “Southeast Asia” in an alliance to contain communist power. The Philippines and Thailand were its only geographically Southeast Asian members; its membership consisted largely of countries located outside of the region but with an interest either in the region or the organisation itself.⁶⁸

For an art world shaped by AAP’s efforts to internationalise Philippine art, such geopolitical formations were not just territorial maps of allegiance but also underpinned networks of travel and circulation. In *The Great Migrator*, a study of the transitional network of modern art in the 1960s and the increasing dominance of American art through the lens of Rauschenberg’s work, Hiroko Ikegami notes that “the ‘global’ rise of American art was in fact restricted” to the “Free World”. In other words, the geography of post-war modern art overlapped with “the geography of international politics of the time”. The travel of American exhibitions connected art scenes with major players who shared a mutual interest in working together to promote post-war American art, engendering an increasingly Americanised “international” art scene.⁶⁹ Within this emergent field, Southeast Asia was a space and concept that existed between the dichotomies of the Cold War.

As a liminal space, Southeast Asia was—in the words of then ambassador of the Philippines to the United States Carlos P. Romulo—“the theatre of conflict between the free world and the Soviet world” and represented “the margin between victory and defeat for freedom”.⁷⁰ Moreover, as Romulo delineates, “Southeast Asia” was a formidable region in political and economic terms:

From this area comes 2/3 of the world's exportable rice and were this rice to fall into communist hands the position of India and Japan would be in serious jeopardy. From Southeast Asia also come the raw material such as rubber, tin, rope and oil which provide the sinews of the economy and preparedness program of the West ... Southeast Asia dominates a vital corner of the globe and controls the communication lanes across the Pacific and the Indian oceans. (In addition) by accepting payments for its exports in consumer goods without requiring dollars, Southeast Asia has contributed immensely to the economic recovery of western Europe without the trade of Southeast Asia there could scarcely be a multilateral free world economy.⁷¹

The Philippines was not shy about the idea that association with such a Southeast Asian regionalism could benefit its interests.⁷² As early as 1949, Elpidio Rivera Quirino, the second president of the Philippines, had tried to initiate this in the form of a regional alliance.⁷³ Quirino wanted to bring the US into the planned alliance but it declined. Without the support of major powers, the alliance did not materialise. For the most part, according to political analysts of the time, “regionalism was not very strong”.⁷⁴ Asians had too many conflicting colonial associations and any alliance to counter the positions of the Soviet Bloc or the American “Free World”—even the alliance of an Asian-African bloc—had little appeal beyond financial practicality.

Where statecraft had failed, the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition succeeded in bringing together a regional alliance of states in support of their artists. The terms of participation, in being reliant on the respective states supporting their artists, framed the contributions as specific nationally endorsed artistic practices. This is evident in the reporting of the exhibition, which essentialised artistic practices by national and cultural identities. The inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color was in a sense no different. It framed an “American” modern art regardless of whether the participating artist identified as such.

It should be noted, however, that the characteristics of these nationally defined modernities—as defined by narratives of innovation, technological prowess and radical subjectivity—were broad enough to include other cultural identifies within its discourse. For example, Malaya's Chuah Thean Teng's painting *Batik of Boats in the Wharf* and Patrick Ng's *Batek Malaya*, both of which use the medium of oil painting to emulate the designs of batik painting, can be read as technological innovations in painting by “reinventing” the use of batik painting. While the work of these two Malayan artists did not directly

relate to works presented in Recent American Prints in Color, they did resonate with the key principles being touted by the exhibition. Ng's *Batek Malaya*, winning first prize at the competition, was especially valued for its innovativeness. As such, AAP's inclusion of nationally endorsed artistic practices alongside Recent American Prints in Color speaks to a construction of Southeast Asian regionalism built on the infrastructure of the nation, coinciding with the values of MoMA's "international art".

This attempted artistic regionalism, however, was seemingly not built on a direct exchange between artists, but rather through art and diplomatic organisations, that in coming together articulated broad principles of modern art to which they mutually could commit. After all, there is no evidence to suggest that Seong Moy's *Inscription of T'Chao Pae* that is based on a "discriminate adaptation" of Chinese calligraphy and abstract expressionism were highlighted in local discourse.⁷⁵

In spite of the First Southeast Asia Art Competition and Conference's chartering a Southeast Asian aesthetic and bringing a community together on the pretext of establishing what would be the "best art" from the region, of the most interesting outcomes of the conference was the quick dismissal of the rubric of Southeast Asia. Instead of a Southeast Asian conference, organisers decided to name the next edition the Pan-Asia Art Conference. The change from "Southeast Asia" to "Pan-Asia" was made to include more countries and to lend the organisation long-term sustainability. This was a particularly significant outcome because the rubric of Southeast Asia was deemed unsustainable, in that it was not inclusive and representative enough for the cultural producers invested in the region.⁷⁶ Despite being so quickly discarded, Southeast Asia was not an insignificant rubric, nor was it too nascent a concept to have no impact. It is worthy to note that a subsequent pan-Asia event never materialised.

