

Press Release

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Painting a tale of two nations – an art showcase about eco-imbalance

Bank of China Manila, in partnership with the Metropolitan Museum of Manila (MET), the Chinese Culture and Art Association, and the China Daily Asia Pacific, is spearheading a cultural exchange program and art exhibit as part of its efforts to bridge business between the Philippines and China.

After the economic ties between China and Philippines developed quickly over the past years, cultural exchanges need to be intensified. Communication helps countries to develop their relationships and enhance people to people understanding and connectivity. But real communication starts from cultural exchange. "Bank of China is in the business of trust, and creating an environment where counterparties understand each other better also creates an environment that's good for business," said Deng Jun, Country Head of Bank of China Manila. "The cultural exchange program is our way of nurturing the trust between the Philippines and China. We hope that through this endeavor, our two countries will realize that they have so much in common despite their apparent differences."

According to China Daily Asia Pacific's Editor-in-Chief, Zhou Li, this year's program is the best one yet, as it features a two-way exchange. "Previously, we took Chinese artists to other nations. But this year, we have artists from two countries, so they have chances to experience other cultures," he said.

Under the program, the Bank has initiated an international art exhibition with an environmental theme inspired by the shared concern of both countries for the protection and preservation of nature.

A common concern

Rapid industrialization has led to much economic progress, but not without heavy costs. Today, many countries face rampant pollution, declining natural resources, and habitat loss affecting thousands of species. The consequences go far and wide, contributing to a global crisis such as climate change that's already wreaking havoc worldwide with worsening weather events and rising sea levels.

The planet is more than just a resource. It is mankind's only home. This is the essence behind the art exhibit themed "In Harmony with Nature" to promote environmental stewardship and green living.

Opened today, the exhibit showcases paintings by Filipino and Chinese artists who have been invited to participate in the Bank's program to help foster intercultural understanding and friendship. Participating artists include renowned Filipino painters Manuel Baldemor, Rico Lascano, Phyllis Zaballero, Norberto Carating, and Jonahmar Salvosa, and their celebrated Chinese counterparts Kuku Chai Bukuk, Cai Zhixin, Ding Jie, Hao Ping, and Liu She.

"In Harmony with Nature" is a two-phase exhibition, starting with the Philippine leg at the MET. The second phase will be at the Art Wharf Gallery in Shenzhen, China, on October 26, 2019.

Inspired by nature

Part of the exchange program is a brief residency in the Philippines and China to give the artists an opportunity to share ideas and learn about the beliefs and traditions of their counterparts. The residencies are also held in places that evoked the beauty and delicate nature of the environment.

During the Philippine phase, the artists spent time together in Palawan amidst the country's lush tropical forests and scenic ocean views, which served as inspiration for their masterpieces now on display at the MET.

It would be the first time for the Chinese artists to see Palawan, who were in awe of the natural wonders of the province, describing it as "Impressive", "Inspiring", and "Beautiful."

For the second leg, the ten artists will travel to Liling in China's Hunan Province, where they can experience the region's unique features—including towering mountains and flowing waterscapes—among autumn foliage. The resulting work will be showcased at the Art Wharf Gallery.

Several artists expressed their excitement for the next phase of the program in Hunan. Norberto Carating, who has been to China for a previous exchange in 1977, said he wants to see the big changes to the region since he was there last. From another perspective, Kuku Chai Bukuk sees this as an opportunity to share Filipino art to Chinese audiences.

Art as collaboration

At the heart of the cultural exchange program is the Bank's goal to unveil the subtle similarities shared by two neighboring—but culturally different—countries.

As testament to this ambition, the exhibition featured a collaborative painting activity involving all 10 artists during the gallery opening at the MET. The result was an amalgamation of perspectives about man and the environment—different visions coming together to showcase harmony. The counterpart exhibition in Shenzhen later this year will also hold a similar interactive session.

"Art has no borders," said both Manuel Baldemor and Phyllis Zaballero. And while the artists have different styles and different languages, they were able to showcase a shared sensibility and a kinship for art and what it stands for.

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