National-ish artists: Victorio Edades and the founding of Filipino modern art

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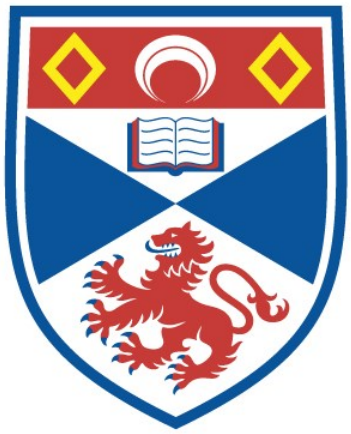

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Introduction: Philippine Modernism in Six Works of Art

The status of 'National Artist' is the highest honour conferred on artists by the government of the Philippines. Victorio C. Edades was granted this status in 1978 in an official proclamation which explicitly recognises him as "the true father of modern Philippine art."[1] This sentiment recurs in varying degrees of intensity across almost all accounts of modernist art from the Philippines, with Leonidas Benesa going so far as to argue that "Victorio Edades' development as an artist is the story of Philippine contemporary art itself."[2] This story, and indeed the longer history of the evolution of Philippine visual culture since the intervention of Spanish colonialism in the mid-sixteenth century, is most often conceived of as a linear narrative in which history and art can be seen developing on parallel tracks. As the Philippine islands developed through Spanish colonialism, American oversight and Japanese occupation to emerge as the independent Republic of the Philippines, its artists traced a corresponding course from academicism through romanticism to arrive at modernism just in time to hit the international stage. This framework, which underscores most broadly chronological exhibitions of Philippine art, is most often developed along the following lines.

[1] Proclamation 1539, 25 March 1976

[2] Leonid Benesa, 'Introduction,' Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* Manila: Security Bank and Trust Company and Filipinas Foundation, Icn., 1979, pp4-5, p.4

Juan Luna, *Spoliarium,* 1884 (Figure 1)

Juan Luna became an intercontinental sensation when his monumental *Spoliarium* won the first of three gold medals awarded at the1884 *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Madrid. Reflecting the long history of Spanish involvement in and influence over the visual and intellectual culture of the Philippines, Luna's work clearly demonstrates a familiarity with European painting, both modern and historical, developed over years of study in the Philippines as well as Madrid, Valencia and Rome. Luna's choice of Roman gladiators as subject matter combines with his use of dramatic, even operatic gesture and the sharp contrast between areas of dark and light to suggest the influence of neoclassical artists in the tradition of Jacques-Louis David. At the same time, the relative freedom of his brushwork and the prioritisation of movement and expression over exact detail indicate an interest at least in Romanticism if not also Impressionism. Luna's inclusion of highly specific elements of ancient Roman costume and architecture also illustrate his exact knowledge of the material culture of the period, the artist having made detailed studies of various artefacts at archaeological sites in Rome and Pompeii during his travels in Italy.

The aspect of this painting which has had the most lasting impact on the art and art history of the Philippines is its reception, in 1884 and ever since, as a nationalist call to arms. Because of the restrictions placed on colonial subjects by those in power, Luna's victory at the 1884 *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes* was received as a triumph not only for the artist himself but by extension for the cause of Filipino independence. Jose Rizal, a close friend of Luna's and future icon of Filipino nationalism, gave a moving toast in celebration of the victory. Rizal argued strongly that Luna's victory was concrete proof that Filipino achievements could equate and

even exceed those of native Spaniards.[3] Believing that an equivalent contribution to literature would further the Philippine cause still more, Rizal eventually gave up his medical career to write the first Filipino novel, *Noli me tangere,* as a deliberate effort to match Luna's painted statement of Filipino cultural maturity in the realm of literature. this context, Luna's choice of subject matter has also been read as deeply political instead of mildly sensational: by focusing not on the gladiatorial games themselves but on the human cost of Roman entertainment, the artist draws attention not to the might and splendour of the ancient past but to the barbarousness of exploiting subject nations for the benefit of the colonial centre. Whether this was Luna's intended message is not entirely clear, but the work and in particular its triumph at the *Exposición Nacional* have continued to be understood, as Rizal first suggested, as an important step on the long journey towards an independent Philippines both politically and in the visual arts. In Rizal's words:

> "The Oriental chrysalis is leaving the cocoon, the tomorrow of a long day is announced for those regions in brilliant tints and rosy dawn, and that race-lethargic during the historical night while the sun lit up other continents-awakens again, powerfully moved by the electric shock produced in it by contact with the Western peoples, and it clamours for light, life, the civilisation that time once gave as its legacy, confirming in this way the eternal laws of continual evolution, of transformation, of periodicity, of progress… and that Mother Spain, solicitous and attentive to the well-being of her provinces, may

[3] Santiago Albano Pilar, *Juan Luna: The Filipino as Painter,* Manila: Eugenio Lopez Foundation, 1980, p.59

soon put into practice the reforms that she has long considered for the furrow has been plowed and the earth is not barren!"[4]

Fernando Amorsolo, *Planting Rice,* 1926 (Figure 2)

This painting is typical of Fernando Cueto Amorsolo's many variations on the theme of peaceful rural productivity in the Philippines. The scenery is lush and inviting, with richly productive rice fields set against the agricultural backdrop Amorsolo favoured throughout his career. The paddy farmers are industrious without being overworked, assisted by country maidens whose vibrant traditional garments are never muddied by contact with the flooded fields in which they stand. The vivid colours associated with Amorsolo's pastoral scenes are instantly recognisable as well, the light, bright green of these rice fields having become so iconic in Philippine art that the shade is sometimes referred to as 'Amorsolo green' in local scholarship.[5] The placement of the church at the top of the composition is also significant, highlighting the Catholic identity of the Philippines and perhaps suggesting a religious reading of the scene as one in which willing work is readily rewarded by an abundance of blessings both material and spiritual. The artists most often cited as key influences on Amorsolo's work are the Spanish painters Diego Velazquez and Joaquín Sorolla as well as Amorsolo's own instructor, the Filipino artist Fabian de la Rosa.

Expressing a nostalgia that can make his work seem all the more ideologically conservative in contrast with Luna's more clearly contemporary concerns,

[4] Jose Rizal, 'Escritos politicos e historicos,' 19,22, translated by and quoted in Ambeth Ocampo, 'Juan Luna: A Brush with History,' in Russell Storer (ed.), *Between Worlds: Raden Saleh and Juan Luna,* Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2017, pp112-123, p.115

[5] Purissima Benitez-Johannot, 'Amorsolo's Women Concealed and Revealed' in *Fernando Amorsolo: Seven Museums Exhibition*, pp19-53, p.41

Amorsolo's work can appear to signal a certain resignation not only to the continued occupation of the Philippines by foreign powers but also of an art market largely determined by those occupying forces. On the other hand, the content of Amorsolo's paintings is much more overtly nationalist than Luna's in its open celebration of local culture. Where Luna often hedged his bets with allegory that was ambiguous at best, Amorsolo made no apology for his somewhat rose-tinted salute to the land and the people of the Philippines. If Luna's major contribution was proving that an artist from the Philippines could hold his own in a European forum, then, Amorsolo's rural idylls uphold the Philippines itself as a subject worthy of close and enthusiastically repeated study.

Victorio C. Edades, *The Builders,* 1928 (Figure 3)

A major work anchoring Edades' first exhibition on home soil, this visual manifesto of the young artist's attitude to modernist art was as instructive as it was ineffectual as a call to action in 1928. At 128 x 321 cm, the work is the largest painting Edades ever completed without assistants or collaborators. Its monumentality is compounded by the composition, which sees a mass of men at work packed closely together to give a strong impression of strength and solidity. Stylistically, *The Builders* could not be farther removed from Amorsolo's rose-tinted rural scenes. Edades' palette is comprised almost exclusively of murky greens and muddy browns, with only beige and yellow-green for contrast. The titular builders are depicted more as massive shapes than individual figures, their forms clearly delineated yet blurring together. Most of their faces are turned away while the few that are visible in profile are barely discernible. The painting is largely devoid of a wider narrative as well: where Amorsolo's images are replete with cultural and even religious detail, Edades

provides very little context for *The Builders* beyond the physical labour immediately at hand.

On its own, *The Builders* does not seem particularly significant in relation to the national and nationalist narratives of Philippine history and art history. As a representative work from Edades' time as a student in the United States, however, it offers vital insight into the first steps towards the development of a discernibly Filipino strand of modernist art. Edades himself frequently credited a direct encounter with the work of French artists Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin at an exhibition in Seattle with catalysing the paradigm shift that led to his interest in modernist visual language. It may also be argued that Edades' focus on manual labourers also represents an advancement of the national discourse by acknowledging the underclass responsible for the physical work of maintaining the conveniences of modern urban life.

Victorio Edades, Carlos "Botong" Francisco and Galo Ocampo, *Rising Philippines,* 1935-36 (Figure 4)

Rising Philippines is the first mural Edades completed in collaboration with his younger protégés Galo B. Ocampo and Carlos "Botong" Francisco. Commissioned for the interior of Manila's Art Deco Capitol Theatre, the work reflects its setting in both style and content. In contrast with Luna's *Spoliarium,* the nationalist sentiment expressed in this work offers a strikingly benign depiction of colonial occupation and its effects. The work associates Filipino religious and academic culture with Spanish intervention, represented by churches and universities founded during the Spanish colonial period, while the United States is offered credit for the establishment of more

recent institutions and innovations. In the painting, these take the form of buildings associated with local self-governance and new technology made available during the American Commonwealth era. The figure of the Philippines, armed with a film reel and a look of determination, is apparently faced with the task not of overcoming the yoke of colonial influence but of transcending it.

Gauguin's purported influence on Edades' approach to modernism is more evident in this collaborative work than in his solo works from the 1920s. Gauguin's ideology as an artist and a modernist also resonates with the wider project of Filipino modernism at this stage, particularly the artists' interest in crafting a visual language that was both clearly modernist in style and distinctly Filipino in content. In this work, this is most evident in the inclusion of the traditional costumes worn by the women in the foreground and from the visual deconstruction of Filipino culture across pre-colonial, Spanish and American periods in history.

Galo Ocampo, *Brown Madonna,* 1938 (Figure 5)

Only a few years later after *Rising Philippines,* Ocampo took the marriage of local iconography and modernist style much further by applying his hybrid visual language to perhaps the most central image in the development of Filipino visual culture. By depicting the Madonna and Child not only on local soil but as unmistakably Filipino in race, dress and language, Ocampo asserts the identity of the Philippines as a Catholic nation without any reference to the Spanish evangelisation of the islands. In addition to the Madonna's costume, which is typical of traditional Filipino dress, Ocampo thoroughly grounds the work in Filipino visual motifs through the use of traditional pre-colonial architecture in the background as well as native vegetation

throughout. The inclusion of calla lilies in the foreground is a particularly striking extension of the transformation of Mary and the Christ child for the Filipino context as even the flowers traditionally associated with the Blessed Virgin take on a recognisably Filipino flavour. Ocampo extended this commitment to local floral motifs to the painting's frame, which evokes bamboo stems like those also depicted within the work. Apart from this at least nativist if not also nationalist message, the work is also a strong assertion of the artist's identity as a modernist in the pattern of Paul Gauguin. Though Ocampo's socio-political agenda is clearly different from Gauguin's, his inclusion of the traditional 'Ave Maria' in Tagalog instead of Latin may well be seen as a direct nod to his predecessor's 'Ia orana Maria.'

Carlos "Botong" Francisco, *History of Manila* (*Filipino Struggles through History)*, 1964-68 (Figure 6)

In *History of Manila (Filipino Struggles through History)*, Botong Francisco chronicles the different kinds of contact that took place between citizens of Manila and the myriad visitors who reached its shores over close to a millennium. The massive scale of this mural, both physically and in its historical and emotional reach, also speaks to another paradigm shift in the socio-cultural standing of the Philippines. If *Rising Philippines* may be seen as the first Filipino foray into national and nationalist aspirations expressed at nearly human scale since Luna's *Spoliarium*, Botong's *History of Manila* may well be the apotheosis of this train of artistic thought. This work, which like Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* marries a distinctly modernist style with thoroughly national and even nationalist content, may also be regarded as the happy middle ground between the traditional paradigm upheld by Amorsolo's conservative school and the stylistic innovation advocated by Edades' modernists. Although its

form and visual language has far more in common with the latter, the painting's regular recourse to motifs celebrating the native beauty of the Philippines, including that of its women, is more reminiscent of Amorsolo's romanticised vision of pastoral life. The narrative content, however, suggests a radical re-framing of history which has more in common with Luna's less than glamorous depiction of the aftermath of Roman spectacles than either Amorsolo's peaceful countryside or Edades' urban squalor. Completed in 1968 for Manila's City Hall, the work enshrines not just the history of the city but the modernist language developed over years of collaboration and contention through three systems of government. In this new period of stability, it might be argued, the struggles not only of Manila's beleaguered citizenry but also of its long-suffering modernist artists might finally be at an end. With the establishment not only of the University of Santo Tomas's Department of Fine Arts but also of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines, the generation of artists that grew up under Edades' tutelage had far more freedom logistically as well as ideologically to experiment with ever-advancing modes of modern art.

Luna, Amorsolo, Edades, Botong: A Long-Held Narrative Tradition

This formula for the over-arching narrative of Philippine art history can easily be expanded and varied to good effect without compromising its basic premise. Luna's career alone demonstrates the variety of artistic modes that were still considered viable during his time in Rome, Madrid, and Paris. Other 19th-century artists from the Philippines may also be featured to give a broader history of this period in Philippine art, with Felix Resurrección Hidalgo offering an even more Euro-centric perspective while Simon Flores's portraits of local *illustrados* speak to a lively local art scene as well. Amorsolo's teacher Fabian De La Rosa was also influential in the 1910s and 1920s, not least as the first director of the University of the Philippines' Department of Painting. Amorsolo himself also remained active as an artist for some forty years after *Planting Rice*, and both the consistency of his work and the longevity of its appeal speak to a lasting enthusiasm for his vision of the rural Philippines. Edades, too, had a long career in both art and education, and his involvement in the teaching and exhibition of modernist art had far-reaching consequences for the way the narrative of Philippine art has been understood since. Because this linear approach is both broadly chronological and largely grounded in historical events, the structure also lends itself to regional comparisons which explore similar developments across different national contexts. This makes it particularly viable for exhibitions with a local or regional focus.

Across these textual and curatorial accounts of art in the Philippines, then, Edades consistently emerges as the artist most directly associated with the turn towards a deliberately modernist visual language. That he was the first Filipino artist to advocate for modernism as a viable visual language in the local context is not a

matter of interpretation but simply historical fact. His largely self-funded one-man exhibition, held in 1928 at the Columbia Club in Ermita, was the first exhibition of modernist art staged not only in the Philippines but anywhere in Southeast Asia. Edades was also the first Filipino artist to systematically define and defend his ideas about modernism as the future of the visual arts in the public eye. He did this by writing a series of articles which gained popular attention in large part due to the vocal disagreement of sculptor Guillermo Tolentino on behalf of the conservative school against which Edades had set himself. This, too, was a self-conscious decision: while Tolentino's initial preference had been to keep their professional differences out of the public eye to avoid controversy, Edades urged his opponent to continue their written exchange precisely because a high-profile debate about art and its objectives "would benefit the public as well as our respective students."[6] The success of Edades' energetic efforts is equally self-evident: in the space of a generation, he and his followers irrevocably altered attitudes to art, art education and even the ideological function of artistic endeavours in the newly inaugurated Republic of the Philippines. Because of this, the origins of Edades' own interest in modernist art have had enormous consequences for the history of Philippine art more generally: in this rare case, it is possible to trace the development of modernist visual language on a national scale directly to its source through the single figure of its earliest advocate. As Benesa suggests, then, the history of Edades' personal turn towards the modern in art is effectively the starting point of Filipino modernism as well.

[6] Cid Reyes, *Conversations on Philippine Art,* Manila: Cultural Centre of the Philippines, 1989, p.3

The prevailing account of how Edades came to claim his position as the foremost modernist in the Philippines is firmly grounded in the artist's own account of his life and career. The young Victorio's talent was recognised as early as high school, when his drawing of national hero José Rizal was received with such enthusiasm that the "supervising teacher, Mr. Dawson," had the image displayed in the entrance hall of the school instead of a portrait of President William Howard Taft.[7] This early affirmation encouraged Edades to develop his skills as a draughtsman, which in turn led him to enrol in the architectural programme at the University of Washington in Seattle. He proved to be an excellent student, receiving commendations in class as well as at a school-wide level, but the physical strain of remaining bent over a drafting table for long periods proved debilitating. The position exacerbated a childhood injury, resulting in serious chest pains which eventually became so intolerable that Edades had to abandon architecture. He transferred permanently to the Department of Painting, where the ergonomics of easel painting proved less hazardous to his health. Here, he began to develop his talent as an artist as well as his intellectual engagement with both art and art history under the tutelage of Seattle's foremost artists and art instructors. Of these, Edades would go on to name Walter F. Isaacs and Ambrose Patterson as the teachers who had the most direct impact on his work and on his outlook as an artist.[8]

Although Edades learnt a good deal about technique and discipline from his mentors in the Fine Arts department of the University of Washington, the prevailing histories of Filipino modernism assert, the major shift in the young artist's perspective came

[7] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, p.13
[8] Ibid., p.24-25

"with his first substantial exposure to Modern Art."[9] This occurred in 1922, at "a travelling exhibit from the New York Armory Hall featuring works by modern European artists such as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and the Surrealists."[10] Lydia Rivera Ingle, whose account is also derived from direct conversation with Edades, gives 1923 rather than 1922 as the year of this transformative encounter with "a mobile Exhibition of Modern Art, brought to America from Europe in 1913," citing Seattle's physical distance from New York as the reason it took ten years for the show to reach the Pacific Northwest.[11] Both accounts agree that the exhibition caused something of a furore in "the conservative artistic community" of Seattle, "where teachers and students painted in a photographic style or in a vaguely Impressionistic manner."[12]

While the reception of the Armory show was almost universally negative, with "distortion and the way the Modernist handled colour" proving particularly offensive to Seattle's art enthusiasts, Edades apparently found that further consideration led him to discard his initial discomfort out of appreciation for the innovations of Post-Impressionism, especially in the work of the French artists Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin.[13] Rivera Ingle does not report Edades' first, somewhat hesitant response: in her account, he "instantly admired the Cézanne canvases, drawn to the very distortions that the others disliked."[14] From this point on, both sources agree, Edades abandoned the conservative leanings he had absorbed from his instructors and

[9] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, p. 24
[10] Ibid
[11] Lydia Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1980, p. 35
[12] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.24
[13] Ibid., p.25
[14] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions*, p. 35

"began to paint in the Modern manner."[15] Having completed his studies in the United States in 1928, Edades returned to Manila only to find the art scene sorely lacking and immediately set about advocating for change. Within ten years, through a combination of hard work, canny professional networking and sheer good fortune, he would see that change in abundance; within twenty years, he would play a vital role in re-fashioning Manila's art scene in the vastly different socio-political climate of the independent Republic of the Philippines. The strongest evidence that Edades himself was not only aware of but consciously cultivating his reputation as the Messiah of Filipino modernism during his own life must be his consolidation of 'the Thirteen Moderns,' a group comprising of himself and twelve younger artists explicitly recruited as disciples in the practice and dissemination of modernist art in the Philippines.

Generally speaking, the narrative of Edades' journey from aspiring architect to foremost modernist of his generation is supported by established fact. It is evident from his paintings, writings, and the record of his activities as a student at the University of Washington that Edades began developing his knowledge of art and art history during his studies in the United States. He consistently acknowledged his instructors in Seattle, most notably Isaacs and Patterson, as an important influence on his practice as an artist in spite of their supposed conservatism. The often-cited impact of Post-Impressionism on his work is also easy enough to identify in his paintings. In particular, "the development of form by means of colour," which Edades highlighted as a defining feature of modernism in the visual arts,[16] distinguishes his

[15] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.25
[16] Victorio Edades, 'The Case of the Leftist in Art,' 1 November 1935, reproduced in Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* pp60-64, p.63

approach to painting both from the finely detailed draughtsmanship which defined his architectural studies of 1921 and from the romanticism and even classicism associated with the conservative school against which he set himself upon his return to Manila.

There is, however, one glaring problem with this widespread and more or less universally accepted account of Edades' first encounter with modernist art that has never been addressed: the Seattle version of the Armory Hall show seems never to have taken place at all. The Armory Hall records reveal no sign of a Seattle version of the 1913 show, and a thorough exploration of the surviving archives of the Seattle Fine Arts Society between 1920 and 1930 turns up no mention at all of such an exhibition or anything remotely similar to it. According to these archives, the first large-scale exhibition of modernist art in Seattle took place in 1960, while the first clear reference to a French Post-Impressionist work shown in Seattle is the inclusion of a single work by Paul Signac in an exhibition of landscape paintings held in 1928. Contemporary newspapers from the decade also reveal no trace of what would have been a high-profile event. Even in the unlikely event that a travelling version of the Armory Hall show that had rocked the art scene in New York close to a decade prior could fail to capture the interest of the *Seattle Daily Times*, it would surely have garnered some notice among local arts magazines, yet these too make no mention of anything like the show Edades describes. In fact, helped along by a regular feature concerned with the comings and goings of the University of Washington's student body, the name 'Victorio Edades' occurs more often than either 'Paul Cézanne' or 'Paul Gauguin' in the weekly and daily newspapers in operation during his time in Seattle. Ultimately, the only clear reference to a Seattle version of the

Armory Show that does not originate with Edades' own account is an article from 2013 which confirms that the city was considered but not ultimately chosen as a destination for the travelling iteration of the exhibition.[17]

As the cracks in Edades' origin story begin to show, other questions also arise about the supposedly catalytic influence of French Post-Impressionism on the young artist. Leaving written sources aside, close visual examination of Edades' early paintings suggests a much less direct relationship with Cézanne and especially Gauguin than his own later testimony would suggest. Beyond the "solidity in form and colours of structural function" which Edades himself cited as his key debt to Cézanne,[18] it is hard to discern how Edades' approach to modernist art, particularly during his student days, might be characterised as relating directly to French Post-Impressionism above all other modernist sources. Although Gauguin is consistently cited in the same breath as Cézanne, suggesting a strong and lasting influence comparable to that of the latter, both Edades and Ocampo agreed in later reflections on their early work that this was truer of Ocampo and Botong than of their mentor. As Rivera Ingle suggests, Gauguin's alleged influence on Edades is more evident in the two artists' mutual interest in tropical motifs than any close visual links.[19] The relative dearth of the very bright colours and indigenous foliage which Edades mentioned specifically in relation to Gauguin in his own work during his student years, however, suggests that Edades admired Gauguin's aesthetic independently of his own practice as an artist rather than that Gauguin's work had the same kind of direct influence on him as Cézanne's at this early stage. Later scholarship has taken the

[17] Leah Binkovitz, "Freakish Absurdities": A Century Ago, An Art Show Shocked the Country, *Smithsonian.com,* 15 February 2013
[18] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions*, p. 35
[19] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.25

artist's own analysis more or less on faith, however, with Cézanne and Gauguin consistently being reported as Edades' most direct influences.

As a result, his supposed relationship with French Post-Impressionism, whether visual or ideological, has rarely been subjected to much real scrutiny, or even close visual examination, beyond the broad consensus that, as Edades himself said, they share a degree of flatness of form and freedom of brushstroke which distinguished all three of them from various precedents in their respective contexts.

Even more striking than the overstatement of French influence on Edades' development as an artist, at least as demonstrated by the visual evidence of his early works, is the apparently deliberate downplaying of the role his teachers and colleagues at the University of Washington played in shaping his engagement with both art and art history. Edades never denied any American influence on his work outright, and in fact remained on friendly terms with his professors at the University of Seattle for the rest of his life. At the same time, though, his reminiscences within the public sphere consistently limited his acknowledgement of Isaacs and Patterson to their impact on his work ethic and his firm grounding in the history of Western art.[20] This greatly understates the extent to which Edades' own work reflects not only visual, iconographic but even ideological affinities with paintings by Isaacs, Patterson and other members of the University of Washington or the wider community of artists and art patrons in Seattle during the 1920s.

[20] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.24 and Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions*, pp. 34-35

The influence of other North American artists, most obviously the Ash Can school and the Mexican muralists who were gaining prominence at the time, has also been acknowledged without being fully explored in relation to Edades' work. On one hand, it seems understandable that Edades and his followers might have chosen to emphasise the links between his work, and by extension Filipino Modernism more broadly, and such prestigious names as Cézanne and Gauguin. Certainly, these names continue to be easier for later scholars of his work to engage with concretely than the lesser-known Isaacs and Patterson, whose paintings are much less widely accessible in person, in publications or online. On the other hand, it is highly telling not only that the more recognisable French sources have consistently been emphasised over the North American precedents for Filipino modernism but also that this has yet to be questioned or even very closely examined in later scholarship either locally or in the wider context of global modernism.

Because Edades is credited with nothing short of breaking the mould of Filipino visual culture and remaking the local art scene in his own image, any major challenge to the Armory Hall show narrative that has long been accepted as fact has far-reaching consequences not only for the study of Edades' work but also the broader history of Filipino modernism for at least a generation afterwards. This raises another pressing question: how have the gaps between the artist's account of these events and the evidence of his own paintings gone unremarked for almost a century? At the most basic level, the answer is likely logistical. With notable exceptions, the paintings Edades completed at this stage in his career are difficult if not impossible to locate, the artist having sold many of them before his return to the Philippines. Some are likely to have survived in private collections in the Pacific

Northwest, but these have yet to be systematically tracked down for study, documentation or display.

Of the paintings Edades did bring back to Manila with him in 1928, including most of the works exhibited at his 1928 Columbia Club show, many were lost or destroyed in the course of the Second World War. As a result, much of his early work survives, if at all, in black and white photographs. In trying to make a detailed study of Edades' career during the 1920s and 30s, it is therefore sometimes necessary to rely on the visual evidence of works that are no longer available except as published reproductions or even written descriptions rather than actual paintings. By a similar token, the lack of attention given to the impact of works by Edades' instructors and colleagues at the University of Washington may be explained partly by a lack of familiarity with the most relevant materials. As late as the 1970s, when the key texts *Edades: National Artist* and *Victorio Edades: Kites and Visions* were written, the subject of these works was still the only person involved in documenting the art history of the Philippines who also had any direct knowledge of the Seattle art scene in the 1920s. In the twenty-first century, there are fewer logistical barriers to reconnecting Edades' early years in the United States with the legacy for which he is remembered in the Philippines. There are, however, long-held institutional priorities as well as practical considerations which make such a study less viable than those focused on the later, higher-profile stages of his career. Because much of the new research into modern art in and in relation to Southeast Asia is conducted through the work of leading museums and galleries in the region, lines of inquiry which can be supported by strong, surviving works of art garner much more interest than less naturally exhibition-friendly theoretical or historiographic questions. This is especially

true for works of art which are already in local and regional collections. Research questions which focus on local or regional networks are thus much easier to fund and facilitate than those which require the movement of people and artworks across continents.

More provocatively, these conditions also illustrate why scholars have had little incentive to question the existing narrative of Filipino modernism as well as why Edades himself would have found the likely fabrication of the Armory Hall show to be advantageous in his account of his life and work. The fact that the broad-strokes narrative of Filipino modernism supports a reading of Victorio Edades as a rule-breaker on a heroic scale is all the more important because of the way the history of art in the Philippines has come to be framed at the national level. With few exceptions, officially designated National Artists tend to be remembered for at least some degree of recognisably Filipino content in their work. This is true not only of Edades' chief rival Fernando Amorsolo but also of his most direct protégé, Botong Francisco: both artists consistently engaged not only with the visual strategies they found most conducive to their work but also with the ideological work of imbuing their paintings with the essence of Filipino identity as it made sense to them.

In contrast, Edades seems to have remained mostly indifferent to the project of expressing a uniquely Filipino identity in the practice of modern art. His work, especially in the earliest phase of his career, reflects almost none of the traits usually associated with Filipino folk culture, from the use of bright colours and abundant ornamentation to a general undertone of Catholic spirituality. Even when he did acknowledge non-Western sources of influence in his own art, Edades cited

Chinese, Persian, and Japanese exemplars rather than the local artisans and folk cultures which inspired his friends and followers.[21]

Rather than explicitly engaging with Filipiniana as most of his colleagues did, Edades cemented his place as the leading figure in modernism as a national and eventually nationalist project by working tirelessly to secure the space- literally, intellectually, and economically- for later artists to pursue these questions in relative freedom. This legacy would be valid regardless of how Edades himself first adopted the cause he came to champion, but a narrative in which his first contact with modernist art and ideology came through an independent and deeply personal direct encounter with iconic works does seem more aligned with the priorities of post-independence nationalism than one in which the whole encounter was facilitated through the benevolence of American Commonwealth programmes.

Taking this further, Edades seems to have taken advantage of the relative obscurity of the Seattle art scene beyond the Pacific Northwest to conflate the conservative position represented by Amorsolo at the University of the Philippines with that of Isaacs and Patterson in Seattle. While it is true that both approaches to art were conservative relative to the avant-garde movements developing in Paris or New York at the time, Isaacs and Patterson were both much more tolerant of and even sympathetic to modernist visual approaches than the more traditional, even Romantic, academicism favoured by Amorsolo, Tolentino and their colleagues in

[21] Alice G. Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate' in Patrick Flores (ed.), *The Life and Art of Carlos Botong Francisco,* Manila: Vibal Foundation, 2010, pp, 84-99, p.90

Manila. Edades' approach to painting, then, was radically modern in relation to the Manila conservatives but not nearly as far removed from his instructors' perspective.

In fact, he regularly displayed his work alongside that of his teachers and classmates throughout his time in Seattle, receiving enthusiastic praise not only from them but from the Seattle Fine Arts society and even the *Seattle Daily Times*. With a little narrative sleight of hand, however, Edades was able to gloss over this early success, casting himself instead as a pioneer of modernism in isolated opposition to his predecessors in both places. In this light, the Armory Hall show scenario, with Edades alone defending Cézanne's Post-Impressionism while his contemporaries remained sceptical, serves to reinforce his already-established position as a lone voice for progress and innovation in the visual arts by suggesting that he had been playing this role as early as 1922. This helps to align his supposed vision as a young artist with his later role in shaping the national agenda for various art institutions, strengthening the identification of Edades as a nationalist at least in ideology if not in the specific content of his paintings.

An account of Edades' formative years which de-emphasises American influence does more than just reinforce the artist's identity as Manila's first and foremost rebel with a cause. The association between modernism and nationalism became much stronger in the post-independence period of the 1940s and 1950s, during which post-war modernism became established as the visual language best suited to articulating the goals and ideals of the new Republic of the Philippines. This was in no small part due to Edades' own efforts but had much more to do with his work as an art educator and intellectual rather than his earlier work as a young artist. In this

light, the omission of Edades' North American sources from the narrative of his early career may be read as a political choice as well. Within the national narrative, Edades' work is usually considered in relation to earlier Filipino artists, especially his direct rival Amorsolo. This provides the necessary backdrop against which to highlight the significance of the paradigm shift brought about by the advent of modernism in the Philippines. In taking on the status quo, represented primarily by Amorsolo and his colleagues, Edades is presented as a modernist David bravely triumphing against the Goliath of academic conservatism. The framing of Edades' ideology in terms of a "firm…resistance to transitory fashions of the art world here and abroad" and his supposed "emphasis on new perceptions of the external world" as the bedrock of Filipino modernism[22] also explains why Cézanne and Gauguin were useful choices as representative figures for the iconoclastic, paradigm-breaking model of modernism suggested here.

This heroic framing of Edades as the dissenting visionary is harder to sustain when his contribution is characterised not as breaking new ground on his own initiative but as returning from his studies to criticise local systems of art and art education for failing to keep up with the colonial centre. If anything, his firm rejection of Amorsolo's picturesque rice fields in favour of dark, ambiguous figural groups reflecting no identifiable setting or society is less nationalist in its agenda than the conservative school's idealising images of home and country. As such, a narrative which privileges Edades' reputation as "the original iconoclast of Philippine art"[23] over the aspects of continuity evident between his American training and his work in and in

[22] Proclamation 1539
[23] Ibid.

the service of the Philippines works not only to overcome the narrative stumbling block of his early career but also to draw attention to his contribution towards the visual language which would develop into the style most associated with post-colonial nationalism.

The quandary of the Armory Hall Show that probably never took place in Seattle may also prove instructive for the larger question of global modernism as a methodology at two key levels. Firstly, the case study of Filipino modernism very clearly illustrates the risks and benefits inherent in an academic community in which primary and secondary sources are so close as to be directly interlinked over two generations. On one hand, Filipino histories of modern art in the Philippines have been able to draw on a wide range of strong visual, written and oral sources accessible in large part because of the cooperation of the artists themselves. That an artist should contribute extensively to the historiography of his own contributions is hardly a unique phenomenon in art history, especially the history of twentieth-century modernism. Diego Rivera and Paul Gauguin, to name only artists directly relevant to Edades' own career, wrote extensively and often inconsistently about their own lives and art. Naturally enough, it has fallen to later scholars with less of a direct stake in the narrative to establish which parts of these accounts are likely to be true and which are, at best, illustrative of the ideologies and personalities which would inform such works of autobiographical fiction. In the Philippines, however, the community of artists and scholars working in and on Manila is still so closely connected to the original stakeholders that it can be difficult to create the distance necessary for close critical engagement. The first generation of local art historians were the artists themselves; their students and supporters have tended to defend and expand on

their perceived legacies rather than questioning the very foundations of these accounts. Even today, critical studies of Southeast Asian art and art history tend to rely on the existing sources to verify primary sources; the result is something of a closed feedback loop in which Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero are used to fact-check Rivera Ingle and vice versa when both are largely based on Edades' own account in the first place.

In view of these highly subjective and often carefully edited accounts, it is almost ironic that many histories of art which function on a regional or global scale continue to rely on a model for artistic development which implies a natural or at least reliably sequential progression from a first break with academic realism through various stages of abstraction eventually culminating in non-objective art. It is telling that Edades himself called out this way of negotiating art history as early as 1935, denouncing naïve views of modernism as "the breaking up of classical traditions" eventually resulting in "a jumble of abstract zigzag lines thrown together in a seemingly haphazard way."[24] Instead, he argued, "Modern Art was born to recreate for the Modern World classical masterpieces not in terms of the reminiscence and archaeology of the past works of art, but as a new and potent reality."[25] Perhaps because of the organic, even evolutionary nature of developments implied by so linear a narrative, few accounts of these developments give much consideration to the notion that the artists involved were aware of and complicit in shaping this trajectory in relation to wider trends. As a result, the notion of a consciously curated history of art on a national scale is unusual, especially in the context of art historical

[24] Edades, 'The Case of the Leftist in Art,' pp60-61
[25] Ibid.

narratives usually confined to the national or regional stage. The fact that most new research into Southeast Asian art is done in cooperation with local and regional museum collections, which also rely on a certain degree of goodwill from interested parties in order to preserve access to extant works and research materials, further demonstrates the close relationships that exist between the various stakeholders in the art and art history of both nation and region.

At another level, this lacuna in the history and historiography of one of the foremost figures in Filipino modern art also illustrates the difficulties involved in writing a regional art history that pre-dates the region itself, at least as a meaningful way of grouping the artists involved. Considering the work of Edades and his immediate followers alongside other Southeast Asian pioneers, most obviously Sindudarsono Sudjojono and his PERSAGI colleagues in Indonesia, can certainly be instructive especially as a study of colonial models, post-colonial systems and their respective impact on the development of local visual languages and modernist strategies. Limiting the study of modernism in these places to the geographic region, however, ignores the fact that the countries which now make up the independent nations of Southeast Asia became much more interconnected in the post-colonial period. This approach erases a whole range of connections from consideration, most notably colonial networks of influence, and necessarily creates blind spots in the history of local and regional visual culture across both time and space. These cannot be addressed without looking beyond strictly geographic and chronological systems, especially those which are formed with reference to external landmarks. Recognising not only that such gaps exist but also that the artists involved actively participated in determining the positioning of their own legacies is therefore not only necessary but

hugely significant. In addition to setting the factual record straight, this line of investigation also illustrates an aspect of Southeast Asian modernism, the self-aware blurring of lines between national and international modes of discourse by the artists themselves, which could certainly stand to be explored in greater depth well beyond the immediate context of Victorio Edades and his followers in Manila.

The position of Filipino art and art history in relation to regional and global narratives may also explain why these questions have not been asked from outside the Philippines either. Within Southeast Asia, the country has by far the longest history of close engagement with art and art history in the Western tradition. Some four hundred years of Spanish occupation brought not only colonialism and Catholicism but also direct and lasting contact with European languages, infrastructure, and material culture far earlier than anywhere else in the region. As a result, Filipino craftsmen had direct access to European art, not to mention a local art market shaped by European patronage, some three hundred years before Edades threw himself into the task of revitalising both art and art market. This would seem to make the case study an ideal one for Art History and Regional Studies alike, but in practice the opposite is true. Survey courses of Asian Art focus mainly on erstwhile imperial centres in India, China and Japan, either leaving out Southeast Asia or presenting it as case study for various forms of hybridity in cultural exchange. In the Euro-American academic context, where colonial networks continue to hold the most sway, the opposite problem prevails: the former colonies that make up present-day Southeast Asia are often considered pertinent only to their former occupiers, leaving little opportunity for comparative or collaborative research across colonial contexts. Once again, the exceptional history of the Philippines seems to have caused it to fall

through the cracks instead of inspiring additional interest. Research into Spanish colonial history tends to focus on its Central and South American possessions, while the United States continues to be more concerned with an internal reckoning than any acknowledgment of its comparatively brief legacy as a colonial power. As a result, the history of art in the Philippines remains a largely internal endeavour, with the largest amount of academic interest originating from institutions that already have a stake in the narrative. This may well be how the Armory Hall fabrication has gone unremarked for some seventy years: active researchers have generally been too close to the material to question the direct testimony of Professor Edades himself, while those in the best position to make a disinterested judgment remain largely unaware of either of these claims or of the potentially paradigm-altering consequences of disproving them.

It only makes sense, then, to return with fresh eyes to the surviving evidence of Victorio Edades' early career. If the artist could not have encountered modernism through a single, transformative event as represented by the Armory Hall show which probably never happened, he must have come across it in other significant ways. My research therefore focuses mainly on primary sources, including archival materials and Edades' academic writing as well as the surviving works themselves, to explore relationships that have long gone unremarked, or at least under-remarked, in the history of Filipino modernism. In addition to re-examining the role Isaacs and Patterson played in forming Edades' attitudes to modernist art, it will also explore the influence of Mexican muralism, New Deal era public art commissions and even contemporary developments in architecture and interior design on the development

of a visual language that was both distinctly Filipino and decidedly modernist in character.

With this in mind, I then return to the histories of Filipino modernism which rely most closely on Edades' personal accounts of his life and work to explore how and why various aspects of his early career have been framed, edited or omitted entirely to accommodate the priorities of a post-independence paradigm. Amorsolo, Botong, Ocampo and even Luna remain central to this discussion, but the relationships between them are somewhat more complex than the traditional, strictly linear, narrative might suggest. The national and nationalist interpretations of their work both individually and in relation to each other will also be re-examined in relation to the broader context not only of the works themselves but of the secondary literature offering these readings. In addition to examining the evidence for and against the existence of the Armory Hall show, I also investigate the consequences first of accepting this version of events and then of looking beyond it for the study of Victorio Edades in particular and Filipino modernism in general. I hope to illuminate the key reasons for the longevity of the Armory Hall narrative in spite of evidence if not directly to the contrary then at least in favour of a more varied set of influential sources. This in turn brings to light important consequences for the way Filipino art and its national narrative has been and can potentially be positioned in relation to art history at the regional level and in the macro-view most often discussed under the still-developing banner of global modernism.

At this juncture, it also makes sense to consider the nature of the surviving evidence relating to Edades' early career and the purported Armory Hall Show. Although

Rivera Ingle and Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero were working in the late 1970s and early 1980s respectively, giving their treatment of Edades' career as well as his reflections within the texts a retrospective flavour that must necessarily colour the narrative, they remain the oldest surviving primary source accounts of Edades' career. This is doubly true of *Kites and Visions*, in which Rivera Ingle reproduces earlier texts by Edades on subjects including his attitude to art in general, his approach to his own painting and his thoughts on teaching. These include Edades' early writings and interviews from the 1930s as well as the famous exchange between him and Tolentino in the 1950s. By a similar token, *Edades: National Artist* has the distinction of being the first monograph on Edades' work. It also remains the best archive of photographs from the artist's own collection, a resource which has become much harder to locate since the artist's death. This has the effect of lending both books an authority which reflects their significance as archives of hard-to-find visual and textual primary sources rather than the absolute reliability of the narrative each crafts. Both texts also show a willingness to accept Edades' testimony without question, with Rivera Ingle even quoting an article from the artist's memory without reference to the publication itself. This has given later scholars tantalising insight into Edades' perspective on his own history, an intimate view that is extremely valuable and hugely informative in its own right. At the same time, however, the Armory Hall show quandary strongly suggests that it may have been a mistake to assume that Professor Edades, speaking some fifty years after his first long journey to the United States, could be expected to offer a narrative that did not reflect a present-day agenda of his own.