"Southeast Asia" did not just offer AAP a conceptual frame with which to build an international community. Much like the practical motivations that encouraged Southeast Asian nation-states to enter SEATO and other political alliances with major powers such as the US, the concept afforded AAP tangible and practical benefits. For one, it did ensure access to the global distribution network of the USIS office in Manila. USIS in Manila was supportive of AAP's First Southeast Asia Art Competition and Conference, because it addressed its goals in promoting the Philippines as a centre or exemplary nation to lead and collaborate with its neighbours.⁷⁷

In addition, the rubric of Southeast Asia was also sustained and supported by many political organisations in AAP's exhibition. Funding for the First Southeast Asia Art Competition and Conference was derived from many

sources including the Asia Foundation (an American public charity which was primarily funded by the CIA at the time); the Department of Foreign Affairs; Northern Motors, a local subsidiary of General Motors; the Philippine National Museum; and the embassies of the USA, Australia, Belgium, the UK, China, France, India, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand and South Vietnam. Carlos P. Garcia, President of the Philippines in 1957 and one of the key fundraisers, commented that AAP's goal of encouraging the exchange of different artworks produced by Southeast Asian countries furthered one of the aims expressed by the 1955 Bandung Conference, which was to bring unity among other Southeast Asian Countries through a renaissance of their cultural, artistic and social activities. He encouraged the Philippine people to support the event, a credit to the nation, in bringing together such different nations in terms of the sponsorship, initiation and fundraising for the event.⁷⁸

In remembering the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, Kalaw-Ledesma states:

The plan was to make the competition an annual, round-robin affair, but somehow a new Southeast Asian exhibition never materialised. Nevertheless, two important ideas emerged from the competition. The first was that all men are brothers and art transcends all barriers because it is universal. The second—and this may not be as diametrically opposite as it may seem—was a belief in national identity.⁷⁹

In organising the first regional platform and exhibition for Southeast Asia, AAP found that the rubric of Southeast Asia was only of limited conceptual value. Member nations themselves identified with the broader term of “Asia” rather than “Southeast Asia”. A regional framework was only useful insofar as it could speak to the diversity of the region, to transcend Southeast Asia's national and political borders.

Following the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, the next Southeast Asian exhibition would be the 1st ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) exhibition in Jakarta in 1968. It would feature artists from Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Years later, under the auspices of the ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), T.K. Sabapathy would write about the legacy of attempts to “foster a sense of region-ness in Southeast Asia by means of art exhibitions”. Sabapathy's points of reference included the exhibition *36 Ideas from Asia: Contemporary South-east Asian Art* at the Singapore Art Museum, which he curated.⁸⁰ Sabapathy proposes

that ASEAN-initiated exhibitions, from the Association's inception in 1967, are enterprises affirming relations within the geographic region based on a perceived shared history. In effect, these exhibitions were crafted to convince Southeast Asians of a Southeast Asia that had cultural relevance. Yet Sabapathy aptly notes that "the sense of Southeast Asia as a region was a failed or incomplete project".⁸¹ Even within the logistical framework of ASEAN exhibitions, there was a lack of a cohesive narrative. Each country determined the extent and content of its participation, presenting what it perceived to be its mainstream art and artists for display and publication. Similarly, the framework of Southeast Asia as it were in the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition was a performance of "aspirational" regionalism. As seen through Sabapathy's analysis of the ASEAN COCI projects, there was little difference in future administration of Southeast Asian exhibitions. The framework for participation was largely the same in both the exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition and the ASEAN-initiated exhibitions. The artistic relationships were associative more than direct, with invitations awarded to state-endorsed agents and facilities by state bodies such as embassies. However, the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition differed in the ways in which it enacted a pragmatic diplomacy for self-development through co-option and collaboration. The occasion of the exhibition in 1957 was a means to visualise the relationship of the different national groups that the conference brought together, which together articulated certain goals for professionalism and collaboration for such a region (for example, the exchange of literature on art and culture between member nations and exchange of art exhibits, see n. 58). Even if the exhibition of 1957 and its frame of Southeast Asia served AAP's interests of development and internationalisation, the exhibition and frame, unlike successive iterations in ASEAN, sought to create a regional identity to host and encourage collaboration. This was fundamentally different than creating a narrative for Southeast Asia or an identity for all its participants to adhere to, it was a tool for self-development through the sharing of resources and collaboration.

As Sabapathy concludes in his essay on international exhibitions of Southeast Asian art, there is a "shadow" to the definition of the region based in political diplomacy: that of a regional perspective *not* immersed in narratives of the nation-state in which the actors who take up the terms of the region and who willingly participate in these frameworks cast themselves as "active, self-determined subjects" that construct the region on "its own terms, exigencies, historical and material conditions".⁸² The First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, as a precursor to more recent ASEAN or

Southeast Asian exhibitionary frameworks, is exemplary of this relationship, wherein an artists' association takes up the notion of "Southeast Asia" and defines it by and for its own agenda.

An Exceptional Inclusion

Returning again to the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color in the rubric of Southeast Asia, this was an anomaly. Never again in its travels would the exhibition be hosted by such a historic and international platform. Furthermore, never again would MoMA contribute to a travelling exhibition that sought to map a region such as Southeast Asia. As an exceptional inclusion in the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, in terms both of its treatment and the conceptual exceptions that AAP undertook to include an American presence at this foundational exhibition of Southeast Asia, this case study pushes against a conventional understanding of how cultural imperialism works, and the assumed binary dynamics of the cultural Cold War. Southeast Asia as a regional concept was conceived as a liminal theatre between the two fronts of the cultural Cold War. As seen from the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color, for AAP, as much as for Southeast Asian political elites, the Cold War provided an opportunity on which nations in the region could capitalise on. Rather than determining the cultural expression and identity of Southeast Asia, the travelling of American exhibitions enabled Southeast Asia, in the form of AAP, to maintain and even generate agency to develop art infrastructure and utilise networks they did not already have locally.

