

THIS AREA IS FOR
REFLECTION
PRAYER
AND
MEDITATION

NOV 2020

This is an Area for Reflection, Prayer and Meditation is an installation displaying typography from the Philippines. It is an ode to the introspective and self expressive process of producing a letterform. Within the letterform a colonized country found a space to reinvent, re-examine and reflect. Within the letterform they found markings that strengthen their communities in the face of oppressive systems. Within the letterform they made spaces for reflection, prayer and meditation.

The display is accompanied by an essay by Corinne Ang under the same title.

Curated by Corinne Ang (BFA '21), Javier Syquia (BFA '21), & Ryan Diaz (MFA '21).

RISING
HALLWAY RESIDENCY'

ESSAY ->

ESSAY

Here I sit, surrounded. The wheels slow as we ease into the stagnation of traffic. American hits from the 70's fill the air. An airbrushed Jesus rolls by on a packed repurposed war vehicle.^[1] Surrounded by the tropical heat and the bastardized remnants of colonization.

Here I sit, meditatively moving through a path ventured by fellow Filipinos that came before me. Except, I'm not in the Philippines. In actuality I'm in the quaint city of Providence, RI, indefinitely unable to return home. And so my vehicle to reunite with my community and move through spaces I call home is an unexpected one: a flat brush dipped in paint.

Familiar letterforms slowly begin to appear in front of me as the brush pulls across the page. They echo the hand lettering that adorns every surface visible when I return home. Like the Filipino words they are spelling out, the letters tell the story of the country and its people. On one hand, they are markings of the community indicative of the cultural identity of the Filipino people of the present day. And on the other, it reveals the inescapable history of oppression that occurred during hundreds of years of colonization in the past.

Confusingly contradictory? Yes. Unavoidably so. Unfortunately for most colonized places, the imposition made by the colonizers is immovable. It has seeped into the daily practices and thoughts of the local people.^[2] The Philippines is no exception to this. The Filipino language I am writing with is steeped with loaner words from Spanish and English. Simple terms essential to our contemporary world like lamesa/mesa (table) or kamusta (how are you) come directly from Spanish. The latin script that I am writing with forcefully replaced the indigenous Baybayin script of the Philippines. The Spanish utilized it as a way to leverage power over the Filipino people in an attempt to "civilize" them.^[3] Furthermore, the highly ornamented Jeepneys (custom painted to the tastes of their drivers) that the lettering most famously adorns were a result of the American colonial period. Our systems of expression are, to put it simply, ones that came from years of oppression.

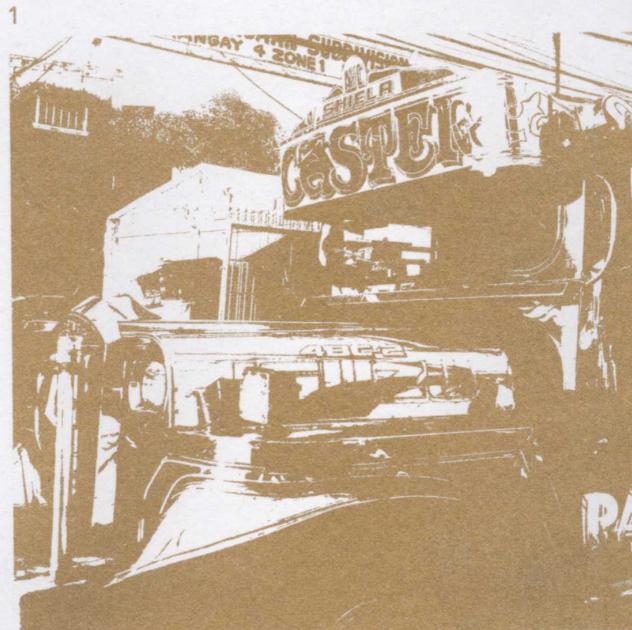
Despite this, I continue to structure spaces that eventually form letters. As when I do so, I don't feel the power of the Spanish. Nor the United States. Instead, I enter a communal space for the Filipino people. What was once a prison like structure has been reshaped to create markings that build and strengthen our communities. The Filipino people added, complexified and reformed the oppressive space of the latin script into a place where they could flourish and express themselves. Through this process of making one is able to enter a space of reflection, prayer and meditation. When they could not rewind and remove, they looked forwards and rebuilt.

With each stroke I feel the past, present and future simultaneously.^[4] The letter stands as a monument of our collective stories. Wrapped into these abstract forms are histories shaped and reshaped over and over again. The handwritten letter leaves a personal monument where the present meets the past. I feel the history of my people and the steps they took to come here. I navigate this space they shaped in the present. Looking ahead, I think of how my hand is shaping what is to come.

Here I sit. I am home.

Corinne Ang, Nov 2020

FOOTNOTES



1
Jeepneys are a popular form of public transportation across the Philippines. They were originally brought to the country by the American Army as a military vehicle. In our contemporary times they have become a symbol of Filipino culture.

2
In page 119 of *My Garden*, Jamaica Kincaid states: "I do not know the names of the plants in the place I am from (Antigua). This ignorance of the botany of the place I am from (and am of) really only reflects the fact that when I lived there, I was of the conquered class, and living in a conquered place, a principle of this condition, is that nothing about you is of any interest unless the conqueror deems it so".

3
Hardworking Goodlooking. Filipino Folk Foundry (Third Edition), Parañaque City, Philippines. 2017.

4
Father Catich, a renowned calligrapher, speaks about the process of creating letterforms as one that has the maker seeing past mistakes (the stroke just made), present possibilities (the action occurring now) and the future (where the stroke will go).

SOME READINGS

Filipino Folk Foundry (Third Edition)
Hardworking Goodlooking / 2017

What does it Mean to Decolonize Design
Anoushka Khandwala / 2019

Design: Into the History of Philippine Graphic Design
with Team Manila's Co-founder Jowee Alviar
Adobo Magazine / 2019

The Decolonizing, or puncturing, or de-Westernizing
design Reader V4
Ramon Tejada / 2020

Stone lettering and variable fonts: What can the
future of typography learn from the past?
Harry Bennett / 2020

TAXONOMY

HALLWAY RESIDENCY 1
PHISDGD

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