The nature of the surviving archive of Edades' life and work is in many ways representative of the challenges and rewards of this project. Many of the early works that are key to this project are untraceable or no longer extant, the portraits and genre scenes from the 1920s likely remaining in private collections in the United States while most of the mural works Edades, Botong and Ocampo worked on together were destroyed during World War II. The wealth of photographs, newspaper cuttings and personal ephemera to which Kalaw-Ledesma, Guerrero and Rivera Ingle allude in their books is no longer traceable, the artist's private documents having been distributed among family and institutional archives after his death. To a large extent, this explains the tendency of later scholarship- including this dissertation- to continue to rely on *Edades: National Artist* and *Edades: Kites and Visions* as the nearest available equivalent to primary source archives, not least because both texts generously reproduce resources that have since become much harder to trace. The unusually linear nature of existing scholarship, with most secondary literature referring directly to these texts to a significant degree, also makes it difficult to corroborate or indeed challenge these texts through cross-referencing. The longevity of the Armory Hall narrative, as well as the speed at which its validity collapses when tried against contemporary documents in Seattle and San Francisco, illustrates another quirk of archival research in relation to Southeast Asian art: the tendency to set geographical rather than logical limits on the range of material considered relevant to their work. It is likely that further archival study is possible with access to documents at Manila's National Archives as well as the archives of the University of Santo Tomas, where Edades taught, and its Museum, of which Galo Ocampo was the first director. I had hoped that materials in these collections might shed some light on Edades' approach to teaching, in particular the

range of artists to which he referred and the tone in which they were mentioned, but was unable to test this hypothesis as travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-21 prevented me from undertaking further research in the Philippines. It is my hope that other scholars will be able to pursue these questions to discover whether any surviving documentation might shed further light on the reception and teaching of modernist art by the first generation of Filipino modernist artists.

This attempt to re-contextualise Victorio Edades' work by examining first the evidence suggested by his paintings and then his apparently self-conscious crafting of a national narrative in view of contemporary priorities is in no way intended to diminish his achievements. If anything, exploring the aspects of Edades' practice as both artist and art historian that have gone largely unreported so far only strengthens his claim to the title of 'father of Filipino modernism.' Rather than challenging the artist's legacy by upsetting the Armory Hall narrative, I hope to draw attention to the acuity with which one of the foremost authorities on modern art in the Philippines was able to stage-manage the history of that art to show both it and himself in the most advantageous light at various points in his career. Demystifying this process further reveals the true depth and breadth of Victorio Edades' knowledge of and engagement with art history, not only in the Philippines or among its neighbours but on a far more global scale, and much earlier in his long career, than has yet been acknowledged.

Chapter 1: If not Paris then …Seattle?

The Armory Hall narrative, in which an encounter with French Post-Impressionism inspired the young Victorio Edades to turn his back on all his previous training in favour of advocating for modernist art for the rest of his career, underpins virtually all the accounts of the artist's life and legacy written in the last fifty years. This is mainly due to the lasting influence of two key texts associated with Edades' life and art. These are *Edades: National Artist* by Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero (1979) and *Edades: Kites and Visions* by Lydia Rivera Ingle (1980). Both books present the Armory Hall show as a career-defining moment in the young Edades' life, framing it as a catalyst both for his own paradigm shift and for the founding of Philippine modernism through his influence. This order of events is presented as fact, and subsequent commentary on Edades' life and work since the publication of these key texts has made at least some reference to one or both of these texts. Because they rely heavily on Edades' own account, both books come tantalisingly close to offering a first-person account of Edades' life. Most likely because of this, subsequent research into Edades' life and work has tended to treat their more or less mutually consistent account as definitive more or less since the time of their publication. The version of Edades' encounter with the Armory Hall show presented in each text is given in full below.

Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, 1979

During his first three years in America, these traditional masters [Leonardo da Vinci and Velázquez] held sway over Edades. But in 1922, with his first substantial exposure to Modern Art, a significant change occurred in his outlook.

The catalyst was a travelling exhibit from the New York Armory Hall featuring works by modern European artists such as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and the Surrealists. The exhibit stirred up the conservative artistic community in Seattle, where teachers and students painted in a photographic style or in a vaguely Impressionistic manner. Discussions were held on the campus, and almost to a man they spoke out against the innovations of the new masters.

The objections centred on distortion and the way the Moderns handled colour, which was very different from the traditional use. “You see,” Edades recalled, “The Modernists followed the results of scientific experiments which showed that the shadow of a tree or grass was not dark green but violet. “Also the violet colours of the Moderns- who are not to be confused with the later school of abstract art- became more intense as they interpreted the deepening heat of the sunlight. They believed that it took time for the naked eye to record the real colour around, and it was the scientists who told us the real colour of things we see. So the Moderns used violet because to their educated eyes it was more realistic than the colours seen by the average person. Naturally, most of the

people who could not appreciate this because they were used to seeing shadows rendered in dark brown, dark green and black."

At first Edades shared the sentiments of his fellow students, but as he analysed the works of the Moderns, particularly Cézanne and Gauguin, a profound appreciation developed within him. In addition, Cézanne opened the Filipino's eyes to the structural use of color.

He was particularly drawn to Cézanne because of his strength and the way this master molded the solidity of an object. His works were solid and yet rough, for he did not paint in the naturalistic way. Cézanne's works seemed very close to those of Velázquez, but they were more powerful.

Soon Edades veered away from the Impressionistic and the Realistic schools and began to paint in the Modern manner. This decision was to have far-reaching repercussions in the long dormant art scene in the Philippines."[26]

Lydia Rivera Ingle, Edades: Kites and Visions, 1980

A mobile Exhibition of Modern Art, brought to America from Europe in 1913, travelled slowly around the country, only reaching Seattle in 1923, Seattle being the farthest place from the exhibition's starting point, New York.
All the Fine Arts students of the University of Washington came to view the exhibition, which displayed the works of Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, and Picasso, among those of many other modern painters. The student body's

[26] Kalaw Ledesma, *Edades: Nationalist Artist,* pp24-25

collective response was one of animosity. The professors refrained from voicing their own opinions, but the students sensed that they too were riding the same wave.

Edades instantly admired the Cézanne canvases, drawn to the very distortions that the others disliked, perceiving that the artist sought solidity and form in colours of structural function. In Cézanne's own words, he aimed "to make of Impressionism something solid and durable, like the art of museums," a precept that Edades immediately understood.

Cézanne became a strong influence, but Edades could not find a responsive chord in himself for the abstract artists, nor for the futurists, nor could he feel an affinity with the fauvists, except for the paintings of Gauguin whose brilliant contrasting colours were natural, and evocative of the red gumamelas and bright green forest leaves of Edades' native land."[27]

These two accounts of the Armory Hall show, which both books argue transformed Edades' practice as an artist, were published two years apart, more than half a century after the events they relay, and coincide and diverge on significant points. The dates provided for the exhibition in question are different, Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero giving 1922 as the year of Edades' paradigm-altering encounter with French Post-Impressionism while Rivera Ingle places the event in 1923. Both accounts agree on the general contents of the Armory Hall show, with Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero naming "Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and the Surrealists"

[27] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p. 36

while Rivera Ingle cites “Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso” as prominent artists whose work made an impression non Edades and his colleagues. This is very much in line with the Armory Hall show of 1913, which featured paintings by various impressionist and post-impressionist artists as well as marking the first time works by Picasso, Duchamp and other members of the European avant-garde were exhibited in the United States. The impression this made on the young Edades was less immediately favourable in the version of events recorded by Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, with Edades taking some time to overcome his initial reaction through further reflection and analysis instead of “instantly” embracing the modernist approaches as in Rivera Ingle’s version. Both agree that the aspects of modernist art which appealed to Edades most strongly were the tendency towards distortion rather than realism in the description of figures and the use of a more vibrant and less naturalistic colour palette.

Both versions also highlight Cézanne and Gauguin as leaving the most lasting impact on Edades; Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero go as far as to compare the former favourably with Velázquez, a hero in the tradition of Philippine art since Luna’s time. Although this has rarely been discussed at much length either in these texts or later scholarship, both accounts also agree that only some of the modernist art included at this exhibition found favour with Edades. Significantly for the wider discussion of Edades’ revolutionary character in the context of the Philippines, much of this was from a previous generation rather than the avant-garde of 1920s Europe and America. Both texts mention Matisse and Picasso, but Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero include “the Surrealists” while Rivera Ingle mentions both Futurists and Fauvists as well. These artists, whose work represents a variety of approaches that were

contemporary at the time, are never mentioned again in Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero's account. Rivera Ingle does bring them up, but only to note that they failed to engage Edades' interest at all. Rivera Ingle also explores Edades' affinity for Gauguin's work with more nuance, identifying the latter's use of vivid colours and tropical motifs as particularly relatable to the Filipino artist studying abroad. Both books also give a consistent account of the generally unfavourable view of the exhibition held by the teachers and students of the University of Washington's Department of Fine Arts. It is striking, however, that Rivera Ingle positions Edades entirely at odds with his colleagues' viewpoint from the outstart while Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero suggest a transitionary period during which Edades came to re-evaluate the positions he had been taught with reference to the new possibilities demonstrated by the Armory Show.[28]

Subsequent accounts of Edades' early career have continued to take the Armory Hall show in Seattle for granted, a reasonable choice given both Rivera Ingle and Kalaw-Ledesma cite the artist himself as their source. The idea that an exhibition of this kind should have such a cataclysmic effect on the young Edades, and by extension on Philippine art history for the next hundred years, is not implausible in the wider context of Philippine art. Given that Edades' contribution clearly marks a clean break with anything his predecessors in Manila might have endorsed, it follows that he must have come to grips with modernism as an ideology as well as an artistic approach elsewhere. Without a specific reason to doubt the artist's own testimony, given to two sources two years apart, the Armory Hall show is as likely a catalyst as any even if the narrative sometimes takes on the tone of a religious conversion.

[28] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* pp35-36

Perhaps because of this, researchers have never seen fit to look much further than these primary source accounts to understand what happened. In some ways, the specifics of the Armory Hall show may not matter especially in relation to the wider narrative of Philippine art: the salient point is that Edades encountered a visual language so wildly different from anything being used in the Philippines in the early 1920s that he was able to return to Manila with an artistic vision the likes of which none of his countrymen had considered before.

Even if the Armory Hall show never in fact reached Seattle, there are other ways in which Edades could have come into contact with works by Cézanne and Gauguin while he was a student. The earliest clear example is an exhibition of "modern French art, including a number of pictures which have aroused widespread interest," held "under the auspices of the University of Washington Department of Painting, Sculpture and Design."[29] According to a notice in the *Seattle Times,* this featured "coloured reproductions of modern masterpieces" by several artists whose work was prominently displayed at the Armory Hall exhibition of 1913, including "Cézanne, Renoir, Matisse and other noted exponents of the modern French school of art."[30] The date of this exhibition is significantly later than either of the dates given in *Edades: National Artist* and *Edades: Kites and Visions*, however, and a University-led display of reproductions is hardly comparable in scale or significance to an extension of the exhibition credited with "introduce[ing] the American public to European avant-garde painting and sculpture."[31] Edades could also have

[29] 'Modern French Art Works on View in Eagleson Hall,' *Seattle Daily Times,* 10 May 1925
[30] Ibid.
[31] "The Armory Hall Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution," New York Historical Society Museum and Library, 11 October 2013- 23 February 2014 < https://www.nyhistory.org/exhibitions/armory-show-at-100#>

encountered modernist art outside Seattle, for example at the “Exhibition of Contemporary French Art” held at Polk Hall in San Francisco in 1923. Again, however, it is difficult to understand why Edades would see the need to tell his biographers a fabricated version of events instead of admitting that he had to leave Seattle to encounter modernist art on his own terms. This would seem to be even more in line with the narrative of Edades as a young modernist striking out on his own in defiance of convention both at home and abroad. It is therefore unclear why Edades would have found it beneficial in any way to retroactively revise the location of the exhibition in this way.

Either way, the fact remains that no convincing records have survived testifying to a significant exhibition of modern art, or indeed any exhibition of modern art, taking place in Seattle during the 1920s apart from the reproductions displayed at the University of Washington. A careful survey of the *Seattle Daily Times* archives as well as the surviving documentation of the Seattle Fine Arts Society turns up no mention of anything comparable to the show Edades described to Rivera Ingle, Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero taking place in Washington state at any point between 1919 and 1930. Articles and surviving ephemera document smaller shows, including local exhibitions as well as packaged tours from other cities, as well as talks, books, and competitions, but there is no trace of anything like the Armory Hall show in either scale or focus reaching Seattle at this time. The one source that does make mention of Seattle in relation to the Armory Hall show is a *Smithsonian Magazine* article from 2013. This specifies that the city was considered but ultimately rejected as a location

for the touring version of the show, which ultimately ended after reaching only Chicago and Boston in addition to New York.[32]

On one hand, it remains true that these arguments are largely founded on the absence of evidence rather than certain fact; it is at least theoretically possible that the exhibition Edades remembers was in fact held in Seattle without collateral evidence surviving to support his account at the time of my investigation in 2019. On the other hand, the likelihood of this is extremely low, especially in view of the wealth of documentation that has survived much more minor exhibitions from the same approximate period. Given the detail which attended newspaper coverage of much smaller local exhibitions, it is difficult to believe that an exhibition as unprecedented in the history of Seattle's engagement with modern art as the Armory Hall show would have gone unremarked in any, let alone all, of the publications whose archives have been retained.

Without the Armory Hall show to function as a narrative bolt from the blue, then, the question of Edades' early formation suddenly becomes much more open-ended. If the "father of Filipino Modernism" did not receive post-impressionist inspiration directly from its most iconic sources, a closer examination of the material that did inform the young Edades' works could suggest a range of influences that have yet to be considered closely in relation to modern art in the Philippines. Without a specific exhibition to mark either 1922 or 1923 as the beginning of Edades' journey towards modernism, it also makes sense to begin such an examination of his early career by asking what the artist was doing in Seattle as early as 1921, significantly before the

[32] Binkovitz, ""Freakish Absurdities": A Century Ago, An Art Show Shocked the Country"

traditional starting point for the narrative of Philippine modernist art. When Edades first began his studies in the United States, the answer was not a more conservative form of painting which would have fit better with the academic tradition favoured in Manila at the time but, in fact, architecture.

Architecture and the Philippines

The history of architecture the Philippines is at least as varied and complex as its art history, and like the latter reflects the variety of forces that have been at play throughout the history of the archipelago. In 1899, the United States of America gained control of the Philippines through the Treaty of Paris. This outcome caused widespread dismay not only in the Philippines, where the prospect of longed-for independence had so nearly been in sight, but also at the White House. In 1900, US President William McKinley argued strongly that his involvement in the Philippines should not be construed as a hegemonic act but as one of Christian charity into which he entered only reluctantly, for lack of good alternatives.

> "I didn't want the Philippines, and when they came to us, as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do with them…I went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way … that we could not give (the Philippines) back to Spain- that would be cowardly and dishonourable; that we could not turn them over to France or Germany- our commercial rivals in the Orient- that would be bad business and discreditable; that we could not leave them to themselves- they were unfit for self-government- and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and that there was

> nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilise and Christianise them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed and went to sleep and slept soundly."[33]

This remarkable passage lays bare McKinley's assumption, period-typical in its racist yet well-intentioned condescension, that the Philippines could not survive without American intervention to "civilise and Christianise" its people. This attitude has helped many colonial authorities justify their actions to their stakeholders at home but is all the more striking in relation to the Philippines, which had not only been Catholic for some 350 years already but also fought and arguably won an independence war against Spain only a year earlier. Evidently, McKinley was much more aware of the economic realities of the region, in particular the competition for control of important ports on trade routes between India, China, and the West, than of the cultural reality of the Philippines. The Philippine leadership was no more receptive to the presence of the United States than to the Spanish forces against which they had organised; the result was a three-year war that ended with the annexation of the Philippines by the United States.

The newly installed insular government of the Philippines did at least make good on McKinley's intention to "educate the Filipinos," offering scholarships to local students as early as 1903 with a view to train the next generation of bureaucrats from within the local population.[34] This was part of a wider programme, formalised in 1916 with the passing of the Jones Law but in the works well before that, intended to give the

[33] William McKinley, speaking in 1900, quoted by Gerard Lico in Gerard Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino: A History of Architecture and Urbanism in the Philippines*, Dilman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2008, p.201
[34] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino,* p.287

Philippines ever greater degrees if not of independence then at least of self-sufficiency. In the context of architectural development, this resulted in plans to transition from American-led projects determined and overseen by colonial administrators to a younger generation of Filipino architects fully qualified to execute these projects on their own. Filipino students of this generation therefore enjoyed unprecedented opportunities to study architecture in the United States, including financial support as well as employment at higher levels of government than had previously been allowed to the local population. Thomas Mapua, Juan Arellano and Antonio Toledo would go on to become the first generation of native-born leaders in their field as a result of this scheme. In accordance with existing American plans for the design and administration of Manila, most of this first batch of students received their training on the east coast of the United States, "the bastion of Beaux Arts philosophy and pedagogy."[35] Architectural historian Gerald Lico emphasises that this was not as progressive a scheme as it can sound like in summary, arguing that the neo-classical style that had become prevalent in the United States and its colonies reflected "an imperial self-image" which "became more evident with the onslaught of architecture and images mimicking European and Roman descent."[36] In fact, the architectural choices of the previous generation, which saw American architect Edgar K. Bourne recommend and implement a building programme first in the Mission Revival style originally associated with California and then in the Beaux Arts style associated with the United States at the turn of the century, also reflected a concerted attempt to rewrite political history through architecture. As Lico argues, the "stylistic alliance" between the pseudo-Hispanic Mission style and Neoclassical style

[35] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino*, p. 287
[36] Ibid., p.197

in Philippine architecture designed by the insular government "gave continuity, rather than disruption, to a form of government that had changed from Spanish to American colonial rule."[37] By insisting on the possibility of cultural continuity in the face of political upheaval, the insular government effectively papered over three years of violence in favour of strong visual representations of stability and harmony.

By the time Edades left for Seattle, therefore, the first native Filipino architect had already registered his practice in Manila. Mapua, who returned from Cornell University in 1912, would go on to serve as supervising architect at Manila's Bureau of Public Works from 1918 to 1927. From a strategic standpoint, then, a degree in architecture would have offered the young Edades a secure career path with self-evident and still-developing pathways to professional advancement. He did enter the University of Washington as a student of architecture, and there is clear evidence that he could have excelled in his chosen field. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero report that he excelled at architectural problem-solving, consistently producing work that was good enough to be held up as an example for his fellow students.[38] An example of this standard-setting work is preserved in the Special Collections of the University of Washington (Figure 7). Edades' design for 'a colonnade' in the Beaux Arts style is precisely rendered, featuring an exactly spaced row of carefully ornamented columns topped with robed figures above the entablature. There is more classicising detail in the foreground, which features another decorated capital as well as a large urn, decorated with human faces and floral forms, resting on an ornate pedestal decorated with sculpted gryphons. A far cry from Edades' work as a painter, the

[37] Ibid.
[38] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.23

drawing is very much in line with the elaborate neoclassical style Lico argues was intended "to declare the ascendancy of America as a new world power, its civilising presence and its pledge to spread democracy across the globe."[39] That the drawing survives is a testament to its quality by the standards of the department at the time; that it remains in the special collections at the University of Washington while neither Rivera Ingle nor Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero make any specific reference to the work indicates that Edades was not sentimental enough about this early success to either retrieve or reminisce about it in later years.

Despite the promise he showed early on, however, Edades would never fully qualify as an architect. By his third year at the University of Washington, the physical demands of his vocation proved too taxing, with long hours spent at the drafting table exacerbating a childhood injury to the ribs enough to cause him serious pain. For the sake of his health, Edades made the decision to transfer to the Department of Fine Arts, from which he would graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts in 1925 and a Master's degree in 1928. In relation to the wider narrative of Edades' long, paradigm-altering career in the visual arts, the three years he spent training for a career he would not ultimately pursue have come to be regarded as a serendipitous prologue to the twist of fate which saw the future game-changer embrace his true vocation. In fact, this first foray into the visual arts laid the foundation for professional connections and personal relationships which would later provide Edades with crucial access to Manila's most forward-looking public spaces later in his career.

[39] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino*, p.197

Already, then, one aspect of the Armory Hall narrative falls away: it is difficult to argue that anything that might have occurred in 1922 or 1923 would have constituted a paradigm shift in relation to Edades' artistic practice given that he had barely established a personal approach to painting at the time. If the Armory Hall narrative is to be believed, Edades encountered European modernism especially in the works of Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin as early as 1922. This in itself signals some incoherence in the narrative given to Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero: Edades only transferred to the University of Washington's Department of Fine Arts in 1923, and so would not have had any teachers or colleagues from that department with which to disagree about the merits of Post-Impressionism. Taking 1923 as the date for this exhibition, as given by Rivera Ingle, is somewhat more consistent with the likely timeline of Edades' programmes of study in Seattle. Edades would still have been relatively new to the department, however, making any disjuncture between his opinions and that of his new instructors less personally and intellectually significant than the accounts given by both Rivera Ingle and Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero suggest. Even if the Armory Hall exhibition did take place exactly as Rivera Ingle describes, then, Edades' disagreement with his teachers and colleagues would have constituted less of a heroic break with a long-held position of security and more of an unusual opening move on the part of a relative newcomer.

Edades in Seattle: Isaacs, Patterson and the University of Washington

Although they argue that Edades quickly broke with the visual traditions enshrined at the University of Washington, his Philippine biographers agree that two instructors at the Department of Fine Arts made a lasting impression on their new student. Walter Isaacs, the director of the Department of Fine Arts as the University of Washington

as well as a painter in his own right, is acknowledged by Rivera Ingle as well as Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero as "a chief influence" during Edades' time in Seattle.[40] According to their account, Isaacs was the instructor who taught Edades "to concentrate on the main subject instead of cluttering up a canvas with many details."[41] In addition, "Isaacs also emphasised concentration on one's work, and to develop this concentration he advised his students when at work to imagine that they were lifting a 200-pound sack."[42] At this time, Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero add, "Edades supplemented his education by reading art books during his spare time, especially those on the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Velázquez."[43] Rivera Ingle agrees with the assessment of Isaacs as a key figure in Edades' education, declaring that "Edades learned most from the uncompromising director of the college, Professor Isaacs, his teacher in Life Painting (where nude models were used), composition and the history of art."[44] Rivera Ingle also connects Isaacs with painters associated with seventeenth-century Spain, noting that "Isaacs showed a marked preference for the Spanish painters, Velázquez and Goya, and El Greco."[45] Rivera Ingle further reports that "Edades deduced that what Isaacs admired in the works of these men was their stress on fundamentals."[46] Because of this "avowed affinity with the Spanish masters," Isaacs specifically advised Edades "never to miss the Prado" if he had the opportunity to travel in Europe.[47] Most significantly, Rivera Ingle also credits Isaacs with having shown Edades "the fallacy, indeed the cheapness, of flattering the sitter" instead of pursuing authenticity in

[40] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.24
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.35
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

representation.[48] This would become a key feature of Edades' work as both artist and educator in the Philippine context. The other University of Washington instructor whose significance to Edades is noted in both biographies is the Australian artist Ambrose Patterson. Rather than exploring how Patterson might have shaped Edades' practice or perspective as an artist, Rivera Ingle reports that Edades' teacher "was so greatly impressed by his pupil's works that he would have them hung on the wall as examples for the class to emulate. Patterson would extol Edades' industry and dedication, as though these qualities in themselves make an artist!"[49] While Isaacs also admired Edades' work, Rivera Ingle notes, he exhibited "all his students' work" and praised Edades' specific achievements in private instead of singling him out in front of his classmates.[50]

While Edades' biographers acknowledge the importance of Isaacs and Patterson as formative influences on the young Edades, then, they focus on their impact on the young Edades' mindset rather than his practice as an artist. Patterson's views on art are not discussed at all beyond his appreciation for his student's work, and Isaacs is established as a solidly conventional figure whose advice mainly centred on cultivating a healthy work ethic and respecting the achievements of the Old Masters particularly in the Spanish tradition. This decision is consistent with the Armory Hall narrative: if Edades' work marks a departure from the style and ideology associated with his instructors, it makes more sense to consider his work in relation to that of the artists who inspired this change rather than the artists Edades left behind. Perhaps because the emphasis on Cézanne and Gauguin as crucial precedents to Edades'

[48] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.35
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

modernist turn has become so universally accepted in relation to the study of his work, no serious attempt has been made to study the artists whose influence was supposedly displaced by French Post-Impressionism around 1922-3. As a result, little attention has been paid to Isaacs and Patterson's work as painters, rather than instructors, in connection with Edades' own early style. In fact, the Philippine sources single Isaacs out as being uniquely progressive not for his own views but for even allowing Edades to follow his modernist instincts in his Masters work. Returning to the visual evidence, however, suggests that this is a serious oversight: paintings and drawings by the key figures associated with the University of Washington while Edades was a student demonstrate a much more progressive tendency in his teachers' work than the Philippine version of events suggests.

The tendency in Southeast Asian art history since Kalaw-Ledesma and Rivera Ingle has been to describe Edades' work primarily in relation to two sets of references. These are the conservative artists in the Philippines, particularly Amorsolo, from whose pastoral scenes and tourist-friendly vistas Edades' work so clearly marks a departure, and the French Post-Impressionists whose example had, apparently, inspired this break with tradition in the first place. That Edades' work had little in common with Amorsolo's in the 1920s is self-evident: the two could hardly have been further removed from one another in style or indeed subject matter. At the time of their perceived divergence, Edades was just about finding his footing at the University of Washington's Department of Painting after transferring from Architecture while Amorsolo was already collaborating with Juan Arellano on mural works for the Metropolitan Theatre. The latter was already working in what may be described as representing his mature style, with neither the contents nor the visual

approaches evident in his work deviating much from the norms established in, for example, *Planting Rice* (1929) over the next several decades.

In contrast, the young Edades' early works seem to illustrate a period of exploration and inquiry rather than the declarative self-assertion suggested by the Armory Hall Show narrative. Edades' surviving works from his student years may be broadly categorised as portraits, genre paintings, and thematic studies. Many of the portraits he painted during this period were for students or instructors in Seattle. These included Frederick Starr, the University of Washington professor who introduced Edades to another of his sitters, his future wife Jean Garrot (*Dr. Frederick Starr,* 1928, Figure 8 and *My Sweetheart,* 1928, Figure 9).

Edades' genre pieces also reflect the settings with which he concerned himself: apart from the barely-described urban settings of *The Builders* and *The Wrestlers,* he painted his fellow artists at work in a shared studio as well as various models in a similar setting. A few more unusual works occupy an interstitial category between portrait and genre work: the subjects of *Geisha Girl* and *Negro Football Player* (1927 and 1928 respectively, Figures 10-11) may well have been drawn from life but are presented as types rather than individuals at least as far as their present-day titles may be seen as representative of the artist's intentions. That both of Edades' subjects in these paintings were racial minorities he could well have encountered in Seattle only adds to the ambiguity of these works. Much later, the artist would recall the affinity he felt for various disadvantaged groups in Seattle and Alaska as part of a wider reflection on his perceived role as a man of the people. Without surviving examples of works in this category, or even documentation of the works or Edades'

thoughts and feelings about them, it is difficult to say more about how, why, or for whom they were made. It is therefore difficult to show conclusively that these works were portraits in the same way as those of Jean Garrot or Dr. Starr rather than having been painted from memory or even imagination. It is also possible that the works were painted as portraits during Edades' time in Seattle but displayed as types at the Columbia Club show, where thematic titles would have gained more traction with Manila's viewing public than the names of specific individuals unknown in the Philippines. This is arguably also the strategy that led to Edades' portrait of his wife being titled *My Sweetheart* rather than simply *Jean.* An undated work from Edades' time in the United States, *Jean and Friend in the USA* (Figure 12)*,* seems to suggest that Edades did sometimes paint specific portrait subjects in costume to create fictionalised settings for genre scenes. In this work, Jean and her companion appear in orientalising dress, apparently just for the sake of visual interest. It is equally possible, then, that Edades' 'geisha girl' is an acquaintance of his performing her heritage for the painting.

As soon as paintings by Isaacs and Patterson are considered alongside Edades' student works, it becomes clear that the situation must have been somewhat more complex than the Armory Hall narrative suggests. Isaacs' work shows at least as much engagement with the post-impressionist tendency towards the flattening of the picture space and the description of form through the use of colour as Edades' early paintings. This is an aspect of his practice that definitely does not come through in the Philippine sources. Patterson, too, explored visual approaches far beyond the academic style one might expect from Edades' recollections of half a century later. As such, the visual record of Edades' teachers' paintings, including some from well

before his arrival in Seattle, simply does not correspond to the Philippine portrayal of staid academics with little interest in the evolution of visual culture after Velázquez and El Greco. Apart from their paintings, there is also documentary evidence that Isaacs, Patterson and their colleagues at the University of Washington were much less resistant to modernist discourse than the Philippine accounts seem to indicate. Isaacs gave papers on modernist art in Seattle and San Francisco in 1926 and 1927, suggesting that he was at least willing to study and discuss the kind of work associated with the Armory Hall exhibition rather than dismissing it out of hand. Patterson and Isaacs continued to develop their interest in modernism in the 1930s and later, exploring the subject in their art as well as in their research. Of particular note is a project which saw Isaacs send a questionnaire to modernist artists around Europe and America requesting their insights into the conception, teaching and display of art in the 1950s. Not all of these inquiries were answered, but replies from André Masson, Joan Miró and Jean Dubuffet among others are preserved among Isaac's correspondence at the University of Washington. Because many of these developments occurred well after Edades' time in Seattle, it is always possible that the Department of Painting simply revised their stand on modernist art some years after his departure. On the other hand, Patterson in particular seems to have gone farther than Edades himself ever did in experimenting with some strands of modernism even before the two were acquainted.

Edades' early portraits bear witness to Isaacs' influence in composition as well as style. Isaac's *Portrait of Miss Gray,* which the Seattle Art Museum dates to "either 1929 or 1938" (Figure 13) resonates strongly with Edades' portraits of young women from the 1920s, perhaps most notably *My Sweetheart*. Like Isaacs, Edades

describes his sitter in far more detail than her situation, drawing attention to the subject's face and dress at the expense of elaborating on setting or wider context so that any additional clue as to the sitter's identity or state of life must be gleaned from her costume and expression rather than any additional detail included in the work. Even where some detail is evident, as in the broadly defined sitting room in *Mother and Daughter* (Figure 14), Edades retains Isaacs' use of blurred lines and muted colours to allow the background to fade away relative to the brighter clothes and clearly defined features of his subjects. The young artist's figure painting also bears notable resemblance to his teacher's, as does his approach to the composition of genre scenes. This is perhaps most obvious in Edades' images of models in the artist's studio, with *Artist and Model* and various untitled studio nudes bearing clear resemblance to Isaacs' works on similar themes (Figures 15-17).

While the visual similarities between Edades' work and that of Ambrose Patterson's are less immediately striking than the obvious resonances between his work and Isaacs', a closer look at Patterson's work from the 1920s and earlier is also instructive. Patterson was also somewhat more adventurous than either Isaacs or Edades in his experiments with cubism as exemplified in the small, experimental and apparently private *Centrifugal Introspection* (Figure 18) still among Patterson's private papers archived at the University of Washington. In other works, Patterson's interest in cubism was less apparent than his mastery of just those Post-Impressionist elements which Edades claimed to have discovered in Cézanne (Figure 19).

From these examples, it is clear that the Armory Hall narrative's assertion that Edades could only have come into contact with elements of French Post-Impressionism from a direct encounter with works by Cézanne and Gauguin is simply not accurate. Both Isaacs and Patterson show an interest in the same elements of non-linearity and experimental use of colour which Edades argued was fundamental to the identification of a work of art as modernist in style. As such, it seems highly likely that Edades came to understand, interact with and adopt those elements of Post-Impressionism that are characteristic of his early style through the influence of his University of Washington instructors rather than in stark defiance thereof.

It follows, therefore, that the wider art scene in Seattle was also somewhat more diverse than the Philippine accounts allow. While the art to which Edades was exposed in Seattle was not as progressive as the most avant-garde works he would have encountered at the Armory Hall show or any equivalent, it was significantly less conservative than the dominant accounts of his student days would later suggest. Taking Edades at his word, as most scholarship relating to his time in Seattle has done thanks to the lasting influence of *Edades: National Artist* and *Edades: Kites and Visions*, his teachers at the University of Washington were not only conservative in their own practice but also largely uninterested in recent trends in art outside their immediate circle. At the same time, though, both sources acknowledge the impact of these early mentors on Edades' later work to at least some degree. They are, at least, accurate in their assessment of Seattle's art scene as relatively modest compared to those of American cities catering to a more internationally oriented audience. Compared to such intercontinental hubs as New York and San Francisco,

cultural life in Seattle was, as Edades recalled to his biographers, relatively parochial. On the other hand, however, there is clear evidence that many members of the local art scene would have been much more receptive to an exhibition in the vein of the Armory Hall show than Edades suggests. The fact that Seattle was considered as a venue at all, even if it was ultimately rejected, indicates that it was considered at least plausible if not ultimately practical as a destination for the exhibition.

Furthermore, correspondence from as early as 1921 reveals at least some members of the Seattle Fine Arts Society were advocating for greater engagement with modernist art. In 1925, when Edades had already been a student of Fine Arts for some time, his own department facilitated an exhibition of coloured reproductions of French modernist art. In addition to supporting the show in his capacity as head of the Department of Fine Arts, Isaacs is cited by the *Seattle Daily Times* describing the show as "one of the most interesting and representative displays of modern French work ever shown here."[51] That Isaacs not only allowed this exhibition but also gave a public lecture discussing the works featured seriously undermines the notion that Edades' colleagues and instructors were as vehemently opposed to the work of Cézanne and Matisse than one might assume from the Philippine accounts. This did take place in 1925 rather than 1922/3, suggesting that they may in theory have had time to change their minds since Edades first disagreed with them, but there is little evidence that this occurred. In fact, Isaacs' assessment of the 1925 exhibition as highly significant in terms of Seattle's exposure to French modernist art, along with the failure of the *Seattle Daily Times* to cross-reference what would have been a

[51] 'Modern French Art Works on View in Eagleson Hall,' *Seattle Daily Times,* 10 May 1925

much more significant exhibition of original works in a similar vein only two or three years earlier, strongly suggests that there simply was no such exhibition to which to compare the University of Washington show. In many ways it seems more likely that this is the exhibition to which Edades refers as the Seattle version of the Armory Hall show: the artists involved are similar, and the timing makes more sense in relation to his relatively late entry into the Department of Fine Arts. On the other hand, this is certainly not the story received by Kalaw-Ledesma, Guerrero and Rivera Ingle. The works were reproductions instead of original paintings, the exhibition was organised by Isaacs and his department rather than repudiated by them, and a ten-day university-led exhibition of coloured reproductions of famous works does not quite constitute the heroic encounter with the true spirit of modernism portrayed in the Armory Hall narrative.

Another challenge to the original account of the Armory Hall show and its reception in Seattle is the dearth of evidence either at the time or afterwards that Edades ever found himself particularly at odds with his teachers at the University of Washington as a result of this alleged rift in their artistic visions. Already, this characterisation of their relationship is somewhat at odds with the generous praise and encouragement both accounts say Edades received from his teachers at the time. Edades also remained on friendly terms with his instructors for the rest of their lives, making a trip to Seattle to visit Isaacs in 1930 and staying in touch with Patterson well into the 1960s. In an introductory letter written on behalf of a former student, Edades entreats “Professor and Mrs. Patterson” to “come to the Philippines and paint tropical sceneries,” laments “getting homesick for our campus at Seattle” and declares his

intention to visit again.[52] Even the *Seattle Daily Times* continued to take an interest in his career after his graduation, featuring a brief update on Edades' activities in November 1934. The short paragraph notes that "Filipine (sic) students don't often study art at the University of Washington, but if they do they usually have something to show for it" before reporting that Edades had found work as "an art instructor at the University of Manila" as well as being "in demand for mural work in Manila theatres and homes."[53] This reference to projects that would not be unveiled in Manila until the following year at the earliest suggests that either Edades or someone he trusted enough to share news of ongoing commissions with was still in contact with the *Seattle Daily Times,* while the proprietary tone in which credit for Edades' ongoing success is associated with his training at the University of Washington strongly suggests that neither he nor anyone at the university had made any attempt to discount their relationship in the way that might be expected from the later Armory Hall narrative. The cordial tone of both this report and Edades' continued relationship with Isaacs some 30 years later suggests that both his teachers and the still relatively modest art scene in Seattle generally took a benign rather than adversarial view of the young Edades.

The strongest evidence that this was the case is another of Edades' local claims to fame: in 1928, he won the second prize at the annual competition organised by the Seattle Fine Arts Society. Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero report that Edades had participated in the competition in earlier years with growing success: while his first attempt "created hardly a ripple," he received some notice for the "very ambitious"

[52] Victorio Edades, letter to Ambrose and Viola Patterson, 17 May 1966
[53] *Seattle Daily Times,* 23 November 1934

scale of *The Market* and *The Picnic*.[54] In contrast, Edades' entry, *The Sketch* (Figure 20), lost out only to the winning painting by Viola Patterson, a teacher and artist herself as well as being Ambrose Patterson's wife. The *Seattle Daily Times* story which reported the results of this competition carried a reproduction of his work over the winning piece, highlighting Edades' achievement not only in itself but as a foreign student successfully holding his own against faculty at his own department. Some five to six years after his supposed turn away from the style endorsed by the University of Washington, then, Edades was still painting in a manner that the Seattle Fine Arts Society found appealing enough to award him highly for his efforts. From the success of *The Sketch* in a competition that also featured works by his own instructors to the enthusiastic reception of Edades' work in the newspapers at the time, the reaction to Edades' work really does not suggest that the tastemakers of Seattle's art world regarded Edades as a maverick outsider whose avant-garde leanings held no appeal in Washington.

The surviving ephemera associated with the 1928 exhibition in Seattle also offers unprecedented insight into Edades' attitude to his own work towards the end of his studies. A letter from Edades' future wife, Jean Garrot, requests the assistance of contest administrators at the Seattle Fine Arts Society in filling out the entry-blank enclosed with one of Edades' entries to that year's competition. Noting that "he has already sent a blank to you for the portrait of Professor Starr," Garrot confesses that she is "not sure whether he wishes the paintings classes as conservative or modern" and so asks that "the same classification be put as the blank he already submitted,

[54] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.25

as the paintings are in something of the same technique."[55] Unfortunately, the entry form to which Garrot refers has not been preserved along with her letter; this would have revealed whether Edades' work was in fact ultimately categorised as modernist or not at the time. Even this second-hand account, however, is extremely telling. That Edades' own fiancée could not commit to either designation with confidence clearly demonstrates that the position of his work was not as extremely modernist in the context of contemporary art in Seattle as the Philippine accounts suggest.

Even with all this contextual evidence against it, one of the most persuasive arguments that Edades did not adopt a modernist position specifically in response to the Armory Hall show or anything like it is the visual record of his own works from this period. Regardless of whether Edades encountered Cézanne, Gauguin and Matisse in person, through coloured reproductions sponsored by his own department or in books and scholarly journals, the claim that these artists can be considered the primary influence on his work after 1922-23 simply does not stand up to scrutiny in relation to the evidence of his own paintings. The 1913 New York Armory Hall show featured works by all the artists named by Rivera-Ingle, Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero as well as many others. It is immediately apparent that these paintings mark a clear departure from the academicism and impressionism which were the norm in Seattle, and it is easy to understand how more conservative viewers might have been unsettled by the trajectory of modern art suggested by the exhibition taken as a whole. That their influence immediately drew Edades away from the mode of painting endorsed by the University of Washington, however, is much less clear. To begin with, it is difficult to argue concretely for or against a clear paradigm

[55] Jean Garrot, letter to Seattle Fine Arts Society, 1 September 1928.

shift in Edades' early work, in large part because very few of his paintings from this period are precisely dated. As such, there is no way to compare works directly from before and after the alleged paradigm shift prompted by the Armory Hall show or its equivalent. This is suggestive in itself: although Edades' paintings may be seen as growing increasingly post-impressionist over time in the widest view of his 50-year career, there is no clear visual marker with which to identify a before and after in relation to the paradigm shift supposedly caused by the Armory Hall show. In fact, the more clearly discernible shifts in Edades' visual style took place later in his career, after his return to Manila, and will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Restoring some visual analysis of paintings by Isaacs and Patterson to the historical record Edades offered his Philippine biographers also demonstrates that he simply would not have needed an Armory Hall exhibition or its equivalent to discover the ideas associated with Cézanne and Gauguin. Instead, Edades worked closely with artists who were already exploring a strand of modernist art that incorporated post-impressionist aesthetics into portraiture and genre scenes. Without access to paintings by Edades' instructors, it is easy enough to see how the "development of form by colour" in his own work has come to be ascribed to Cézanne's influence.[56] In comparison with works by Isaacs and Patterson, however, it seems entirely plausible that Edades' student works were engaging with artists much closer to Seattle than the Philippine accounts allow. In defining modern art in 1935, Edades himself cited Delacroix, Helmholz and Rood alongside "Impressionists and Post-Impressionists"

[56] Edades, "The Case of the Leftist in Art," p.63

as pioneers in the development of a “novel, highly realistic, exuberant” style “vibrating with life and movement.”[57]

Even deprived of direct contact with works by Cézanne and Gauguin, Edades did have access to other sources of modernism which had gained some traction in Seattle by the mid-1920s. In addition to the Seattle Fine Arts Society and through it museums and art societies from the west, northwest and central United States, it is also likely that Edades had at least some access to Mexican modernist art and ideas. Edades’ interest in his Mexican contemporaries has received relatively little attention in the scholarship of Edades’ work, especially in comparison to the consistent emphasis on Cézanne and Gauguin as vital figures in the development of Philippine art. Although Rivera and Orozco are often acknowledged as key influences as well, this is usually done in relation to Edades’ protégé Carlos “Botong” Francisco’s postwar work rather than Edades’ student days. Perhaps because the resonance between Botong’s and the Mexican muralists is so self-evident given how often the artist himself drew attention to it, this relationship has been studied much more extensively than Edades’ own, earlier, interest in the same artists. Like Rivera and his colleagues, Edades was committed to depicting the grim, often dehumanising experience of the urban working class. This is perhaps most evident in *The Builders* and *The Wrestlers* (Figure 21). *The Builders* replicates something of the “planarity and repetition” which Tatiana Flores identifies in Rivera’s *Trapiche* (Sugar Mill, 1923, Figure 22) while both works depict “nondescript anonymous

[57] Edades, “The Case of the Leftist in Art,” p.63

figures who are mostly reduced to action or shape rather than personality on any level" in much the same way as Rivera's factory workers.[58]

The surviving examples of Edades' works from this period, including those that survive only in photographs, are mainly genre scenes, figure studies and portraits of Edades' classmates, colleagues and acquaintances in Seattle. To some extent, this may illustrate the limitations of a body of work designed to fulfill course requirements rather than the young artist's inclinations: however strongly Edades felt the purported affinity for French Post-Impressionism, and however much freedom Isaacs allegedly gave one of his favourite students, he would have been confined to at least some extent by the demands of the University of Washington's syllabus. Edades' interest in images that explore poverty, hard labour and the experience of minority groups seems to have developed a little later, perhaps in the course of his postgraduate work culminating in *The Builders.* The subject matter of *The Builders,* as well as *The Wrestlers* and arguably even *The Sketch,* resonates not only with Rivera's work but also with the Ash Can School and its focus on urban life much more naturally than with the major concerns of French Post-Impressionism. Independently of either set of Western precedents, however, Edades' paintings from this period also show the young artist responding to his own circumstances as a poor foreign student in the Pacific Northwest. As the artist himself suggested, "it is unavoidable" that "the milieu, the environment of an artist is reflected in his works plus, of course, what he gained of universal truth."[59] The sympathy for relative outsiders, especially foreigners and racial minorities, revealed in Edades' portraits and figure studies from this period can

[58] Tatiana Flores, *Mexico's Revolutionary Avant Gardes from Estridentismo to !30-30!,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992, p.120
[59] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.36

be attributed at least in part to Edades' consciousness of his own position as an artist who also supported his studies by working long hours at a salmon cannery between school terms.