Recent American Prints in Color did not entirely achieve what was intended for it, either by MoMA, by a US state office anxious to garner support for American liberal modernism and American policies or by Filipino artists anxious to link themselves and their modern art to an international art scene. Thus, study of this iteration of the travelling exhibition offers insight into the dynamics of the reciprocal processes that contributed to the influence of American art on the development of art practices in Southeast Asia. As much as USIS intended for the exhibition to develop affinity between American and Philippine culture and MoMA wished to develop cultural exchange and educate foreign countries on American culture and connoisseurship, the extent to which their projects were successful were based solely on how useful they were to AAP in a time of considerable transition and consolidation of artistic practices. Besides the seeming triumph of the Moderns in ascertaining a foothold as leaders in the Philippine art scene over the conservatives, the other major transition at the time was a desire to internationalise the

Philippine art scene. Purita Kalaw-Ledesma would later write that the period of 1953–57 was a particularly important period in which art as a carrier of social protest shifted to focus on technique and its perfection, with artists instead aspiring to international recognition. This drive in turn pre-empted “the quest of cultural identity”.⁸³

Benedict Anderson argues that national identity in Southeast Asia arises out of three institutions: the census, the map and the museum, which together “profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion—the nature of the human beings it rules, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry”.⁸⁴ The map and census shaped the way we think about nations, making possible such identifications as “Southeast Asia” and “Southeast Asian”, “Philippines” and “Filipino” but it was in the museum, in its imagining of power and history, that these concepts were concretised.

The exhibition of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition exemplifies this concretising of power and history in the construction of national identity within the region. In a one-room schema, it made visual a Southeast Asian culture and aesthetic, making concrete a concept that reflection political aspirations more than real affinities. Through the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color, AAP tied a nascent concept of a modern Southeast Asian art to power in the form of the US, and history in the form of an American modernist lineage. Making concrete, in the form of the exhibition, an “international” definition of Southeast Asia, AAP not only sought to carve a space for Philippine art at the epicentre of Southeast Asian culture, it also sought to affirm its investments in modern art at a time of contentious change when a definitive aesthetic of Philippine art was only just emerging.

BIOGRAPHY

Kathleen Ditzig works for the National Museum of Singapore. She holds an MA from the Center of Curatorial Studies, Bard College that was funded by a National Heritage Board scholarship. She also holds a BA in Art History with a minor in Asian Humanities from UCLA, and was a Regents Scholar. With experience in cultural policy, she is interested in the relationship between art, globalism and power. Some of her past projects include *On Sweat, Paper and Porcelain* (CCS New York), *Footnotes and Scripting Space: Writing as the Site of Exhibition* (Judd Foundation, New York) as well as *A History of Curating in Singapore* (Singapore, 2012). She has been published in *Artforum.com*'s critic pick, *Flash Art* and *BOMB*, among others.

NOTES

- ¹ Writing in his foreword to the catalogue of the exhibition, Dr Eduardo Quisumbing, Director of the National Museum of the Philippines, identified the Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition as a “concrete instance where the countries will meet in friendly competition and an exchange of contemporary art trends in this part of the world”. See *Catalogue of First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition*, RPC [Regional Production Center] Manila: First Southeast Asia Art Conference—English, 1954–59; Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951–79; Entry P 46; Box 16; Records of the United States Information Agency [USIA], Record Group 306, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, USA.

The definition of modern and contemporary art is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is interesting to note the slippages between the terms, even in the 1950s. In a review of the exhibition, titled “Crowds Flock to Art Exhibition” and published 8 May 1957 in the *Manila Chronicle*, MoMA was referred to as the “Museum of Contemporary Arts of the United States”. While this may be a mere misprint or result of human error, it speaks to apprehensions of the type of work that MoMA presented, and connotes a flattened understanding of the contemporary and the modern.

This flattened understanding is seemingly reiterated in Hernando R. Ocampo’s lyrical description of symbolic abstraction in the *Sunday Times Magazine* of 3 June 1956. He writes of the work of Ocampo, Zobel, Luz, Manansala, Oyeyza, Legaspi and Bernardo as “contemporary in their method of expression, in their outlook. They are not afraid to confront the present, with its cacophonies, its frittering of the soul, its outlandish material values and its position of surplus: in beauty, in understanding, in purity, in grace, in love.”

- ² Simon Soon, *Maps of the Sea*, Web, 25 Jan. 2015. <http://www.search-art.asia/attachments/files/MAPOftheSEA.pdf> [accessed Apr. 2016]. Soon’s research delineates the emergence of the concept of Southeast Asia as a geopolitical region that comes out of the cultural Cold War. The referenced list includes publications, exhibitions, conferences, symposia, meetings or, more broadly, events. Following the first exhibition of Southeast Asian art that is explored in this thesis, the next Southeast Asian event is that of the 1963 Southeast Asia Cultural Festival in Singapore, which predated its merger with Malaya and was tied to a nationalist agenda. As a counter-perspective, Jennifer Lindsay provides a case study for how the rubric of Southeast Asia was employed in exhibitionary forms by state power to perpetuate specific regional narratives for international prestige. See Lindsay, “Festival Politics: Singapore’s 1963 South-East Asia Cultural Festival”, in *Cultures at War: The Cold War and Cultural Expression in Southeast Asia*, ed. Tony Day and Maya H.T. Liem (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia

Program Publications, 2010), pp. 227–46. In contrast, this article engages with “smaller histories” and studies a private art organisation’s utilisation of the same conceptual rubric and exhibitionary platform towards its own ends.

- ³ However, it is worthy to note that Purita Kalaw-Ledesma reflected on the exhibition briefly in her memoirs. See Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis María Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art* (Manila: Ledesma, 1974). It is also worthy to note Ahmad Mashad’s “Moments of Regionality: Negotiating Southeast Asia”, *Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum* (Singapore: Singapore Art Museum and Ayala Museum, 2004) in which he traces how a region is framed through institutions and their mechanisms.
- ⁴ For representative revisionist accounts, see the anthology *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Francina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985). See also Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), which is representative of revisionist accounts of the 1980s, and posits that abstract expressionism originated in Paris and was later co-opted by artists Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, and that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) actively supported state bodies that supported their circulation.

These revisionist studies began with a series of articles in *Artforum* by Max Kozloff (1973), William Hauptman (1973) and Eva Cockcroft (1974), which responded to Irving Sandler’s *Abstract Expressionism: The Triumph of American Painting* (London: Pall Mall, 1970). The revisionist essays interrogated prevailing modernist narratives from the 1940s, and exposed art and culture as a major concern for American foreign policy. In effect, this work called into question the conventional narrative of abstract expressionism as an essentially autonomous, depoliticised practice. The legacy of these initial studies has been productive in questioning the sociopolitical dimensions of the formalist narrative of modern art. Subsequent work by historians such as A. Deirdre Robson and Michael Kimmelman in the 1990s furthered this line of research by studying the discrepancies between American culture and its representation abroad, parsing the conflicting agendas of the different stakeholders advocating for American modern art.

Robson’s *Prestige, Profit and Pleasure: The Market for Modern Art in New York in the 1940s and the 1950s* (New York: Garland, 1995) focuses on the relationship between the art market and critical responses to abstract expressionism, and the lag between the two.

Kimmelman countered Cockcroft’s argument that there was a connection between the state and MoMA, arguing that in the reality of the McCarthy era the state could not co-organise and support all of MoMA’s international programmes, especially those of vanguard art. Shows like *The Family of Man* and *Built in the USA—Postwar Architecture* were another matter. In the case of *The Family of*

Man, the United States Information Agency (USIA) commissioned a number of sets that they would circulate. To circumvent the difficulties of McCarthyism in the early part of the Cold War, the smaller, country-specific offices of the United States Information Service (USIS, a division of USIA) were able to assist with local publicity and transportation. They played a key role in sourcing partner organisations in the host country to provide the international programme with project-specific funding and support.

The revisionist studies coming out of the late 1980s and early 1990s were particularly insightful in their explorations of schisms within the main stakeholders and the contradictory representations of American culture. They coincided historically with congressional attacks on the National Endowment of the Arts at the very end of the Cold War, which showed the structural contradictions of an American liberal modernism that advocated the first amendment right of freedom of expression, but insisted that it should be not funded.

See also Helen M. Franc's "The Early Years of the International Program and Council", in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), which explores the tensions inside MoMA and outside America, and the US State Department's initial resistance to working with modernists who they suspected to be communists.

- ⁵ Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). While Barnhisel's work deals only with American bourgeois liberalism, it could be conceived that a "Cold War modernism" would also include socialist realism. Perhaps the blending of political philosophies that one sees in the rise of new nation-states like Singapore during the Cold War, which operatively "borrow from both sides", would provide a richer definition of a Cold War modernism with multiple reference points, ideologies and strategies. See Tan Tai Yong, "The Cold War and the Making of Singapore", in *Cold War Southeast Asia*, ed. Malcolm H. Murfett (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2012), pp. 132–64.
- ⁶ The MoMA International Program was initially established and funded by a five-year grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in 1952, a private philanthropic organisation formed for the purpose of promoting international exchange in the visual arts. The programme was an expansion of MOMA's international outreach and grew out of the museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions which had begun two decades earlier and was dedicated to art education and domestic tours of the museum's exhibitions.

1957 was a crucial year for the International Program, as it began to invest in developing its infrastructure so as to expand its operations and ensure its sustainability. With the expiration of the five-year grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, from July 1957 onwards the International Program was funded

by the International Council at MoMA, a non-profit membership organisation comprised of art patrons and community leaders in the US. The council's role was established to support the expansion of the programme in terms of developing sponsorship for its own membership and donations from interested individuals and organisations.

Given the importance assigned to the museum in facilitating international exchange, MoMA began to develop a framework for protecting the International Program from outside influence as the programme expanded. The museum expenditure for exhibitions circulating outside the US grew considerably at this time. In 1957–58, MoMA spent US\$80,000 on exhibitions outside the US; this number was expected to increase by 1960 to US\$100,000 for large exhibitions and US\$150,000 for small exhibitions. The International Program, from the period of its establishment till the early 1960s was, in effect, responsible for the representation of the US in biennales and other cultural, “art world” events. See International Council and International Program Records, Museum of Modern Art Archives. IC/IP IV.A 91 (spreadsheet dated 17 Oct. 1956). The funding and development of Recent American Prints in Color as a travelling exhibition arose out of this institutionalisation of the International Program. While there is no direct reference in the MoMA archives to the exhibition having had a direct effect on subsequent policy and planning, it would not be too far-fetched to assume that MoMA's sidelining in the inclusion of Recent American Prints in Color in the First Southeast Asia Art Competition exhibition would influence museum policy written only a month later. USIS informed the museum that AAP was sponsoring the presentation of Recent American Prints in Color. However, according to the catalogue of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, the exhibition was funded through a variety of sources including political organisations and businesses such as Northern Motors. “International Council and International Program Records”, I.A.406, Museum of Modern Art Archives.