With all this in mind, the Armory Hall narrative which has become the standard account of Edades' early career is clearly at odds with both the historical record and the visual evidence of his time at the University of Washington. At the most fundamental level, there is simply no surviving evidence to support Edades' assertion that the Armory Hall exhibition, or anything which would have approximated its contents, ever reached Seattle while he was a student there. In fact, outside Edades' own account some fifty years after the fact, there is no mention at all of such a show either at the time or on the scale described in *Edades: National Artist* and *Edades: Kites and Visions.* Furthermore, the evidence of Edades' own paintings give little credence to the retroactive claim that the aesthetics associated with Cézanne and Gauguin held the most sway over him in the earliest phase of his career. Even if he had encountered French post-impressionist art in Seattle, San Francisco or elsewhere, the visual evidence strongly suggests that, at least at this stage, Edades was more interested in a less idealising realist strand of modernism of the kind more associated with Rivera or the Ash Can school than with Paul Gauguin. Edades' characterisation of his instructors and colleagues at the University of Washington as firmly conservative to the point of disdaining post-impressionist aesthetics is also more complicated than it appears from the vantage point of the Philippines in the mid to late 1970s. Most obviously, the notion that Isaacs and Patterson in particular might have found such art offensive is simply not supported by the visual evidence afforded by their own paintings from before and during

Edades' time in Seattle. In direct contradiction of the accepted account, a close examination of Edades' early works in relation to the approaches to painting espoused by his teachers and colleagues at the University of Washington in the 1920s strongly suggests that the early inspiration for the young artist's interest in modernist art were much closer to home than the work of Cézanne or Gauguin. Gauguin in particular seems to have had much more demonstrable impact on Edades during the 1930s, in no small part through the intervention of Edades' own future collaborators. In contrast, even a passing awareness of paintings by Walter Isaacs and Ambrose Patterson, who are often mentioned by name but rarely studied in-depth in relation to their student, immediately suggests formal and stylistic connections with Edades' work.

As the future Mrs. Edades suggested, categorising Edades' work as either modernist or conservative in the context of 1920s Seattle is difficult to do definitively. Challenging the claims implied by the Armory Hall narrative, Edades' early work does not represent a clear and uncompromising break with the attitudes to painting endorsed by the University of Washington. His genre work was often more uncompromisingly working class in its subject matter than Isaacs or Patterson tended to be in their own paintings, and his pronounced interest in the racial and economic underclasses of the Pacific Northwest was very likely informed as much by his personal circumstances as any affinity for the Ash Can School's interest in the honest grime of city life. On the other hand, the 'distortion' and 'discoloration' in his work do not represent the wild departure from his teacher's practice that the Armory Hall narrative suggests. To the extent that Isaacs and Patterson may be considered

‘conservative’, Edades was somewhat more progressive in his choice of subject matter but not consistently so in his use of colour, line and figuration.

Rather than rejecting American conservative influence in favour of French modernism, then, Edades’ particular innovation at this stage in his career was marrying different strands of modernism, both American and French, to suit his own interests. In this respect, there is more continuity between the trajectory of the young Edades’ career and that of the pensionados who completed their studies in architecture than with the path sketched out by the Armory Hall narrative. Like Arellano, Mapua and the Nakpil brothers, Edades received a thorough grounding in the visual arts as they were practiced and taught in the United States. As a Filipino student abroad, his overseas education comprised not only the courses taught at university but also exposure to a wide range of visual, material and even socio-political ideas that had yet to reach the Philippines in quite the same form. As a student, Edades showed signs of absorbing information and ideas from a variety of different sources ranging from his instructors’ opinions and advice to his own daily life in Seattle and Alaska. Like his colleagues in the field of architecture, he did not immediately express his own perspective as a fully fledged modernist, but took some time to adapt what he was learning to the audience he was trying to reach. While he was still in Seattle, there is every reason to believe that this audience was primarily local rather than Filipino. The notion that his viewpoint was wildly different from that of his contemporaries in Seattle, at least to a degree that would explain their respective reactions to the alleged Armory Hall exhibition, is also somewhat undercut by the enthusiasm with which his own work was received within the same circle. As with the 1925 exhibition hosted by the University of Washington, these events took

place some years after the alleged Armory Hall show would have occurred, so it is not impossible that the art world in Seattle had simply caught up to Edades' early affinity for the Cézanne and Gauguin by this time. The simpler and more broadly persuasive explanation, however, is simply that Edades' work was at least as much a product of the culture within which his perspective as an artist was formed.

Chapter 2: Big Breaks: Columbian Club to Capitol Theatre

Few of the works Edades did not have in his possession when he left Seattle have since been traced. Those that survive outside the Philippines most likely remain in private hands in the Pacific Northwest but have yet to be systematically documented anywhere. Fortunately for the art historical record of the Philippines, Edades did bring many of the paintings he regarded as his most successful from his time at the University of Washington home with him when he returned to Manila. The first exhibition at which these works were shown in the Philippines took place within a month of his return from Seattle. This exhibition, held at the Philippine Columbian Club, has long been regarded as the first salvo in a decades-long conflict between the modernist and conservative factions in the Philippines. While it is certainly true that Edades' "artworks of explicit individualistic style" were unlike anything his predecessors had exhibited at any point in the history of Philippine art,[60] it is less clear that this first attempt to advocate for a more modernist style made much difference to the wider trajectory of Filipino art. Although the exhibition did represent a concerted effort to introduce Manila to Edades' vision of modern art, this chapter will demonstrate that several of the key factors in his eventual success had at least as much to do with the wider context of visual culture in 1930s Manila as with Edades' own art or advocacy.

When Edades departed for the United States, there was little to speak of in the way of a local art scene in the Philippines. As discussed in chapter 1, colonial resources were concentrated on developing architecture and infrastructure, with the visual arts

[60] Horikawa Lisa, 'Imagining Country and Self,' in Low Sze Wee (ed.), *Beyond Declarations and Dreams,* Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2015, *,p.*38

remaining a comparatively low priority. By the time Edades returned, however, the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts was up and running, resulting in much higher numbers of young artists producing visual art from a local perspective and for local as well as colonial buyers. By 1929, the standard to which these young artists aspired was very much set by one of the first graduates of the UP School of Fine Arts, Don Fernando Cueto Amorsolo. Though best remembered in the present day as the "Grand Old Man of Philippine Art"[61] primarily associated with the picturesque nostalgia suggestive of an older age, Amorsolo was in his own way "no less a pioneer" than Edades in his own time.[62] In fact, their early careers followed a more similar trajectory than one might expect from the enduring tendency to characterise these artists as opposing commanders in a generation-long battle for artistic supremacy.

Completing his studies in the Philippines rather than abroad, Amorsolo trained under Fabian de la Rosa at the newly inaugurated art school of the University of the Philippines from 1909 to 1914. The school's director, Raphael Enrique, was best known for emphasising "the thoroughness of Velázquez's manner of painting and the vividness of his colours" to his students, further entrenching the centuries-long tradition of Filipino artists developing their craft primarily in reference to Spanish art historical tradition.[63] Amorsolo's early exposure to Euro-American art was enhanced by "the development and improvement of colour process in printing."[64] Through

[61] Quijano de Manila, 'Homage to the Maestro,' Phillipines Free Press Feb 1 1969, reproduced in Alice M. L. Coseteng, *Philippine Modern Art and its Critics,* Manila: Unesco National Commission of the Philippines, 1972, pp 72-79, p.72
[62] Alfredo R Roces, *Amorsolo*, Philippines and Hong Kong: Vera-Reyes Inc and Toppan Printing Co, 1975, p.30
[63] Castañeda, quoted in Roces, *Amorsolo,* p30
[64] Ibid.

publications like *La Esfera* from Spain, *International Studio* from England and *The Studio* from the United States, young artists of Amorsolo's generation had unprecedented access to works their predecessors could not have expected to see in colour from their classrooms in Manila. Amorsolo and his classmates were therefore able to engage with the works of "Joaquin Sorolla, Zuloaga, Anders Zorn, Manet, Monet, Corot, Millet, Renoir, Gauguin, George Iness, James McNeil Whistler, John Singer Sargent, and the British Gainsborough, Turner, Constable" without making a months-long journey few of them would have been able to afford.[65] This somewhat eclectic blend of influences finds expression in Amorsolo's work in both style and subject matter, resulting in picturesque pastoral scenes described with an impressionistic lightness of touch. At the same time, these works cannot be called purely derivative: if anything, the use of European visual references to capture a uniquely local scene is a precise expression of Philippine visual culture up to this point.

Amorsolo is much admired in the Philippines as a "master of light and local colour" whose work captured cherished memories of agrarian life with unprecedented sensitivity.[66] His preferred palette is considered so distinctive that local art historians commonly refer to a specific shade of vivid light green as 'Amorsolo green' because of how universally it continues to evoke his pastoral works in the minds of viewers several generations removed from their original context.[67] Amorsolo's paintings explore variations on the theme rural life in the Philippines, a subject from which he

[65] Castañeda, quoted in Roces, *Amorsolo,* p.30
[66] Carmita Elisa J Icasiano, 'Rituals and Amorsolo' in *Fernando Amorsolo: Seven Museums Exhibition*, pp55-71, p.57
[67] Purissima Benitez-Johannot, 'Amorsolo's Women Concealed and Revealed' in *Fernando Amorsolo: Seven Museums Exhibition*, pp19-53, p.41

rarely deviated throughout his long career. A representative work in this vein is *Planting Rice* (1926). Like many of Amorsolo's genre scenes, the painting depicts villagers tending to rice fields typical of the Philippine lowlands. A *dalagang bukid* (country maiden) is featured prominently in the left foreground, her back to the audience with her face in profile. In addition to the rice fields and native carabao, the local setting is confirmed by the Spanish-Filipino architecture of the parish church which rises in the background to subtly reinforce the role of Catholic moral values within this idealised vision of Philippine identity. Amorsolo's palette is vibrant without being oversaturated, with not only the characteristically bright 'Amorsolo green' of the crops but also vividly coloured items of clothing drawing the eye while also acknowledging a long tradition of folk culture. This idealised vision of agriculture in the Philippines was already clearly a-chronological if not altogether anachronistic by the 1920s, ignoring the encroachment of modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation and preserving the costume and architecture more closely associated with an earlier age. A work from some twenty years later shows that no amount of social, political and industrial change could motivate Amorsolo to abandon this model entirely. In *Planting Rice* (1951, Figure 23), a country maiden takes centre stage in a scene with obvious similarities to *Planting Rice* (1926). Her bright clothing and pretty face are as vibrant as those of her predecessor, and the landscape remains unfailingly lush and lovely. Instead of a parish church, smoky hills and mountains rise up in the background to complete the composition. The association of the *dalagang bukid* with these scenes of rural work also identifies the beautiful Filipina with the beautiful Philippines, with both "embodying the fertility of the land" and associating the thriving landscape with the population dependent on and

responsible for it.[68] In both paintings, carabao-driven ploughs are the closest approach to modern machinery depicted in either painting while the back-breaking labour of rice farming is presented as a wholesome community activity rather than an ever-expanding capitalist venture not always controlled by those who did most of the work.

Just as Edades did not spring fully-formed from the mind of Cézanne or Gauguin, Amorsolo did not come to prominence in Manila by operating in a vacuum either. By 1928, his closest colleague in Manila was the sculptor Guillermo Tolentino, who graduated from the Ecole de Beaux Arts in New York in the same year that Edades arrived in Seattle. Like Amorsolo, Tolentino combined a deep respect for realistic figuration with a wide-ranging knowledge of techniques and visual approaches from a variety of traditions. His early works clearly demonstrate the neo-classical solidity associated with the Beaux Arts style in which he was trained as well as his lasting admiration for Gianlorenzo Bernini's dramatic, narrative approach to sculpture. Tolentino's work is actually more conservative than Amorsolo's in its references, suggesting some interest in the relatively modern Rodin but otherwise largely avoiding even late 19th-century sculptural tradition in favour of older precedents.

This, then, was the local art scene within which the young Edades hoped to find a place in 1928. He received almost immediate support from Tolentino, who shared both his counsel and his connections generously in part because he felt some kinship for another young Filipino artist educated in the United States. In addition to

[68] Grace Tng, 'Fernando Amorsolo', *Thrice Upon a Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines*, Singapore: Singapore Art Museum, 2009, p.121

making introductions and offering career advice, Tolentino was instrumental in helping Edades secure the space for a self-funded solo exhibition at the Philippine Columbian Club. Frequently regarded as a modernist call to arms from the vantage point of the 1970s, the practical objective of this exhibition was more modest at the time: to introduce Edades to the artists, critics and patrons of the arts in Manila. The monumental *Builders* was given pride of place, not least because of its impressive scale, while portraits and genre scenes made up most of the show. These included the much-lauded *Sketch* as well as *The Market, My Sweetheart, The American Mestiza, The Negro Football Player* and *The Salmon Cannery Worker*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the categorization of Edades' overall approach to painting as either conservative or modernist was ambiguous enough to confuse even his wife in the context of 1920s Seattle. This was much less challenging by contemporary standards in Manila, where Edades' paintings did very much represent a clear departure from the expected norms in both content and philosophy.

Recalling the initial reception to his work some 50 years after the Philippine Columbian Club exhibition, Edades identified several key reasons for this failure to connect with his intended audience. "There were several things that people did not like about my works then. Most obvious was the rough texture, which was just the opposite of Amorsolo's smoothness. And then most of the people I painted, except for the portraits, were not pretty. People also objected to the use of distortion, which they considered ugly. In '*The Builders*,' for example, the arms and legs of the workers were not in proportion. But I painted them that way for the sake of composition. And lastly, there were the colours I used. They were not pretty

colours."[69] He made a similar, even more self-deprecating assessment a few years earlier in conversation with Cid Reyes. "My paintings were conceived in big, forceful masses, with strokes that are invisible, strokes that were new to the viewing public in the Philippines in contrast to Amorsolo's brushstrokes which were very smooth, very fine in technique. His technique was what the public had been accustomed to when they looked at paintings. The rough-and-rugged way I shaped my figures was a bit too much for them. They thought I was a lunatic who did not know how to draw."[70]

Even Tolentino, arguably Edades' biggest supporter at this time, "simply failed to see the artistry in the paintings."[71] This is a fairly accurate summary of contemporary objections to Edades' work. In fact, Edades told Reyes, there was one positive review of his work in 1928. This review, its inclusion in Reyes's 1973 interview, and its implications in the wider history of this period, are discussed at greater length in Chapter 4. In summarising the situation, Edades seems to consider form and style the only salient factors. He emphasises form and colour as the key ways in which his paintings broke with the established conventions of Philippine visual culture without discussing the fact that his work was no less radically different in its subject matter.

While both Amorsolo and Tolentino did make genre works and portraits as well as ambitious historical works on a grand scale, tone and setting consistently grounded them firmly in visual and cultural traditions that were familiar and appealing to Manila's art-buying public. In direct contrast, Edades' uncompromising images of unwashed labourers of indistinct origin working hard at barely-defined tasks must

[69] Edades, quoted in Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, p.46
[70] Edades, quoted in Reyes, *Conversations in Philippine Art,* p.7
[71] Lydia Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.47

have been at least as jarring in tone and subject matter as in his more radical use of brushstroke and colour. Even his more urbane images are hard to place in a way that would not trouble viewers of Amorsolo's work: *The Picnic* features sketched-out nude figures in a broadly identifiable setting, more recognisable as a picnic from the title of the work than from the scene itself, while *The Sketch* is at least as much an exploration of race, gender and relative power dynamics as it is a depiction of an artist at work. National Gallery Singapore curator Lisa Horikawa sees these aspects of Edades' practice as intrinsically linked, arguing that "his vision of modern art was also grounded in his belief in bringing art closer to everyday life."[72] Clearly, represented a very different approach from Amorsolo's glossy yet nostalgic rural scenes.

Edades had no more success finding either encouragement or employment within existing institutions in Manila. Having failed to sell a single painting at the Philippine Columbian Club show, he quickly sought employment as a teacher at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Art, then the only official painting school in Manila.[73] De la Rosa, who as mentioned above had mentored Amorsolo and continued to work closely with both Tolentino and Amorsolo at the department, "categorically" declined to hire an artist whose aims and approaches as an artist diverged so completely with most of his prospective colleagues.[74] These objections illustrate the disjuncture between Edades' aims as an artist, shaped in large part by contemporary developments in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest, and the reality of the art world- and particularly the art market- in the Philippines.

[72] Horikawa, 'Imagining Country and Self,' p.39
[73] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* pp.47-48
[74] Ibid., p.48

Although this moment is often cast as a turning point in the artist's career, with Edades consciously taking up an ideological position in direct opposition to the artists and educators who had refused to work with him, his work and whatever ideology it may have been seen as espousing were received not as a radical threat to the status quo but with general apathy. As Rod Paras-Perez summarised it, "public reaction- as with most audiences confronted with something unfamiliar- was one inaudible grumble and subsequent indifference."[75] As a result, Edades had enough gaining any recognition at all as an artist in Manila without also trying to advocate for new approaches to either his own profession or the formation of future generations. Instead, he took Tolentino's advice yet again and sought alternative employment. In the end, a local politician from Edades' home town helped him to secure a job at the Department of Architecture at the Bureau of Public Works. Here, Edades drew not on his two degrees in Fine Arts but on his early, ultimately abandoned training as an architect to design "plazas and capitols" in the Beaux Arts style favoured in both Seattle and Manila during the 1920s.[76]

1931-35: Breaking the Mould

Given Edades' somewhat reluctant recourse to architecture, it is all the more serendipitous that contemporary developments in that field rather than the fine arts would fundamentally transform the viability of American-influenced modernism as a visual language for the Philippines. As discussed in Chapter 1, a series of high-profile public buildings commissioned in 1926 signalled the beginning of an ongoing

[75] Paraz-Peres, *Edades and the Thirteen Moderns,* p.7
[76] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.48

project intended to establish Manila as the urban centre of modern Southeast Asia. Most significantly, this was the first generation of native Filipinos to qualify as architects in their own right instead of having to work as craftsmen and labourers under the supervision of colonial architects.

Several of the *pensionados* who had left the Philippines for the United States around the same time as Edades quickly became major players in this endeavour. Thomas Mapua, the first Filipino architect registered in the Philippines, had become the supervising architect at the Bureau of Public Works, marking the first time in the history of visual culture in the Philippines that native-born architects had free rein over the design of such public institutions as the Legislative Building (Arellano, 1926, Figure 24) or Philippine General Hospital. The buildings produced during this phase of development were mostly neoclassical in their approach, reflecting the Beaux Arts style which had been most fashionable when both artists were completing their training in the United States.[77] Although Arellano and his contemporaries were allowed to qualify fully instead of serving in more limited roles under colonial oversight as previous generations had been expected to, Gerard Lico emphasises that this arrangement was not as wholly progressive as it may first appear. “In a colonial society, the knowledge systems of the colonist assume a privileged position while local knowledge may be subdued or repressed in the pursuance of modernity. Colonial tutelage or the act of teaching or channeling knowledge originating from the metropole to the local artisanal populace who would comprise the corps of professionals in the colony was accomplished through the pensionado

[77] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino,* p.287

programme."[78] The *pensionados* did gain unprecedented access to both training and funding under the American regime, but the deliberately hegemonic architectural programme of the Beaux Arts style, especially in its associations with the values and intellectual precedents of both Europe and North America, somewhat limited their capacity to express a uniquely Filipino viewpoint through their early work. By the time Edades returned to Manila, however, both Arellano and Mapua were beginning to set their sights on a more contemporary mode of expression which offered a lot more flexibility in the incorporation of non-Western design elements.

Juan Arellano's Metropolitan Theatre (Figure 25) was the first major Art Deco building constructed in the Philippines. Completed in 1931, Arellano's first venture in the direction of modernist architecture could not be more removed from the solid, grammatical predictability of the neoclassical style in which he had already distinguished himself. Far from the "civilizational dynamic predicated on the marmoreal tradition of the ages,"[79] Arellano's approach to designing the Metropolitan Theater produced a brightly coloured, wildly eclectic tropical parfait not at all indebted to the tradition from which his own earlier work stemmed. A rectangular auditorium, designed to seat 1670 people, was flanked on either side by pavilions. Its exterior was a vibrant pink decorated with sponged-on details suggesting patterns from traditional weaving or embroidery, with an interior as ambitious as the scale of the theatre suggests.

[78] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino,* p.287
[79]Ibid., p.310

The most striking departure from previous architectural forms in Manila was the capacity of Art Deco to accommodate elements of native flora, fauna and material culture without compromising the overall aesthetic. Arellano did this at every possible opportunity, using bamboo-shaped banisters and lighting details, ceiling reliefs in the form of carefully carved bananas and mangos and batik-patterned mosaic to infuse every aspect of the Metropolitan Theatre's interior with local flavor.[80] The use of grillwork featuring "stylised birds of paradise" further illustrates Arellano's ability to adapt distinctly local content into the streamlined repeating motifs associated with Art Deco. The second-generation architect Juan Nakpil took this one step further at the Capitol Theatre (1935). Low-relief carvings combine traditional material culture with modernist technology as stylised figures of Filipina women in traditional dress, recalling Amorsolo's country maidens, carry icons of cinema and sound to allude directly to the purpose of the building where they are installed. This use of "purely native ornamentation" was unique in the history of Philippine architecture, which had previously been imported according to colonial preference for some 400 years.[81] It is worth noting that the definition of 'local' could be somewhat flexible: decorative murals cover the walls of the Hidalgo-Lim dining room with tropical foliage typical of the Philippines but also prominently feature a scarlet macaw native to Central and South America.

Art Deco also offered some practical advantages in comparison with the Beaux Arts style which preceded it. Where neo-classical buildings were largely calculated to invoke imported ideas about democracy, capitalism and urbanization through equally

[80] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino*, p. 350
[81] Lourdes R. Montinola, 'The Metropolian Theatre,' *Art Deco in the Philippines,* pp83-103, p.88

foreign materials and motifs, Art Deco offered Filipino architects much more scope to embrace and even incorporate Manila's tropical environment both literally and in their use of ornamentation. Agosto Villalón cites Pablo Antonio's work for the Far Eastern University as particularly illustrative, utilising "machine-age" technology to make use of reinforced concrete, reinforced steel and galvanised iron while also adapting typically Art Deco architectural features in response to the local weather. In particular, "thin concrete slabs broke flat façades, protruding from unadorned wall surfaces to protect door and window openings from torrential monsoon rains and the hot sun."[82] Ornamental features could be made functional in this way as well, as when Antonio adapted a motif already well-explored in Art Deco architecture to local conditions by using a checkerboard of open and closed squares of glass to promote air circulation. Elements from traditional architecture, such as the high ceilings and cross ventilation typical of the *bahay na bato* (literally "house of stone," local architecture typical of the Spanish colonial era), could also be incorporated seamlessly both as a nod to Philippine architectural heritage and in response to the climate that had made those features desirable in the first place. Villalón also argues that the tropical gardens which surrounded Art Deco buildings in the Philippines "further softened" the sharp lines of a style otherwise closely associated with mechanization and industry,[83] but the extent to which this can be seen as a deliberate choice on the part of Filipino architects is debatable. Both Mapua and Arellano also made use of local materials on many occasions, using bamboo and other native species of wood in their interiors for private homes and public buildings.

[82] Agosto Villalón, *Art Deco in the Philippines*, p.14
[83] Villalón, *Art Deco in the Philippines*, p.15

Art Deco innovations thus broke with the norms of Manila's visual culture in much the same way that Edades saw himself as doing in his paintings, yet they received a much warmer initial reception than the muddy, "distorted" paintings shown at the Philippine Columbian Club around the same time. Where Edades' work had been derided as ugly, inaccessible and generally devoid of appeal, Arellano's foray into modernist architecture three years earlier was hailed as "the most magnificent and impressive structure ever erected in the Philippines."[84] Ruben Ramas Cañete suggests that, at least for Guillermo Tolentino, modernist architecture was much easier to parse than modern art because the Art Deco aesthetic continued to prioritise forms that were "streamlined" and "pleasing" and therefore still intelligible to Manila's more conservative artists.[85] Arellano and Mapua were therefore able to depart from the Beaux Arts conventions with which Manila's art community were most familiar without entirely abandoning the appeal to the beauty, order and perfection which Tolentino saw as fundamental to the artistic endeavor.[86]

Indeed, Rod Paraz-Perez characterises this disagreement about "the primacy of the *beau idéal* over expression as an aesthetic principle" as the main contention between Tolentino and Edades- and by extension the conservative and modernist schools active in Manila for much of the twentieth century.[87] This is abundantly evident in an article from 1948 in which an exchange of letters between Edades and Tolentino is reproduced for the public's edification. Tolentino claimed to "adore

[84] A. V. Hartendorp, Philippine Education Magazine, 1932, quoted in Montinola, The Metropolian Theatre,pp83-103
[85] Reuben Ramas Cañete, 'Guillermo Tolentino,' BluPrint Volume 5 (September 2010), pp 30-32, reproduced in Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays Reviews and Interviews on Philippine Art*, Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, pp74-76
[86] Tolentino, 'Modern Art?', Sunday Times Magazine, August 15, 1948, quoted in Cañete, 'Fernando Amorsolo,' *Contemporary Art Philippines* (Nov-Dec 2008), pp 74-81, reproduced in Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays, Reviews, and Interviews on Philippine Art*, pp77-83
[87] Rod Paraz-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns*, p.14

modern architecture" and "highly admire the modern architect," prompting Edades to object that "adoring modern architecture is inconsistent with abhorring modern painting."[88] Tolentino, having already clarified that his objection was not to the whole category of modernist painting but to "those distorted ones" in particular, re-asserted his view that "works of art that do not possess the quality to please the onlookers are just the opposite- they are anti-aesthetic."[89] Arellano seems to have agreed with this assessment, dismissing Edades as a mere provincial hopeful when he attributed the young artist's unorthodox style not to any modernist inclination but to his unsophisticated roots as an outsider "from the farm regions."[90] It is worth noting that Arellano's apparently off-hand comment reveals an aspect of Edades' early ventures in Manila that is not often acknowledged in the scholarship of this period: the intellectual community active at the time was a privileged elite, and questions of race, class and social status played a significant role in determining a newcomer's prospects. At this stage, then, the issues motivating Edades' dissension related more to his own immediate concerns than the intellectual priorities which would underscore his later scholarship of the period.

Whether Arellano appreciated Edades' earlier work or not, the presence of overtly modernist architecture as epitomised by his own Metropolitan Theatre helped to prompt a cultural turning point that Edades could not conceivably have engineered independently. Crucially, the new buildings were commissioned works, endorsed first by the Commonwealth government and then by the wealthy elite whose personal patronage continued to dictate standards of taste in Manila. These new buildings,

[88] Tolentino and Edades, Distortion in Art, This Week, 12 September 1948, reproduced in Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns,* pp 29-32.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Juan Arellano, quoted in Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p. 47

both public and private, offered a tacit endorsement of modernism which more or less literally opened doors for similar advancements in the visual arts.

The key moment for Edades came when Juan Nakpil was charged with designing the new Capitol Theater in Escolta. With postgraduate qualifications in architecture from Harvard University in addition to a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Kansas, Nakpil was much more aware of and sympathetic towards the latest developments in art and architecture in both Europe and North America than most of his contemporaries in Manila. He is best known for the natural, apparently intuitive, manner in which he incorporated traditional Filipino forms and aesthetic sensibilities into an otherwise streamlined, machine-age aesthetic.[91] Less sceptical of modern art in general and Edades' version of it in particular, Nakpil was quick to recognise the artist as a fellow modernist and an ideal collaborator. With his experience in architecture as well as modern art, Edades was all the more qualified to interpret and execute both the spatial and the ornamental demands of such a project.[92] With the support of his own backers, Ernesto and Vicente Rufino, Nakpil was able to circumvent the personal politics and professional biases associated with the official channels to recruit Edades privately. The result is still remembered as the series of works which brought modernist art to the attention of the Filipino public for the first time.

[91] Ruben Ramas Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays, Reviews, and Interviews on Philippine Art,* Manila: UST Publishing House, 2012, p.90
[92] Ibid.

Breaking New Ground: 'Triumvirate of Modernism'

The first work Edades made on commission for Nakpil was *Rising Philippines,* an ambitious painting intended for the lobby of Nakpil's Capitol Theatre. Because of the challenging scale of the commission, Edades decided to take on two assistants rather than complete the work alone. By his own account, Edades' first choice for a collaborator was the rising star Carlos "Botong" Francisco, who in turn recommended Galo B. Ocampo as the third member of their team.[93] Botong and Ocampo had been classmates at the University of the Philippines School of Fine Art, where both impressed their colleagues and instructors but ultimately dropped out before graduating. Both adapted quickly to working under Edades' instruction, completing most of the painting and drawing involved in the commissioned works while their new mentor focused on planning scenes that would make sense in relation to the space for which they was intended. Commanding the lobby of the Capitol Theater, *Rising Philippines* explores the relationship between the Philippines, represented by a female figure ascending diagonally across the picture space, and the two sets of colonial influence which had in so many ways determined its history, culture and ideology. The United States of America, represented by a wreathed figure identified not only by the American coat of arms but also the Statue of Liberty nestled in the crook of her arm, is seated in direct opposition to the figure of España, recognizable from both the Spanish coat of arms and an elaborate veiled headdress. Where the figure of America seems to be associated with such classical systems as democracy and the rule of law, suggested by the neo-classical buildings on the left of the image, España is associated especially with the Philippines' Catholic identity, represented by the crucifix in her left hand and the traditional blessing she offers with her right.

[93] Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays, Reviews, and Interviews on Philippine Art,* pp.85-86

She is attended by figures representing various indigenous groups, suggesting the establishment of national boundaries during the early stages of colonialism. In addition to Manila Cathedral and the University of Santo Tomas, illustrating the Spanish involvement in religious and intellectual life in the Philippines, a Spanish galleon represents the earliest phase of colonial economic activity in the region.[94] In contrast, America appears to offer encouragement to more contemporary figures associated with the modernisation and industrialisation of labour and agriculture in the Philippines.[95] Up to this point, the characterisation of the relationship between the Philippines and its colonial past resonates extremely strongly with Maximo M. Kalaw's near-contemporary characterisation of the Filipino population as "an Oriental people standing at the portals of Asia, in deep sympathy with its kindred neighbours yet with hands outstretched to the cultures of Spain and America."[96]

Behind the allegorical figure of the Philippines are the local, modern institutions not strictly associated with either Spain or the USA. The Legislative Building illustrates the recently instituted Commonwealth government while the new Capitol Theatre itself serves as a prime example of a prominent site of cultural exchange conceptualised, built and populated by native talent.[97] A steamship and passenger jet together also suggest the cutting edge of modern technology as well, perhaps, as the effects of these advancements in safe, speedy transportation on the potential for

[94] Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate', p.93
[95] Ibid.
[96] Maximo M. Kalaw, *Introduction to Philippine Social Science,* Manila, 1937, p. 185, quoted in Ahmad Mashadi, 'Moments of Regionality: Negotiating Southeast Asia,' *Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum*, Singapore and Makati City: Singapore Art Museum and Ayala Foundation, 2004, pp25-37, p.27
[97] Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate', p.93

a political, artistic, and cultural life beyond the immediate borders of the Philippine islands.

Rising Philippines impressed Edades' patrons enough to prompt another, more ambitious commission for another new theatre also designed by Nakpil and funded by the Rufino brothers. This work, titled *Music*, explored "indigenous music as performed by indigenous communities" across the walls of the new State Theatre.[98] In the same year, the trio also provided smaller-scale murals for the homes of Nakpil as well as both Rufino brothers. These works, particularly the public murals, received enough attention in the press to earn Edades, Botong and Ocampo the nickname 'Triumvirate of Modernism' in acknowledgment of their status as pioneers of the new style. Unfortunately, all but one of the murals from this period were destroyed within a decade of their completion, casualties of the bombing Manila endured during the Second World War.[99] As a result, the private commission *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* (Figure 27) has taken on much greater significance in the scholarship of Filiipino modernism as the last extant work from this series. Although its subject matter is less ideologically charged than *Rising Philippines* and its scale less grand than *Music,* the work is representative of many aspects of the collaborative works from this period.

Like the other mural works Edades worked on with Ocampo and Botong, *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* was painted on canvas rather than directly on the wall for which it was intended. At 257.5 x 272.8 cm in size, the painting is much larger than might be expected of a simple, largely decorative pastoral scene. Like the

[98] Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays Reviews and Interviews on Philippine Art*, p. 86
[99] Ibid.

rest of the mural commissions, the painting was intended for a specific location, in this case the grand dining room of Ernesto Rufino's private residence. As such, the dimensions of the work relate less to its content than to its function: its grand scale relates to the wider context of the room for which it was made as well as the contents of the work. This is also true of the other mural works, the scale and composition of which consistently reflect the artists' spatial awareness.

Even though the works were painted on canvas rather than directly applied to the walls for which they were made, they were conceived as site-specific commissions. As such, the context for which the paintings were intended also determined their content. *Rising Philippines* would seem to be the most literal in this regard, not only incorporating formal elements which mirror the room in which it was situated but also depicting the theatre itself within the painting. *Music* makes no overt reference to the State Theatre as a physical building, but explores the theme of entertainment through its contemplation of indigenous instruments. This continues the emphasis on the representation of indigenous culture already being explored in *Rising Philippines*. The work survives only in photographs of fragmentary details showing individual figures marked as indigenous by the costumes they wear as much as the instruments they play, such as a nose flute and traditional drums. The musicians are depicted entirely immersed in a melody which can only be conveyed by visual means, which may be why several figures are depicted with their eyes closed in concentration as if carried away by tunes the viewer can only imagine. Tellingly, this is a device both Botong and Ocampo would revisit in separate explorations of music and dance later in their own careers. A visual rhythm is also built up through the use of repeating horizontal bands of light and dark colours in the

musicians' costumes as well as in their stylised streams of "hair like waving banners"[100] which emphasise the sense of movement and particularly the passage of air in images of woodwind and percussion instruments. The meticulous interest in capturing the cultural and ideological heritage of a nation with such diverse influences, from recent colonial innovations to indigenous traditions, informs *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* as much as it does the two more public mural works done for the Capitol and State Theatres. Again, this reflects the interests and approaches of Galo Ocampo and especially Botong Francisco as well as the overall decorative scheme applied to the environments for which the works were made.

In *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest,* the natural abundance of the Philippine landscape is directly connected with the purpose of the room itself: in the dining room of a grand house where guests were often entertained, many of the examples of Mother Nature's bounty depicted in the Triumvirate's harvest scene would have been served with some regularity within sight of the painting. The composition of the work seems to acknowledge this as well: the thick foliage in the foreground of the image creates an almost three-dimensional divide between the viewer and the picture space. This device complicates the relationship between real and imagined space, setting up the illusion that the physical space occupied by the viewer opens out onto the idealised landscape behind the barrier of leaves and branches that separates them.

The mural works from this period also offer valuable insight into the working process by which three of the most distinctive artists in the history of Philippine

[100] Cañete, *Art and its Contexts: Essays Reviews and Interviews on Philippine Art*, p.94

Modernism were able to express a unified artistic vision in their collaborations. Almost two decades older than his assistants, Edades led the team in both artistic and practical matters while leaving much of the actual painting to Botong and Ocampo.[101] The elements of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* and the other mural works which seem most obviously drawn from Edades' personal approach to Modernism include the flattening of the picture space and the prioritisation of colour and composition over the establishment of a single viewpoint in the composition.[102] The description of the almost faceless, well-muscled men at work, especially the central figure bowed down by the weight of the load he carries, also bear a certain resemblance to figures from *The Builders*. These heavyset labourers reflect the "solid earthiness" which seemed brand-new to the Philippine public of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the local art scene having "thrived on sweet and delicate images" of the kind associated with Amorsolo.[103] At the same time, however, the mural works also represent a marked contrast with Edades' independent works. The colour scheme and graphic approach correlate much more to the individual works of his young followers Botong and Ocampo, who both continued to favour brighter colours and a more graphic approach throughout their careers. This supports Edades' characterisation of his own role as largely advisory, determining the subject matter and overall approach while leaving most of the execution to his collaborators.

The dominant narrative in Philippine art history portrays Botong as Edades' natural successor, the "foremost muralist in the country" in his own generation just as

[101] Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate,' p.86
[102] Ibid.
[103] Felipe M. de Leon, Jr, *The Filipino Nation: Philippine Art and Literature.* Philippines: Grolier International, 1982, p.71

Edades was "*the* muralist of the pre-war period."[104] Edades claimed to admire Botong's "facility in drawing" in particular, noting that "no one could beat him in draftsmanship."[105] Ocampo concurred, speaking to his colleague's efficiency as well as his competence when he recalled that "if Botong had time to spare[…]it was because he could sketch in half an hour a production design that would, in my estimate, take a whole team two weeks to draw."[106] The graphic quality typical of Botong's style comes across clearly in the mural collaborations, especially in the treatment of fabric, which often appears both softly translucent and heavily draped, and the solid, clearly defined musculature of figures both clothed and semi-nude. The wide-ranging cultural and historical references in the more content-laden murals also suggest one of Botong's guiding principles: "Know your history and people. They are endless sources of art."[107] This approach is especially evident in Botong's later large-scale history paintings. The meticulous attention to specific detail in the triumvirate's collaborative works, especially in combination with a certain mythologising tendency, also seems likely to be a sign of Botong's personal influence, the artist having had a passion for storytelling second only to his love for art.[108] The visual dominance of Botong's hand in the mural collaborations may also be explained by the artist's approach to conceptualising a work of art: "He would lie on his back nibbling a blade of grass, one leg flung over the other, his eyes closed. He looked as if he was just relaxing, but he was creatively occupied. When he got up, the composition was already complete, down to the last detail, ready to be

[104] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, p.80
[105] Victorio Edades, quoted in Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate,' p.85
[106] Galo Ocampo, handwritten letter reproduced in Virginia Ty-Navarro and Paul C. Zafaralla, *Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art*, Kyoto: Nissha Printing Co., 1985, p.24
[107] Botong Francisco, quoted in D. M. Reyes, 'Miracle of Rare Device,' in Flores (ed.), *The Life and Art of Carlos Botong Francisco,* pp40-77, p.56
[108] Ty-Navarro and Zafaralla, *Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art*, p.13

painted."[109] While this deeply individual process was mediated by the lively and often extended discussions Botong conducted with Edades and Ocampo between their formulating individual visions for the mural works and the eventual selection of a final sketch, it does suggest that Botong's personal style tended to underpin the works for which he was primarily responsible at the drafting stage.