⁷ Press release for Recent American Prints in Color, International Council and International Program Records, Museum of Modern Art Archives. ICE. F. 2053.

⁸ “The Art Museum's Role in International Cultural Exchange”, address given 23 May by Rene D. Harnoncourt, Director, Museum of Modern Art, New York, at the 1963 Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Fort Worth, Texas, International Council and International Program Records, V.E.29, Museum of Modern Art Archives.

⁹ International Council and International Program Records, I.A.410, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Correspondence between Porter McCray and William W. Copeland, Public Affairs Officer, USIS American Embassy Manila, 5 Dec. 1956.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 102.

- ¹² See "Aguilar to be Guest Speaker at Art Meet", *Manila Bulletin*, 23 Apr. 1957, p. 7. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive, Manila, the Philippines.
- ¹³ There is no evidence to show that AAP or any of its members were in communication with the International Program at the time. McCray had desired a more established institution associated with the state and with an exhibition or educational platform. AAP had neither, and there is no evidence to show that McCray was aware of AAP's existence prior to his request. USIS would not only select and facilitate AAP as a host of the MoMA exhibition, but also secure it as a sponsor of the exhibition's costs. USIS also assumed the cost of the one-way shipment of the exhibition (each USIS branch that would host the exhibition would assume such costs). After the exhibition closed, USIS would report to McCray. AAP not only chose to install the exhibition under the frame of the First Southeast Asia Conference and Competition, it also sponsored the presentation of Recent American Prints in Color.
- ¹⁴ See "SEA Art Competition", *Manila Times*, 30 Apr. 1957. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.
- ¹⁵ The author attempted to reach out to those who organised the exhibition. However, these attempts were not fruitful.
- ¹⁶ For Reinhardt's and McCray's correspondence from 16 May 1957 to 4 June 1957, refer to "International Council and International Program Records", I.A.409-410, Museum of Modern Art Archives. For newspaper articles, refer to Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive. References to rare prints are made in "SEA Art Festival Opens April 27", *Manila Bulletin* and "Crowds Flock to Art Exhibit", *Manila Chronicle*, 8 May 1957.
- ¹⁷ "Crowds Flock to Art Exhibit", *Manila Chronicle*, 8 May 1957. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.
- ¹⁸ *International Council and International Program Records*, I.A.423, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Recent American Prints in Color, post-event report signed by John E Reinhardt, sent in correspondence to Porter McCray on 16 May 1957.
- ¹⁹ The only other photographs are of the ribbon cutting at the opening event. "SEA Art Show to be Held in April", *Manila Bulletin*, Mar. 1957. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.
- ²⁰ The foreign entries only competed in the category of painting. *Moslem Prayer* by Abdul Mari Imao, a sculpture in the foreground, won third prize at the competition and, in the background *The Beacon* by Mary Pillsbury can be made out. See Fig. 1.
- ²¹ *International Council and International Program Records*, I.A.410, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Correspondence from Reinhardt to McCray, 28 May 1957.
- ²² *International Council and International Program Records*, I.A.410, Museum of Modern Art Archives. Letter from Harold F. Schneidman to Porter McCray on 4 June 1957.

- ²³ See “The Kitchen Debate: a Transcript” (n.d.), p. 3. *CIA Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/16/1959-07-24.pdf [accessed Apr. 2016]. In this text, Nixon identifies the television as a technology in which the Americans excelled, compared to the Soviets.
- ²⁴ Seong Moy was a Chinese-born American painter and printmaker, whose woodcuts are known for subject matter that draws from Chinese classics and abstract expressionism.
- ²⁵ See Hiroko Ikegami, “Introduction: Discovering ‘The Great Migrator’”, in *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art*, Hiroko Ikegami (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), pp. 19–20.
- The continuing prestige of Paris was also a concern for the USIA. An internal study in 1953 resolved that the stereotype of Americans as cultural barbarians must be counteracted. It lamented that “Americans are regarded throughout the world as uncultured boors and crude, materialistic people who have no time for the finer things in life”. The agency wanted to stress that the relationship between American and European art was one of equals, not of filtration: the agency needed to show that American art and French impressionism derived from the same tradition, rather than one being derived from the other. The 1953 internal report is reprinted in full in Leo Bogart, abridged by Anges Bogart, *Premises for Propaganda: The United States Information Agency's Operating Assumption in the Cold War* (New York Free Press, 1976), pp. 91–110.
- ²⁶ For more information on the history of printmaking in New York and the US see Deborah Wye, in *Artists & Prints: Masterworks from the Museum of Modern Art*, Deborah Wye, Starr Figura, Judith Hecker, Raymond Livasgani, Harper Montgomery, Jennifer Roberts, Sarah Suzuki and Wendy Weitman (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), pp. 23–5; Allan L. Edmunds, *Three Decades of American Printmaking: The Brandywine Workshop Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills, 2004); “Creative Space: Fifty Years of Robert Blackburn’s Printmaking Workshop”, *Exhibition: Creative Space: Fifty Years of Robert Blackburn’s Printmaking Workshop*, The Library of Congress, n.d. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/blackburn/> [accessed Apr. 2016].
- ²⁷ In an address on the work of the International Council, given 23 May 1963 at the Convention of the American Federation of Art in Texas, MoMA Director Rene d’Hanoncourt delineated a key difference between the desire of the International Program to demonstrate the great collections of art in America and the desires of host countries of the programme, alluding to the demonstration of American connoisseurship and taste to host countries which requested exhibitions for one-man exhibitions to travel to them instead. Many host countries were less interested in group exhibitions that were, in some way, a survey of American