Where Edades spoke of Botong in terms of his raw talent, his account of working with Galo Ocampo stresses their intellectual and academic relationship instead. From the beginning of their association, Edades recalled, "Galo was more knowledgeable, shall we say. He liked to read, and he absorbed everything he read. He was also a fine writer, and in the Thirties he wrote regularly about Modern Art." Again, Ocampo seemed to agree with Edades' assessment when he suggested that "my greatest contribution to the group was my ideas."[110] Visual analysis seems to confirm this: while Ocampo's use of bold, largely static poses, highly decorated backgrounds and stylised hair and fabric do suggest the influence of these early works on his mature style, his independent work consistently bears more thematic and ideological resonance than visual affinity with these early collaborative works. At the same time, however, Alice Guillermo contends that Ocampo's "strong sense of figurative structure with strains of block-like cubist influence" also proved formative to the harmonised style of the Triumvirate.[111] This is most evident in *Music* (Figures 25-26), which has much in common with Ocampo's later works exploring music and dance in the indigenous Philippines. Like Edades, Ocampo would go on to shape the dominant train of thought in local art history by engaging in high-profile, often

[109] Ty-Navarro and Zafaralla, *Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art*, p.16
[110] Ocampo, quoted in Advincula, 'Galo's Other Views', p.42
[111] Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate,' p.87

protracted “polemics with Amorsolo’s defenders” on the subject of the conservative school vis-à-vis the Triumvirate’s new approach to visual art in the Philippines.[112]

As the last-surviving member of the Triumvirate of Modernism, Galo Ocampo ultimately got the final say in assessing the individual contributions of each member of the group. Reflecting on the first major works of his career, he recalled that “we let Edades choose the design” in most of the mural works.[113] Overall Ocampo believed that “Botong’s style was most evident” because “he did most of the work” while Edades and Ocampo expended more energy on the academic and institutional work of establishing their emerging style as a plausible option in the mind of artists and audiences alike.[114] Diosdado Lorenzo, a friend and later colleague of all three artists, also remembered that “it was Galo and Botong” who were responsible for most of minutia of Edades’ mural projects while Edades supported the other two not only through direct mentorship but also by pushing their shared agenda through other channels.[115] In this light, these collaborations illustrate Edades’ personal vision not only for the commissioned works from this period but for those developments of Modernism in the Philippines which would find a fuller, more formalised expression in the formation of the Thirteen Moderns by the late 1930s. Rather than asserting his aesthetic preferences in the immediate term, Edades thus focused his efforts on the task of starting the conversation which would continue to shape the practice and reception of modern art in the Philippines for generations to come.

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[112] ‘An Amorsolo Festival,’ first pubished in the Philippine Sunday Express, 6 November 1975, pp24-27; reproduced in Benesa, *What is Philippine about Philippine Art? And Other Essays,* pp125-129, p.127

[113] Ocampo, interviewed in Emelyn G. Advincula, ‘Galo’s Other Views’ in Rod. Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns*, Manila: Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1995, p.42

[114] Ocampo, interviewed in Advincula, ‘Galo’s Other Views’ in Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns*, p.42

[115] Diosdado Lorenzo, quoted in Marilen M. Perfecto, ‘Diosdado Lorenzo on Galo’s: Interview with Mr. Diosdado Lorenzo’ in Paras-Perez, *Edades and the 13 Moderns*, p.43

In terms of the opposition developing between Edades' modernism and Amorsolo's conservatism, the mural works clearly broke with the academic, even romantic style still prevalent in the curriculum of the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts where Ocampo and Botong had been classmates for a short time between 1928 and 1929. In her essay exploring the early forays into Modernism by artists operating in late colonial Southeast Asia, Lisa Horikawa discusses the collaboration between Edades, Botong and Ocampo in terms of the "highly refined synthesis of international visual language" evident in these works.[116] Ocampo identified Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse as the three artists whose work exerted the most direct influence on the early development of both his and Botong's artistic practice both together and separately. Lorenzo seems to agree with this assessment to at least some degree, but names Cézanne's work as having particular influence on Edades rather than his two protégés.[117] This is evident in a direct comparison of the three artists' separate work as individuals: both Ocampo and Botong favour a much brighter colour palette than Edades as well as a flatter, more ornamented picture space. They also embrace Gauguin's interest in the tropical as an exotic escape from urban reality to a much greater degree than Edades. This will be developed further in chapter 3. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, Edades' interest in and reference to Cézanne was not only influenced but also moderated by a series of American intermediaries, most significantly the Ash Can School and his own instructors at the University of Washington.

[116] Horikawa, 'Imagining Country and Self,' p.39
[117] Diosdado Lorenzo, quoted in Perfecto, 'Diosdado Lorenzo on Galo's: Interview with Mr. Diosdado Lorenzo', p.43

The mural works also show the influence of contemporary developments in Manila, especially the Art Deco style with which the murals had to harmonise.[118] The "strong sense of design and linear quality" which Alice Guillermo recognises in *Rising Philippines*[119] is equally evident in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest,* especially in the more stylised, almost graphic description of the heavenly figures occupying the upper third of the image. Lisa Horikawa also recognises the influence of Art Nouveau on the "organic forms, asymmetrical lines and absence of one-point perspective" which inform the work's decorative scheme.[120] Edades himself saw the "flat manner" of painting he associated with Cézanne's modernism as an effective reference for mural works in particular as these had to be designed to remain "in harmony with the walls of the building, which are flat."[121] The artist identified Persian and Chinese sources as having resonated especially strongly with him at this point.[122] In visualising the Triumvirate's approach to creating public works for the Filipino public, Edades also drew on "the strength and simplicity of Mexican muralists," especially Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, whose works were known to him from his travels in America and to his followers from the books he had brought back with him.[123] This "library of Edades" was a crucial resource for the younger artists, who had been shown few examples of modern art in the course of their education before Edades shared his personal resources.[124] The facility with which the 'triumvirate' synthesised references from a wide range of sources resonated well with the "highly eclectic and hybridised aesthetic" of Art Deco as practiced by the second generation

[118] Ayala Museum, *Edades: Images of Nation*, Makati City: Ayala Foundation, 2012, p.12
[119] Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate', p.96
[120] Horikawa, 'Imagining Country and Self,' p.39
[121] Edades, quoted in Guillermo, 'The Triumvirate', p.90
[122] Ibid.
[123] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist*, p.70
[124] Ibid.

of Filipino architects.[125] In spite of the obvious resonance between these approaches to art and architecture, the facility for adapting elements from a variety of cultural sources for local use was not unique to the modernist turn in the Philippines.

At the same time, Edades maintained that "the influence of one artist over another should be tempered by intelligence and the proper use of materials."[126] Just as Edades drew inspiration from Cézanne without simply replicating the latter's style, he argued, the mural collaborations show the three artists of the Triumvirate synthesising a wide variety of local and international visual references without compromising the "unity of styles in their work."[127] The artists were thus able to demonstrate their wide-ranging knowledge of and critical engagement with a variety of sources from both Eastern and Western traditions, especially in relation to their developing interest in crafting a recognizably Filipino style of painting, while still working towards a shared outcome. In this way, Edades, Botong and Ocampo were able to bring their own strengths together in a single work, achieving harmony not only between their distinct approaches to painting but between the myriad of separate and collective references which informed their collaboration. Again, the eclecticism already associated with Art Deco proved highly compatible with the wide range of visual references made in these works.

Another element of the painting which differentiates *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* from anything produced by the conservative school is its colour palette, which is on the whole more stylised than realistic. A variety of subtly differentiated

[125] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipino*, p.324
[126] Ibid., p.28
[127] Lorenzo, quoted in Perfecto, 'Diosdado Lorenzo on Galo's: Interview with Mr. Diosdado Lorenzo', p.43

golden yellows and deep greens evoke the lush natural foliage of an idealised pastoral setting, but there is little of the "hot light and delight" which give Amorsolo's romanticised landscapes their distinctive sensuality.[128] The much-mentioned influence of Gauguin and Cézanne may be most evident in the use of colour fields rather than linear perspective to define spatial relations within the image.[129] The yellow-green cast to the skin of some of the female figures in the work also recalls Gauguin's Tahitian period. The striking contrast between large areas of deep green and the spreading swathes of gold, as well as the smaller, more startling touches of vibrant orange which punctuate the picture space, also demonstrate the influence of Post-Impressionism on the Triumvirate. There may also be a local source for this treatment of colour, the Moro tribe in particular being associated with the use of stark complementary colours in their traditional dress.[130] Of the three artists involved, Ocampo's solo works bear the closest resemblance to *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* in its treatment of tone and colour. This also reflects the settings each artist favoured in their independent work: the muddier reds, browns and dark greens typical of Edades suited his grittier, more urban subject matter just as Ocampo's preference for more self-consciously tropical themes and motifs called for an equally lush colour palette. While Botong's later works reflect more visual connection with Ocampo's oeuvre than Edades' in both form and content, his mature style often incorporated an even brighter, sometimes lurid, range of pinks, greens and yellows. This was drawn from his work in other media, most prominently illustration and costume design, and served to give the historical figures Botong often depicted a pop sensibility reminiscent of contemporary superhero comics. Each artist also

[128] de Manila, 'Homage to the Maestro,' p.77
[129] Ayala Museum, *Edades: Images of Nation*, p.12
[130] Winfield Scott Smilth (ed.), *The Art of the Philippines 1521-1957,* Manila: Associated Publishers Incl., 1958, p.45

retained in their own work the unique qualities they brought to the collaborative works: Ocampo would take the colour-blocking evident in these works much further, experimenting with cubism over much of his later career, while Botong continued to develop his distinct and predominantly graphic style.

While the colours used in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* are vibrant to the point of idealisation, the individual elements described in the painting are very much grounded in reality. The bounty harvest depicted is comprised of fruits and vegetables which remain staples of both the Filipino diet and the economy of the Philippines to this day. Most prominent in the composition is the spreading papaya tree, impressive but not unrealistic in scale, which fills the centre of the picture space. Bananas also appear prominently, not only in two picturesque bunches but in a full comb generous enough to overwhelm the worker tasked with bringing it in. Other key crops which feature prominently are corn and pineapple, both of which were first cultivated in the Philippines using samples transported from Spanish colonies in South America. While these are still farmed substantially for both local consumption as well as export to this day,[131] they may also have been included as a subtle reminder of the Spanish influence on Filipino identity. Only one animal is included in the image, a hefty carabao being guided into the picture space from the left of the image. The use of the bullock and its partially depicted cart to allude to work done elsewhere also helps to compound the theme of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest,* emphasising a deliberate gathering-in of disparate elements from across a nation composed of not hundreds but thousands of separate islands. This, too, is a theme to which Botong and Ocampo would return time and again in their individual

[131] Philippine Statistics Authority, *Major Crops of the Philippines 2010-14*, 2014, 2014, p. iii

practice. More significantly in view of Edades' earlier trouble finding traction for the themes and motifs which had interested him in Seattle, it also explored the idea of work in a much more accessible context than *The Builders*. The critique of urban systems strongly implied in the latter work is also absent here except to the extent that the a-colonial rural idyll presented may be considered preferable to the lived reality of Commonwealth-era Manila.

The general response to the public works by 'Atelier Edades,' as these works were sometimes signed, was far warmer than the reception of the 1928 Philippine Columbian Club show. This was, in large part, due to the nature of the commissioned works: the Atelier Edades murals were conceived not as standalone works but as part of a cohesive artistic and architectural whole. They therefore connected both visually and thematically not only to other works in the series but also to the buildings in which they were situated. Rather than challenging an unprepared viewer to make sense of an entirely new approach to art in the way that *Builders* or *The Sketch* might have done in 1928, then, the mural commissions of 1935-36 supported and enhanced an overall approach to design in their respective settings. They were in turn framed as a natural and even necessary part of a pre-conceived whole, with both style and content speaking to the wider context of the space for which they were made.

On top of this, the fact that the mural works were commissioned specifically in the context of these new Art Deco buildings meant that they were generally seen by an audience which arrived already disposed favourably or at least sympathetically towards the new aesthetic approaches embraced by the artists and architects alike.

The recognisably Filipino motifs in these works, from the flora and fauna to specific tools, weapons and items of clothing, also appealed to a much wider section of the works' audience than had responded to Edades' scenes of urban working life in the United States. Although the works of this period are often seen as breaking entirely with visual tradition in Manila, they also represent much greater continuity with Amorsolo's idealising agrarian works than with Edades' efforts up to this point. The mural works are also much more generally harmonious, visually appealing and thematically relatable in the immediate context of the Philippines. In fact, *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* goes much farther than Amorsolo ever did in exploring the spiritual aspect of rural work by depicting not a church but God Himself, attended by angels, watching over the workers.

The use of Art Deco not only for residential buildings and traditional theatres but especially for the new "popcorn palaces" proved advantageous to Edades' developing cause as well. Because cinemas were in direct competition with each other in a way that traditional theatres were not, owners deliberately took advantage of public interest in Art Deco architecture to give their buildings specific appeal through a unique visual identity.[132] Targeting a larger demographic than theatres designed for stage performances, these locations attracted a wider audience both in terms of numbers and in terms of economic and educational status. As a result, the association of modernist art both with the clearly modern technology of the cinema helped Edades and his followers reach a new audience independently of the usual processes by which artists interacted with patrons. This helped to cement the impression that modernist architecture offered an entirely new way forward, not only

[132] Gerard Rey Lico, 'Popcorn Palaces,' *Art Deco in the Philippines,* p.118

accommodating but actively seeking to incorporate new ways of seeing into modes of expression that had previously been determined primarily by colonial systems. The *Monday Mail* article in which Edades denounced the conservatism of Filipino aesthetics suggests that he recognised and approved of this trend towards the democratization of art in the Philippines: "Speaking of murals, Professor Edades entertains a happy future for them in this country. He said that gradually the Filipino public is becoming more conscious of the importance of art in ordinary life. Now theatres, public buildings private mansions are beginning to be adorned with murals."[133] As demonstrated by the article itself, this much wider audience brought Edades' work to enough prominence to give his views unprecedented significance the local press.

Armory Hall Narrative

Manila's 'triumvirate of modernism' would go on to set the tone and pace of art and art education in the Philippines in the second half of the twentieth century. Becoming not only the foremost artists but also the teachers and historians who determined the trajectory of modernism in their local context both at the time and in retrospect, Edades and Ocampo had the rare privilege of not only shaping the course of art history but also recording it on their own terms. While Botong rarely concerned himself with historiography, he was no less influential through his contributions as the most prolific public artist of his generation. As such, the Armory Hall origin story takes on a whole new set of nuances which have important implications for the trajectory of Filipino modernism in its earliest stages.

[133] Victorio Edades, 'A Modernist Talks on Local Art,' The Monday Mail, 23 December 1935, p., reproduced in Rod Paras Perez, p.29

Perhaps most obviously, the claim that Gauguin's influence was of fundamental importance to Manila's early modernists is much more defensible in relation to the mural works of 1934-35 than any of Edades' work before this point. The collaborative works are much more tropical in theme and motif, mostly featuring scenes from pre-colonial rural life in the Philippines rather than the working poor of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Not coincidentally, they also make use of the brighter colours more associated with Botong and Ocampo than with Edades working on his own. By claiming his association with both Gauguin and Cézanne through the Armory Hall narrative, however, Edades was able to establish personal primacy as the direct link between these artists and Manila. This is not entirely untrue, Edades likely having served as the conduit through which Ocampo and Botong became familiar with Gauguin and certainly having provided their first opportunities to work in the modernist style on so grand a scale, but his position as a lender of relevant books is somewhat less memorable than the early, near-spiritual communion suggested by the Armory Hall narrative.

From another point of view, the insistence on Cézanne-and-Gauguin as a joint influence also helps Edades to skim over the lean years between his return from Seattle and the formation of the 'triumvirate of modernism.' Where recognising Isaacs, Patterson and the Ash Can school as formative influences alongside Cézanne would require Edades to acknowledge the separate stages represented by his early paintings and the collaborative murals, this shorthand reference places the emphasis on two artists whose joint influence is most intelligible in the 1934-35 works and afterwards. Within the retrospective narrative of Fiilipino modernism, this

draws a straight line between Edades' alleged first encounter with modernist art and the establishment of a new modernist school of artists in Manila. This gives the impression of a single triumphant debut for Edades rather than acknowledging his solo exhibition at the Philippine Columbian Club as at best a false start and at worst a complete failure to connect with either his peers or the public.

Edades' commitment to the relationship between Filipino modernist art and Post-Impressionism through Cézanne and Gauguin is all the more significant in view of another somewhat questionable association often made in commentaries on Philippine art. Amorsolo is sometimes referred to as an Impressionist artist, presumably due to his interest in naturalistic colour and light. The simultaneous association of Amorsolo with Impressionism and Edades with Post-Impressionism is strangely apt as an analogy for the relationship between the two artists. Both adopted a position that was groundbreaking in its own right, and the conflict between them emerged more in retrospect than through any direct conflict or even significant competition. This may also help to explain the persistence of the Armory Hall narrative: without the visual evidence discussed in Chapter 1, which was, and to a large extent still is, unavailable in Manila, the argument certainly seems persuasive enough in view of the historical record.

Although Art Deco architecture in the Philippines quite literally made space for dissenting voices in the visual arts, it did not by any means bring about a rejection of Tolentino's *beau idéal*. As Cañete suggests, the popularisation of Art Deco helped to make room for modernist art in the Philippines precisely by demonstrating to sceptics like Amorsolo and Tolentino that modernist visual language could break with tradition

without totally rejecting order and attractiveness as priorities. Edades was able to capitalise on this in no small part due to the instincts of his assistants, both of whom had been trained within the local system over which Amorsolo and Tolentino presided. Compared to Edades, Botong and Ocampo were much more comfortable incorporating brighter colours and distinctly local forms and content into their understanding of modernist painting. The opportunity for Edades to collaborate not only with these two but also with Nakpil, already rapidly establishing himself as an authority in the new style, thus demonstrated to an already more receptive public that the expressiveness Edades preferred need not be mutually exclusive with Tolentino's aestheticism even in a much more progressive visual language.

Because of their impact on the trajectory of Philippine art, the mural collaborations by Edades, Botong and Ocampo are typically framed- including by the artists themselves- in opposition to Amorsolo, Tolentino and their conservative followers. Far less widely acknowledged is how much these works have in common with the themes and motifs characteristic of their predecessors. Both Edades and Ocampo acknowledged their private debts to the artists they so publicly antagonised, however. Ocampo in particular emphasised that "the arguments were conducted on a high plane," reflecting ideological and theoretical differences with Amorsolo and his followers rather than a specific or programmatic rejection of the artist's own work.[134] Similarly, Edades later clarified that "the thing I really attacked was the academicism of the Filipino painters under the influence of Amorsolo."[135]

[134] 'An Amorsolo Festival,' first pubished in the Philippine Sunday Express, 6 November 1975, pp24-27; reproduced in Leonidas M. Benesa, *What is Philippine about Philippine Art? And Other Essays,* Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2000, pp125-129, p. 128
[135] An Amorsolo Festival,' reproduced in Benesa, *What is Philippine about Philippine Art? And Other Essays,* p.127

Although Botong never participated in the public debates which occupied his colleagues, he expressed his point of view through his art as well as his somewhat intermittent work as a teacher. Even as the artist "strove for the opposite Romantic ideal of movement and action á la Luna," as Beñesa argues, "the rural and historical themes that Amorsolo loved" also continued to inform the quasi-mythological world of Botong's imagination.[136] Like his predecessor, Botong drew on his personal experience of the rural Philippines, in his case the fishing village of Angono rather than the lowland rice fields Amorsolo favoured, to evoke a more naïve model of the Filipino locale which "retains its rustic simplicity, reluctant to accept change and modernization."[137] This is evident even in the triumvirate's mural, of which only *Rising Philippines* clearly engages with modern life. In all the others, the depiction of Filipino life is really more in line with Amorsolo's vision of an idealised Philippines than with Edades' uncompromising exploration of punishing urban work. This strongly suggests that the paradigm shift brought about in large part by the much-publicised early works by Edades, Ocampo and Botong, at least at this point in time, centred around their application of new visual approaches to an already acceptable range of themes and topics rather than a fundamental shift in the content or character of Philippine art. Again, this will be explored more fully in chapter 3. The use of Cézanne-and-Gauguin as a single joint reference in the Edades narrative is also useful here, allowing Edades and his followers to emphasise their stylistic break with Amorsolo over their adoption of the subject matter he too found most congenial. Invoking Gauguin as a precedent, which all three artists would take much further as

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ty-Navarro and Zafaralla, Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art, p.6

their careers developed, also allowed Edades to align the triumvirate's vision of the Philippines with a modernist vision of tropical paradise rather than admitting any debt to Filipiniana in the tradition of Amorsolo and his followers.

In the wider history of Filipino modernist art, Amorsolo is firmly identified with the conservative school. While this makes sense in relation to the second half of the twentieth century, as will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4, characterising Amorsolo's work as backwards or purely derivative, especially in the 1920s, does the artist a serious disservice. At this point in his career, Amorsolo must have had at least as valid a claim to founding Philippine modernism as Edades. While the younger artist showed more interest in the forms of modernism as they were being practiced in Europe and America, especially in the context of the Pacific Northwest of the United States, Amorsolo was doing the work of making space for an entirely new type of subject matter in the local context. This would prove to be a valuable precedent for artists on both sides of the conservative/modernist divide in post-1930s Manila, with such pioneers of Filipino modernism as Botong Francisco and Galo Ocampo often showing at least as much interest in Amorsolo's Filipiania as they did in the stylistic experimentation which would become associated with Edades.

The fact that Arellano's Metropolitan Theatre accommodated Amorsolo's traditional approach with no more difficulty than Nakpil's Capitol Theatre had with Manila's 'triumvirate of modernism' also shows that the modernist turn in the Philippines did not occur to the exclusion of previous visual approaches. Despite the self-consciously adversarial tone both sides adopted, both schools of both art and education co-existed quite comfortably for the full duration of the relevant artists'

careers. Contrary to the narrative set out in most accounts of Filipino modernism, it may even be argued that Edades gave more ground than Amorsolo ever did over the course of their respective careers. Where Amorsolo's work shows little deviation from his well-established commitment to nostalgic tranquility, Edades' work would gradually become less overtly confrontational in both tone and content over time. Furthermore, the infusion of native flora and fauna together with the incorporation of local material culture into the murals Edades completed with Botong and Ocampo has more to do with the specific needs of each commission in relation to its intended setting than with Edades' earlier preference for the gritty reality of urban life. This is something of a challenge to the more nationalist readings of Edades' work which tend to see his influence as key to the development of a nativist and eventually nationalist visual language in Filipino modernism. While Edades certainly bears the responsibility for bringing Nakpil into contact with Botong and Ocampo, and while he was very much involved in designing and executing the works that launched all their careers, the distinctly nationalist messaging of *Rising Philippines* and the profusion of local detail in all the mural works, were dictated at least as much by the demands of Nakpil and his collaborators as by any personal convictions the Triumvirate may have held either separately or together.

The narrative of the Armory Hall show therefore allowed Edades to characterise these changes as relating to an independent and clearly modernist interest in Post-Impressionism and even Expressionism rather than the influence either of colonial investors or of local nay-sayers. By consistently citing prestigious examples of modernist art in the West rather than acknowledging such practical considerations as audience or personal finance, Edades was able to concede some ground to the

Manila conservatives' insistence on harmony and visual appeal without compromising on his self-identification as a modernist artist in the style of Paul Gauguin.

The economic considerations that made Art Deco attractive to artists and patrons alike also played an important role in speeding the developments which made *Rising Philippines* possible. Lico cites the economic downturn in the 1930s, following on from the global crisis heralded by the 1929 stock market crash, as a factor in the increasing popularity of a more streamlined modernist style in large-scale architectural works. The sudden shortage of funds "discouraged the application of ostentatious decorative elements in buildings in favour of cost-effective, straightforward and austere structures, making Art Deco a suitable pretext for stripping away the classical features or replacing them with a more stylised breed of ornament."[138] It is difficult to see how the Metropolitan or Capitol Theatres could conceivably be described as austere in their finished form, but in fact the buildings themselves are much simpler in construction than their Beaux Arts predecessors. The proliferation of decorative detail which helped to mask this was largely superficial, taking the form of creative paintwork, the incorporation of mosaic and stained glass elements or low-relief carving instead of the more than human scale full-figure statues of only a few years prior. This blurring of the lines between architecture and interior design combined with the resonance between the Art Deco aesthetic and Edades' interest in exploring more modernist visual styles proved essential to establishing an environment in which Edades' approach could enhance and reinforce Nakpil's architectural programme rather than competing with or even

[138] Lico, *Arkitekturang Filipinas,* p. 327

ideologically challenging it. To a large degree, then, the various factors both local and international which combined to motivate the shift towards Art Deco architecture in Manila c.1930 were no less crucial to the eventual longevity of Philippine modernism as espoused by Edades, Botong and Ocampo than any of the efforts made by the Triumvirate itself.

What Edades really gained from the advent of Art Deco in Manila, therefore, was an opportunity to present his work in a more congenial forum than had previously been conceivable in the Philippines. The visibility of these projects gave Edades the momentum he needed to advocate for a modernist visual language which was neither pandered to colonial sensibilities nor broke entirely with visual conventions still beloved in Manila. This was facilitated in large part by the participation of Ocampo and Botong, who showed far more inclination towards these approaches in their own work, and by the credibility afforded to Edades by his connections with Mapua, Nakpil and the Rufino brothers. The result was a series of works which were controversial enough to interest the media yet successful enough to gain traction with intellectuals and casual viewers alike. It was this opportunity, rather than the Columbian Club show and its lukewarm reception, that gave Edades and his new followers the presence and platform without which they could not possibly have begun to advocate for change. The impact of this emerging voice in the local discourse on art, aesthetics and even Filipino identity is virtually impossible to overstate.

Chapter 3: National/ist Artists?

Nationalism and the visual arts have been interconnected in the Philippines at least since Rizal set the tone by framing Luna's victory at the Espósicion National as a triumph for Filipinos everywhere. From the earliest stages of their involvement with painting, sculpture and architecture in the Western tradition, Filipino artists have shown a keen awareness of the potential of visual and material culture as media through which to explore notions of self, other, and the identity of both in relation to each other. At the same time, though, many of these artists were operating within systems of patronage which determined the ideological slant of their works to a greater degree than their own sympathies. The tendency to read paintings by artists from Luna to Botong as expressive of the artist's personal views therefore bears further interrogation. This chapter investigates the question of national identity, nativist content, and the relationship between the two in works by Edades, Ocampo and Botong. In particular, it tracks the changes that developed in the attitudes the three artists displayed towards these elements over the course of several abrupt transitions from the American Commonwealth to the Japanese Occupation during World War II and then to post-war independence.

The climate in which Manila's 'triumvirate of modernism' first started collaborating certainly lends itself to analysis through a nationalist lens. The establishment of the American Commonwealth was a significant step towards self-governance, made tangible in the built landscape of the Philippine capital by the ascendancy of the first generation of *pensionado* architects. As discussed in Chapter 2, the shift from Beaux Arts neoclassicism to Art Deco under the supervision of Mapua, Arellano and their contemporaries allowed for the incorporation of much more incorporation of local

detail than could have been accommodated by the Beaux Arts, Mission Revival or Spanish colonial forms that had been the norm at previous stages in the architectural history of the Philippines. The shift towards Art Deco forms was already well underway by 1935, suggesting that it was a separate development rather than a specific expression of newfound freedom in the Philippines, but it is easy enough to see an argument that the rejection of architectural language that was explicitly associated with the propagation of American control in favour of a style that emphasised local detail echoed political developments at the time. The infusion of Philippine material culture into a style associated with the United States in projects overseen by native Filipino architects may quite convincingly be read as a direct subversion of the hybrid styles usually associated with colonial architecture. In addition to the Mission Revival style championed in the Philippines, Lico points to European colonial initiatives in India, Indochina and North Africa to illustrate various efforts "to retain control of the semantic content of the styles in which they built."[139] Similarly, American architecture in the Philippines "evidently rummaged familiar local architectural icons from Hispanised colonial structures overlaid with a neoclassical massing and consequently formed a so-called tropical hybrid style."[140] In stark contrast, the proliferation of Philippine themes and motifs in Art Deco architecture saw the first generation of native architects asserting their agency through both the reclamation of pre-colonial motifs and the mastery of modernist architectural forms.

The interrogation of Philippine identity in the modernist art of this period likewise represents both change and continuity. Although Edades repeatedly expressed his

[139] Lico, Arkitekturang Filipino, p.198
[140] Ibid., p.199

irritation with the staid, oft-repeated motifs of rural abundance in the work of the Amorsolo school, all the elements associated with a typical work in that vein occur in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest.* Just like Amorsolo's rice fields*,* the Triumvirate's image of Philippine paradise depicts a rural idyll evoked in lush greens and bright yellows, populated by locals who tend the fields with a generally serene countenance. There is even a nod to the Catholic faith traditionally understood to be sustaining the system, the Triumvirate choosing a much more explicit depiction of God and his angels where Amorsolo might be expected to include church architecture or villagers at prayer. Even the title of the work, *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest*, alludes to the intrinsic link between the fertility of the land and the productivity of the people already familiar from Amorsolo's work. Furthermore, the relationship between art and modernism was somewhat more fraught than it was in architecture. Mapua, Arellano and the Nakpil brothers were already operating from positions of relative power when they began to work in the Art Deco style rather than the Beaux Arts mode in which they had received their training. Furthermore, there was no conservative school of architecture either to critique their work or to block their progress in raising awareness about their recent innovations in design. In contrast, Edades and his collaborators would continue defending their break with the conservative style for a good two decades more. In examining the agenda of visual art from this period, then, it is important to consider how the ongoing argument in favour of modernism factored into the exploration of national, or at least native, identity in these works.

Ocampo's *Brown Madonna*: Modernism, Nationalism and Catholicism?

Like the art history of the Philippines, the country's religious, social and even legal systems reflect not only Spanish colonial intervention but, both through and in spite of it, the predominance of Roman Catholic ideology as a guiding influence. This has been a source of controversy and contention, especially where Church and state were seen to be working together against local interests, but a sincere belief in the Catholic faith also informs much of Philippine cultural life to this day. As such, it is not altogether surprising that an exploration of Philippine identity would include references to religious, and particularly Catholic, imagery. The painting that has become synonymous with this interaction between modernism and Catholicism in the Philippine context is Galo Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* (1938). In this painting, Ocampo depicts the Madonna and Child as indigenous Filipinos. This is evident in the ethnicity of the two figures as well as from every conceivable aspect of the setting in which they are depicted. The Madonna wears simple but richly decorated local dress. A nipa hut in the background of the image establishes the setting as distinctly Filipino and specifically lower-class, while the rising hills in the background also suggest the landscape of the rural Philippines. Ocampo preserves key elements of Catholic iconography associated with the Virgin Mary but transforms them for the Filipino context: Mary does wear blue, but her woven skirt recalls both the women in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* as well as any number of Amorsolo's country maidens rather than the billowing fabric typical in European depictions of the Madonna. Similarly, Ocampo depicts calla lilies in the foreground of the work by way of including a locally occurring version of the flowers most often associated with the Blessed Mother. Even the halos in the image are given a distinctly Filipino touch,

ornamented with jasmine petals and palm leaves of the type often used to decorate altars and statue pedestals in Catholic churches in the Philippines.

When the painting was exhibited at the University of the Philippines in Baguio, it caused an immediate uproar and became "the subject of furious and intense debates between the conservative and progressive factions of the Catholic church."[141] Those who saw the European tradition in Church art as sacrosanct were shocked and disturbed by the image of Christ and his Blessed Mother as indigenous people, reflecting centuries of indoctrination regarding the racial and class hierarchies in the Philippines in their assumption that it must somehow be more correct for Biblical figures to be depicted with Caucasian features.[142] Ocampo's image, in contrast, situates the Virgin Mary not as a figure of authority who might have arrived with and on behalf of Spanish colonial forces but as "a mother who lived among the people, shared their humble lives, partook of their food and suffered with them in their daily struggles- a loyal companion and friend within reach of all."[143] In her work on indiginising images of the Virgin Mary in the Philippines, Yuria Furusawa notes that Ocampo's painting was the first by a Catholic artist to pursue this line of thinking but not, in fact, the first time the Madonna was depicted in Philippine dress. [144] Furusawa identifies the *Virgin of Balintawak* (1927, Figure 28) as the work "most likely" to hold this distinction.[145] This icon is explicitly nationalist in its origins, having been made for the openly pro-independence Philippine Independent Church and depicting an

[141] Guillermo, *Galo Ocampo*, p.11
[142] Ibid., p.12
[143] Ibid.
[144] Yuria Furusawa, "Image and Identity : A Study on the Images of the Virgin Mary Clad in a Local Dress in the Philippines," in *The Work of the 2011/2012 API Fellows,* Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Michiko Yoshida and Chadapan Malipan (eds), Bangkok: Nippon Foundation, 2013, pp88–97, p.92
[145] Ibid.

incident which relates directly to the experience of Filipino revolutionaries in the late nineteenth century. According to the anecdote, the Virgin Mary appeared in a dream to warn the *katipuneros* (Filipino revolutionaries) to proceed cautiously, which inspired them to change their plans and so avoid arrest.[146] As the image illustrates, the Virgin in the dream wore the traditional dress local to Balintawak, where this dream was received, and was accompanied by a small child dressed as a *katipunero* who was armed with a *bolo* knife and shouting his support for the revolution.[147] There has been some disagreement about whether this boy may be identified with the Christ child entirely on the basis of proximity to the Virgin Mary, but the overall message of the work is clearly that divine favour rested with the Philippine nationalists even though their revolution was ultimately thwarted by Spanish and American interference. Furusawa highlights the importance of the religious setting of this work to its legitimisation and exhibition given the laws against displaying nationalist symbols including the Philippine flag during this period.

Ocampo's work is both more and less radical than the *Virgin of Balintawak.* The identification of the boy in the painting as the Christ child is far less ambiguous, the imagery much more traditional, and the character of the work generally more theological than political in its assertions. Specifically, Ocampo's attempt to "annul the vast distance that colonialism wrought between the common people and the privileged elite" is wholly orthodox in relation to Catholic theology.[148] As Ocampo himself explained at the time, Church authorities actively encouraged "vernacular representations of Mary" intended to "facilitate conversion within indigenous

[146] Furusawa, "Image and Identity: A Study on the Images of the Virgin Mary Clad in a Local Dress in the Philippines," p.92
[147] Ibid.
[148] Guillermo, *Galo Ocampo*, p.11

contexts."[149] As Ocampo demonstrated, European artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were doing much the same thing; Raphael and Murillo, among others, were no more concerned with giving the Madonna and Child features or costumes associated with wealth, education or power.[150] They are also, of course, reverent interpretations of religious imagery represented in the visual language of their own time and place rather than portraits that might be considered more historically accurate than Ocampo's *Brown Madonna.* This view was upheld by influential Catholics at the time as well: Ocampo received the endorsement of Monsignor Joseph Billiet, Apostolic Prefect of the Mountain Province, who defended the work during its exhibition at the UP Baguio campus, as well as the support of the Catholic *Philippines Commonwealth* newspaper, and went on to display the work to great popular interest locally as well as in India, Japan and the United States.[151]

Although most of the controversy surrounding the *Brown Madonna* was related to its position in relation to Catholic theology, later analysis has focused on its status as a modernist work of great significance. The painting is frequently compared to Gauguin's *Ia orana Maria* (Figure 29)*,* not least because of a detail in Ocampo's work that has most often been received as a direct nod to the Tahitian predecessor to his work. This is the banana leaf inscribed with "Binabati kita, Maria," the Tagalog translation of "Ave Maria" almost always interpreted as "echoing the modernist Gauguin's greeting, "Ia orana Maria."[152] Ocampo was well-aware of Gauguin's work by 1938, and there are in fact some resonances between the bright clothing and lush tropical settings used in both works. Although *Brown Madonna* was held up as a

[149] Guillermo, *Galo Ocampo*, p.11
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.

triumph of Philippine modernism both at the time and in retrospect, Ocampo's image is also a sincerely religious work.

Compared to both Gauguin's *Ia orana Maria* and the *Virgin of Balintawak,* this painting is much more in keeping with the traditional composition of a devotional image. The direct, serene gaze of the Virgin Mary is designed to offer consolation and invite contemplation at least as much as the frontal position and radical guise in which she has been presented challenges the viewer. Ocampo was a devout Catholic who maintained an interest in ecclesiastical art throughout his career. He had already produced a "Portfolio of Philippine Churches and other Manila Scenes" for use as a souvenir programme at the 1937 International Eucharistic Congress in Manila.[153] Later in his career, he would go on to design stained glass for Santo Domingo Church and Manila Cathedral as well as continuing to explore religious themes in his own painting through every phase of stylistic experimentation and evolution. In 1940, he created several more religious images set within the local context for the University of Santo Tomas. These included, among others, *Nativity,* in which the birth of Christ is attended by a carabao, cockerel and some chicks instead of the traditional ox and ass, an *Annunciation* in which calla lilies recur as the symbol of the Filipinised Virgin Mary, and *Sagrada Familia,* in which St Joseph appears in a traditional barong shirt and traditional gourd hat alongside the Virgin Mary in similar dress to the *Brown Madonna* (Figure 30). This painting is the most similar to *Brown Madonna* in other respects as well, repeating the use of floral halos and the profusion of calla lilies in the foreground of the image as well as the uncompromisingly frontal position of the Christ child in relation to the viewer.

[153] Guillermo, *Galo Ocampo,* p.7

In view of Ocampo's involvement with the Church, including his personal devotion as well as the various commissions he would undertake for religious institutions, it is not impossible that the *Brown Madonna* is also a response to Our Lady of Guadalupe. This apparition of the Virgin Mary to an indigenous Christian in Mexico has long been received as proof of the universal reach of the Catholic faith and is often interpreted specifically in terms of the religious doctrine of the Catholic church transcending colonial ideology. Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* situates the viewer in an analogous position to St Juan Diego, the indigenous Mexican saint who is believed to have encountered the Virgin of Guadalupe dressed in pre-colonial native dress and speaking his own language, circumventing the mechanisms of Spanish colonialism and evangelism to reach the local population directly. In addition to resonating with the ongoing negotiation of national, cultural and colonial identity in the newly established American Commonwealth, this image would have held particular significance to Ocampo and other Philippine Catholics at the time because Pope Pius XI had proclaimed the Virgin of Guadalupe the "Heavenly Patroness of the Philippines" as recently as 1936.[154] Although the apparition itself happened some While Ocampo was most likely aware of both Gauguin's Tahitian Madonna and the Virgin of Balintawak, then, his *Brown Madonna* offers a meeting point between the priorities of modernism and nationalism that is also firmly grounded in Catholic doctrine both ancient and contemporary.

[154] Acta Apostolicae Sedis 28 (16 July 1936), pp. 63

Phase I: Finding Filipino Modernism

In evaluating Botong's career as a whole, Gabriel Casal argued that "his roots were Filipino, the wellspring of his art was Filipino; he spent his entire life in the Philippines; his canvasses were celebrations of the folk Filipino."[155] This emphasis not only on the national but also on the indigenous is also evident in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* and the other mural works beyond the inclusion of architectural elements. Vernacular material culture is also represented in the costume, jewellery and local tools depicted in these works. Discernibly local costume is used to identify especially the women in the image as native Filipinas in all the murals in which they appear. In *Music,* this is compounded by the use of indigenous instruments like the nose flute and traditional drums. In *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest,* the striking chevron pattern worn by the third woman from left is particularly reminiscent of specific textiles which would be studied by later followers of Edades.[156] Various tools and weapons in the mural works are also distinctly Filipino and specifically pre-colonial in nature; the most striking examples are the spear and shield in *The Hunt* (Figure 30) and the *bolo* knife or local machete at the waist of the central male figure in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest.*

Another aspect of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* which seems to draw on traditional material culture as much as on contemporary trends is the near-total saturation of the picture space with human, animal and floral forms. Emmanuel Torres identifies the character of this ornamentation as a uniquely Filipino amalgamation of "Spanish baroque" and "Muslim-Malayan" aesthetic impulses,

[155] Gabriel Casal, 'Foreword' in Ty-Navarro and Zafaralla*, Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art,*pp 2-3, p.2
[156] Ricarte M. Puruganan, *Folk Art: the Thread to National Art,* Manila: Lucila A. Salazar and Heritage Art Center, 1983, pp21-22

referring to an authentically local "folk-art culture" which he sees especially in the tendency towards a profusion of decorative detail, particularly "in a florid, sensuous way with flat tapestry-like effects" and a discernible urge to fill all available picture space with "detail of shape, colour and tone."[157] Again, these visual devices continued to feature regularly in later, independent works by both Botong and Ocampo. Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* is a particularly striking example of this: the solid, starkly frontal figures of the Virgin and child are almost literally wreathed by a wealth of floral, architectural, geographic and decorative detail. Similarly, Botong's historical paintings are almost always filled from edge to edge not only with elaborately costumed human figures drawn from various phases of Philippine history but also with floral, architectural and ornamental detail that enrich the historical and thematic setting of the scene depicted. In each case, the artists' mastery of colour and composition prevent the central figures from being completely overwhelmed by this abundance of embellishment. The same is true of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest*, in which the stylised poses of the figures, echoed by the spreading branches of the papaya tree which dominates the composition, create a visual rhythm which helps to draw the eye across the picture space. This, too, has been attributed to Botong, who often made use of "gestural variations and occasional repetitive orientations- frontal, profile, oblique- to create tension" in his large-scale figural works.[158] The rich fabrics of the women's skirts are especially detailed, including bright patterns which suggest fabrics traditional to the various communities which made up the pre-colonial Philippines. Furthermore, this reference not only to the local culture of modernised, urbanised Manila and its environs but also to the

[157] Emmanuel Torres, 'Nationalism in Filipino Art "Hot" and "Cool"' in Coseteng, *Philippine Modern Art and its Critics*, pp165-172p. 170
[158] Ty-Navarro and Zafaralla, *Carlos V. Francisco: The Man and Genius of Philippine Art*, p.16

various minority groups which make up the wider Filipino population reflects a broader view of Filipino identity, which "applied equally to the proud and independent mountain people" instead of focusing exclusively on "the colonised lowlander."[159]

In keeping with the timeless quality suggested by the women's costumes, the lack of costume may also be an assertion of pre-colonial or at least non-colonial attitudes. Alfredo Roces draws on Kenneth Clark's distinction between "the naked and the nude," but describes the colonial nuances of such a concept in the Philippines: both Spanish and American missionaries, separated by some three hundred years, expressed dismay at "the matter-of-fact attitude towards nudity among non-Christian Filipinos […] who saw no relation between morality and bare breasts."[160] Wryly noting that "apparently one overpowering goal of Christian missionaries throughout the whole of the colonial periods under Spain and America was to inculcate moral shame over nudity," Roces argues that the re-assertion of the unclothed figure in Filipino Modernism can therefore be read as a counter-colonial impulse at least to the extent that "one has to be first colonially guilt-ridden about sex to be able to gain the new colonial sense of liberation from inhibitions over sex and nudity."[161] There is little sexual connection between the men and women in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest;* it seems far more likely that the bare-chested males in this painting as well as *Rising Philippines* have eschewed more elaborate clothing for practical reasons. There is also an element of practicality in the nudity of the male figure in *The Hunt*, but this figure seems much more overtly sensual than the figures in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest.*

[159] Felipe de Leon, *The Filipino Nation: Philippine Art and Literature*, p.72
[160] Roces, *Filipino Nude,* p.9
[161] Ibid., pp. 9-11

The inclusion of a *bahay kubo* (nipa hut) in the right background of this image also seems significant in view of the artists' interest in vernacular architecture. Fernando N Zialcita and Martin I. Tinio Jr reflect prevalent attitudes to the architectural history of the Philippines when they identify the *bahay na bato* (house of stone) of the Spanish colonial era as "the conscience of Philippine architecture" while, in the same paragraph, dismissing its "native ancestor" the *bahay kubo* as "the nipa hut which most people would hardly acknowledge as architecture."[162] In contrast, the Triumvirate showed a consistent willingness to engage with pre-colonial, supposedly primitive architecture, costume and mythology in their works. Botong in particular is consistently identified as one of "the first [artists] to discover the treasures of folk artistry that had long been neglected and discarded in favour of urban (or Westernised) art forms" in the Philippines.[163] Botong and Ocampo often revisited the *bahay kubo* in their individual works, making full use of the effects of light and space associated with the hut's distinctive construction in their description of scenes located in and around these archetypal native dwellings. In scenes where the nipa hut was prominent but not central, including *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* and Ocampo's *Brown Madonna,* the use of the *bahay kubo* serves to establish the location of the scene in the same way as the inclusion of local costume, vegetation and wildlife. To the extent that *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* may be considered an arcadian image, for example, the *bahay kubo* takes the place of classicising- and thus Western, and therefore colonial- architecture in a rural idyll which is clearly contextualised as Filipino- the scene may be timeless, but it is

[162] Fernando N Zialcita and Martin I. Tinio Jr, *Philippine Ancestral Houses* (1810-1930), Quezon City: Philippines, GCF Books, 1980, p.6
[163] de Leon, *The Filipino Nation: Philippine Art and Literature,* p.72

emphatically not without geographical situation. This incorporation of elements from local and often specifically rural architecture as a means to firmly ground modernist paintings in Filipino material culture would become a classic feature of works by many of Edades' followers and in fact became a trait closely associated with the work of establishing an identifiably Filipino form of Modernism in painting.[164]

The relationship between the otherworldly figures in the top third of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* and the earthbound ones below them also sets up a subtle racial dichotomy in the depiction of the idealised Philippines. The heavenly figures are all depicted as light-skinned and blonde- or white-haired in contrast with the brown-skinned, dark-haired indigenous Filipinos depicted gathering in the harvest. In some ways, this is to be expected- before Galo Ocampo painted his *Brown Madonna* in 1938, Biblical figures in the Philippine tradition were almost always depicted in the Spanish style, and therefore as Europeans. The relationship between race and power in the Philippines was most famously explored in Juan Luna's *España y Filipinas* (Spain and the Philippines, 1884, Figure 31). This work depicts a personification of Spain leading the allegorical figure of the Philippines towards enlightenment by hand. Although Luna's painting is much more explicitly engaged with the subject of colonial relations with the Philippines, there is a certain similarity in the way *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* illustrates the dynamics of an idealised relationship between the local population and a higher, white European power. This approach also resonates with a work more immediately related to *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest*, the artists' own *Rising Philippines.* This work, too, portrayed colonial influence in almost entirely positive terms but also staked specific claims on behalf of

[164] de Leon, *The Filipino Nation: Philippine Art and Literature,* p.11

the newly autonomous and –at least implicitly- independence-bound Philippines. That this relationship was consciously idealised in both cases cannot be denied: Luna himself was actively involved in the nationalist movement of his own day, and is in fact much better known in the Philippines for a monumental history painting, *Spoliarium* (1884), painted in the same year as *España y Filipinas* (Spain and the Philippines) but presenting a much less cheerful image of colonial domination.[165] Similarly, local attitudes to the United States during the 1930s were not as friendly as the Triumvirate's allegorical interpretation suggested, marked by years of striking and public protest as early optimism gave way to disillusionment and resentment regarding American attitudes to Philippine independence.[166]

Although any apparent commentary on the relationship between the colonial and the colonised in *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* is implicit rather than clearly defined, it does not seem coincidental that the heavenly figures are depicted as much more static and stylised than the more vibrant, dynamic indigenous figures at work below. Whether the painting can be read as commenting on either colonialism or religion in deliberate terms or not, its composition does suggest that, at least in the view of the new Filipino Modernists, the next move would be made locally. Whichever forces are at work in defining the scale and specific nature of the harvest in this painting, it is the local workforce- young, strong and fully capable for acting on its own agency- which is shown gathering the literal fruits of their own labour.

[165] Phoebe Scott, 'Authority and Anxiety' in Low Sze Wee (ed.), *Beyond Declarations and Dreams,* Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2015, pp16-30, p.25
[166] Luis Taruc, 'Born of the People (1953)', reproduced in Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom (eds.), *The Philippines Reader,* Boston: South End Press, 1987

The engagement with the visual and material culture of the pre-colonial Philippines demonstrated in modernist works of the 1930s uses indigenous motifs at several levels. Most obviously, they serve to locate images within the literal and cultural geography of the Philippines. With the plethora of detail marking the costume, architecture, and indigenous flora as Filipino, it would be difficult to misunderstand the origins of *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* or *Brown Madonna*. Secondly, the emphasis on pre-colonial material culture rather than modern life in the Philippines is used both to explore and celebrate alternatives to the hybrid culture brought about by Spanish and American interventions in the local culture and to imagine an alternate situation free of those interferences. This can sometimes veer into the territory of exoticisation, especially when artists from the urban intellectual set sought to celebrate the non-Western elements of minority cultures like the Igorot and Moro tribes with images of scantily clad women engaged in mystical pursuits.

At the same time, however, a close examination of the more narrative of these works, especially the more public-facing mural works of the late 1930s and early 1940s, strongly suggests that Edades and his followers were not in fact pursuing a nationalist, in the sense of anti-colonial, agenda. In fact, the majority of them offer a vision of Filipino identity and indeed colonial history that is largely flattering to both Spain and the United States. In light of this broader trend, Ocampo's defence of the *Brown Madonna* as being broadly in keeping with works by Raphael and Murillo strongly suggests that he was more concerned with upholding its faithfulness to Catholic teaching than with asserting the validity of Gauguinesque modernism or indeed ethnically-driven nationalism as viable prospects for the advancement of the Philippines.

Spiritual Learning?: Art Education as the Way Forward

Of the triumvirs of modernism in Manila, Edades showed the least overt interest in nationalist or even nativist themes in both his art and his writing during this period. Articles and interviews during this period strongly suggest that he was much more interested in defining the modernist agenda than articulating a political stand on behalf of his own art and that of his recently acquired followers. In asserting the need for new methods in Philippine art, Edades was necessarily critical of the existing school of thought. He was especially critical of art education in Manila at the time. In his estimation, the existing system showed little promise of encouraging innovation, Amorsolo and his followers having surrendered or at least agreed to settle in their artistic ambitions by the time he returned from Seattle. Most of the artists educated at the UP School of Fine Arts went on to work commercially, either for advertisements commissioned by American companies operating locally or in the form of small-scale oil and watercolour works designed to cater to the demand of American tourists and expatriates. These were perfectly sound ways for young artists to gain experience and mastery of their craft, and indeed both Amorsolo and Edades' own protégé Botong Francisco gained much of their skill in draughtsmanship from on-the-job training in government positions.[167] The art education available in the Philippines was correspondingly artisanal in orientation, training students to replicate styles favoured within the department less to gratify their teachers and more to ensure the commercial viability of their own works.

[167] Roces, *Amorsolo*, p.30

"It is sad to note," he told *The Monday Mail* in 1935, "that the Philippines' spiritual learning (sic- leaning?) are (sic) still for the old conservative type which has already become a dead matter in many progressive countries of the world today. Japan, for instance, our nearest enlightened neighbour, has turned modernistic, e. g. (sic- i.e.?) her works have become more natural and true to life."[168] Edades goes on to argue that "verisimilitude in art…is the call of the times."[169] Noting the variety of "conflicting ideas, some beautiful and ugly," Edades calls on "good artists" to engage with these issues "as they are and not as they should be."[170] He emphasises the value of capturing the flaws as well as the attractions of the natural world, arguing that "nature itself is not a thing of perfection, so to attempt to embellish it and forget its flaws is the height of illusion."[171] He also complained that Amorsolo's country maidens were simply too idealised to be taken seriously: "We do not see a country woman reaper wearing silk, gaudy clothes that are usually seen in fiestas and other gala occasions… Why, a country reaper is just a humble folk (sic) who must wear homespun clothes, because these are more cheap than silk imported from foreign countries."[172]

The Monday Mail goes on to assure its readers that "Professor Edades believes that fidelity to life does not mean the relinquishment of man's idea of the beautiful," clarifying that "the exotic charm, the virginality (sic), the unravished naivity (sic) of ordinary life: remains valuable, and, "handled by a great artist, may signify a whole

[168] Victorio Edades, :A Modernist Talks on Local Art," *The Monday Mail*, 23 December 1935, p., reproduced in Rod Paras Perez, *Edades and the Thirteen Moderns,* p.29
[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.

world of emotions and hidden springs of meaning."[173] According to Edades, at least in this interview, "the giving of meaning to the ugly and repellent is the true criterion of creative art."[174] Edades then makes the point that this tendency towards exploring ugliness in the interest of authenticity is prevalent "in almost all modern countries of the world today," citing growing enthusiasm for "artists such as Rivera, Orosco (sic) and Sloan" in "America, where democracy continues to have a strong hold on public opinion" as proof that earnest depictions of "ordinary reality, unblemished by the idealist's brush" could be uniquely attractive without being artificial in the way Edades deplores in Amorsolo and his followers.[175] Edades argues that this has the potential to foster important personal growth, encouraging artists and their viewers to "face reality and laugh out whatever unsavoury elements they find in them (sic)."[176] The end of this interview takes a somewhat unexpected turn towards the question of national interest in relation to modern art: "Professor Edades is confident that the present government will some day take uncommon interest in the cultivation of fine arts in the Philippines. He believes that while we are primarily concerned with our national defence and economic problems, the spiritual side of life should not, however, be forgotten. A nation's greatness is not measured in material wealth alone but also in her love of things that enrich the soul."[177]

As early as 1935, then, Edades was prepared to leverage on notions of national greatness to exhort not just artists but even the nascent government of the increasingly autonomous Philippines to make what he saw as the necessary

[173] Edades, :A Modernist Talks on Local Art," p.29
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.

changes in art and art education. This, too, suggests the more democratic approach taken by Edades and his modernist collaborators compared to Amorsolo and the conservatives. Where Amorsolo and Tolentino continued to remain content to practice, teach, and sell art as they saw fit within the confines of the institutions that supported them, Edades saw the value of engaging with public opinion to carve out a place for modernist art and ideology in the Philippines. At the same time, however, the consistent cross-referencing of "modern countries," also points to an internationalist sensitivity in Edades' outlook. While his colleagues on either side of the contemporary-modern divide concerned themselves with the incorporation of identifiably Philippine motifs and material culture into their work, Edades showed more interest in tracking his country's progress in relation to contemporary events in other countries. The choice of Japan, Mexico and the United States in particular again points to the impact of Seattle's early forays into modernist art on Edades' frame of reference. This article represents the first surviving source in which Edades discussed the place of Filipino modernism specifically in relation to art historical developments around the world.

Edades made two significant overseas trips in the 1930s. The first was in 1937, when Edades spent a summer pursuing a Diploma in Architecture in Fontainebleau on French funding offered to American citizens in recognition of assistance received during World War I.[178] While in Fontainebleau, Rivera Ingle reports that Edades "also studied fresco painting."[179] Instead of returning to the Philippines from France, Edades went on first to New York and then to Seattle "purposely to see his old

[178] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.55
[179] Rivera Ingle, *Edades: Kites and Visions,* p.55

mentor, Professor Isaacs." In the context of the late 1930s, Rivera Ingle describes Isaacs as "a fine but neglected painter whose leanings on Velazquez made him an anachronism in a period strongly inclined towards abstraction and other modernistic movements."[180] This description of Isaacs a decade after the his first appearance in Rivera Ingle's account does acknowledge the growing trend towards abstraction in the work of Isaacs' younger students but continues to characterise Isaacs as firmly opposed to modernism to a degree that is simply not supported by the evidence of his own work.

In 1939, Edades made another trip to the United States when he travelled to San Francisco to oversee the installation of the Philippine pavilion at the Golden Gate International Exposition. The Philippine display featured a large-scale mural by Edades and his assistants celebrating "the unity of culture" as well as a smaller work, *Woman with Idol,* also by Edades (Figures 33-34). Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* was also exhibited at the GGIE, presumably also in the Philippine pavilion, but no surviving documentation of the exhibition offers any insight into the context of its display. It is telling that the conservative school of Philippine art was also represented in the pavilion, with Vicente Dizon Alvarez winning the international art competition held in conjunction with the exposition for his painting, *After the Day's Toil* (1939, Figure 35). The work depicts a family of farmers returning from a day's labour. The adults in the image are visibly weary, but the child running ahead of them remains energetic enough to run and play with a dog in the foreground.

[180] Ibid.

The strikingly local subjects depicted by artists from both schools of art may be construed as nationalist in spirit to the extent that they celebrate the Philippines, but neither the paintings themselves nor the context of their display at the GGIE suggests much in the way of a post-colonial rebuke or even acknowledgment of colonial-era hierarchies. Indeed, the works presented by both schools celebrate the richness of the Philippine landscape and the dedication of its population, fitting themes for a setting like the GGIE. Although Edades' characteristic use of muddy colours and starkly blocked figures against a relatively flat picture space makes his work more obviously modernist than Dizon's, the latter artist's visual approach is not without contemporary leanings. Neither as conservative as Amorsolo nor as radical as Edades, Dizon found a middle ground that ultimately had as much in common with Botong Francisco's visual style as with Amorsolo's. His work has all the elements of Amorsolo's Filipiana, from the bamboo and palm leaves which frame the image to the rice fields and rolling hills in the distant background. At the same time, it is less idealising than one might expect from the conservative school, drawing attention to the workers' visible exhaustion rather than celebrating the fruits of their labour. Its dynamic, almost theatrical composition also suggests Botong's approach more readily than Amorsolo's

By 1940, then, Edades and his followers had found a space within which to operate, and the systems of education within the Philippines and of exchange with the international art world seemed stable enough to accommodate both schools of thought comfortably. Artists on both sides explored themes and subject matter that was directly connected with the question of Philippine identity, from more iterations of Amorsolo's pastoral women at work to Ocampo's controversial yet orthodox

religious paintings. It is difficult, however, to definitively categorise these works as nationalist in character. Rather than articulating a coherent ideological stance either in their work or in their writing, the first generation of Philippine modernists seemed most concerned with advocating for modernism, rather than nationalism, as a viable force for change in the local context. Edades showed a willingness to frame modernism in terms of nationalism when advocating for progress, but also continued to look towards other nations as a benchmark against which to measure progress in the Philippines. The contents of his work did grow more national during this period, but this could as easily illustrate his stand as a modernist committed to exploring everyday scenes from his current reality, as any wider aspiration for the Philippines in general.

Phase II: Asia for the Asians

As so often happened in the history of the Philippines, this period of relative stability could not withstand the conflict brewing overseas. In December 1941, the Philippines became the second victim of the Japanese campaign against the United States in the Pacific theatre of World War II. The Japanese invasion began within a day of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, resulting in almost a month of intense fighting before the withdrawal of US troops in January 1942. The Japanese occupation of the Philippines constituted three years of intense suffering not only because fighting continued intermittently throughout the occupation but also because of the scale of deprivation that resulted from the intense bombing of Manila and its surroundings by both the advancing Japanese forces and the retreating Americans seeking to deprive the occupiers of resources.

As relative outsiders, Edades and his followers found themselves under less pressure from Japanese hostility towards anyone connected with the institutions of American influence than Amorsolo and the conservative school at the University of the Philippines. In fact, Edades' message that artists should stop blindly emulating their instructors and pay more attention to their own lived reality combined with the nativist subject matter prevalent in his work at this time to resonate quite strongly with the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" proposed by the Japanese. This was an overtly anti-colonial propaganda campaign that encouraged occupied populations to see Japanese forces as liberating them from Western rule. The slogan "Asia for the Asians" was particularly overt in its assertion that Japanese occupation must necessarily be preferable to Euro-American colonialism as a form of foreign intervention in Southeast Asia. The Japanese authorities in the Philippines recognised the resonance of this message with recent trends in local visual culture and so embraced modernist art in the Philippines as an important visual demonstration of the Japanese promise to help the conquered peoples of East and Southeast Asia reclaim their identities in line with the notion of "Asia for the Asians."

An article by the Japanese artist Miyamoto Saburo offers specific insight into the way Edades and his followers were understood or at least utilised by the Japanese propaganda machine during World War II. Titled 'Philippine Painter' and appearing in the wartime culture magazine *Bijutsu (Fine Art),* the article offers an account of Miyamoto's day-long visit with Edades in Japanese-occupied Manila.[181] Edades, the article reports, was trained in Paris but worked in America for some time. Miyamoto identifies North American influence in Edades' works, but attributes this to the books

[181] Miyamoto Saburo, *Philippine Painter,* Bijutsu (Fine Art), January 1940, p.40

by Rivera and Orozco in the artist's personal collection of art historical resources.[182] The conversation led to a critique of Amorsolo, with Edades citing Gauguin, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso and Braque among others as modernists whose art he admired in contrast with the Philippine conservatives.[183] Edades also accompanied Miyamoto to the Vargas collection and library, where they discussed works by Luna and Hidalgo. Miyamoto praises Edades' attitude to modernist art as well as his accomplishments as a painter, highlighting the "gradation of colours" in his work and the ceiling mural at the presidential residence as evidence of this. Miyamoto also mentions meeting with Ocampo, whose *Brown Madonna* would come to be celebrated by Japanese propagandists in the Philippines.[184]

Without making mention of Seattle or New York, this account marks the first surviving record of a history of Edades' career that takes a similar shape to the armory hall narrative. Like the latter, this version of events emphasises a direct encounter with French modernist art as the starting point of Edades' and therefore the Philippines' engagement with modernism. It also acknowledges a small degree of American influence but dismisses this as secondary or mediated, in this case ascribing Edades' affinity for the Aschcan school and even the work of his own instructors to a secondary effect of his interest in left-wing, anti-colonial Mexican modernist art. The emphasis is on the internationalist nature of modern art as defined in the context of the French canon of notable names as well as the heroic achievement of claiming that heritage on behalf of the Philippines.

[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

The content of art created for display during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines was necessarily confined to obvious propaganda commissioned and closely vetted by the Japanese authorities. By the end of the war, Edades, Botong and their colleague Vicente Manansala were working in collaboration with the fascist KALIBAPI party. Recalling their contribution, Edades remembers designing "posters showing then-president Jose P. Laurel planting rice" for distribution and display throughout the Philippines.[185] Work from this period cannot be characterised as wholly voluntary on the part of the artists, most having done what they could to survive rather than embracing the politics of the parties that proved most willing to keep them in work. Ocampo offers unique insight into this situation, actively working against the Japanese and participating in the liberation of Manila alongside American forces[186] while at the same time being held up as the poster child for Asian modernism in Japanese propaganda magazines. In spite of this, wartime propaganda including the reception of earlier works by Edades, Ocampo and their contemporaries marks the beginning of the overt association between Philippine modernism and Philippine nationalism in a political rather than largely conceptual context. This would be continued and amplified in the post-war independence era.

Phase III: Image-Making in a New Republic

In 1946, the first stage of nation-building for the newly independent Republic of the Philippines was unfortunately quite literal in a capital city that had been devastated by World War II. Manila had been more or less razed to the ground not by enemy forces but as a defensive measure by American troops hoping to slow down the

[185] Victorio Edades, 'Letters from Contemporaries,' in Flores (ed.), *The Life and Art of Carlos Botong Francisco,* .235
[186] Ibid.

advancing Japanese forces. All but one of the mural works that had launched the careers of Manila's "Triumvirate of Modernism" were lost along with the architectural context that had made literal and cultural space for their emergence as key players in the next generation of Philippine art. *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest*, currently on long-term loan to the National Gallery Singapore, is therefore the last extant work signed "Atelier Edades" and the only remaining record of this crucial period of collaboration and exchange.

As Manila's art world set about re-establishing itself after the war, Edades and his fellow 'Moderns' found themselves on much more equal footing with the conservative school than had been the case at any point previously. This was in part due to the intervention of the Japanese administration, which had treated the younger, less institutionalist modernists more sympathetically than their conservative counterparts. Combined with the earlier success of Art Deco in establishing modernism as a style that could be both modern and national in its visual language, this established the modernist artists of the newly established Philippine Republic as the most sought-after image-makers during this period of recovery and growth. Edades was most occupied with the re-establishment of the University of Santo Tomas and the establishment of new galleries and exhibition spaces. Ocampo supported Edades in these endeavours while also involving himself in the restoration of Manila Cathedral and even in designing the coat of arms of the new Republic of the Philippines. Botong, for his part, proved most suited to the project of literal and ideological rebuilding in the form of large-scale public art. The result was a series of mural works on an even more ambitious scale than those that had first thrust him and his fellow triumvirs of Modernism into the spotlight.

Where the triumvirate's joint works before WWII may be described as 'nativist' rather than necessarily nationalist in content, Botong's post-war mural paintings are much more overtly concerned with discovering and monumentalising the history, culture and moral character of the Philippines and its occupants. The first of these was *Progress of Medicine,* commissioned in 1953 for the Philippine General Hospital (Figure 36). Botong's four-panel work offers a concise summary of 500 years of medical practice in the Philippines, from folk magic represented by "a native priestess perform[ing] a ritual that mends ruptures and rifts between the material world and the spiritual realm" to "the rise of hospitals" like the one for which the work was intended.[187] The intervening panels explore "the civilising efforts of colonisers to introduce a different system of healing."[188] In a concise summary of the most lasting impact of the country's two colonial occupiers, this takes the form of Spanish religious figures planting medicinal herbs and introducing the premises of Western medicine as a discipline as well as American soldiers directing a vaccination drive.

This work bears significant resemblance to an American work which Botong cannot possibly have seen in person. Completed in 1938, Bernard Zakheim's *History of Medicine in California* is a painting in fresco at Toland Hall at the University of California San Francisco (Figure 37). The forms of these works are quite different, Botong's occupying four panels of equal size while Zakheim's fresco expands to cover Toland Hall's whole curving interior. Their subject matter, however, is virtually identical: both works trace the history of medicine in the local context from traditional

[187] Ino M. Manalo, 'Angono: Hometown as Subversion' in Flores (ed.), *The Life and Art of Botong Francisco,* pp142-217, p.185
[188] Ibid.

practices in the pre-colonial era through missionary and colonial intervention to celebrate the advances- and advantages- of modern medicine. Both take a markedly ambivalent view of Western intervention in indigenous culture while also acknowledging the obvious benefits of modern medicine, sanitation and scientific inquiry. Not coincidentally, both works were commissioned for spaces to which the history and progress of medicine was directly pertinent, Botong's for a hospital and Zakheim's for a lecture theatre in the School of Medicine at UCSF.

That Botong knew of Zakheim's work is unconfirmed but not impossible: as discussed, Edades' collection of American books on art and art history was a vital resource for Botong in his formative years, and Edades was in San Francisco to participate in the installation of the Philippine Pavilion at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939. He may well have had access to the commemorative publication which was being distributed in San Francisco at the time. This work contains a detailed explication of Zakheim's work, including its historical content, some explanation of many of the historical figures depicted and the reason for their inclusion, and notes on Zakheim's artistic paradigm and reasons for his stylistic choices in relation to his own art as well as the architecture of Toland Hall itself. If Edades brought a copy back to Manila, where he was in the habit of making his personal library available to friends and followers, Botong would certainly have had access to it as well. It is also possible that the two works are connected not by any direct contact between the two artists but by their mutual interest in Mexican mural art from the 1920s-30s and by the historical resonances between California and Manila, the visual cultures of which were both shaped first by indigenous culture then by Spanish colonialism and American occupation. Zakheim's connection to the

Mexican painters Botong so admired was even more intimate, the artist having spent several months living and working alongside Rivera and his colleagues in Mexico in 1930.[189] Referring to this period, Zakheim recalled that "Rivera taught me one thing and that was that every artist must work out of his own roots."[190] This was also a guiding principle of Philippine modernist art in general and Botong's practice of it in particular, the artist's strong awareness of local scenery, material culture, history and mythology informing his work from the earliest collaborative murals to his most bombastically nationalist public works in the mid to late 1960s.

Botong's final work is widely regarded as his crowning achievement. In some ways, it is also the summative work of Philippine modernist art in its first generation. Completed just months before his death, *History of Manila (Filipino Struggles through History)* is a monumental work even by the standards of an art tradition that regards Luna's massive history paintings as foundational. Rather than selecting a single representative scene, Botong explores five centuries of contact between the city of Manila and all manner of foreign powers seeking to trade, invade or otherwise intervene in the cultural history of the Philippines. The first panel of the mural covers some 300 years of history, including the city's first flourishing as a pre-colonial port city, its defence by local Muslim leaders represented by Rajah Sulayman and his allies from Tondo, the arrival of Spanish Catholicism and almost concurrently Spanish imperialism, and the British invasion of 1799 and the re-establishment of Spanish control in the 1800s. The central panel explores a series of religious and

[189] M. Elizabeth Boone, ""Something of his Own Soil": Jewish History, Mural Painting, and Bernard Zakheim in San Francisco," *American Jewish History* Vol. 90, No. 2 (June 2002), The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 123-140, p.126
[190] Bernard Zakheim, quoted in Boone, ""Something of his Own Soil": Jewish History, Mural Painting, and Bernard Zakheim in San Francisco," p.126

secular martyrdoms from literature and history, centered on the brutal execution by garotte of Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jasinto Zamora for their alleged support of the Cavite mutiny in 1872. A change of tone is evident from this point on, with the final panel of the mural focusing on the near-constant series of uprisings and re-assertions of colonial authority which continued through much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and ending only with independence, represented in the mural by the Filipino flag and stylised coat of arms at the very end of the picture space.

Filipino Struggles through History features text in no fewer than five languages, highlighting the wide range of authorities, both local and foreign, whose influence has shaped the city's socio-political landscape at one time or another. The first vignette in the mural highlights Manila's role at the heart of a thriving regional trade while colonial incursions are distributed across the rest of the picture space as indeed they occurred, with different degrees of success, at least once a century throughout the city's history. The local population is also shown in all its ethnic, economic and ideological plurality, from the Muslim Tondo kings to the Spanish Mestizo elite embodied by José Rizal and his collaborators. Here too, costume and weaponry help to denote the affiliation of various figures, from the *salakot* hats associated with indigenous Filipino nobility to the distinctive armour and helmets of the Spanish conquistadors, shogun armour, the tricorn hat of the British soldiers receiving the Spanish commander's sword and even the turban of the lone lascar depicted in the same scene.

The mural's emphasis on the local, as well as on the importance of oral tradition and communal memory, is consistent with the wider narrative of Botong as first and foremost a native son rather than an academic. D. M. Reyes captures Botong's particular gift for synthesising disparate vignettes into a coherent visual narrative when he describes the artist's gift for "[turning] history's prosaic narratives into imposing figures and colours, assembling them in dramatic chapters that worked as tropes of collective struggle and change."[191] This is accurate in two ways. Botong's process not only brings together a series of key moments in the city's history but also simplifies and even essentialises them so that the viewer is struck more by the overall emotional charge of the mural than by the fine details of each separate scene. Galo Ocampo also praised the "consistent excellence and visual cohesiveness" of Botong's compositions, highlighting the "creativity, charm, an undefinable sense of style, reason, intelligence, order" evident in Botong's work as well as "a definite aesthetic structure that will pass the test of time."[192]

It is significant that this work was made not for display in a gallery setting, as it is currently presented, but to anchor the central space of Manila's City Hall. It is likely because of this that Botong explores only events that happened in the capital city since its establishment rather than considering national history in its wider context. On one hand, this helps to differentiate the work from *500 Years of Philippine History* (1953, Figure 38). The general sense of the two narratives is broadly similar, but the scope of *History of Manila* is more tightly focused: where *500 Years* begins by depicting ancient legends about the creation of man, the emergent city of Manila is

[191] DM Reyes, Miracle of Rare Device, pp40-77, p. 70
[192] Galo Ocampo, *Botong Francisco,* p.23

already bustling with international trade from the first panel. Furthermore, some of the earliest events which are still considered quintessential to the history and even identity of the Philippines simply have no place in a mural set specifically in Manila. Perhaps the two most glaring omissions are Ferdinand Magellan's fatal encounter with Lapu-Lapu and the *sandugo* (blood compact) between Miguel López de Legazpi and Datu Sikatuna, both of which took place not in Manila but in the more remote Visayas islands. The first of these events is almost legendary, and the area around the battle site is still known as Lapu-Lapu City in recognition of the indigenous chief whose forces successfully repelled the first Spanish incursion into the Philippines; the second may be the single most famous anecdote in Filipino history. The mutual pledge of brotherhood, however cynically undertaken by Legazpi on behalf of Spain, is fundamental to the long-held perception of the Spanish-Filipino relationship as being closer and more mutually meaningful than the exploitation of neighbouring locations by other colonial powers. A painting of the scene by Juan Luna (*Sandugo*, 1883, Figure 39) still hangs at Malacañang Palace as a visual articulation of Filipino notions of diplomacy and hospitality. Botong himself also painted versions of the *sandugo,* once as a stand-alone work in 1936 and again as an essential moment in *500 Years of Philippine History.* Speaking of both Luna and Botong, Virgilio S. Almario described the *sandugo* as a natural choice for artists so closely associated with the joint projects of Filipino nationalism and nation-building precisely because "their art represents a blending of the native and the European styles" in much the same way as the blood compact itself legitimised the mingling of these influences in the Philippines.[193]

[193] Virgilio S Almario(ed.), *Pacto de Sangre: Spanish Legacy in Filipinas*, 2003, Manila: Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day Committee, p.75

Demonstrating the "profound sense of history" for which Reyes so admires Botong,[194] the artist found an effective solution to the enforced absence of iconic moments in Philippine history made necessary by the painting's focus on events which took place in Manila. The depiction of Rajah Sulayman and his allies in the second major section of the mural seems somewhat disproportionate to the actual influence of these figures in the general narrative of history and identity in the Philippines, especially in relation to such household names as Legazpi, Rizal and Bonifacio. Their significance, however, is not only literal but symbolic: it seems very likely that Botong featured the Tondo kings so prominently not just to acknowledge their role in Manila's early history but also to capture the two most salient aspects of the still-fraught relationship between the pre-colonial Philippines, the Spanish conquest and contemporary Filipino identity usually represented separately by Lapu-Lapu's victory and the *sandugo.* Botong thus preserves the "key discourses of modernity that moulded the nation" in spite of the geographical limitations imposed by the specific needs of Manila's City Hall.[195]

Considering the original situation of this massive work also suggests surprising associations with another of Botong's large-scale works. This is not a nationalist work in the pattern of *Rising Philippines* or *Blood Compact,* a scene which actually recurs in *Filipino Struggles through History,* but *Via Crucis* (Stations of the Cross) for Far Eastern University (1956, Figure 40-41). The Stations of the Cross are a Catholic spiritual devotion through which believers reflect on and respond to Christ's journey to Calvary in fourteen stages marking key developments along the Way of the Cross.

[194] Reyes, "Miracle of Rare Device," p 70
[195] Ibid.

Botong's images for FEU are solidly conventional in content, but the mural consists of two panels of seven stations each, with the separate scenes flowing together in a linear narrative. This is a marked departure from traditional Stations of the Cross, which usually consist of fourteen separate pieces of art to correspond to the different stations along the way. The *Via Crucis* murals are somewhat more muted in their colour palette than most of Botong's wider oeuvre, with the artist using a relatively small range of colours compared to works like *Progress of Medicine* or *Filipino Struggles through History.*

Although Botong's *History of Manila* has been studied extensively, especially in relation to other visual and literary depictions of Filipino history, it has yet to be considered closely in relation to Botong's religious art. In particular, resonances between this painting and the artist's *Via Crucis* offer an interpretation of the work that has yet to be explored in any depth. Some key points of connection between the two are immediately apparent, especially the visual means by which Botong blurs the lines between separate scenes along a single canvas. Paulino's description of the *Via Crucis* "unreeling like an illustrated Bible retold in the panorama of the cinema" is not without application to *History of Manila,* just as the "rhythm of destiny and will" which moves the latter composition is all the more evident in Botong's religious work. Less well-noted, however, is the physical resonance in the composition of the two works in relation to the spaces for which they were designed. Like *History of Manila,* Botong's *Via Crucis* is comprised of two long panels completed by a central panel- in this case the altarpiece. It is populated by figures familiar to most viewers from both popular culture and serious religious instruction. Paulino's description of the function of such a work in relation to the spiritual devotion of the Stations of the Cross is

particularly telling: “the Via Crucis… references the suffering and transcendence of Christ, a process imitated by the Catholic faithful in their own search of redemption, be it in their renewal as mortals striving to deserve their humanity or as a persecuted people in search of the language of revolution against the empire that is Spain or Rome.”[196]

This approach to *Filipino Struggles through History* also helps to explain the somewhat awkward position of the work’s central panel depicting the execution by garrotting of three Catholic priests, Mariano Gomez, José Burgos and Jacinto Zamora (Figure 42). Known collectively as ‘Gomburza,’ the three Filipino priests courted controversy by challenging the Spanish authorities on their treatment of native-born priests. In the context of the Stations of the Cross, this position is analogous with the altar in relation to which the rest of the church or chapel is oriented. Botong would therefore seem to be positioning the Gomburza trio as the figures whose sacrifice is most fundamental to Philippine nationalism as framed in his mural. It also offers a succinct summary of Botong’s broader themes in *Filipino Struggles through History*, with the three Filipino priests falling victim to foreign powers who, despite claiming to represent both Catholic values and the ‘civilisation’ of the West, failed to represent the interests of the local population in any demonstrable way.

My suggestion, then, is that the best way to understand Botong’s *History of Manila* is to approach it as a secular *Stations,* journeying with Manila’s population on its long

[196] Roberto G Paulino, “Visualising Philippine History: Image and Imagination in Murals,” pp110- 135, p. 110

struggle towards independence. Like the *Via Crucis,* this journey constitutes a celebration of heroic sacrifice as well as a meditation on the meaning of this legacy for those who have inherited its merits. The Gomburza trio are raised up at its centre, a ghastly encapsulation of the sacrifices involved in standing up to oppression. This image is flanked by a series of images from Filipino fiction, particularly Rizal's *Noli me tangere,* itself in part a response to the cruelty with which the Cavite mutiny was suppressed. Just as the Stations of the Cross as an exercise is designed to be reparative in nature, the intellectual and emotional journey through which Botong leads the viewer in his *History of Manila* is at once cathartic and triumphant, emphasising above all the survival of the city into its new independent incarnation. This is all the more compelling in view of its original location at the newly inaugurated City Hall, a working monument to the recently established Republic of the Philippines after 500 years of obstacles to independence.

Compared to his earlier history paintings, Botong's depiction of colonial powers and the Filipino experience under the authority of other powers is starkly critical. In a mural for the University of Santo Tomas, a Dominican institute of higher education still closely linked with both Spain and the Catholic Church locally and internationally, Botong framed the abandonment of indigenous religion as a good and necessary step for the development of the Philippines. In this work, the nationalist edge to Botong's interpretation of events is evident not in any obvious critique of the Spanish colonial forces in themselves but in his consistent emphasis on the agency of the natives who engaged with this unsolicited intervention. In contrast, *Filipino Struggles through History* is openly hostile in its treatment of virtually all foreign intervention in the history of the nation. Other history paintings from the same period, however, are

less vehemently anti-Spanish: *First Mass in the Philippines* and *Introduction of the First Christian Image* (both 1965, Figures 43-44) strike a tone more similar to *The Introduction of Christianity to the Philippines* than *Filipino Struggles through History.* In both works, Spanish evangelists including Catholic priests as well as conquistadors in armour are depicted as sincere in their devotion and in their desire to share the faith out of genuine goodwill. These works are not wholly uncritical, however, with some of the Filipinos in attendance regarding the interlopers with visible suspicion. This is a delicate balance, but Botong does manage to convey a respect for Catholicism alongside a healthy awareness that it was not the only fruit of Spanish intervention in the Philippines. The visual negotiation of the relationship between the Philippines and its colonial occupiers in Botong's works across time thus reflects the nuances pertinent to the context of their display as well as evolving notions of nationalism, modernism and the relationship between them.

Botong's depiction of the Christianisation of the Phlippines does not rebuke the destruction of indigenous material culture but focuses on the agency of the indigenous population in not just accepting but claiming the Catholic faith for themselves. In terms of the relationship between religion and nationalism, this work has more in common with Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* than Botong's post-war history paintings. Rather than contesting Spanish colonialism in the wider geo-political context, Ocampo and Botong both sought to celebrate the historical and cultural grounds for Filipino identity as both indigenous and Catholic without relying overmuch on the Spanish presence in the Philippines. *Progress of Medicine* and *500 Years of Philippine History,* both from the 1950s, also adopt a fairly neutral tone when highlighting key figures from both sides over the course of the narrative

depicted. Although the achievements of native Filipinos are celebrated throughout, Botong does not take the opportunity to villainise the colonial powers depicted changing the course of Philippine history, often without consulting even a token representative of the local population.

In sharp contrast, *Filipino Struggles through History* leaves no room for doubt as to who the protagonists might be. Local figures are depicted as larger than life heroes bordering on the mythical while a diversity of foreign invaders appear increasingly inhuman as they attempt to impose their will on a local population that is often downtrodden but never defeated. Roberto Paulino argues that Botong uses this visual approach to "engender the Great Man Theory in history" by depicting huge masculine figures scaled "not by spatial position but by historical status."[197] This has the effect of unifying the overall composition as even the most uninitiated viewer's eye is drawn from Great Man to Great Man, guided by simple visual cues to the dominant players in a history with which they may not be familiar. Paulino also sees the influence of superhero comics on Botong's image of the idealised native, especially in the form of pre-colonial royalty such as the Tondo kings in *Filipino Struggles Through History.*[198] Botong's masterful synthesis of references from both high and low art thus bring Captain America and Michelangelo's David together in the figure of Rajah Sulayman and his allies preparing to take a stand against the first of many foreign incursions into Manila (Figure 45). This is effective not only in encapsulating the noble, powerful, and implicitly moral qualities with which Botong endows his images of the pre-colonial Filipino but also in making these relatively remote figures more relatable to a viewing

[197] Paulino, "Visualising Philippine History: Image and Imagination in Murals," p. 110
[198] Ibid., p.113

public much more familiar with Rizal, Bonifacio or even Legazpi than with the personalities, ideologies and personal convictions of either Sulayman or Lapu-Lapu.

A similar device produces almost precisely the opposite effect in Botong's description of the Japanese Occupation, represented predominantly by a group of green-toned, barely human Japanese soldiers celebrating their victory while surrounded by smaller descriptions of Filipino suffering as a result of the war (Figure 46). The grotesque, even overtly racist description of these figures immediately recalls American wartime propaganda, which used similar visual tropes to demonise the Japanese during the Pacific War. That this slight is deliberate and the reference likely specific is reinforced by a comparison between this group and the much more heroic seventeenth-century shogun warriors who appear fighting the Spanish in on the facing panel of the mural. Where Botong's earlier paintings suggest a willingness to at least acknowledge the benefits of colonial activity for the Philippines, then, this one makes an unequivocal point: there have always been great men in the Philippines, and if that seems surprising it is only because five hundred years of invasion, oppression, and persecution have taken their toll. In terms of expressing the zeitgeist of the Philippines in the late 1960s, this aligns almost exactly with the populist rhetoric with which Fernando Marcos came to power in 1965. Having run for President of the Philippines on the now eerily familiar slogan "We shall make this nation great again," the newly inaugurated President rallied the Philippines to action in a fervent speech that framed the nationalist project in religious as well as historical terms.

> "This nation can be great again. This I have said over and over. It is my article of faith, and Divine Providence has willed that you and I can now translate this faith into deeds. I have repeatedly told you: each generation writes its own history.