culture (*International Council and International Program Records*, IV.B.93, Museum of Modern Art Archives).

Manila was no exception: a painting show from the Museum of Seattle, organised by USIS, which focused on the identities of the American painters and sent the painters to Manila garnered positive reviews from the local press, and resonated more than Recent American Prints in Color. See “Serigraphs Exhibition”, *Manila Bulletin*, 22 Sept. 1957 or “Serigraphs Display Opens Tomorrow Closing Sept 23rd”, *Manila Bulletin*, 6 Sept. 1956. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

²⁸ Acquired by MoMA between 1951 and 1952. Source: *International Council and International Program Records*, ICE. F. 2053, Museum of Modern Art Archives.

²⁹ In addition to founding AAP, Purita Kalaw-Ledesma was a patron of the arts and an art historian. During her high-school education, she studied preparatory drawing at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts. In the three years that she was there, she met many modern artists who would later rise to prominence through AAP, including Manansala, Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Nena Saguil and Galo B. Ocampo. Kalaw-Ledesma studied at the design department of University of Michigan where she begun what she termed the “serious training of a creative artist”. She writes that in her design course she “learned that the foremost consideration was the function of design ... The design should follow the function, which in turn should be followed by the form.” This line of thought would influence her ideas about art (Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Jaime C. Laya, *And Life Goes On: Memoirs of Purita Kalaw-Ledesma* [Manila: P. Kalaw-Ledesma, 1994], pp. 257–66).

Kalaw-Ledesma was politically connected, and AAP benefited from this. In 1952, by virtue of her appointment to the local unit of UNESCO, AAP was represented at UNESCO. Her family was close to international diplomatic cultural attachés, specifically the Wilson family, who represented the Asia Foundation in the Philippines. Kalaw-Ledesma also brokered many opportunities for artists, such as developing scholarships with UNESCO, the Agence France-Presse bureau in Manila and the Rockefeller Foundation, among others. She was the president of AAP from 1949–50 and 1956–57. Throughout AAP’s history, she played an active role fundraising and developing programmes.

³⁰ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 10.

³¹ Writing about the context to which AAP responded, Kalaw-Ledesma asked:

What was the future of the artist of that period? His [*sic*] lot was not an enviable one. Most painters ended up sign painters, magazine illustrators and teachers, while the sculptures became wood carvers and tombstone makers. There were no galleries, and paintings were not bought ... There

were “walking galleries” in the form of enterprising painters who went around peddling their works to office employees. This was not a dignified practice. Often the painters were subject to the whims of the purchasers and they had to settle for humiliating bargains. Creative talent was neither appreciated nor encouraged, and the audience for the fine arts was limited to a few cultural families whose way of life was a carry-over from the Spanish tradition who benefited from the classical and humanistic system of education inherited from Spain (but with the arrival of the more pragmatic and materialistic Americans, the niceties of life were discarded and the emphasis shifted to making money). The artist was looked down upon, he was not considered a “respectable” member of society. Among the artists, only the writers were respected. Those who pursued a career in painting, sculpture or music were considered lacking in intelligence, “mahi na ang ulo”. As a result of this bourgeois prejudice, the artist became distrustful and suspicious, working only for himself. In time the UP School of Fine Arts became a collegiate school, but the artist continued to be maltreated and often resorted to unethical practices because he knew no better (ibid., p. 7).

³² *AAP Manila Bulletin*, n.d. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

³³ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 15.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Much more nuanced discourse on the intersections of themes and rendering of subject between conservative artists and the Moderns, as indicated, is found in more recent Philippine art historical texts.

³⁶ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 16.

³⁷ In addition to the conservatives, the cartoonists separated themselves from AAP. A new criterion for membership meant that recommendation from a member and approval by the board of samples of one’s work was necessary. Associate members, who were art lovers and hobbyists who supported the association financially, were also welcome. Ibid., p. 34.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 34–5.

⁴¹ As a painter he neither sided with the conservatives nor the Moderns, though most of his friends were conservative painters. Kalaw-Ledesma, through her political connections, recommended Rodriguez to Boyd Compton, a Rockefeller Foundation representative who was touring Southeast Asia at the time, looking for Asian graphic artists to train in the US. Rodriguez would become a recipient of a scholarship from the foundation and would study for two years at the Pratt

School of Design in New York. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 66.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Rodriguez would participate in the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition with a non-objective case in painting, “In the Beginning”. See *Catalogue of First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition*; Records of the United States Information Agency [USIA], Record Group 306, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁴ The paintings themselves were sourced from hundreds of museums and private collections. *AAP Chooses MGM Film as Benefit*, 22 Sept. 1956. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁴⁵ It also included the awarding of a special surprise gift to every 400th guest and the start of an essay contest on the subject “What Impressed Me Most in *Lust for Life*”. See “‘Lust for Life’ Tonight to Finance SEA Art Confab”, *Manila Times*, 8 Oct. 1956. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁴⁶ Ricaredo Demetillo, “Filipinism in Art”, c. 1950s–60s, n.p., clipping held in Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁴⁷ Ricaredo Demetillo, “Art in the Philippines”, *Sunday Times Magazine*, 3 June 1956, p. 42.