> Our forebears have written theirs. With fortitude and excellence we must write ours."[199]

Botong's *History of Manila* clearly matches Marcos' rhetoric in tone as well as content. The religious overtones which underscore its composition, subtly framing secular leaders as martyrs to the national cause, is especially in tune with the President's blending of nationalist goals with religious language. Exhorting the everyman to stand up in the national interest, Marcos also encouraged his audience to "find the secret chords which turn ordinary men into heroes, mediocre fighters into champions." *History of Manila* gives this notion visual form, at least in relation to the past, by lionising the Filipino players in each event depicted regardless of whether their efforts ultimately proved pivotal or largely incidental to the wider course of Philippine history. Botong's Filipino heroes are depicted as larger-than-life forces for good even when they were unsuccessful in their attempts to oppose various colonial interlopers. Much like Marcos' campaign slogan, this approach frames Philippine greatness as a quality intrinsic to its population and needing only to be harnessed by a capable leader, himself a 'great man' in the historical tradition, to reach its potential.

[199] Ferdinand Marcos, 'Inaugural Address of His Excellency Ferdinand E. Marcos (Delivered at the Quirino Grandstand, Manila on 30 December 1965,' *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines,* 30 December 1965

Armory Hall Narrative: best-fit summary, life-saving innovation or convenient fib?

Based on the visual evidence, then, it was not in the immediate aftermath of the alleged Armory Hall show in Seattle but during the 1930s that Edades began to engage with Gauguin's visual approaches in his own art. It was also during this period that Edades began to produce works which more closely align with the description of his style in *Edades: National Artist* and *Edades: Kites and Visions*. *Woman with Idol*, completed in 1937 and displayed alongside the collaborative mural *Unity of Culture* and Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, is at least identifiably Gauguinesque in its use of tropical costume and motifs as well as broad planes of colour used to divide the picture space. At the same time, however, the specifics of the work are at least as reminiscent of paintings by Botong and Ocampo as of any specific painting by Gauguin. It resonates particularly with *Introduction of Christianity in the Philippines* (Figure 47) in its depiction of the native population encountering its own material heritage. Where Botong's painting makes the historical situation of this encounter explicit, this wider context is only implied in Edades' work.

This relatively minor, arguably second-hand engagement with Gauguin stands in direct contrast to both Botong and Ocampo, who quoted Gauguin much more directly in their independent works from this period. Botong's *Sungkaan* (1943, Figure 48) strongly suggests a specific knowledge of Gauguin's *Parau Api* (1892, Figure 49) in its close mirroring of Gauguin's composition of a similar scene of two girls at rest in their native environment. In this work, Botong directly with Gauguin's work than either Edades' student works or Ocampo's famous *Brown Madonna.* While the latter understandably reminds art historians of Gauguin's work because of the related

subject matter as well as the indigenous translation of 'Ave Maria' in each work, Ocampo was making a unique point specific to the national and even theological context of the Philippines in *Brown Madonna.* In contrast, Botong's *Sungkaan* offers a much less complex illustration of the artist's knowledge of Gauguin's work as well as his appreciation for the colour palette and tropical atmosphere which would become associated with his own work as well. In comparison, it is difficult to say with any certainty what *Woman with Idol* reveals about Edades' attitude to Gauguin in particular or his art historical sources in general in the late 1930s. It is entirely possible that the artist had always been attracted to the tropical motifs and vibrant colours Rivera Ingle ascribes to Gauguin and that Edades simply found Fontainebleau and Manila more conducive environments than Seattle in which to explore those influences in his own work. It is no less plausible, however, that *Woman with Idol* shows Edades beginning to work individually in a style that more closely resembled his contributions to the Atelier Edades murals.

Although the retroactive accounts of these collaborative works given by both Edades and Ocampo make little specific reference to how each artist brought his own style into alignment with that of the others, it stands to reason that, in doing so, Edades would have engaged with such arguably Gauguinesque devices as a recognizably tropical locale and the more romanticising, generalised image of 'the Filipina' still more closely associated not only with Botong and Ocampo but with Amorsolo to this day. Although his paintings from and after the 1930s do show distinctly more evidence of the Postimpressionist elements for which both Rivera Ingle and Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero come out strongly from the start, it is therefore difficult to be sure whether this was a result of the time Edades spent in France, a conscious effort

to realign his work with that of more prestigious, recognizable artists than his own instructors at the University of Washington or simply the result of close involvement with sources and subject matter that had originally appealed more to Edades' collaborators and commissioning architects. In any case, the visual record of Edades' surviving works from the 1930s support the argument that he was at least as interested in Gauguin as his proteges much more convincingly than the earlier, more distinctly American-influenced portraits and genre scenes of the 1920s.

In his later years, Edades continued to work in a style reasonably aligned with the description of his paintings as post-Impressionist in character. His portrait works from the 1950s to 70s no longer suggest the influence of the Ash Can School with its plain backgrounds and matter-of-fact approach to subject and setting. Instead, Edades employed bright colours, distinctly local fabrics and costume choices, and rich settings suggestive of his sitters' own lives to situate his subjects in both time and place. Again, it is not implausible that Gauguin's influence inspired Edades' use of bright colours and space indicated by colour rather than line.

To a large extent, Edades' painting in the post-war independence era does seem to support the characterization offered by Rivera Ingle and Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero. His portraits from this period are much more consistently ornamented during this period: *Portrait of Joan* (1949, Figure 50) and *Susan* (1971, Figure 51) both show the artist's relatively late turn towards brighter colours the inclusion of more decorative elements in both costume and setting. Edades' genre scenes likewise conform to the vibrant tropical palette more familiar from Botong and Ocampo's works in the pre-war period. A late *Nude* (1976, Figure 52) also illustrates

the increased tendency towards Post-Impressionism in Edades' work compared to his own paintings on similar themes during the 1920s. Because the written sources retroactively attribute this to the likely fictional Armory Hall show of 1922/23, however, it is difficult to argue conclusively for one determining factor for Edades' interest in Gauguin at this period over the other possibilities by the time the visual evidence of his works can be said to support the analysis of his approach as influenced by Gauguinesque Post-Impressionism. Based on the chronological development of such elements, together with the comparative success of the Atelier Edades murals compared to the Columbia Club show, the most convincing possibility would seem to be that Edades used his obvious awareness of the approaches to modernist art that were and were not gaining traction in Manila and adapted his own practice accordingly. Edades' later work in both portraiture and genre scenes thus show a degree of engagement not only with Rivera, Cézanne and Gauguin but also with American mural tradition and even the advancements to Philippine modern art proposed by his own followers. In the main, these are developments that had yet to take shape, particularly within Edades' sphere of influence, at the time of the purported Armory Hall show. From the surviving visual evidence, it seems much more likely that Edades' adapted his visual approach to conform better with the paintings for which he was becoming better known through his collaboration with the Nakpil brothers, Botong and Ocampo. There is certainly an argument that the vivid hues with which Edades enlivened his later genre scenes simply reflect the tropical settings of Manila and Davao where the muddier palette he favoured in earlier years was more appropriate for the lower-class dwelling places he occupied in Seattle in the 1920s. In any case, a combination of visual, textual and contextual evidence strongly suggests that Edades' eventual use of Gauguinesque

devices in his work represents a development over time, likely in response to a variety of personal and social circumstances rather than a direct expression of his first encounter with French modernist art around 1922.

It may also prove instructive to consider how Edades' followers continued to evolve in their own independent practice. Both Ocampo and Botong remained strikingly consistent in terms of the subject matter with which they continued to engage most frequently. Ocampo's interest in religious art led to extensive public commissions, most notably the restoration of Manila's Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception (Manila Cathedral). Ocampo's designs for the Cathedral's stained glass reflects many of the priorities first articulated in *Brown Madonna*, incorporating local history and religious tradition into Marian iconography selected in keeping with the dedication of the cathedral to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.[200] The description of the Madonna herself, however, is much less overtly nationalist in these depictions than in the 1938 painting: the Virgin Mary appears in a much more traditionally Western guise, complete with blonde hair and European dress, in Ocampo's stained glass designs. In other works, Ocampo also explored religious themes and motifs in a variety of styles. His *Crucifixion* of 1984 (Figure 53), for example, is perfectly orthodox in its religious iconography but experimental, especially for Ocampo, in its use of cubist figuration. His interest in the ethnography and anthropology of the Philippines also continued to manifest in his work even as his paintings grew more abstract in their figuration.

[200] Manila Cathedral, 'Stained Glass Window'< http://manilacathedral.com.ph/glass-window.aspx>

Botong's visual style changed less drastically over the next few decades than either Edades' or Ocampo's. His late works show a commitment to Gauguinesque colour choices combined with a consistent interest in pre-colonial history and material culture that deviates little from the precedents set by the Atelier Edades collaborative works. Where the focus of Botong's work can be said to have shifted, the cause is likely the demands of specific commissions rather than any overtly philosophical paradigm shift on the artist's own part. This is perhaps most evident in the nuances of Botong's later history paintings, the political overtones of which seem to reflect their patrons and intended contexts of display more explicitly than Botong's own views**.** To a large extent, these murals reflect the changing political landscape of the Philippines during the Marcos era rather than explicating the artist's thoughts or feelings on these developments. This also explains the apparent contradiction between attitudes revealed in different works by Botong, with *History of Manila* offering a much harsher view of colonialism and even Catholicism than other paintings from much the same time.

During the Japanese Occupation, Edades was able to use this fact to handwave the potentially dangerous fact of his American education by aligning his practice with a country Japan was, at least, not in direct conflict with at the time. It is difficult to say whether Edades felt the need to make this distinction out of self-preservation or whether Miyamoto chose the interpretation of Edades' work most in harmony with Japanese rhetoric relating to Asian liberation through the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Obviously, no mention was made of a modernist exhibition in Seattle at this time; instead, the article is most remarkable as the first surviving record of an instance when Edades allowed a biographer to conflate Paris and

Seattle in the history of his own life and career. Miyamoto's account suggests that Edades may not have lied outright so much as allowed his visitor to draw his own conclusions from a carefully selected series of anecdotes. Instead of discussing close to a decade of intimate contact with the art world in the Pacific Northwest in the 1920s, Edades appears to have allowed his short period as a student in France and working visit to San Francisco in preparation for the GGIE to serve as a more palatable summary of the influences that shaped his approach to modernist art. With the benefit of another 70 years of scholarship in hindsight, it is also significant that a Japanese observer with one day's familiarity with Edades and his interests as both an artist and an intellectual made more of the Mexican connection than most subsequent scholars of Edades' work have done.

Although the influence of Mexican muralism on Philippine modernist art is almost exclusively associated with Botong in most current scholarship, there is clear evidence that Edades, too, took an interest in Rivera and his colleagues. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, it is much easier to support the argument that Edades learnt of these artists' work and absorbed aspects of their approaches to modernist visual language in his own art while studying in Seattle than it is to find either historical or visual evidence for the primacy of Cézanne and Gauguin in the early days of Filipino modernism. The resonance between Botong's *Progress of Medicine* and Zakheim's *History of Medicine in California* also offers new insight into the influence of Edades' experience as well as his collection of books and images on his collaborators. It also suggests San Francisco, particularly during Edades' involvement in the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, as another site of

influence and exchange that could certainly be interrogated further with reference to Philippine modernism.

The Armory Hall narrative also sets up a clear rivalry between modernist and conservative positions that speaks less to Edades' time in Seattle than to his experiences in Manila over the next fifty years. Most of the objections to Cézanne, Gauguin and modernism in general which are attributed to Isaacs, Patterson and their contemporaries at the University of Washington were in fact articulated by Tolentino on behalf of his own colleagues at the University of the Philippines. This also strengthens the resonance between Edades and his supposed predecessors, casting him and by extension his followers as heroic figures protesting against the complacency of a previous generation of urban elites on two continents in much the same pattern as Gauguin or Cézanne. In reality, much of this rivalry was if not mostly one-sided then at least consciously exaggerated for strategic purposes. Amorsolo in particular consistently showed little to no interest in expressing any particular enmity towards the modernists who had defined their practice largely and vocally as opposed to his own. To some extent, Amorsolo's relative indifference suggests a degree of privilege, or at least of comfort, which Edades and his followers had not yet secured for themselves in the 1930s. While the triumvirs of modernism were still fighting to establish their position as legitimate in the eyes of Manila's art-buying elite, Amorsolo and his students already enjoyed widespread acceptance among the patrons and connoisseurs who tended to dictate the local art market.

The Armory Hall narrative also gives Edades more credit for the shift in his own art towards local and national subject matter than might otherwise make sense. To the

extent that Edades can be seen to have identified with Gauguin's interest in tropical motifs as early as 1922, as Rivera Ingle suggests, it is possible to argue that his own adoption of similar themes in the 1930s was an original choice to which Edades had been committed much earlier than it was discernible in his surviving works. This is a somewhat more heroic narrative than the more likely interpretation of surviving evidence, which suggests that Edades embraced the tropical, local and even nationalist motifs that became associated with Filipino modernism through the work of his own followers, especially Botong and Ocampo, as well as through their broader association with Art Deco and its localising forms. This is not inconsistent with his earlier approach as it only makes sense that the subject matter of "the everyday" would vary widely between Seattle and Manila. It would therefore be quite understandable if Edades had adjusted his approach to art to accommodate not only local flora, fauna and modes of dress, which were themselves more in line with a Gauguinist approach to colour and line in 1930s Manila and 1960s Davao than 1920s Seattle, but also the visual language he had already endorsed in the collaborative murals of 1935-36. The main problem with admitting this, at least in terms of the wider narrative of modernism in the Philippines and Edades' legacy in relation to it, is that the "father of Philippine modernism" would have to admit to ceding ground not only to his subordinate triumvirs but, arguably, to his chief rivals Amorsolo and Tolentino.

Chapter 4: Modernist, Nationalist- Southeast Asian?

By the 1960s, the early pioneers of Modernist art in the Philippines were firmly established not as the heralds of a new direction but as the old guard of a tradition they had established decades earlier. The Thirteen Moderns had long since developed their own careers as educators as well as artists, while the erstwhile triumvirs of 1930s modernism had gone their separate ways. Botong, who consistently showed the least interest in making explicit statements about his own legacy, died in 1969 without giving any outward indications of altering his position on the issue. This left Ocampo and Edades as the last remaining first-person witnesses to the earliest phase of Filipino modernism as well as the two artists whose work as educators and historians of modernist art would become most influential in the following decades. Ocampo continued to innovate in his personal practice as well as cementing his position as the foremost writer on Filipino art and art history in the twentieth century; Victorio Edades continued to teach and paint in Davao City, away from the spotlights and controversies associated with the capital city. It was during this period, when his position as the original authority on the history of his own practice had already been established and institutionalised, that Edades gave his account of the Armory Hall show first to Rivera Ingle and shortly afterwards to Guerrero and Kalaw-Ledesma. This chapter examines the retroactive nature of these texts and the relationship between the perspective offered and the specific priorities of Filipino artists and art historians in the context of Philippine nationalism in the 1970s.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Filipino artists had interrogated key questions of national identity, colonial influence, religious unity and the relationships between them almost

as long as they had access to paint and canvas. In the post-war period, however, a new matrix was introduced within which to negotiate questions of cultural identity in relation to geography, language and race. This was the development of "Southeast Asian" as a viable regional identity. The term had been used as a regional designation before, usually to describe trade routes between China and Japan, East Asia, and India, South Asia. In the 1967, however, the formalisation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations saw the new member nations adopting that identity for themselves for the first time. ASEAN's founding members were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The association's primary aim, according to its founding document, was "to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations."[201] This was to be fostered through a mutual respect for local sovereignty, collaboration and cooperation in various areas including "the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields," and by sharing resources "in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres."[202] In essence, these countries- four of them relatively newly established- sought to establish a local network of trade, industry and education to replace the colonial ties that had been severed through decolonisation while still asserting and protecting their rights as sovereign states.

[201] *Bangkok Declaration*
[202] Ibid.

The turn towards the regional was solidly rooted in immediate political and economic concerns, but it also echoed the sentiments of newly post-colonial nationalists seeking to replace Euro-American frames of reference with models crafted closer to home. It is no coincidence that four out of five founding members had gained their independence from Western powers in the two decades prior to the formation of ASEAN. As Marcos suggested in his inauguration address two years before the association was established, "Today, as never before, we need a new orientation toward Asian; we must intensify the cultural identity with ancient kin and make common cause with them in our drive toward prosperity and peace. For this we shall require the understanding of ourselves and of Asia that exceeds acquaintance; we require the kind of knowledge that can only be gained through unabating scholarship on our histories, cultures, social forces and aspirations, and through more active interaction with our friends and neighbours."[203] ASEAN provided concrete strategies through which the Philippines and other member nations could form these connections instead of competing for dominance in the absence of the foreign powers which had long done the same in the region. Perhaps echoing Rizal's sense that cultural output could function as both an assertion of identity and a call to action, the promotion of "Southeast Asian studies" was included as one of ASEAN's founding goals to further these intentions.[204] In addition to celebrating the diversity of linguistic, religious, cultural and even socio-economic perspectives now represented by the association, this aspect of the ASEAN mission statement articulated an unprecedented interest in identifying and strengthening common ground in a region which had long been defined primarily by difference. Artists and museums from all

[203] Marcos, 'Inaugural Address of His Excellency Ferdinand E. Marcos
[204] *Bangkok Declaration,* 8 August 1967

five founding countries suddenly had more access to the cultural lives of their neighbours than previous generations would have imagined possible or even necessarily meaningful. They also received new resources and, including local and regional funding, with which to study and respond to this new regional conception of self and other.

For the first time, then, artists from most of the national traditions now under the ASEAN umbrella had an opportunity to position their work not just in relation to their contemporaries not in Europe and America but also within the regional context. This had never been done before, existing systems of art education, ethnology and museology having been formed with reference to networks of colonial influence rather than geographic proximity. Various pioneers of modernist art at the national level thus had an unprecedented opportunity to present and define their work, both ongoing and in retrospect, not only in relation to local and colonial precedent but in relation to the achievements of their contemporaries within the region. Being able to compare the separate paths artists in Southeast Asia forged towards the establishment of a distinctly local form of modernism is thus instructive on several levels. The differences between the strategies that proved successful help to illuminate the systems that made them necessary, demonstrating the impact of colonial attitudes to art, education and even ethnology on the availability of training and exhibition spaces before independence. As a result, the practice of art in the Western style itself had different political valencies in various Southeast Asian countries. In Indonesia, Sindudarsono Sudjojono and his PERSAGI colleagues had been flatly denied the opportunity to exhibit their work alongside Dutch artists in Batavia in the 1930s. In view of this, the very act of making modernist art as native

Indonesians became an explicitly countercultural choice. In choosing to develop their ideas about Indonesian modernist art in overt defiance of the colonial administration, Sudjojono and his PERSAGI colleagues broke not only with years of indigenous tradition, which did not have a figural tradition comparable to Western art, but also with ideas about racial hierarchy imposed by foreign powers drawing ethnic lines to their own benefit. In contrast with these artists, whose very vocation was necessarily anti-colonial and therefore at least potentially nationalist in character, Philippine artists from De la Cruz Bagay to Luna, Edades and Tolentino operated very much in cooperation with colonial institutions of education and art-making. As a result, the relationship between nationalism and modernism in the Philippines was significantly less fraught until an excess of colonial support became a liability rather than an advantage in the post-independence era.

Artists in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, on the other hand, were able to negotiate their relationship with Euro-American modernism without direct intervention from colonial powers. Thailand remains the only country in Southeast Asia never colonised by a Western power, resulting in some two hundred years of careful negotiating foreign influence. Participating in various outward signs of modernism, from the use of photography at a royal court which had long regarded images of the monarchy as taboo to educating local artists in a variety of visual modes, was at least in part a nationalist assertion that Thailand needed little Western assistance to participate in the projects of modernisation. Malaya was a British possession in Southeast Asia, comprising both Malaysia and Singapore and valuable to its occupiers primarily for spices, rubber, and control of key ports on the most profitable trade route between India and China. Where Indonesia was the jewel in the crown of

the Dutch colonial empire and the American possession of the Philippines was controversial from the moment it was established, British control of pre-war Malaya tended to prioritise practical interventions designed to maximise trade and industry over social and cultural development in the pattern of British society. Artists operating in Singapore and Malaysia therefore received neither the financial and structural support offered to Filipino artists and architects nor the blanket opposition suffered by their counterparts in pre-war Indonesia. As a result, there was little in the way of a national tradition in Malayan art before independence and the first moves towards a modernist style were made by Chinese diaspora artists who had received their own education in Shanghai, Paris and even further afield.

A direct comparison of two key works which first went on display during the early years of ASEAN illustrates how the study of Southeast Asian art is both enhanced and limited by analysis from a regional perspective. Sudjojono's *Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan Jan Pieterszoon Coen* (Battle Between Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen*),* referred to after this as *Sultan Agung,* Figure 54), completed in 1973, represents a major departure from the scale and subject matter typical of Sudjojono's broader output. This painting was not only his first foray into the genre of history painting but, as a commission for the newly founded Museum Sejarah Jakarta (Jakarta History Museum), also his biggest and most public effort work. Indeed, Amir Sidharta goes so far as to call it "one of the most significant pieces Sudjojono had ever created" and even the artist's "magnum opus."[205] In contrast, government-funded murals depicting the principal heroes and villains of Filipino

[205] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen' in *Seabad S. Sudjojono 1913-2013*, Jakarta: S Sudjojno Centre, pp30-62, pp. 30 and 43

history were not only nothing new for Botong but in fact the type of work for which the artist is best known. Whereas Sudjojono's *Sultan Agung* already represents more of an evolution than a culmination of his previous art practice, then, Botong's monumental *History of Manila (Filipino Struggles through History)* can seem very much like a final word on narrative painting by the "supreme muralist" of the Philippines.

At 3x10 metres in size, *Sultan Agung* is by far the largest work Sudjojono ever completed. The logistical challenges associated with working on so grand a scale seem almost to have amused the artist, who complained about the difficulty of securing the appropriate materials for such a large painting.[206] *History of Manila* is likewise the largest of Botong's paintings, but by a significantly smaller margin. By 1968, Botong had been working on public and private commissions on a monumental scale for more than three decades, and the prospect of an extensive government commissions was neither new nor especially challenging in relation to his recent undertakings. Botong himself joked about this among with his colleagues, as Galo Ocampo observed when he recalled some tongue-in-cheek advice on remaining ambitious in his own practice: "'Well, Galits,' Botong would say, 'if you cannot make it good, at least make it big!'"[207] Where Sudjojono completed *Sultan Agung* entirely by his own hand, Botong is known to have called on carefully selected "fellow painters and apprentices" to help him with his larger mural commissions. This was his usual practice when working on a large scale, and the "group sessions" that resulted were later remembered as "more fun than hard work,"

[206] Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen, p. 31
[207] Galo Ocampo, 'Letters from Contemporaries' in Flores (ed.), *The Life and Times of Botong Francisco,* pp. 235-236, p.235

with good cheer- and alcohol- typically abounding at each gathering.[208] In spite of the relaxed atmosphere, Botong remained keenly attentive to his overall vision, supervising “the preliminary pastiche” and “the final shadings” especially carefully.[209] He also handled the description of hands, feet and faces himself[210] and took pains to ensure that the final touches of each mural were “painted by his own hand, since he alone could bring the work to glowing life.”[211]

As perhaps makes sense for such self-consciously monumental works, both paintings were site-specific commissions. Sudjojono even makes some reference to the location for which the painting was intended, including a burning building in the background of the battle scene which corresponds to the one which would eventually be repurposed as the Museum Sejarah (Museum of History). Botong’s *History* makes no direct reference to its setting in Manila’s City Hall, but the whole historical narrative of the mural traces the path through various occupations to the establishment of an independent democracy embodied by the type of work which typically took place there. Both murals have been restored extensively since their completion, *Sultan Agung* in 2008 and *History of Manila* between 2013 and 2017. Sudjojono’s work remains in its original location at the Museum Sejarah, the current display completed by historical artefacts and large-scale reproductions of selected preparatory sketches, while Botong’s *History of Manila* has been relocated to the National Museum (Fine Arts) and reinstalled at eye level instead of one storey above the viewer.

[208] Rafael Ma. Guerrero, “Carlos V Francisco, The Filipino Dream- Filipino Literature and Commitment,” pp.143-151, pp. 146-147
[209] Ibid.
[210] Reyes, “Miracle of Rare Device,” pp40- 77, p. 57
[211] Guerrero, “Carlos V Francisco, The Filipino Dream- Filipino Literature and Commitment,” p.147

Both works are concerned with turning points in the national narrative, but Sudjojono focuses on a single course of events while Botong explores a series of separate but decisive moments in the history of the Philippine capital city. Sudjojono's painting illustrates three key moments in the 1628 conflict between Sultan Agung, the King of Mataram, and Dutch Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen. These are the first meeting between the two principles, the battle itself, and the ultimately unsuccessful personal appeal of the emissary Kyai Rangga to Coen on behalf of the Sultan. The Dutch victory in this encounter was decisive, and the period which followed saw the systematic exploitation of the resource-rich spice islands in the service of European colonial expansion on a global scale. It is somewhat surprising that this painting represents the only battle scene Sudjojono ever depicted, the artist's career being so closely associated with the Indonesian war for independence. This was due in part to Sudjojono's philosophy as an artist, especially in the 1930s-50s, when he was most concerned with capturing real life in the moment rather than historicising even the most recent past. Even later on, when Sudjojono did begin to consider "episodes of the past from a peripheral standpoint" in his work, he tended to focus on preparations for battle or the aftermath of a skirmish rather than the military action itself. This interest in exploring the ideas surrounding conflict rather than the visceral description of the clash itself is also present in *Sultan Agung,* which depicts no bloodshed at all[212] despite the violence of the event being commemorated.

[212] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p. 33

The nationalist character of both works is often taken for granted in discussions of their content. This is due in part to their subject matter, which in both cases is concerned with questions of history, memory and identity. At the same time, however, there also appears to be a certain expectation that paintings by such artists as Botong and Sudjojono must be nationalist in ideology by virtue of their authorship, both artists being so commonly associated with the project of nation-building and the articulation of a national style in the earliest phase of each new republic. This does not seem strictly accurate for Sudjojono, who spoke explicitly about the disjuncture between his perspective as an artist, seeking to render the scene as objectively as possible, and as a nationalist, fundamentally invested in one side of the battle more than the other.[213] Botong does not seem to have made any public statements regarding his perspective either as a nationalist or as an artist, which is consistent with his general preference to let his work speak for himself while other artists, including his close friend Galo Ocampo, concerned themselves with the history of art. While it is difficult to conceive of anything other than a nationalist reading of Botong's *History of Manila,* it seems likely enough that Botong was more invested in the various folk histories which informed his composition than in inciting nationalist fervour specifically in the context of this commissioned work. It is worth noting too that in both cases the artists were working within the confines of a governmental brief. While both Sudjojono and Botong did concern themselves with questions of place, identity and community in many of their works, then, the specific content of these two commissions reflect the priorities of their patrons at least as much as those of the artists as individuals.

[213] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p. 35

At the same time, it is striking that both artists place more emphasis on intellectual and ideological strength than on military prowess even in the depiction of obviously martial scenes. Sudjojono discussed this explicitly, arguing that a hundred diplomatic overtures, however unsuccessful, were preferable to causing a single death.[214] Speaking of this painting, the artist also praised Governor General Coen not only for his prowess in battle but also for his intuition, discipline, imagination and moral values.[215] This is a remarkably generous interpretation of Coen as a historical figure, especially coming from a self-proclaimed Indonesian nationalist, considering the Governor General's role in the exploitation of the Netherlands East Indies through the introduction of, among other things, an economic monopoly and even the legalisation of slavery.[216] Instead of focusing on these aspects of Coen's involvement, however, Sudjojono saw his work as nationalistic in that it portrayed figures from Indonesian history on the same level as such vaunted men as Coen. To the extent that any aspect of *Sultan Agung* can be considered exhortative, then, the exhortation is one to peaceful collaboration. As the artist himself put it: "let's not focus our thoughts on the question of who is right and who is wrong. We should instead think together… now that today has returned to normal here's to a better tomorrow. The Dutch nation is the one which understands the most about our nation in every field. Why should we not work together?"[217] Botong's work seems less

[214] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p. 35
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid., p.54
[217] (my translation of "janganlah focus pikiran kita pada pertanyaan siapa salah, siapa benar. Lebih baik kita pikirkan bersama… hari ini untuk hari depan yang gemilang mumpung hari sekarang sudah normal kembali. Bangsa Belanda adalah satu bangsa yang paling banyak mengerti tentang bangsa kita dalam segala bidang. Mengapa kita tidak bekerja sama?") 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p.35

optimistic about the outcomes of cooperation, though there is an echo of the pride Sudjojono takes in being recognised on the same level as a former occupier in the final scene depicting Filipino-American cooperation in the aftermath of independence.

Both paintings reflect the meticulous research, preparation and experimentation which informed their execution. Sudjojono's sketches for *Sultan Agung* are especially well known, having been presented as one of the focal works of both the centenary exhibition, *Seabad S. Sudjojono (A Century of Sudjojono)*, and the 2017 *Europalia* exhibition in Brussels. These comprise some forty separate drawings exploring the minutiae of the final work, from careful notes on costume and weaponry to the specific positioning of the hands, feet and heads of key figures.[218] As Sidharta notes, "in spite of being known as an anti-academic artist, in his approach Sudjojono did adopt an academic system in his work"[219] This is certainly evident in *Sultan Agung,* which reflects a largely traditional approach to history painting which does in many ways seem more academic, intellectually if not aesthetically, than the majority of Sudjojono's work. The artist also spent a full three months in the Netherlands researching both the history of the battle and the surviving evidence of the material culture from both sides in the 1620s.

A "tireless researcher" himself, Botong too brought not only years of study but also 30 years' experience to the project of crafting historical narratives in his chosen

[218] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' pp. 38-39
[219] (my translation of "walaupun terkenal sebagai pelukis yang anti-akademis namun pada kenyataannya Sudjojono sendiri pun memiliki system kerja yang akademis.") 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p. 40

medium.[220] Like Sudjojono, Botong worked on preparatory sketches before putting paint to canvas. For *History of Manila,* he also referred to many of his own earlier compositions exploring the history and identity of the Philippines. The majority of the scenes depicted are specific and historical in their content, but Botong also draws on oral history and folk tradition throughout the composition. Where Sudjojono's depiction of history is grounded in as much contemporary detail as would fit in the picture space, Botong relies on popular culture and contemporary interpretations of history as well as archival materials to flesh out his vision of Manila through the ages.

This emphasis on the local, as well as on the importance of oral tradition and communal memory, is consistent with the wider narrative of Botong as first and foremost a native son rather than an academic. Reyes captures Botong's particular gift for synthesising disparate vignettes into a coherent visual narrative when he describes the artist's gift for "[turning] history's prosaic narratives into imposing figures and colours, assembling them in dramatic chapters that worked as tropes of collective struggle and change."[221] This is accurate in two ways: Botong's process not only brings together a series of key moments in the city's history but also simplifies and even essentialises them so that the viewer is struck more by the overall emotional charge of the mural than by the fine details of each separate scene. Galo Ocampo too praised the "consistent excellence and visual cohesiveness" of Botong's compositions, highlighting not only the "creativity, charm, an undefinable sense of style, reason, intelligence, order" evident in Botong's work

[220] Guerrero, "Carlos V Francisco, The Filipino Dream- Filipino Literature and Commitment," p. 146
[221] Reyes, "Miracle of Rare Device," pp40- 77, p. 70

but in fact “a definite aesthetic structure that will pass the test of time.”[222] Where Sudjojono’s process was designed to offer a moment of deep immersion in the scene described, Botong’s approach thus offers his viewers a series of intense impressions of a rapid succession of separate events which are connected more by emotion and intention than by specific narrative details.

Both artists also go to great lengths to represent the diversity of the participants in the history they explore. Sudjojono’s battle scene shows a near-obsessive interest in costume and weaponry, from the exquisite royal *parang barong* batik worn by Sultan Agung to the specific local costumes which highlight the involvement of warriors from all over Indonesia. Sudjojono meticulously captured the flags which establish the origins of various regiments as well as the Dutch military attire familiar from any number of colonial-era portraits.[223] Even the horses depicted are taller and more impressive than might be expected of native stock, reflecting the idea that these may have been brought from Turkey at the time of the conflict. [224] Similarly, Botong’s vision of Manila’s history is variously populated, visited and even occupied by a diverse range of players. The participation of the indigenous population is essential to both the composition and the message of the mural, which shows the city’s native population changing modes distress through passive exploitation to active resistance over the course of the mural. Like Sudjojono, Botong takes advantage of the complexity of his overall composition to incorporate this wide range of perspectives, both sympathetic and antagonistic, in his depiction of the events which shaped Manila.

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[222] Galo Ocampo, ‘Letters from Contemporaries, p.235
[223] ‘Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,’ pp51-52
[224] Ibid, p.52

It is also worth noting those elements of both narratives which are not included in the final works. Sudjojono explored several variations before settling on a composition, and the decisions he made are telling. An earlier sketch of the encounter between Coen and Kyai Rangga, for example, showed the Sultan's emissary with his head positioned higher than the Dutchman's, while one rejected vision for Sultan Agung's portrait showed the Indonesian leader riding a horse into battle, suggesting quite a different overall narrative. [225] That these sketches were ultimately rejected seems to support the artist's statement of his intention to create a work that emphasised the newly levelled playing field of the post-colonial context rather than glorying in Indonesia's former grandeur. In Botong's case, the mural's focus not on national history but on events centred upon the capital city imposes interesting limitations on the anecdotes available for inclusion.

Where Botong's work spans the chronological breadth of life in Manila, Sudjojono captures three relatively brief events. As such, the visual references used in *Sultan Agung* are both more tightly focused and more thoroughly described. In addition to his extensive research into costumes and weaponry discussed above, the artist made very specific use of a series of nineteenth-century portraits of Sultan Hamengkubuwono VII of Jogjakarta by Indonesia's first native photographer, Kassian Cephas (Figure 55). Sudjojono's composition of Sultan Agung enthroned to receive the Dutch closely resembles Cephas's photograph in every aspect except the placement of the hands. These photographs were necessarily made after the

[225] S. Sudjojono, *Cerita Tentang Saya dan Orang-orang Sekitar Saya*, Jakarta: KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017, pp 250-251

Dutch occupation and even through the intervention of the Dutch colonial presence, Cephas having learnt to use the new technology from his Dutch instructor at the court of Hamengkubuwono VII, but Sudjojono's appropriation of the image for his Sultan Agung reflects the interest of both artist and photographer in capturing the timeless qualities of a traditional monarchy that had long pre-dated the Dutch occupation. Indeed, the *parang barong* batik pattern combines coral and lion motifs designed to remind a king of his duty.[226] This type of cloth is considered so exclusive that even in the present day only members of the various Indonesian royal families are permitted to wear it.[227]

Both artists thus make use of local material culture to ground their work in a visual context their intended audience would have recognised immediately. Sudjojono's careful description of the Sultan's court and all its trappings, including betel boxes, various pipes and traditional weaponry, seems particularly calculated to demonstrate the wealth and complexity of pre-colonial Indonesian culture. The depiction of the Sultan's throne is also particularly intricate, while the inclusion of a Quran and prayer mat recalls the Muslim ideology which underpins not only the pre-colonial court but the modern rhetoric concerning contemporary Indonesian identity. Sudjojono was not above taking some liberties with these small details, however: the elaborate *gebyok* doorway which lends his composition both colour and complexity would not normally have been located in a public reception area, so its inclusion seems to have more to do with visual interest than any real expectation that one would have featured at

[226] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p.44
[227] Ibid.

Sultan Agung's reception of Coen's party.[228] Botong's work is also peppered with elements drawn from everyday Filipino life. Local architecture in the form of the *bahay kubo* is hinted at at various points, while the recurrence of bamboo stems and bolo knives not only unite the composition through the recurring motif of strong vertical lines that help to define and divide the mural's complicated narrative but also visually assert the fundamentally water-bound identity of Manila as not only a port city but also the capital of a country made up of some thousands of islands.

To some extent, the modes of research employed by each artist also relate to the wider message of each finished work. Sudjojono's interest in forward-looking cooperation and collaboration, together with the assertion that the Dutch nation is most familiar with Indonesia, was borne out by his reliance on Dutch resources, both financial and academic, to furnish the painting with its fine details. Conversely, Botong's freer interweaving of fact, mythology and social memory as sources comprising the canon of national history may also reflect the artist's desire to circumvent the official, necessarily colonial, account of Filipino history. Even in the first half of the twentieth century, the institutional version of Philippine history was still largely reliant on Spanish and American primary sources "whose opinions of Filipinos an their institutions were less than flattering"[229] and thus less suited to Botong's overall message than the strong, and strongly partisan, oral traditions which grew up outside colonial institutions of learning. This may also explain why the second half of the mural, highlighting local figures whose lives, thoughts and ideals were much better documented, is somewhat less mythologising than the first. The

[228] 'Mengenal Lebih Dekat Lukisan Pertempuran Antara Sultan Agung dan JPC/ Getting Up Close and Personal with The Battle of Sultan Agung and Jan Pieterszoon Coen,' p.49
[229] Teodoro A Agoncillo (ed.), *The Revolutionists: Aguinaldo, Bonifacio, Jacinto,* Manila: National Historical Institute, 1993, p vi.

reception of Botong's works has tended to take his artistic license in stride, with Reyes noting that "the bedrock of Botong's genius was his profound sense of history."[230] Furthermore, the artists simply approached this aspect of their work with different agendas in mind. Where Sudjojono's project seems to be the careful identification and incorporation of as many elements of authentic history and material culture as possible, Botong is more concerned with providing his viewers with the broad strokes necessary to identify a variety of individual players in a *dramatis personae* spanning five centuries.

One final aspect of both works which adds an unexpected dimension to this comparison is the use of forms traditionally associated with Christian religious art. Neither work is overtly Christian in subject matter: Sudjojono's makes no reference to any church tradition at all while the attitude to Catholicism articulated by Botong's *History of Manila* is at best ambivalent and at worst overtly hostile. Nonetheless, the composition of each paintings leans on religious tradition to canonise key events from secular history. *Sultan Agung* seems to make less ideological use of the forms on which it draws, but the influence of religious art is clearly discernible. By depicting the battle scene at the centre of the canvas, flanked by peripheral but directly relevant scenes, Sudjojono recalls the tradition of triptych altarpieces. This gives the image of the Sultan enthroned a somewhat more mystical association, suggesting the iconography of saints and holy kings enshrined as ideal examples for the living viewer to admire and emulate. Although Sudjojono never takes his appropriation of religious forms as far as Botong, any allusion to Christian imagery in his work seems all the more significant because of the departure this represents from the very

[230] Reyes, 'Miracle of Rare Device,' p.70

deliberately non-theistic content of his early works and indeed from the general trend of modernist art in Indonesia. Where Botong's reference to Catholic tradition is both expected and consistent in the context of Filipino modernism, even a suggestion of Christian iconography for Sudjojono, formerly known to his colleagues and students as an artist, a man and a socialist in that order,[231] and still acknowledged as the "Father of Modernism" in a predominantly Muslim nation. Leaving aside each artist's personal relationship with Christianity, the use of religious iconography as a framing device seems to clearly articulate the intention, of the official bodies which paid for these works as much as of the artists themselves, to mark important events as fundamental to the history and identity of the still relatively new Republics of Indonesia and the Philippines.

The degree to which these paintings can be seen as encapsulating any fundamental truths about their creators' long careers is debatable. On one hand, Corazon Alvina could easily be describing this mural specifically when she summarises Botong's reputation as "an artist who assayed the folk and their community (native, if you will), encapsulated history and told stories of institutions and agencies, of society and its heroes (national, if you will)."[232] On the other hand, *Sultan Agung* is a much less natural development in Sudjojono's artistic career. A close thematic examination of *History of Manila* also suggests some unexplored gaps between the view of history and particularly religion articulated in the painting and Botong's own stand as an artist and a private citizen. Furthermore, the fact that both works are government commissions should signal the fact that the artist's personal motivations were not the

[231] S. Sudjojono, Cerita Tentang Saya dan Orang-orang Sekitar Saya, Jakarta: KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017, p.34
[232] Corazon S. Alvina, 'Foreword' in Flores (ed.), *The Life and Art of Botong Francisco,* pp vi-vii, p. vii

only factor determining the final outcome. To some extent, the fact that the expectation that these works should be at all representative of any wider truth about their creators reflects a lingering naïveté in existing histories of modernist art in Southeast Asia. The founding figures of modernism on a national scale had by this time become Great Men themselves in the history of art at home. Sudjojono was not only a founding member of PERSAGI and the widely acknowledged patriarch of Indonesian modernism but also a key voice in the first generation of historians of Indonesian art. While Botong tended to leave the latter concern to Galo Ocampo, he too was easily perceived as part of the system of nation-building simply by association because of the prominence of his works at public institutions from the Philippine General Hospital to Manila City Hall. The fact that these commissions were made at all seems to demonstrate this: by the late 1960s and early 1970s, Sudjojono and Botong had become the natural choice for ambitious works investigating the history of national identity precisely because they were already associated, whether by intention or not, with the project of nation-building in an almost literal sense.

Although the addition of a regional dimension to the art and identity of Southeast Asia offers new insight into the various conceptions of nationhood developing in and in relation to these new republics, it also lays bare the failure of Southeast Asia to function coherently either culturally or in terms of shared history before the 1960s. During the colonial period, which lasted well into the 1960s in several countries, the region operated primarily within separate colonial systems which greatly limited direct exchange between the future member nations of ASEAN. This is in direct contrast to Harper Montgomery's findings in Latin America, where enough shared

history united regional artists for Havana's *Revista de Avance* to ask regional artists and writers their views on "the possibility of common characteristics shared by the art of all the nations of our Americas" as early as 1928.[233] José Carlos Mariátegui, the editor-in-chief of *Amatua*, a magazine based in Lima, enlarged upon this conversation by providing a space for the dissemination of the works discussed.[234]

Both ventures revealed the diversity of Latin American art and the concerns of its artists, demonstrating "a shared sense that American art could not be reduced to a single style or theme," but the success of such collaboration on a regional scale also illustrates the "shared artistic and sociopolitical concerns" which united artists from Havana, Lima, Buenos Aires and Mexico City.[235] The young Edades, on the other hand, likely had more knowledge of and contact with some of these Latin American modernists than with any of his contemporaries in the region now designated Southeast Asia. Even within the complex and sometimes fluid parameters of Southeast Asian identity, the Philippines has long been something of an outlier. As discussed in other chapters, the country's relatively long colonial history fostered a strong sense of cultural, religious and even linguistic heritage in its people even before the American occupation during the twentieth century. This can be something of a disadvantage to the art history of the Philippines when its art history approached, as it often is, from a regional perspective. Just as Southeast Asia itself is often sidelined in histories of Asian art as neither South Asian nor East Asian enough to have a distinct identity, the case study of the Philippines tends not to fit comfortably within the lenses through which the region is typically understood.

[233] Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017, p.10
[234] Ibid., p.11
[235] Ibid.

Armory Hall narrative: answering post- ASEAN questions

It was in this context, with Edades already firmly established as the lone visionary who had first argued for the visual style which would come to define the dominant tradition in Filipino modernism, that the two books which so firmly established the Armory Hall narrative as fact were first published. At the most superficial level, the Armory Hall version of events would make some sense even as a casual obfuscation for the sake of narrative convenience. Aligning Edades and his followers with some of the most recognisable names associated with French Post-Impressionism instead of the relatively obscure Isaacs, Patterson and their colleagues was a perfectly sensible marketing strategy especially in the ASEAN context circa 1980. By this point, with the regional discourse more or less wholly concerned with the establishment of national and regional identities independent of colonial interference, the Armory Hall narrative not only helped to distance Edades and his followers from direct American influence but also offered tangible points of connection with other newly formed Southeast Asian nations. The added questions not only of articulating a post-colonial national identity but of positioning that identity in relation to the newly pertinent notion of Southeast Asia as a regional identity certainly coloured both the expression and the reception of national and nationalist content in Philippine art during this period.

The historical record of Botong's life and career offers an illuminating counterpoint to Edades'. Because he never participated in the writing of his own history, Botong's

career has been both memorialised and intellectualised by his colleagues, students and other contemporaries instead of in his own words. The broad impression is convincing, with most sources agreeing on biographical data as well as the general interpretation of Botong's character and his priorities as an artist. At the same time, though, this history was no less retroactive in its construction than Edades', and speaks to a related agenda in carving out specific roles for key figures in the history of Philippine art.

Where Edades presented himself as the intellectual and even ideological leader of the movement, Botong is consistently portrayed as something of a savant. In spite of the clear evidence that Botong conducted extensive research on a variety of subjects to incorporate historically relevant details into works as diverse as his *Via Crucis* and *History of Manila,* his friends and colleagues often called more attention to his easy-going, country-bumpkin persona than his impressive work ethic or the wide range of his cultural and historical references. The repeated emphasis on Botong's commitment not only to the country but specifically to the countryside is also suggestive. Given the importance of Gauguin as a cited precedent in the development of Philippine modernism, it is not impossible that this is the model Botong's contemporaries had in mind when they made a concerted effort to cast his preference for relatively rural life in Angono as a deliberate retreat from city life. An implicit association with Gauguin may also explain the near-mystical character sometimes ascribed to Botong's approach to art. The total effect of this narrative portrays Botong as a naïve local visionary who tended to reject the sophistication- and pretension- of the urban elite in favour of a more authentic life in relative isolation. Consistently with other interactions between the Philippine modernists and

Gauguin's life and work, this move would represent not just a possible appropriation of an attractive narrative arc from the history of French modernism but a reinterpretation of it that neatly replaces the casual exoticism of colonialism with a nativist and even overtly nationalist pride in the local context. Where Gauguin had to travel halfway across the world to find his Tahitian paradise, Botong's life and work is often presented as a strong argument that Filipino artists were already there. At the same time, associating Botong's life-long interest in folk culture in the rural Philippines with precedents in nineteenth-century France also helps to obscure his artistic debt to Amorsolo and his colleagues at the University of the Philippines in much the same way as the same tactic helps to downplay Edades' debt to Isaacs and Patterson. Although neither artist shied away from acknowledging their relationships with their instructors in their own lives, this tactic is useful in distancing the wider narrative of Philippine modern art from either colonial or conservative influence.

While Botong is often cast as the extension of Edades' legacy in the field of mural art, then, their respective biographies set them up as two sides of the same modernist coin. Botong's work represents the Filipino experience expressed in its purest form while Edades' legacy is framed chiefly in terms of what he was able to bring with him from the Euro-American canon. In combination, these accounts of two of the most influential figures associated with Philippine modernism speak to both sides of the post-ASEAN agenda in the history of Southeast Asian art. Edades' experiences abroad, especially through his direct and personal encounter with some of the most influential artists in the history of European modernist art as early as 1922 or 1923, gives Philippine modernism a solid claim to historical precedence and

international prestige in relation to the rest of the region. At the same time, Botong's intuitive connection to both indigenous culture and modernist style offered a clear argument that Philippine modernist art was at least as authentically local in its sources as it was intellectually engaged with modernism on a global scale. Neither account is strictly accurate, but both speak to the very particular priorities of Philippine art and art history in the 1970s, when the need to balance a demonstration of credibility on the international scale warred with a desire for authenticity expressed at the most local level. They are also plausible enough to stand up to the visual evidence especially of both artists' later works. A close visual examination especially with attention to the context in which earlier works were conceived and executed, however, quickly reveals the mythologising aspect of these accounts; their main function.

The Armory Hall device also serves the wider narrative of Edades' most valuable contributions to Philippine modernism by bringing his achievements as an artist more concretely in line with his legacy as an educator. Relying on visual evidence alone, it is not especially obvious that artists like Hernando Ruiz Ocampo and Vincente Manansala trace the roots of their own modernist practice back to Edades' muddier, much less obviously localised precedent. The influence of Botong Francisco and Galo Ocampo is much more immediately appreciable from the visual evidence alone, with both the bright colours and confident reinterpretation of the former and the solid, Gauguinesque forms of the latter both apparent in the works of their younger students, assistants and collaborators. Edades' influence on the next generation of modernist artists is therefore mediated rather than direct, a result of his own work as a teacher and the effect of his more immediate influence on other influential figures

in the development of Filipino modernist art. Indeed, his own work from the 1950s-70s suggest that it was Edades whose work reflected a new interest in the dominant style of Philippine modernism rather than vice versa. There is, of course, nothing inherently objectionable about this version of events; if nothing else, it highlights that Edades' conviction, discipline and willingness to work hard to win a worthy argument were as influential on his followers as the formal and stylistic patterns they absorbed from other instructors. In many ways, this is what Edades himself claimed to want.

On the other hand, the notion that Edades was most important as a teacher and librarian rather than an artist somewhat sidelines him as a key player in the visual progression of Philippine modernism. In visual terms, it is easier to trace a direct line from Amorsolo through Botong Francisco to Manansala and other younger artists than it is to place Edades as a useful point of reference either forwards or backwards in time. This may well be the result of Edades' own view of his role as a teacher, given how vehemently he decried the tendency towards imitation in students of the conservative school. As such, both circumstantially and by design, Edades was far more important as the first artist who fought to make space for the exhibition and discussion of modernist art than as a visual standard to which his followers were expected to aspire in their own work. The Armory Hall narrative helps to align these two strands of Edades' output by emphasising the importance of Gauguin in particular as a key influence. This in turn helped to align Edades' work more obviously with that of Ocampo and Botong, both of whom showed much greater visual affinity for Gauguin's understanding of space, colour, and even tropical beauty in their own individual works.

That the Armory Hall narrative only gained prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s rather than at any earlier point in Edades' career also draws attention to the way the idea of 'modernism' is articulated in this version of events. Though never explicitly defined by either Rivera Ingle or Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, Edades' brand of modernism is explicated through a series of examples both positive and negative. Because this was done some fifty years in retrospect, Edades and his biographers were able to construct their notion of Philippine modernism in relation to a local context that did not yet exist when Edades was first developing the relevant visual language. As a result, he is consistently defined as a modernist particularly in contrast with the conservatism associated with Amorsolo and his followers, and the claim to his progressiveness in both art and art writing remains founded primarily on the contrast between the approaches endorsed at the University of Santo Tomas as opposed to the University of the Philippines. Although this is certainly accurate in the local context as it would go on to develop, defining Edades' work as modernist in relation to Amorsolo's conservatism does not shed much light on his position in relation to the wider art world either in Seattle in the 1920s or within the Triumvirate of Modernism in Manila in the 1930s. This illustrates a risk Briony Fer identified with the necessarily relativist nature of defining modernism generally and modernist works in particular. "An over-reliance on direct comparison," Fer argues, tends to bias the resultant analysis as "such contrasts tend to exaggerate certain features and suppress others."[236] This is certainly true in the case of Edades and Amorsolo, whose views on modernist art beyond their own practice were in fact much more

[236] Briony Fer, 'Introduction,' in Francis Frascina, Tamar Garb, Nigel Blake, and Briony Fer (eds.,) *Modernity and Modernism: French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press and The Open University, 1993, pp3-48, p.8

closely aligned than much of the scholarship of their work as artists and art teachers might suggest.

Fer also describes Baudelaire's use of "modernity" as a term intended "to articulate a sense of difference from the past and to describe a peculiarly modern identity."[237] This resonates strongly with Edades' claims on behalf of Philippine modernism, especially during the 1950s and afterwards, and perhaps explains the necessarily oppositional character of the early discourse. What the Armory Hall narrative offers the wider history of Philippine modernist art, then, is a specific occasion to which to trace the source of this difference. By allowing Edades to claim a direct artistic lineage from Cézanne and Gauguin rather than drawing attention to the North American sources that were at least as and often more influential on his own work, this account effectively backdates Edades' modernist credentials. Where Edades' "sense of difference from the past" is self-evident in the context of Manila c.1935-6, when the 'triumvirate of Modernism' rose to prominence in no small part due to the influence of Art Deco architecture, the Armory Hall narrative claims a similar disjuncture between the young Edades' work and that of his students and teachers at the University of Washington that is simply not borne out by visual analysis. Again, then, the national, regional and global lenses which can greatly enrich the study of modernist art outside the Euro-American context at a macro level also serve to distract from the immediate context of the paintings being analysed. In Edades' case, this may also illustrate the difficulties involved in applying these analytical schemata to an artist whose career transcends not only geographical but also socio-political boundaries.

[237] Fer, 'Introduction,' p.9

What the Armory Hall narrative really offers, then, is a route by which Edades could trace the roots of his interest in modernism- and therefore the roots of Filipino modernism more broadly- directly to the most prestigious names associated with the French avant-garde. This is understandable enough at face value: Cézanne and Gauguin are immediately recognizable icons of Post-Impressionism whose names are known anywhere where art history is taught while Isaacs and Patterson have relatively little name recognition outside their immediate circle in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. This device also allows Edades to circumvent the sticky issue of colonial influence, an aspect of his education which would have been much more contentious in the 1970s and 1980s than the 1920s. By the same token, the retroactive focus on Cézanne and Gauguin at the expense of Rivera and his colleagues also helped to distance both Edades himself and Filipino modernism in general from any potentially damaging ideological affinity with the Mexican muralists. This had much more to do with the political considerations affecting Filipino nationalism- and nationalist art- in the 1960s and 1970s than with Edades' time in Washington. In the post-independence context, the Armory Hall narrative is ultimately most attractive because a direct encounter with French modernist art makes for a much more appealing origin story. This is all the more convincing with the additional details provided by both versions of the story, with Edades expressing some hesitation at first before overcoming his doubts- and, by implication, the pressure to conform to the more conservative views of his teachers and instructors. These details go further than simply downplaying the influence of Isaacs, Patterson and more generally Edades' experiences at the University of Washington: they set the American position in direct opposition to that represented by Cézanne and

Gauguin, giving Edades the freedom to determine not only his own position but the future of Filipino art more or less independently.

As to how the Armory Hall narrative has endured for so long despite the almost complete dearth of evidence that such a show existed, two factors seem to have proven decisive. The first is logistical challenges involved in researching Edades' time abroad. Quite apart from transcending four distinct political systems and all their attendant views on modernism, nationalism and the relationship between them, the artist's career took him not only to Seattle but also to San Francisco and Fontainebleau for periods of work and study of varying length and importance. The surviving record of what Edades did during these periods, and what he brought back to Manila or not, varies between being incomplete and largely nonexistent. While Edades was certainly at the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, for example, his trip was too short and the surviving documentation of his involvement too scanty for any clear conclusions to be drawn about any direct or indirect contact with Zakheim, Rivera or their works. Similarly, many of the paintings Edades completed as a student in Seattle now survive only in photographs, most of which come from the collection of the artist's estate. Even the large-scale public works by Edades and his students in 1930s Manila did not survive, all except *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* having been destroyed in the course of World War II. As a result, it is difficult if not impossible to study Edades' early work, especially from within the Philippines, without making reference to his own account of the period. The second factor in the survival of the Armory Hall narrative is the obvious one: it can be traced directly to Edades' own account of his student years. The two combine to devastating effect: in the absence of accessible evidence to the contrary, there

would simply have been no reason to question the artist's own version of events. Because Edades was so firmly established not only as an artist but also as an art educator, subsequent generations of his students and their students have continued to rely on the existing sources, which have in turn come to inform the regional and global narratives about Philippine modernism, its sources and its later development. The first accounts of the Armory Hall show thus became the standard accounts of Edades' first brush with modernist art, repeated often enough by a large enough number of established and reliable historians and curators of Philippine and Southeast Asian art that it would simply not occur to scholars to question or challenge so foundational an aspect of the subject. Ultimately, then, the resilience of the Armory Hall narrative is a testament to Edades' self-awareness and intelligent assessment of the scholarship of modernist art both at home and internationally.

Chapter 5: Beyond Edades- Philippine Art and the Global Modern

It is difficult to deny that Edades earned his reputation as the father of Filipino modernism. As far as the metaphor goes, he must be one of the most attentive parental figures on record in art history. Beyond facilitating the development of Filipino Modernism through his own art, Edades was also directly involved in establishing not only the narrative which legitimised the modernist movement in the Philippines but also the cultural and academic institutions through which it has been understood and propagated since. Edades' extensive and wide-ranging career, in particular the remarkable diversity of influences evident from the earliest possible stages of his engagement with visual culture, illustrates the truly global reach of Filipino modernism. Through Edades' influence, the movement was shaped not only by Euro-American modernism as it was known throughout the art world by the 1960s but also by the immediate concerns of Seattle's cultural elite in the 1920s, the political and popular leanings of Mexican modernist art in the 1930s and the unique conditions of post-war Southeast Asia in the aftermath of World War II. These connections were forged not only with careful and consistent attention to international developments in the visual arts but also through Edades' direct contact with artists whose attitudes to modernism differed wildly from each other's as well as his own. The specifics of Edades' achievements are uniquely modern, not least because of how closely key moments in his life and work reflect the rapidly shifting social, cultural and political conditions of the Philippines as they developed over the course of the twentieth century. On the other hand, the wide geographic range of his references represents an element of continuity rather than change in the visual culture of the Philippines.

The strongest arguments for the inclusion of the Philippines in any text interested in 'global' or 'transnational' artists can be demonstrated in a single work of art, not by the Triumvirate of Modernism either together or separately but by their predecessor Juan Luna. Luna's *La Muerte de Cleopatra* (*The Death of Cleopatra*, Figure 56) was displayed at the 1881 Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid, where it became the first painting by an artist from the Philippines to be awarded a silver medal. Sold for 5000 Spanish pesetas, a record at the time, the painting was acquired by the Spanish government and remains in the collection of the Museo del Prado today. Scholars of Luna's work recognise *Cleopatra* as one of Luna's earliest full-scale works, but the iconic *Spoliarium* of 1884 continues to receive most attention in the study of his early career. At first glance, *La muerte de Cleopatra* appears to be a fairly standard description of the famous scene from Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. The text has been popular with artists since the recovery of the text during the Renaissance, with Michelangelo making a pencil sketch of the queen and her asp in 1535 while Guido Reni painted the same scene several times in the course of his career. The subject enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century as recent sensational developments in politics, archaeology and even theatre gave the Roman conquest of Egypt renewed currency among contemporary audiences. Jean-Andre Rixens's *La Mort de Cléopâtre* (*Death of Cleopatra*, Figure 57*)* of 1874 has been cited as relating closely to Luna's treatment of the same subject[238] mainly due to a 'boceto' or preparatory sketch in which Luna's effort bears much closer resemblance to Rixens' colour scheme and overall composition than the finished work displayed in 1881.[239] Luna also took a more

[238] Carlos G. Navarro, 'Juan Luna's *cursus honorum* in Spain: Laurels and Thorns' in Storer (ed.), *Between Worlds: Raden Saleh and Juan Luna,* pp124-131, p.125
[239] Dexter R. Matilla, 'Salcedo to bid out 'boceto' of Luna's *Cleopatra,*' *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* 4 March 2019

somber approach to visualising the material culture of ancient Egypt than Rixens, allowing large stonework artefacts to dominate the scene where Rixens favoured smaller, vibrantly coloured elements of drapery and painted wood. This is not necessarily to the benefit of the overall composition of Luna's painting, which is crowded to the point of claustrophobia with monumental statuary and minutely detailed jewellery alike, but the wealth of archaeological detail is immediately striking. A series of painted sketches from this period, now part of the long-term exhibition of Luna's work at the National Museum (Fine Arts) in Manila, testifies to the extensive visual note-taking through which Luna gathered material for his more ambitious history paintings (Figure 58). These sketches show various interiors from the ruins of Pompeii as well as smaller items of material culture including a series of incense burners from which Luna appears to have selected the one which wafts smoke over his *Cleopatra.* Meanwhile, other statues and jewellery depicted in the painting quote directly from objects in the Vatican collections which were on display during Luna's study trip to Rome in 1880. The costumes in the painting also show a marked departure from Rixens, and in fact from the majority of images of Cleopatra and her attendants. All three women are fully clothed, marked out as exotic by their elaborate jewellery, hairstyles and dress but not sexualised to the point of obvious objectification. Even if the painting is not unique in its reticence, Luna's decision to paint both Cleopatra and the asp that killed her without giving into the temptation to frame the scene around the queen's bare breasts puts him in a very small minority of artists.

Luna's determination to preserve Cleopatra's dignity as much as her modesty may also point to an aspect of this painting which has received strikingly little scholarly

attention in spite of its implications for Luna's legacy as both an artist and an early proponent of Philippine nationalism. As Prado curator Carlos Navarro noted, the treatment of this subject matter is markedly more political in the hands of a colonial artist for whom images of ancient Rome could readily suggest "an implied critique of the decadence of the old and already ramshackle Spanish Empire- commensurate to the Roman Byzantium- and its steady drift away from its easternmost outpost, the Philippines."[240] This is made explicit in the moment Luna has chosen to capture by its specific relation to the source texts describing the death of Cleopatra and her handmaidens. Although the work is titled for Cleopatra, Luna in fact depicts the death of Charmian, the queen's handmaiden and last of the women to die in Plutarch's account. It is entirely possible that Luna was aware of Plutarch, but more likely still that he was aware of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. This is the painting's most striking departure from Rixens, whose painting depicts the still-living Charmian turning her head in anticipation of the Roman soldiers who will burst in too late to intervene. By choosing the moment of Charmian's death only a few moments later, Luna refers explicitly to the handmaiden's purported last words. These are a resounding endorsement of Cleopatra's decision to meet her death instead of living as the symbol of an enslaved nation: "it is well done, and fitting for a princess/ Descended of so many royal kings."[241] The restoration of this dialogue to Luna's painted scene suggests that Navarro's reading of the work is altogether too cautious. Luna's commentary on the plight of the Philippines through the depiction of Cleopatra's death, and particularly the triumphant defiance with which her dying handmaiden decries the alternative, in fact constitutes the most overt condemnation

[240] Navarro, 'Juan Luna's *cursus honorum* in Spain: Laurels and Thorns,' p.125
[241] William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra,* ed. John Wilders, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995, Act V Scene ii

of the colonial system articulated in any of his paintings. This is all the more striking in view of Luna's repeated use of female personifications of the Philippines in more strictly allegorical, and far less openly critical, works.

Taken altogether, this evidence clearly demonstrates that the work is far more sophisticated than its reception so far might suggest. Its subject matter reflects Luna's desire to engage a contemporary Western audience by showcasing not only his awareness of classical history but also an intimate knowledge of modern Italian culture from its theatres to its museums. This mastery of both ancient and modern source materials has yet to be acknowledged explicitly in relation to Luna's *Cleopatra*. It is possible that the artist found this process more involved than profitable: only three years later, he used ancient allegory to make a contemporary point with much less finesse and was rewarded with far more immediate and enduring success. Luna's monumental *Spoliarium* of 1884 became the first work by a non-European artist to win a gold medal at the Exposición Nacional, cementing his reputation at home and abroad. By paring down the details, Luna sacrificed historical specificity for visual clarity to good effect. The message of this work, which is broadly thematic in subject rather than referring to a concrete historical and literary events as in *La Muerte de Cleopatra*, is also much easier for casual viewers to parse without external references. As a bonus, the persecution of the early Christians by pagan oppressors was sufficiently broad to allow the Spanish public who were the work's first audience to identify with the Christians instead of the Romans without the work losing all nuance. In contrast, the composition of *La Muerte de Cleopatra* explicitly sets up the (Spanish) viewer to stumble onto the scene and receive Charmian's last rebuke alongside the Roman soldiers whose presence completes the dramatic

scene. This is extremely powerful in the context of the scene, but near impossible to grasp without some knowledge of the exchange as described by Plutarch or indeed Shakespeare.

La Muerte de Cleopatra thus demands that its creator be taken seriously as an artist fully attuned to the tastes and expectations of Madrid's cultural elite, but at the same time reflects the wide range of personal, political and intellectual concerns which informed Luna's position as a Spanish citizen who was not entirely Spanish either. This intrinsically transnational approach to visual art, which allowed Luna to showcase the academic and literary pursuits which occupied him during his European travels while still engaging with his implicit social and political commitments to the Philippines, is no less evident in paintings by Amorsolo, Edades, and Ocampo later on in the art history of the Philippines. As Botong Francisco illustrated so vividly in his *History of Manila,* the Philippines has been shaped by cultural exchange with foreign powers far more diverse than the already impressive range of colonial forces that claimed dominion over the archipelago at one point or another. Chinese and Arab traders had long been present in the region, and their influence is evident not only in the material culture of the pre-colonial Philippines but also in its linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity. In addition to European visual and material culture, the Spanish presence in the Philippines also brought the archipelago into dialogue with the material culture of colonial Latin America as early as the sixteenth century. Now rarely remarked upon in the scholarship of Philippine modern art except in reference to Botong Francisco, the close relationship between Mexican and Filipino visual culture reflects a deep-rooted and multifaceted history of guided by Spanish trade routes, Jesuit evangelism and eventual American

intervention. Just as Botong's *History of Manila* situates the actions and reactions of local heroes against the backdrop of intercontinental struggles, the history of Filipino material culture from pre-colonial textiles to David Medalla's *Cloud Canyons* can only be fully understood with some awareness of wider interactions between its players and their contemporaries further afield. In view of all this, it is not just striking but somewhat disappointing how rarely the Philippines is explored in any depth in existing surveys of global modernism. Both 'global modern' and 'transnational' art history are categories which seem tailor-made for a case study like the Philippines, yet artists like Luna, Edades and Botong rarely rate a mention in texts with a more than regional scope. Even overviews of modern art in Asia typically feature Southeast Asia as a collective footnote or segue between India and China or Japan.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the existence of a model which seeks to map the common ground between separate national histories has been useful to the art history of Southeast Asia at the regional level. Cultural outreach initiatives by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have contributed to this success from the earliest phases of the institution. These shows helped to raise the profile of separate national trends through an economies of scale that raised their collective visibility both within the region and further afield. More significantly to the development of art and research practice in the region, ASEAN-led initiatives also fostered greater cooperation between national institutions across Southeast Asia. At this level, the use of global modernism as a framework can also be helpful in circumventing the tendency to see 'Asian Art' as a pre-colonial and therefore inherently pre-modern category. On the other hand, the very project of categorising artists and their work as

global, modern, or both suggests an implicit agenda that brings with it a separate set of privileges, biases and assumptions.

As has emerged consistently throughout the case study of Edades and Filipino modernism, the influence of the art market cannot be ignored in measuring the impact of various artists and movements whether locally or internationally. Within the colonial context, this means that artists who captured the attention of colonial connoisseurs were naturally favoured over those who did not. While recent studies of modernism in non-Western contexts have been quick to acknowledge the "radically unequal power structures that characterise modernity itself," this is usually expressed in terms of unequal standing between separate national narratives rather than in terms of the influence of external financial forces on art production at the local level.[242] On one hand, this is certainly defensible in practical terms. A history of global modernism must therefore also comprise a history of colonialism, capitalism and their interaction as well. As such, a survival-of-the-fittest account of these interactions may well consider the commercial viability of art as a key factor in determining its longevity in cultural history. This is as evident in the nineteenth-century Indonesian artist Raden Saleh's career, which was made possible mainly by the benevolence of colonial patrons, as when rising interest in Art Deco provided a much-needed early turning point in Edades' early attempts to introduce Manila to his brand of modernism. On the other hand, taking the art historical record at face value without considering the financial dynamics that helped to determine when and to what extent specific initiatives succeeded preserves a matrix that takes the

[242] Alys Moody and Stephen J. Ross, 'Global Modernism: An Introduction and Ten Theses,' *Global Modernists on Modernism: An Anthology,* London: Bloomsbury Press, 2020, p.13

assessment of the Euro-American centre for granted in assessing the performance of artists on the periphery. This can have the effect of disguising or disregarding the entrenched systems which played a key role in determining the development of art within colonial systems.

A related aspect of global modernism which is a cause for some concern is the implication that there is no real prospect of establishing an equal playing field between global modernism and the more normative modernism it seeks to complement. Even such sympathetic writers as Alys Moody and Stephen J. Ross, who come out in favour of "a reconceptualisation of modernity that decouples the term from its historical tendency to elevate the West as the primary location of modernity,"[243] cannot help but reinforce this binary through language that consistently situates each side in relation to the other.[244] Similarly, recent efforts to reconfigure the permanent galleries of New York's Museum of Modern Art to reflect these efforts, were summarised in the New York Times as "Modernism Plus, with globalism and African-American art added."[245] This conveys the notion of acquisition more readily than integration, clearly implying that art that does not fit into the traditional canon is extraneous to working definitions of modernism. Salman Rushdie has raised similar concerns about trends in the study of literature in English. Questioning the boundaries of "commonwealth literature," and even wondering aloud whether the category should exist at all, Rushdie sardonically summarises the category as encompassing "that body of writing created, I think, in the English language, by persons who are not themselves white Britons, or Irish, or citizens of

[243] Moody and Ross, 'Global Modernism: An Introduction and Ten Theses,' p.6
[244] Ibid., p.11
[245] Holland Cotter, 'MoMA Reboots with 'Modernism Plus,' *New York Times,* 10 October 2019

the United States of America."[246] Intriguingly, Rushdie's curiosity about "whether Black Americans are citizens of this bizarre Commonwealth or not" is echoed in art critic Holland Cotter's implicit categorisation of "African-American art" as a third category outside both the Euro-American and global streams.[247] It is striking how these concerns compare with José Rizal's commentary on Filipino cultural efforts in the Spanish context more than a century earlier. As Rizal saw it, Luna broke new ground for the recognition of the Philippines as a cultural force on equal footing with Spain when he became the first colonial artist to win a gold medal at Madrid's Expsición Nacional.[248] Operating within the confines of a colonial system so conservative that even the possibility of being treated as equals was a sign of liberal-mindedness on the part of Spanish leaders,[249] Rizal actually arrived at a more optimistic assessment of Filipino chances of being taken seriously within the paradigm of European art than Rushdie, who a century later remains openly bitter about being relegated to the "ghetto" of commonwealth literature.[250] Unfortunately, the realities of both global modernism and post-colonial literature suggest that Rizal may have been expecting too much of those in power when he suggested that cultural merit would be enough to move the needle of global inequity significantly.

There is an argument that the present still-unequal approach is a necessary interim step while the discipline of art history catches up with the practicalities of treating non-Western art and artists with the same degree of academic rigour afforded to

[246] Salman Rushdie, 'Commonwealth Literature does not Exist,' *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism,* London: Penguin Books, 1991, pp 61-70, p.63
[247] Cotter, 'MoMA Reboots with 'Modernism Plus'
[248] José Rizal, quoted in Leon Ma. Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of José Rizal*, Manila: National Historical Commission, 1974, p.115
[249] Ibid., pp114-115
[250] Rushdie, 'Commonwealth Literature does not Exist,' p.63

artists from the Euro-American centre. This is certainly one of the method's chief goals, with its proponents generally agreeing that "the vital extraterritorial dynamics of global modernism" must be acquired alongside rather than instead of good art history at the national level.[251] Before this can occur, however, some concrete measures are more urgently needed to facilitate a more thorough art history of places where the study, documentation and even maintenance of visual culture has not yet become a top priority. Florina H. Capistrano-Baker highlights basic measures needed in countries where local art history has yet to be properly recorded, let alone theorised in relation to wider narratives of art history. These include "retrieving and documenting art historical data from archives and objects before they are forever lost" to physical deterioration, urban redevelopment or even natural disasters like the floods and typhoons which wreak havoc on the cultural landscape of the Philippines.[252] That these concerns are being tackled simultaneously to the refinement of global modernism as an academic strategy further highlights the fundamental inequities still in play. Serving as a kind of discipline-specific Affirmative Action in the meantime, global modernism at least provides a space within the discipline in which to explore the artists and approaches to art that have not had enough visibility to gain traction in dialogue with the modernism(s) of Paris and New York. To the extent that this is a realistic end goal, global modernism already offers a good first step in that direction.

[251] Elaine O'Brien, 'The Location of Modern Art' in *Modern Art in Asia, Africa and Latin America: An Introduction to Global Modernisms* by Elaine O' Brien, Everlyn Nicodemus, Melissa Chiu, Benjamn Genocchio, Mary K. Coffey and Roberto Tejada (eds)., Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p.3
[252] Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, 'Whither Art History in the Non-Western World: Exploring the Other('s) Art History,' *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 97, No. 3 (September 2015), pp. 246-257, p.246

Where the canon of Western modernism remains closely guarded by those invested in preserving their claim, on the other hand, global modernism as a category functions like 'commonwealth literature' in claiming to foster inclusivity while instead enforcing artificial disciplinary boundaries "to delay the day when we rough beasts actually slouch into Bethlehem."[253] In a similar way, the existence of global modernism as a category definitely represents progress in relation to the academic paradigm within which non-Western material culture is only considered valuable in its 'authentic' pre-colonial form, but this argument can quickly turn disingenuous. Claudia Mattos effectively illustrates the inequities which persist in the field in her analysis of audience responses at the congress of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art, where she found that the relative diversity of topics now considered relevant to the purview of art history did not translate to greater inclusivity: "art historians who worked with non-European traditions were themselves European or American, or at least came from a well-known institution placed in this geographic realm, consistently had a larger audience and were received with more enthusiasm than those coming from non-Western countries."[254]

Just as colonial views played a significant role in the development, or not, of modernist art in colonised locations, the cultural and academic centres of modernism continue to determine how far scholars from the rest of the world are able to bring their perspectives into dialogue with mainstream discourse. This echoes the reservations Moody and Ross voice about the representation of women in modernist texts: "to the extent that modernism is a self-theorising project it is therefore one that

[253] Rushdie, 'Commonwealth Literature does not Exist,' p. 70
[254] Claudia Mattos, 'Whither Art History? Geography, Art Theory and New Perspectives for an Inclusive Art History,' *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 96, No. 3 (September 2014), pp. 259-264, p.260

reinscribes and exacerbates gender inequality" as both the sources and the structures of the modernist project exclude demographics that are not already represented.[255] If this is not acknowledged and addressed, the 'global' aspect of global modernism will continue to apply more to it subject matter than to its practitioners and remain accordingly limited.

Even in the context of subject matter rather than academic community, the tendency to categorise individual case studies by their geographical situation in deference to the 'global' aspect of global modernism can also be very restrictive. In the case of Southeast Asian art it has often been limiting to the point of exclusion as most anthologies seeking to provide a broad-based perspective select an absolute maximum of three countries to feature from a region that is not typically treated as hugely significant on the global scale. In *Modern Art in Africa, Asia and Latin America,* for example, a scant two essays make reference to the history of modern art in Southeast Asia, both of which also make wider comments on Asian art in general, while India, China and Japan are given four to five chapters each.[256] While even the inclusion of India and China in a history of art that does not hark back to terracotta soldiers or the Taj Mahal clearly represents progress, the dismissal of Southeast Asia as a crossing-point between the two continues to leave the region under-represented in global and even regional narratives of art. The consistency with which this distribution occurs in separate research initiatives strongly suggests that older biases relating to the authenticity or purity of native cultures have survived into global modernism, with the complexities of a more obviously cross-cultural regional

[255] Moody and Ross, 'Global Modernism: An Introduction and Ten Theses,' p.21
[256] Elaine O'Brien, 'The Location of Modern Art,'pp8-9

history set aside in favour of the clearer-cut narratives of more monolithic visual cultures.

Returning to Luna's *Cleopatra,* it seems highly likely that the lack of attention given to a work of such great potential significance mainly reflects the impact of physical limitations on the study of an artist whose career was more international than art history at the local level has the resources to accommodate. On display in Manila since 1958, *Spoliarium* is the pride and joy of the National Museum of the Philippines (Fine Arts). It has been studied extensively, not only in relation to Luna's career but also for its impact on José Rizal and the hardening of his nationalist rhetoric in response to Luna's gold medal win of 1884. In contrast, *La Muerte de Cleopatra* has only been displayed once since its consignment to the Prado collection's storage space, and not even in Manila. The exhibition of this work, on loan from Madrid for *Between Worlds: Juan Luna and Raden Saleh* at the National Gallery Singapore, marked the first time the painting was displayed in more than a century and the only time it has been shown in Southeast Asia. The exhibition aroused keen interest in Singapore and Manila alike, but neither the initial responses to *Between Worlds* nor any subsequent scholarship has acknowledged the work's stirring political message beyond Navarro's lukewarm observations. This suggests that it is not only the physical distance between scholars of Luna's work and this painting but also the academic distance between the fields of study now considered relevant to Luna's works and those the artist himself engaged with in composing *La Muerte de Cleopatra* that prevent the painting from being understood in full. As a result, a work that should probably be considered far more provocative in tone and intent has rarely been studied in much detail in relation either to Luna's wider career or to the project

of articulating Filipino identity at the late nineteenth-century tipping point with which the artist is so closely associated.

This resonates strongly with the reception of Edades' career, the earliest stage of which is both the most global in its range and the least well-known in the history of the artist's work. Because both geo-political and socio-cultural realities have so transformed the world since Edades was a student, let alone Luna, there are aspects of both artists' work that simply cannot be understood without venturing beyond the cultural reach of modern-day Southeast Asia. At the same time, the perceived insignificance of colonial artists from the point of view of the former colonial centres, mean that researchers who do have access to these resources have little idea of their significance and not much incentive to find out. Thus, frustratingly, the very factors which make the Philippines such an ideal case study for investigations into the global context of art history in the colonial era somehow combine to exclude it from consideration. As Capistrano-Baker puts it, "Philippine art appears too 'Western' for inclusion in surveys of Asian art, but not mainstream enough to make it to Western art surveys," resulting in "a marginalisation that springs not so much from the artists' inability to adapt as from an infinite capacity for cultural simulacrum to the point of invisibility."[257] Arguably, the same could be said of Southeast Asian art in the wider context of the art history of Asia as a continent.

The Filipino modernists were hardly the only artists who took an active interest in their own position within the contemporary paradigm of modernism, art criticism and

[257] Capistrano-Baker, 'Whither Art History in the Non-Western World: Exploring the Other('s) Art History,' p.255

the history of these movements. As discussed in chapter 3, Gauguin also actively cultivated a set of myths around his own person as well as his philosophy as an artist. On the periphery of the Euro-American canon, the Mexican artists admired by Edades and his followers were also keenly aware of the contemporary reception of their work both in Mexico and in the United States. Closer to home, geographically if not ideologically, the Indonesian artists associated with PERSAGI also played a key role in defining both their artistic output and the wider context of their contributions to the local art scene as post-colonial institutions began to chart the recent history of national art. Assertions such as these have a good deal in common with the broad characterisation of Edades as the father of modernism in his local context. More unusual, however, is the step that seems to set Edades and his colleagues apart from other modernists: their direct involvement in the writing, exhibition and teaching not only of Filipino art but of art history at the national level. Where Gauguin, Rivera or Sudjojono and his PERSAGI colleagues may be said to have made self-conscious plays for a favourable position in the developing canon of modernist artists, Edades and Ocampo had the rare opportunity to turn their preferred version of their own history into the official record. In part, this indicates a key distinguishing factor in post-colonial art history. Even within this more select group, however, Edades remains unique in having borne his role in the national narrative in mind apparently from the earliest stages of his participation therein.

The clearest evidence that this was an intentional strategy on Edades' part is the revisionist nature of this history cross-referenced against statements the artist himself made at other points in his own career. Compared to the accounts Edades found most useful at these earlier stages in his life, the retrospective origin story

provided by the Armory Hall narrative corresponds much more neatly with the "evol[ution] from naturalism to abstraction" outlined by Herbert Read in 1949.[258] As discussed, the Paris-Seattle elision in Edades' biography most likely originated as a matter of literal rather than professional survival during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines. To an extent that is not always clear from art historical narratives which focus on the visual evidence in isolation, these strategies could make all the difference in ensuring the survival not only of the movement but of the artists themselves in a chillingly literal way. This reflects the rarely remarked but truly extreme degree to which the cultural heritage acknowledged in the dominant narrative of Filipino modernism sometimes had life-or-death consequences for its pioneering generation.

It is also telling, however, that Edades chose to lean into this narrative rather than correct the record when the crisis was over. It seems highly likely, given his detailed knowledge of the history of modernist art in Europe and America and his sustained interest in contemporary art, that Edades deliberately took advantage of the edited version of his career to bring the history of Filipino modernism more into alignment with the trajectory of Euro-American modernism. Before Edades "broke the mould" in this narrative, Luna and Hidalgo first struck out as native artists coming to grips with imported media and materials alike. Building on their foundation, De La Rosa made it possible for native artists to study Western art locally, setting up Amorsolo to perfect an emotive, impressionistic visual convention that was both specific and sentimental enough in its typical contents to become popular among colonial expatriates and

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258 Herbert Read, *40,000 years of modern art : a comparison of primitive and modern,* quoted in Rose, *Art and Form*, p. 129

local nationalists alike. After Edades returned with the fruits of his paradigm-shifting encounter with modernism via French Post-Impressionism, Galo Ocampo ventured further towards abstraction and Fernando Zobél went farther still as Filipino modernism drew level with international trends. At the time of writing, the Armory Hall show narrative was perfectly calculated to meet the expectations of a view of modernism still understood mainly in relation to Paris and New York. It cannot be a coincidence, either, that each progression is explicitly framed in terms of Euro-American references that were both easily recognizable and very marketable. The self-consciousness of this extremely personal approach to art history on a national scale is not usually provided for within the structures of global modernism. Useful as the framework is, it has yet to accommodate self-aware participation by an artist being studied within the system. This disciplinary blind spot is a major reason for the endurance of Edades' Armory Hall narrative in direct contradiction of the visual, written and museological evidence against it.