⁴⁸ Demetillo, “Filipinism in Art”.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. It is interesting to note that Demetillo goes on to claim that Vicente Manansala claimed, at a symposium, that Filipino art had no roots. This further suggests, to a certain extent, that Euro-American modernism was being used and co-opted by a Filipino modern art defined in its own terms.

⁵¹ In 1954, AAP developed a project with UNESCO, Shell Company and the Philippine Women’s University to conduct in-service training programmes for art teachers in public schools. From 1953 onwards, AAP sponsored children’s art competitions and opened children’s art classes run by artists in the Association. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 57.

⁵² Ilene A Maramag, “Art in Asia”, *Sunday Times Magazine*, 30 Dec. 1956. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁵³ As reported in AAP’s art bulletin and the press at the time. “Art Bulletin”, 22 Sept. 1956, Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁵⁴ See Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 67.

⁵⁵ Before attempting to establish its own international platform in the form of the First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition, AAP organised the Philippine participation at the Second International Contemporary Art Exhibition of 1953 in India. In successive years, AAP would organise Philippine participation at the Spanish–American Biennale in Cuba in 1958 and the 1962 participation

at the Venice Biennale. See Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, pp. 66–9.

- ⁵⁶ See *Catalogue of First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition*, RPC [Regional Production Center] Manila: First Southeast Asia Art Conference—English, 1954–59; Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951–79; Entry P 46; Box 16; Records of the United States Information Agency [USIA], Record Group 306, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.
- ⁵⁷ The delegates included Elizabeth Warren (Australia), Ran In-Ting (China), Irving Hsu (China), Chen Bing Sin (China), I Hsiung Ju (China), Gang Dhar (India), Des Alwi (Indonesia), Tay Hooi Keat and Syed Ahamd Jamal (Malaya) and Nguyen Thi Qua (South Vietnam), who represented the political and cultural elite of their respective countries. It is perhaps worthy to note that while Australia participated as a delegate, it did not send an accompanying exhibition or contribute artwork.
- ⁵⁸ Prior to the presentation of Recent American Prints in Color, USIS presented the American Serigraph Exhibition, a 17-day exhibition co-sponsored by the Cultural Foundation of the Philippines and USIS. Prepared by the National Serigraph Society of America and curated by the eminent American serigrapher Doris Meltzer, it featured serigraphy as a creative art and examples of its industrial uses. The exhibition included a selection of books on serigraphy and examples of commercial silkscreen printing. USIS was invested in presenting American printmaking in Manila, and AAP featured this show (7–23 Sept.) in its bulletin of 2 Nov. 1953 before MoMA's McCray wrote to USIS in Manila promoting Recent American Prints in Color. Jesus T. Peralta, ed., "AAP Bulletin", 2 Nov. 1953, Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. While these resolutions delineate desires to professionalise and maintain standards across the region, there is no evidence that any action resulted from these resolutions. AAP did, however, continue to collaborate within the region.
- ⁶⁰ The panel included some of the delegates, including the aforementioned Elizabeth Warren, Ran In-ting, Horace Smith and Constance Bernardo.
- ⁶¹ The other prizes were delineated according to genres such as representational, abstract, non-objective, sculpture, etc. See *Catalogue of First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition*, RPC [Regional Production Center] Manila: First Southeast Asia Art Conference—English, 1954–59; Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951–79; Entry P 46; Box 16; Records of the United States Information Agency [USIA], Record Group 306, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.
- ⁶² Vicente Manansala was an artist who touted the artist's individual subjectivity in painting. A feature article on him elaborated on these values:

As one critic said, "his pictures explode with violence. His brush is brutal.... (Manansala) believes that the most important quality in

painting is emotion and that the best technique counts for nothing if the painting fails to arouse some emotion ... He paints 'on the spur' ... With exuberance and vitality, he gives us facets of the Philippine life: churches, street vendors, market scenes, cock-fights, carabaos" ("Modernist Painter of Manila", *Cultural News from Asia* (New Delhi: Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1957), p. 3. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