Perhaps the approaches associated with global modernism really are, as Moody and Ross suggest via Jeremy Braddock, best suited to the project of collecting.[259] In recent years, museums have had some success exploring connections between works that have not traditionally been considered natural companions within the accepted framework of modernism. In 2016, the National Gallery Singapore opened *Reframing Modernism* in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The exhibition was designed as a self-conscious attempt to move beyond binary models of centre and periphery by considering modernist works from Europe, Southeast

[259] Moody and Ross, 'Global Modernism: An Introduction and Ten Theses,' p.1

Asia and beyond thematically rather than around "shared stylistic rubrics."[260] The result, the exhibition organisers hoped, would be a curatorial approach centred on "a more inclusive re-examination of the roles of specific artists and movements in the history of art, and of the currents that have shaped our ideas of modernity."[261] The revamped Museum of Modern Art in New York took a related approach to its permanent galleries in 2019, arranging works thematically instead of insisting on a the "strict definitions of geography or medium" which characterised previous iterations of MoMA's "canonically gated modernist story".[262] Early reviews of this new strategy were somewhat mixed: *Guardian* reporter Charlotte Higgins applauded the decision to display Faith Ringgold's *Blood in the Streets* (1965) alongside Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* as a worthy effort to challenge traditional narratives surrounding Picasso's work[263] while Artnet's Andrew Russeth worried that the situation of one anachronistic or otherwise exceptional work within an otherwise fairly predictable curatorial sequence, such as the juxtaposition of one painting by Alma Thomas in a room full of paintings by Henri Matisse, is "tentative" to the point of being "tokenistic" rather than radical.[264]

The gallery, then, offers a setting for the pursuit of a global modernism which encompasses both close reading of specific works and the contextualisation of visual culture within the socio-cultural and historical trends which informed its creation. As Horikawa and Scott explain in their introduction to *Reframing Modernism,* the "artist-

[260] Horikawa Lisa and Phoebe Scott, 'Introduction,' *Reframing Modernism,* in Sarah Kee and Sara Siew (eds). *Reframing Modernism: Painting from Southeast Asia, Europe and Beyond.* Singapore: National Gallery Singapore, 2016, p.10
[261] Serge Lasvignes and Bernard Blistène, 'Foreword,' *Reframing Modernism,* p.7
[262] Cotter, 'Moma Reboots with 'Modernism Plus'
[263] Charlotte Higgins, 'Budge up, great white males! MoMA goes global with an explosive $450m rehang,' *The Guardian,* 16 October 2019
[264] Andrew Russeth, 'MoMA's Expansion and Rehang are Sumptuous and Smart- Now's the Time for it to Take Big Chances,' *ArtNews,* 10 October 2019

centric" approach taken in their exhibition helped to centre new research around the "concerns shared by artists across disparate contexts" rather than formalist echoes as perceived by the curators.[265] This was also intended to facilitate a non-linear exhibition experience allowing visitors to explore groups of works intuitively rather than within a strictly defined narrative.[266] This less rigid curatorial approach allowed curators to bring Galo Ocampo and Botong Francisco into dialogue with Emira Sunassa, Marc Chagall and Natalia Goncharova in the exhibition space without insisting on a discussion of Gauguin and Cézanne as the source and summit of any visual or ideological connections that might suggest themselves.

These shows represent a step in the right direction, and it is especially encouraging to see traditional guardians of the Euro-American canon, including both MoMA and the Centre Pompidou, make a concrete effort to back up the politically correct rhetoric of diversity and inclusion with serious intellectual effort. At the same time, though, they continue to rely on a series of binaries that have long underpinned the study of non-Western art in traditional art history. The exhibition design for *Reframing Modernism* demonstrated real commitment to breaking down the usual barriers between the West and the rest, focusing on thematic and formal relationships between works rather than emphasising either geography or chronology in the ways that are usually used to privilege Euro-American modernism. Further analysis, however, tended to highlight mutual interests in visual language already associated with French Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, so that the project of reframing modernism appeared to involve expanding the Euro-American

[265] Horikawa and Scott, 'Introduction,' p.14
[266] Ibid.

canon to accommodate a more diverse selection of participants. When done well, as in *Reframing Modernism,* this is a worthy endeavour that rightly highlights both the diversity of the modernist scene in Paris at a time when artists from Poland, China and Mexico were making their mark in conversation with Bréton, Chagall and their contemporaries and the myriad ways in which these intercontinental cultural exchanges found expression across the globe.

At the same time, though, as demonstrated at the regional level in Chapter 4, the tendency to seek a best-fit line in global modernism can have the effect of erasing most of the nuance which makes individual artists and their work most valuable. The result can be tokenistic, as Russeth suggests, or so overly simplified as to be either facile or self-defeating. This occurs when the effort to find points of contact between works from wholly separate contexts relies too heavily on visual or thematic connections as perceived by the viewer. Formalist approaches are useful and even necessary to the project of visual analysis, but it should be borne in mind that they are necessarily guided by the scholar's frame of reference rather than the artist's. Sam Rose acknowledges this with the warning that formalist analysis can all too easily "slip almost imperceptibly from sympathetic attempts to engage with others into overconfident pronouncements about the way that others make and see."[267] This holds true in regard to most art objects but becomes all the more consequential when a work contains or at least describes the complexity of is creator's relationship with Euro-American visual conventions and cultural history. In the case of Luna's *Cleopatra*, the fact that the artist's historical and archaeological interests far exceeded the areas of expertise usually associated with the study of Philippine art

[267] Rose, *Art and Form,* p.129

has prevented much discussion of the painting's most salient details, not least the starkly political message which emerges much more clearly in relation to the dialogue implied by the scene. Edades' Armory Hall narrative, too, has stood up to formalist analysis in large part because the artists whose work was much more directly influential are not well-known enough, at least in Southeast Asia, for their influence to be identified in his paintings without prior knowledge of Isaacs, Patterson and the wider context of 1920s Seattle.

The converse situation, in which formal analysis is used to draw links between independent works, is also instructive in both its potential and its limitations. The extreme position must be independent gallerist Marc Restellini's notion of 'transversality,' as a concept he describes as seeking to explain how a "small, timeless, community of artists, from all periods, from all cultures and origins, are united by a similar way of thinking, of reflecting, and of behaving."[268] This idea is at once elitist and reductive, emphasising the exclusivity of the artistic vocation while simultaneously claiming to be conversant in every possible approach to this calling. The method is also highly subjective and hardly lends itself to further discussion given the stated objective of "evok[ing] a more intimate and spiritual feeling" rather than engaging with ideas or classifications that might render an exhibition "too academic."[269] Restellini's Pinacothèque enjoyed initial success in part due to the novelty of a curatorial approach which his website boasts "[did] not shrink from re-thinking the usual field of art history."[270] Restellini does not address another likely reason for the gallery's early success, its access to privately owned works not

[268] Marc Restellini, quoted in Terry Ong, 'Marc Restellini from the Art of Collecting,' *SG Magazine,* 11 October 2013 <https://sgmagazine.com/events/article/interview-marc-restellini-art-collecting>
[269] Restellini, quoted in Terry Ong, 'Marc Restellini from the Art of Collecting'
[270] Restellini, *Pinacothèque de Paris,* <http://www.restellini.com/en/pinacotheque-de-paris/>

usually available to the viewing public. The venture did not prove sustainable, however, and the Pinacothèque went into receivership in 2015. [271] An exported version of the Pinacothèque lasted less than a year in Singapore not least because its esoteric exhibitions and high ticket prices compared poorly to the newly opened National Gallery Singapore. In contrast with the concrete entry-points offered by the chronological and tightly thematic approaches taken by the latter, critics found the Pinacothèque's 'transversality' "a bit tone-deaf" and even "practically neocolonialist" in its failure to engage with the visual traditions of Southeast Asia in any meaningful depth.[272] This, too, illustrates the dangers of a naïve formalism which fails to acknowledge the inherent biases of its practitioner. In some ways, Restellini was ahead of his time in seeking a more inclusive museological strategy independent of strict boundaries in time and especially space as early as 2007. In practice, however, the hyper-universalism of his 'transversal' approach was simply too subjective to offer much in the way of meaningful insight.

Patrick Flores also cautions against a global modernism that takes its Eurocentric origins for granted: "It is readily apparent that the "West" underpins the points of the cartographic intuition about the art of the time (contemporary art) and the time of the art /(art history). It has become a habit to refer to it as the defining agency of art and history, institutionalised as it is by structures of exhibitions, collections, professions and discourses."[273] Flores sees a way forward, however, in curatorial intervention. He views this as "a tricky venture" which nonetheless "proves catalytic in many

[271] Huang Lijie, 'Pinacotheque de Paris in receivership,' The Straits Times, 9 December 2015 < https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/pinacotheque-de-paris-in-receivership>
[272] Bruce Quek, 'Art Review: Pinacotheque,' *Today,* 20 June 2015
[273] Patrick Flores, 'A Possible Coordinate,' *South by Southeast,* pp6-15, Osage Art Foundation, 2015, p7.

ways."[274] Flores appears to see curation as being more explicit about its methodology than art history as a discipline, arguing that "a curatorial response to art history or the history of art ensures timeliness and urgency because it brings to the fore the question of modernity and cracks its codes across mediations and afterlives elsewhere."[275] Recognising the Western domination of "the master narrative of art and modernity," Flores argues that instead of committing chiefly to dismantling that narrative post-colonial historians of art and culture also have the option of asserting their own entitlement to 'the 'west', "co-makers as we are of its architecture. In addition to challenging the unilateral models of cultural transmission suggested by earlier histories of regional modernity then, Flores suggests that "the so-called "non-west" must be reinscribed into the west so that both could be transformed post-colonially, that is, abiding by the compromised achievement of the colonial."[276] Flores sees this as involving mutual recognition of the violence perpetuated and experienced as part of cultural "exchange," with the West acknowledging "the self-consciousness of the refusal of humanity" in conjunction with "the reclaiming of that refused humanity" by the non-west.[277] The levelling of the playing field would thus be achieved between a "chastened West" and a non-west characterised not as a "mere victim" condemned by circumstance "to imitate or to fail in the imitation."[278] Flores offers the notion of a "polytropic subject" as an additional dimension to cultural hybridity, allowing for art created within a colonial paradigm to be treated as "an intelligence that comprehends back, indeed, a dissemination" rather than simply "a colonial object" passively receiving various streams of information.[279] Botong's visual

[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.,pp7-8
[277] Ibid., p.8
[278] Ibid.
[279] Flores, 'A Possible Coordinate,' p.8

reflection on colonialism and post-colonialism resonates strongly with this idea, asserting Filipino agency and subjectivity across various encounters between the Philippines and various outsiders and their different legacies. More significantly, the careers of transnational artists including Luna, Edades and even Raden Saleh show a degree of self-awareness about the interstitial position of an artist acting as both intellectual elite and colonised outsider that strongly suggests that Flores' polytropic model has been in practice longer than the vocabulary to describe it has existed.

Flores proposed "the polytropic Southeast" for *South by Southeast*, a 2015 exhibition he curated with Anca Verona Mihulet. Again, the gallery space provides the most interesting point of contact for this kind of exhibition, allowing the curators to situate art from various traditions in conversation with each other rather than speaking too much on their behalf. Rather than systematising and re-systematising theoretical models, as can be tempting in a research paper, engaging with the same content in an exhibition space requires the articulation of abstract ideas to be grounded in the physical and historical reality of specific objects. As evidenced by *South by Southeast* itself, Flores's highly theoretical analysis of the themes of global modernism, its players and their objectives finds more concrete expression in the exhibition's attempt to showcase different strands of art within a productive framework.

That the tendency towards connoisseurship in art history can be not only limiting but also damaging to the study of art is no less evident in case studies much closer to the traditional centre of Art History as a discipline. No serious scholarship dismisses artists active during the Italian Renaissance as hopelessly derivative for their

experimental, often unsuccessful attempts to mimic the achievements of artists from another culture as they came to grips with the recently rediscovered Greco-Roman material culture which would prove so formative in the development of Western painting and sculpture for some 500 years. As Galo Ocampo argued in 1938, after all, what has long been celebrated in Renaissance art should at least be permitted in the Philippines.[280] Although Ocampo was also defending the catechetical legitimacy of his *Brown Madonna*, the point is no less defensible in relation to the artistic practice of exploring pre-existing material culture from a variety of local and international sources to make a point of specific relevance to the artist's own immediate context. That Michelangelo is remembered as a genius for studying Roman copies of Greek sculpture long enough to conceive of *David* while Luna and Saleh are merely derivative because of their open interest in Delacroix and Velázquez clearly demonstrates the double standard that global modernism must seek to address. Flores's polytropic subject would seem to offer a way forward here, insisting on more widespread recognition of the fact that Luna and Saleh have at least as much right to discuss, dissect and reconstruct art at the colonial centre in their own work as any Renaissance artist ever had to explore Greco-Roman art and culture.

By the same token, it simply cannot be less authentically modernist for Botong and Ocampo to have cultivated their interest in Gauguin's work as a means to expressing a unique point about their own circumstances than it was for Gauguin himself to draw on the myriad resources generally summarised as primitive, exotic or both. Indeed, Flores's recommendation that the notion of the West be reworked rather

[280] Guillermo, *The Life and Times of Galo B. Ocampo,* p.12

than removed in relation to non-Western modernist art seems likely to offer new insight into virtually every stage of visual and material culture that can be studied within disciplinary boundaries. Rather than seeking either to cancel colonialism or handwave its long-term effects, this approach simply broadens the scope of analysis to include the artist's perspective as well as the art historian's. In this way, an art history that is truly global in scope can be achieved not by shoehorning a series of suitably diverse artists into the existing canon but simply by embracing the notion that even the most profound geniuses in any age must have engaged with contemporary material culture before they add to it.

Outside the gallery context, art historians have attempted to draw primarily formal links between Southeast Asia and the Euro-American canon with somewhat mixed results. For example, art historian Kevin Chua sees an echo- if not a direct quotation- of Courbet's *Stonebreakers* (Figure 59) in the bent knee of a soldier at rest in Sudjojono's *Meeting in Tjikampek* (1964, Figure 60).[281] Building on the resonance he sees between Sudjojono's rejection of the *mooi Indië* tradition and Courbet's "more radical version of realism," Chua argues for a "contemporaneity" between the two artists which he sees as relating to their political leanings as well as their mutual interest in the visual language of realism.[282] Chua does cite a 1936 article about Courbet's work in an Indonesian newspaper as evidence that Sudjojono had access to Courbet's work from a relatively early point in his career,[283] but offers little corroborating evidence beyond perceived similarities in the poses of certain figures in a trio of works from the 1960s. As such, his analysis is primarily formalist in

[281] Kevin Chua, 'Courbet after Sudjojono,' *Art History,* April 2018, pp.293-317, p.293
[282] Ibid., p.296
[283] Ibid., pp.309-310

approach, with the conclusion that Sudjojono found not only "community" but an "ancestor" in Courbet[284] ultimately based partly on a few largely subjective observations and partly on the somewhat obvious fact that both artists engaged with versions of social realism as a means to both represent and critique the subjects of their work. In contrast, Matt Cox is able to illustrate the connections between PERSAGI and French modernist artists in a much more concrete way. His analysis of visual connections between paintings by Sudjojono, Otto Djaya and their colleagues and the work of Manet and Renoir is grounded in extensive evidence that PERSAGI members not only knew of these artists but also discussed and theorised Emile Zola's work in relation to the wider question of depicting city life in art.[285]

Restoring the social and historical context within which modernist art developed is also useful in dispelling the myth of modernism as a pure and self-determining vocational calling. Paying attention to the accessibility of information and materials, financial support and physical logistics seem so divorced from the art history of modernism precisely because such practical considerations are anathema to the myth of the modernist genius developing in splendid isolation. This is no less true of Picasso or Gauguin than of Edades or Sudjojono, and acknowledging this may well be an important step towards dismantling the myths of modernism which have been held up to separate the canon of Euro-American geniuses from their flesh-and-blood counterparts from elsewhere in the world. Recognising the wider agendas which influenced the success or failure of various artists, movements and initiatives associated with modernism at various points in the long twentieth century not only

[284] Chua, 'Courbet after Sudjojono,' p317
[285] Matt Cox, 'The Painting of Prostitutes in Indonesian Modern Art,' *Southeast of Now Vol 1 No. 2,* October 2017, pp41-63, pp48-53

avoids the pitfalls of Euro-centric mythologising but also restores the history not only of exchange but of active struggle which informs many narratives of modern art at the national and regional levels. In the case of Filipino modernism, the true version of events which comes to light through close examination of both visual and textual evidence rather than by taking the 'father of Filipino modernism' at his word some 50 years after the moment in question is in its own way all the more heroic for not at all conforming to the expected narrative. Instead, the very fact that Edades sought to situate Filipino modernism within the global context of modernism as an international cultural movement as early as the 1940s speaks to his astute, carefully selective and deeply sensitive engagement with Euro-American art and art history as well as a strong instinct for self-preservation under challenging and rapidly evolving political conditions. Just as his own work shows the myriad of local, colonial and international factors which shaped Edades' career, the creation and propagation of the Armory Hall narrative demonstrates an awareness of nuance which has not been as reliably present in its reception.

Paying greater attention to the impact of colonial networks, too, greatly enriches the study of artists whose work is connected through relationships that receive less attention in the post-colonial context. Improbable as it seems, Edades and his followers had much more interest in and direct knowledge of Diego Rivera than of Sudjojono in the 1930s. Further back in the history of art in the region, the most concrete point of connection between Raden Saleh and Juan Luna is that both artists spent a short but formative period in Paris, some 50 years apart, during their very separate European travels. In contrast, commentary on the visual links between Raden Saleh's fantastical paintings of deer, cattle and lion hunts in Indonesia and

the equally dramatic Orientalist works of French artists Eugene Delacroix and Horace Vernet is enriched by demonstrable contact between these artists. Raden Saleh admired Delacroix enough to travel to Algeria specifically in emulation of the latter, and both artists are known to have encountered the same lion specimens through their acquaintance with circus trainer Pierre Henri Martin. Raden Saleh also knew of Vernet's work, having visited his studio while travelling in Europe and even responding directly to a lithograph of *Mazeppa* in his own work.[286] Like studying Luna's work in relation to Velazquez or the Vatican collection of antiquities, this is effective because formal and stylistic resonance is backed up by concrete historical context. Further inquiry into the socio-cultural reasons for the connection is therefore much more concrete in both cases than Chua can hope to be in his speculation about the implications of Sudjojono's possible interest in Courbet.

That Isaacs and Patterson are much less recognisable artistic precedents than Delacroix or Velázquez may help to explain why their work has never been studied specifically in relation to Edades' work. Because the work of these artists is not widely available to scholars of Southeast Asian art, it is only by pursuing the details of Edades' biography that one can even come into contact with the visual evidence that clarifies their influence. Like the possibility that Edades and through him Botong may have known of Bernard Zakheim's mural works, or at least shared his interest in Rivera's TITLE, this is significant not only because of the clear formal and stylistic relationship between artists who are not usually considered in relation to each other but also because the history of these largely untested relationships suggests a new avenue of inquiry into the wider history of transnational connection and

[286] Agus Dermawan T., 'The Wild Animals of Raden Saleh, *The Jakarta Post,* 23 February 2018

communication during the colonial period. Pursuing not just visual connections between works from different strands of modernism but also historical evidence for plausible points of contact thus offers a much more concrete and nuanced way into the history of transnational art than inquiries which lean too much on either formalist or socio-historical analysis to the exclusion of the artist's lived experience.

Reena Devi gestures towards the potential for further research in this direction in a recent article exhorting Asian artists and gallerists to "pay attention to Latin America."[287] Informed by her work as a journalist and art critic, Devi argues that Asia is falling behind recent trends in the art world by failing to take a more active interest in contemporary artists from Latin America. She highlights "contrasting yet parallel cultural histories between parts of Asia and Latin America" as a key reason for deeper engagement, but is generally most concerned with harnessing the cultural valency of artists whose work has gained prominence at "international art fairs such as The Armory Show, Frieze London, and Art Basel."[288] It is telling that the impetus for further investigation here is the success of these artists as measured by Euro-American cultural institutions rather than the deep-rooted connections between the two regions which would be revealed with only a little more attention to historical context. As Capistrano-Baker argues, there is much work to be done not only on contemporary art across these regions but on several centuries of close contact through Spanish trade by sea.[289] If global modernism as a framework can progress from agitating for the inclusion of artists and art historians from these formerly peripheral strands of modernism to fostering cooperation and even collaboration

[287] Reena Devi, 'Why are we not paying attention to Latin America?' *Cobo Social,* 14 February 2020
[288] Ibid.
[289] Capistrano-Baker, 'Whither Art History in the Non-Western World: Exploring the Other('s) Art History,' p.248

between them, the resulting research is more than likely to prove revelatory not only for each side at the local and regional level but also for the field as a whole.

Ideally, the ultimate sign that the framework of global modernism has been fruitful will be its own eventual obsolescence. As Rushdie suggests in his analysis of 'commonwealth literature,' these categories are only really useful insofar as they are intended to bridge rather than implicitly reinforce the gap between centre and periphery. Mattos too argues that it is not the discovery of "a unified theory or perfect method" but the wider "circulation of knowledge in an extended netlike system" that will help to break down these divisions in art history.[290] The solution, at least at this stage, therefore seems not to be to forge ahead with best-fit curves that help to extrapolate unknown quantities but to focus first on collecting good data. In the longer term, practical measures towards fostering more inclusiveness at the established centres of modernist art would also go a long way both towards raising the profile of 'global' modern artists and integrating ongoing research across geographic boundaries. These measures would also go some way to addressing Capistrano-Baker's concerns about the culture of "outsider and insider scholars" of art history outside the Euro-American centre.[291]

A universal rather than universalist approach, then, offers the straightest path to a history of modernism that has any hope of being truly global either geographically or metaphysically. The question with which 'global modernism' should occupy itself in relation to art history is how self-proclaimed modernist artists bring individual

[290] Mattos, Whither Art History? Geography, Art Theory and New Perspectives for an Inclusive Art History,' p.259
[291] Ibid., p.255

perspectives to the broader context of modernism, not whether or how fully they qualify in the first place. Rather than querying Luna's right to be considered modern given his disdain for Impressionism as a label, it is far more productive to explore the ways in which his work demonstrates an interest in high and low culture on several continents, visual approaches from a variety of traditions, and a complex and nuanced sense of local and international politics that can hardly be called conservative. In the same way, exploring Edades' claims to modernity should not have to boil down to a choice between taking the artist at his word and casting doubt on his entire legacy. In both cases, giving the visual and historical evidence due consideration alongside existing art historical narratives is crucial to understanding the full significance of these artists' works. To dismiss Edades' work as merely or even predominantly derivative is therefore to fundamentally misunderstand the relationship between this artist, his engagement with the art history of Europe and America, and the history of his own art. Far from merely imitating the flatness or distortion of French Post-Impressionism or blindly incorporating his teachers' preferences into his own practice, Edades consistently demonstrated a keen awareness of the specific trends and ideologies with which he was interacting. In his work as an academic even more than as an artist, Edades showed a clear facility for moving between various modes, sharing material more progressive than his own approaches with his students and claiming different art historical pedigrees in response to different socio-cultural motivations. This represents a much more sophisticated relationship with Euro-American art as well as the still-developing trajectories in the history of international modernist art than would be suggested by even Edades' own account through the Armory Hall encounter that never took place.

Conclusion: What was it all for?

This is not the project I proposed originally. The dissertation I had intended to present was provisionally titled “Self, Other and Self as Other.” It would have investigated the treatment of pre-colonial material culture in paintings and sculpture by Southeast Asian artists who received their training during the colonial era. In doing this, it would also have explored the relationship between colonial systems of knowledge, especially archaeology and ethnography, and the extent to which the objects of study first analysed within those disciplines became useful motifs in the development of modernist art in the region. My theory was that modernist artists were more likely to reclaim a material culture that they saw as having been neglected or sidelined by colonial powers whom they perceived as more interested in reshaping the local scene to their liking. In contrast, those who had come to associate traditional objects with colonial research and display would engage with their heritage through more experimental means rather than simply incorporating visual motifs from their pre-colonial material culture into their work. In the most ambitious version of this proposal, I had hoped to conduct this research as a comparative study of pre-war art from Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Vietnam. As late as 2019, I was still pursuing a comparative study of modern art in Indonesia and the Philippines c. 1840s-1940s. Victorio Edades and his fellow triumvirs of Modernism were key figures in this project as well, but I was most interested in situating their work in relation to that of Sudjojono and PERSAGI in Indonesia.

When I went to Seattle in search of more details on the Armory Hall show that changed the history of Philippine art, therefore, my intention was not at all to

challenge the narrative which had inspired my trip in the first place. In fact, my main goal in visiting the special collections at the University of Washington was to identify specific examples of the paintings by Cézanne and Gauguin which had proven so pivotal in Edades' early career. This, I thought, would offer a good point of comparison and contrast with the exhibitions of European modern art, held in Jakarta in the mid-1930s, which likewise proved highly influential on the young Sudjojono. Once it became apparent that there was almost certainly no Armory Hall show to speak of, however, it was only natural to set the comparative aspect of my research aside for the time being. Focusing on the visual and documentary evidence of Edades' early career, especially in relation to each other, immediately revealed aspects of the artists work that have rarely or never been studied in depth. From this point onwards, my research was underpinned by two key questions: why would Edades have found the Armory Hall narrative preferable to a more accurate account of his first encounter with modernist art in the United States and how has this relatively small yet hugely consequential deception gone unchallenged for close to a century?

The resulting study is somewhat more metatextual than I had originally intended. In addition to exploring the paintings and documents that inform and constitute Edades' work and later legacy, it investigates the unexpectedly complex relationship between the visual and written records of modernist art in Manila. It has been particularly rewarding to trace the relative usefulness of the Armory Hall narrative at different stages in Edades' career to discover when and to what end these claims most likely emerged. Perhaps revealing the bias inherent in the perspective of a Singaporean writing some eighty years after World War II, I was most struck by implications of

Edades' encounter with Miyamoto Saburo in 1944. That the move to align Philippine modernist art with French Post-Impressionism rather than his North American sources had both political and socio-cultural implications was self-evident, but I had primarily approached the issue in terms of a post-1970s paradigm. In terms of framing and marketing of Philippine modernism in a post-colonial context, Edades' decision seems entirely sensible. The Armory Hall narrative brings the various aspects of Edades' own career into harmony with one another by smoothing over various gaps and inconsistencies which mostly resulted from the rapidly shifting social and political contexts in which the artist was operating. At the same time, it also associates Philippine modernist art, through the work of its most representative figures, with a network of famous names that remain immediately recognizable and highly prestigious. This aligned with the ASEAN goal of seeking common ground at the regional level by allowing for direct comparison with artists whose frame of reference was in fact more broadly Parisian instead of emphasising the uniqueness of the Philippines' American connection.

The date given for the Armory Hall show, whether 1922 or 1923, also cements Edades' claim to being the first advocate of modernist art not only in the Philippines but also in Southeast Asia as a whole. This seems largely unnecessary as even Edades' own exhibition at the Columbian Club in 1929 constitutes the earliest art show of its kind in the region but claiming direct lineage from Cézanne and Gauguin could only underline Edades' prescience in relation to his contemporaries at home and in the region. It had not, however, occurred to me that there could be circumstances under which the series of relatively minor fabrications which add up to the Armory Hall narrative might have life or death consequences for Edades and by

extension his followers. The Japanese reception of Edades' influence, combined with the lionisation of his followers as within the context of wartime propaganda offered sobering insight into the highly volatile and rapidly shifting series of situations through which Edades conceived of, defended and propagated his ideas about modernist art.

The paradox of Edades' global reach, which was both far more extensive than the traditional accounts and surprisingly hard to trace except by following the primary sources to Seattle and San Francisco, was also a surprise. I am very conscious that I would not have been able to pursue this subject in anything like this depth without financial, academic and administrative support on three continents. This speaks to the uniquely transnational case study of the first generation of Philippine modernist artists and architects as well as to the logistical challenge of fact-checking primary-source accounts that can only be corroborated, or not, across continents. Digitisation has also offered advantages that Edades' biographers would not have had: being able to comprehensively rule out any significant mention of Cézanne or Gauguin in Seattle newspapers in the twenty years on either side of Edades' alleged Armory Hall experience would have been a much more difficult enterprise for Rivera Ingle or Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero even if they had been able to visit Seattle in the course of their research. In combination with the extent to which curatorial research at museums rather than universities tends to drive research into Southeast Asian art within the region, it only makes sense that there have been few attempts so far to trace the Armory Hall show and its implications all the way back to its alleged source.

The challenges to this project posed by restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic also illustrate its fundamentally transnational nature. If the outbreak of this disease had taken place a year earlier, I would not have been able to visit Seattle and this thesis would be a detailed comparison of pre-colonial motifs in modernist art from Indonesia and the Philippines. As it was, I have been unable to pursue an aspect of my research that I believe would provide valuable context for Edades' work as a teacher. My pre-pandemic plan for 2020 included a trip to Manila and Angono during which I had hoped to conduct archival research similar to the work I was able to do in Seattle and to a lesser degree San Francisco. I would have liked to investigate the archives of the University of Santo Tomas, where both Edades and Ocampo were instructors, as well as the holdings of Botong's estate in Angono, seeking evidence of the resources they retained and shared as both artists and art educators. I was most interested in any surviving records of the curriculum all three artists designed and used, and by any more specific information about the books and other publications which Edades brought back to the Philippines from his various travels in Europe and America. I would also have liked to research the relationship between Edades, Botong, and their interest in Mexican modernism in greater detail but was somewhat stymied by a lack of resources, Latin American visual culture not being a priority in the major research institutes in Singapore. This, too, would have been less of a challenge with access to the collections in Manila, London, San Francisco and Seattle that have been of particular importance to this project in earlier phases of my research. I hope very much that I or someone else will be able to pursue these aspects of the subject in greater depth when global circumstances permit.

Another aspect of this project that would reward further development is the comparative strand I set aside in favour of the Armory Hall puzzle. Even this first step towards re-examining the primary sources of modernist art in the Philippines in their contemporary context has revealed blind spots in the research and exhibition of works that are considered canonical at the national and regional level. Similar projects have been and are continuing to be done on the careers of pioneers of national and regional modernist art from Raden Saleh to Georgette Chen. While they have yet to reveal as startling a contrast between history and historiography as the Armory Hall show that never took place, many of these revised histories offer compelling insight into the strategies employed by artists making a self-conscious effort to present, protect, and preserve their legacies both at the time and in hindsight. Comparative research into these efforts, especially in view of the rapidly shifting socio-political climate of Southeast Asia in the twentieth century, seems very likely to illuminate new areas of interest. This could in turn shed new light on the regional histories of art in Southeast Asia. I would be most interested to investigate whether other countries in the region reveal a similar willingness to minimise highly specific colonial sources in favour of seeking common ground and even competing for prestige in relation to a more widely recognisable Euro-American canon of modernism. A more detailed study of Philippine modernism in relation to modernist art in North and Central America, especially Mexican mural art and the modernist communities active in San Francisco and the Pacific Northwest, will also reward further study. A closer examination of the religious strand of Philippine modernism, particularly the relationship between religious, nationalist and modernist discourse in the pre- and post-independence eras, is likewise guaranteed to prove enlightening both on its own and in relation to other parts of the former Spanish empire.

Ultimately, a close examination of Edades' life and work strongly suggests that the wider narrative associated with the Armory Hall narrative is more robust than the Seattle iteration of the Armory Hall show itself. A broadly chronological history of local art does reveal through-lines of subject, theme and medium from Luna through Amorsolo and Edades to Botong and the later proponents of Philippine modernism. The wider context of this journey, however, is somewhat less directly linear than the traditional narrative suggests. Instead of conceiving of the interactions between these artists in terms of a strict progression, it is more useful to think in terms of a map of interconnecting influences with which artists who were perfectly aware of the ideologies and historical traditions involved could choose to interact or not. Instead of the starkly delineated progression offered in the introduction, then, a livelier history of Philippine art can be understood through the following series of works and clusters of works. Returning to the sequence offered in the introduction, a revised version might look more like this.

Precursors: Luna, *Spoliarium*; Tolentino, *The Slave* (Figure 61); Amorsolo, *Planting Rice*

Taken together, Luna, Tolentino and Amorsolo offer an effective introduction to visual culture in the Philippines before Edades returned from Seattle. Both painters spoke of Diego Velázquez in particularly complimentary terms, and *Spoliarium* and *Planting Rice* clearly demonstrate not only this influence but the close relationship between Philippine art and the Spanish art historical and academic traditions up to this point. Tolentino also made much of his admiration for seventeenth-century precedents, especially Gianlorenzo Bernini, but showed a willingness to experiment

with more modernist approaches to sculpture as well. While Amorsolo continued to paint in more or less the same style throughout his long career, both his predecessor Luna and his contemporary Tolentino showed at least some willingness to experiment with less strictly academic approaches in their own work. The colonial context in which all three artists were operating provided unprecedented opportunities as well as significant limitations both of which shaped their own art as well as that of later generations reacting to it. All three had the opportunity to travel extensively in Europe during their formative years, with Amorsolo and Tolentino also visiting the United States. This gave them access to the Euro-American canon to a degree that was not only unprecedented but previously unthinkable in the Philippine context. At the same time, all three artists were also dependent on colonial or foreign goodwill in the various art markets that determined their success or failure. This explains Luna's tendency to favour allegorical subjects and imagery which could be read as critiquing the colonial system while still asserting the artist's mastery of Western history and material culture. For Amorsolo, it took the form of overtly nativist content which celebrated the natural landscape and rich material culture of the Philippines without challenging or even acknowledging the American colonial presence. Tolentino in turn explored forms familiar from the Western canon, often dictated by the demands of the architectural settings for which his works had been commissioned, but skillfully combined an anachronistic range of references to create a cohesive whole unique to his own practice.

Manila's First Modernists: Edades, *The Sketch;* Arellano, *Metropolitan Theatre;* Ocampo, *Brown Madonna*

The Sketch clearly illustrates the interplay of American and European influences filtered through Edades' unique perspective as a Filipino student in the United States. As virtually all the existing scholarship of Edades' life and work emphasises at every available opportunity, Paul Cézanne's Post-Impressionism was especially important to the development of Edades' approach to figuration and the conception of space. Without any evidence for an Armory Hall show in Seattle, this initial encounter may have been direct, perhaps in San Francisco, or through reproductions made available at the University of Washington's department of painting. The department itself also shaped Edades' outlook on figuration and colour, as did the Ash Can School. This is most evident in the murky colour palette and clear resistance to idealisation of form in Edades' early works (see *The Sketch, The Builders*). Edades' particular interest in racial minorities and other members of the social underclasses with which he had become familiar in Alaska as well as Seattle shows further affinity with the Ash Can School's commitment to capturing the less palatable aspects of urban life. At the same time, Edades brought his own experience as a poor student from a colonial background to life in this exploration of race, class, and gender framed within the project of drawing from life.

Of all the elements which proved critical to the development of Filipino modernism, it is possible that Manila's Art Deco architecture has been the most underestimated after the influence of Isaacs and Patterson. Nakpil's collaboration with Edades, Botong and Ocampo on the Capitol Theatre is freely acknowledged as a turning point for the 'triumvirate,' but it is not always made clear that the advent of Art Deco

was a truly critical factor in making Edades' ideas about modernist art marketable in Manila. Arellano's gift for incorporating nativist forms and motifs into an otherwise predictably modernist structure was also an important precedent for the nativist content typical of the mural works made by the Triumvirate at this time. The relative success of works like *Mother Nature's Bounty Harvest* and *Rising Philippines* compared to the utterly mediocre performance of Edades' solo show in 1929 shows that Arellano's intervention in modernist architecture combined with a new approach incorporating local context and nativist content into modernist works helped to create a viable context within which Edades' ideas could be developed in a form that was more intelligible to Manila's art-buying elite than *The Builders* or indeed *The Sketch.*

A comparison of Ocampo's *Brown Madonna* to Gauguin's *Ia orana Maria* elucidates the relationship between Edades' followers and Paul Gauguin's brand of Post-Impressionism in two key ways. Firstly, it supports the widely repeated assertion that Gauguin was a crucial influence on at least two-thirds of Manila's Triumvirate of Modernism. Ocampo's use of vivid tropical greens and bright golden light is particularly reminiscent of Gauguin's images of Tahiti as a tropical paradise. Secondly, it somewhat subverts the first claim by demonstrating that Ocampo and Botong were interested in much more than exotic themes and motifs in their own depictions of tropical paradise. While Gauguin's use of Polynesian culture in *Ia orana Maria* may fairly be called appropriation, Ocampo's use of pre-colonial architecture and costume would be more accurately described as re-appropriation of native culture. By depicting the Madonna and Child as native Filipinos in a setting devoid of colonial influence, Ocampo effectively claims the Catholic identity of the Philippines as an intrinsic part of its heritage rather than a legacy of Spanish intervention.

Although Gauguin's ability to combine tropical themes and motifs with a decidedly modernist visual approach was greatly appealing to Manila's triumvirate of Modernism, Ocampo employed these methods to make a specific theological and political argument in visual form rather than simply experimenting with elements borrowed from another artist's output. That Ocampo's work was championed by the Japanese propaganda machine even as the artist himself worked against the occupation is also illustrative, demonstrating the increasingly complex relationship between nationalism and modernism in Southeast Asia over the course of the twentieth century.

Closing arguments: Amorsolo, *Planting Rice(1951);* Botong, *History of Manila (Filipino Struggles through History,* 1964-68*)*

Although Amorsolo and his fellow "Moderns" gained a good deal of ground in the independent Republic of the Philippines, it is important to note that Amorsolo and his followers maintained their hold on a certain aspect of the public imagination as well. Like Botong, Amorsolo rarely commented on the reception of his work, preferring to devote his time and attention to teaching and painting in the manner he continued to deem most appropriate. The success of these endeavours, especially in connecting with the emotions of his local audience, is demonstrated by the enduring influence of his work alongside the ever more adventurous progression of Philippine modernists innovating on Edades' first foundations.

History of Manila offers something of a microcosm of all the key aspects of Philippine modernist art as well as its historiography and reception. Botong's final work testifies to his facility for blending influences from a variety of sources high and low, local and

international. Although he has often been received as the naïve nativist ingenue of the Philippine modernist movement, the ease with which Botong navigates Filipino history, mythology and contemporary politics without compromising either overall composition or a consistent message speaks to the careful planning and extensive research which underpin the work. Botong's public murals in the independence era helped to cement the association between nationalism and modernism in the Philippines, and this final work is easily the most overt in its nationalist messaging. As discussed, this reflects the realities of the Marcos era as well as the post-ASEAN interest in expressing a Philippine point of view in relation to regional as well as global developments. That Edades and his followers continued to play such a prominent role in the development of visual culture some thirty years after their first joint ventures also explains the tendency of later scholars to analyse their earlier work in post-independence terms, allowing the artists and their biographers alike to craft a retrospective narrative that served the agenda of later works much more cogently than those that preceded them.

Whether the Armory Hall show ever reached Seattle or not, then, a purely linear history which treats Edades' early interest in French Post-Impressionism as his most valuable contribution to the development of Philippine modernist art is not only massively reductive but strikingly unfair as an assessment. It may well be true that Edades' achievements as a champion of Philippine modernist art outweigh his impact as a painter, at least as can be established from a visual examination of his followers' oeuvre, but there is strong evidence that this was by design given the artist's insistence on allowing his students to discern their own approaches. Edades seems to have taken his own advice in crafting the history of his own work, offering a

narrative that safeguarded the interests of Philippine modernism in the context of its publication at the cost of relaying his personal history in greater detail. This was clearly a self-interested move as well, strengthening his claims to participation in nationalist and nation-building projects that are really better understood in relation to his followers, but the gambit has paid dividend not only for Edades' own legacy but for the wider narrative of Philippine modernist art as well. On one hand, it almost seems a shame to reveal the deception after so long. On the other hand, it is surely about time Edades got his due in spite of his own best efforts.

Edades' biographers lamented the impact of his priorities on his artistic legacy: "the long years of teaching, lecturing and pamphleteering took their toll from Edades as artist. Because his energies were expended on art education, he had little time to paint when he was in his prime. His paintings numbered over 150 as of 1976, a relatively meagre output for an artist."[292] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero even ventured to speculate that Edades' work as an artist would be remembered more "for his massive an powerful early works" than for his "more lyrical and decorative" later works, again reflecting the tendency in the scholarship of modernist art to prioritise novelty and innovation and decry perceived shifts away from the cutting edge.[293] Another reason for the special prominence of Edades' earliest works in the narrative of Philippine art history is their particular impact on the generation of artists who would take up the modernist banner in cooperation with, but by his own instruction not in imitation of, the Father of Modern Art in the Philippines. One only has to look at the list of Filipino artists who studied with Edades at one point or another to see

[292] Kalaw-Ledesma and Guerrero, *Edades: National Artist,* p.145
[293] Ibid.

his impact over some fifty years at least. The Armory Hall narrative, the reasons for its construction and its longevity in the wider history of Philippine and even Southeast Asian modernist art offer unique insight into the processes by which this impact was preserved and propagated even beyond Edades' own direct influence. This reveals Edades to be not only an artist and art educator of great creativity, insight and generosity but also an extremely intelligent historian of modernist art with a keen awareness of the local, regional, and global priorities which could make or break the future of Philippine art. Isaacs and Patterson may not be as exciting as Cézanne and Gauguin in the widest view of global modernism, but the very fact that the Armory Hall narrative has gone unchallenged for so long clearly establishes Edades himself as a far more situationally aware and strategically minded guardian of the tradition he founded than his own account suggests.

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Abstract

National-ish Artists: Victorio Edades and the Founding of Filipino Modern Art

Victorio Edades has long been regarded as the founding father of modern art in the Philippines. For a long time, the artist's devotion to this cause has been traced to a paradigm-altering encounter with Post- Impressionist art in 1922 or 1923 at a travelling iteration of the New York Armory Hall show which reached Seattle while Edades was a student at the University of Washington. Closer examination of paintings and documentation relating to Edades' time in Seattle, however, reveal that this is almost certainly not the case. Strong evidence suggests both that the New York Armory Hall show never reached Seattle and that Edades' first encounter with modernist art occurred at the University of Washington itself.

This thesis offers new analysis of Edades' career as a modernist artist over several decades of rapid social and political change. It re- examines the sources that influenced his practice as an artist and art educator, situating his early work in relation to the art and ideas being circulated in the Pacific Northwest in the 1920s and then in Southeast Asia through World War II, decolonisation and the establishment of national and regional identity in the post- independence era. It also interrogates the Armory Hall narrative that was constructed in defiance of the primary sources, exploring possible reasons first for its creation and then for its endurance over some fifty years of scholarship after the fact.

Finally, it explores the implications of this more complicated narrative of Filipino modernism for the wider understanding of modern art in the Philippines, Southeast- Asia and in terms of colonial and post-colonial networks which continue to shape the discourse within which the work of Edades and his followers can be situated at national, regional and global levels.

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