- ⁶³ For reference, the Congress of Cultural Freedom was an international anti-communist advocacy group. It was founded in West Berlin in 1950 and had offices in 35 countries, including New Delhi, Singapore, Australia and the Philippines, among others. Its activities included organising conferences as well as developing publications. In the Philippines it published *Solidarity*, a monthly magazine on culture. The United States Central Intelligence Agency was instrumental in its establishment and funded the group.
- ⁶⁴ "South East Asian Art Competition", *Cultural News from Asia*, no. 3 (New Delhi: Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1957), p. 1. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.
- ⁶⁵ Vicente Manansala's *Give Us this Day* was no different, in that while his work represented the landscapes of the Philippines, it did so through abstraction and expressionism that resonated with a "Cold War modernism".
- ⁶⁶ The book did not initially include the Philippines. D.G.E Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1955).
- ⁶⁷ Supporting such formulations of Southeast Asia in the arena of foreign policy, American scholarship was also an early proponent of "Southeast Asia". Southeast Asian Studies came to be the province of metropolitan academics who were primarily the financial beneficiaries of private and state universities as well as private foundations (in particular the Ford and Rockefeller foundations) rather than the American state. Their studies were heavily concentrated in disciplinary fields different from those of their colonial-era predecessors: in political science, modern history and anthropology as opposed to archaeology, ancient history and classical literature. The first academic programme to pursue such studies was set up at Yale University in 1947, followed by a programme at Cornell. In the post-war period, the creation of American academic discourse around Southeast Asia engendered a politicised subjectivity for those who learnt and identified with it. As Benedict Anderson writes:

Southeast Asia was more real, in the 1950s and 1960s to people in American universities than to anyone else. Second, America had in those days the resources to create "Southeast Asian" libraries which had no parallels anywhere in the world; it also had the scholarship monies to bring over interested students from many different countries of whom

far the most important we're students from the accessible countries of Southeast Asia itself. The long years of student life ... began already (in the 1950s) to create young people who could imagine themselves as Southeast Asian, as well as Indonesians or Filipinos or Siamese (Benedict Anderson, "Southeast Asian Studies, Southeast Asians, Southeast Asianists", in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, Benedict Anderson (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 8–11.

- ⁶⁸ SEATO included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan (including East Pakistan, now Bangladesh), the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. For more discussion on SEATO and 1950s Southeast Asian geopolitics, see Claude Albert Buss, *Southeast Asia and the World Today* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1958) and *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970); and Malcolm H. Murfett, *Cold War Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2012).
- ⁶⁹ By definition, this scene did not include countries behind the Iron Curtain, the art of the Eastern bloc or other regions that did not fit a simple East–West division. See Hiroko Ikegami, "Introduction: Discovering 'The Great Migrator'", in *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art*, Hiroko Ikegami (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), p. 10.
- ⁷⁰ From a paper that Carlos P. Romulo presented at "Southeast Asia in the Coming World", a conference organised by the School of Advanced International Studies of the John Hopkins University, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. Invited participants included leaders from American universities, government and business, as well as educators from Southeast Asia: the president of the University of Indonesia, the rector of the University of Rangoon, the dean of the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University, a professor of geography at the University of Malaya and a professor of law from the University of Hanoi. Carlos P. Romulo, "The Position of Southeast Asia in the World Community", in *Southeast Asia in the Coming World*, ed. Philip Warren Thayer (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953), pp. 250–1.
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² The Philippines gained political independence in 1946 in destitution, with cities, the economy and agricultural production destroyed, and an outdated defence force. Its first president was faced with addressing the immediate security of the state. One of his first acts as president was to create the Department of Foreign Affairs based on a commitment to the United Nations, continued ties with the USA and maintenance of friendly relations with neighbours. See Buss, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, pp. 15–26.
- ⁷³ At a conference on Indonesia held in New Delhi in January 1949, he had aired

the idea of an Asian grouping and proposed establishing a small secretariat in New Delhi or Manila. No consensus was reached. The participating nations also agreed that no political measures be discussed and the conference stayed away from military and anti-communist topics. See Buss, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, pp. 16–7.

⁷⁴ Buss, *Southeast Asia and the World Today*, p. 96.

⁷⁵ There is no archival evidence to suggest a rigorous engagement with the works on display in Recent American Prints in Color in general.

⁷⁶ See “South East Asian Art Competition”, *Cultural News from Asia* (New Delhi: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1957), p. 1. Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive, Manila, The Philippines. The report states that “The delegates to the Conference decided to create a permanent body called the Pan-Asia Art Conference. The ... change was made to include more countries.”

⁷⁷ The Manila-based USIS office’s main goals in 1956 and 1957 were: the promotion of US policies and actions concerning the Philippines; encouragement of greater Philippine cooperation with other free Asian nations, especially popularising SEATO and its joint activities; support of information activities directed towards other Far East countries; and maintenance of active resistance to internal communist activities primarily through indigenous Filipino and Chinese organisations. See USIS Manila to USIA Washington, Field Circular No. 15, Policy Programs, 20 Sept. 1956; Annual USIS Assessment Report, 6 Nov. 1956, pp. 1–2; Philippines Manila Evaluations and Effectiveness, Far Eastern Libraries and Centers Branch, Country Files, 1957; and United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park Maryland, USA. P51; Box 10; RG 306—131/39/06/04. See also press releases and personal notes from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation Archive.

⁷⁸ See *Catalogue of First Southeast Asia Art Conference and Competition*, RPC [Regional Production Center] Manila: First Southeast Asia Art Conference—English, 1954–59; Master File Copies of Field Publications, 1951–79; Entry P 46; Box 16; Records of the United States Information Agency [USIA], Record Group 306, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁹ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, pp. 67–8.

⁸⁰ T.K. Sabapathy, “Thoughts on an International Exhibition on Southeast Asian Contemporary Art”, in *36 Ideas from Asia: Contemporary South-east Asian Art*, ed. T.K. Sabapathy (exh. cat. Singapore: ASEAN COCI, 2002), pp. 1–10.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, p. 172.

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, “Census, Map, Museum”, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso [1983] 1991), p. 163.

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