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### Clickbait: Is photography art or not?

Carmela Fernando, ANC-X

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MANILA -- Since 1816, photography has become a standard visual communication method—whether it's a personal hobby, a form of documentation, used for education, entertainment, or journalism, millions have poured their heart, soul, and vision into taking that perfect snapshot. And yet, this question still stands among fine art circles.

Participants at this year's Art Fair 2018 tackled the question of whether or not photography is an art form, as they explored what photography means to contemporary Filipino art.

In the exploratory and pioneering photography exhibit, ArtFairPH/Photo, some of the country's best photographers, curators, and impresarios got together and sat down with "State of the Art" host Iza Calzado to talk about the marriage of photography and art.

"State of the Art" is the latest art show offering of ANCX, the new lifestyle block on ANC.

Featured here are personalities in the creative industry who have made it possible to redefine photography's place in art via this exhibit. Below is a veritable who's who in the worlds of both photography and art, as they appeared in "State of the Art."



Filipinas Photographs by Isa Lorenzo, *IG photo courtesy of @berniepasrasgan*

### 1. Isa Lorenzo

Founder of Silverlens Galleries (2004) and Museum Foundation of the Philippines board member, Lorenzo has contributed to establishing photography as a recognized collector's medium in the art industry. She also received the Jenesys Grant of the Japan Foundation at Tokyo Wonder Site and the Berlin Arts Program of the Goethe Institut.

Her works have been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, UNESCO House in Paris, and the Cultural Center of the Philippines and Metropolitan Museum in Manila. You can see some of her pieces at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Collection (Manila), the Mikey and Lou Samson Collection (Singapore), and the Ropke Collection (Cologne).



Kin by Neil Oshima, *IG photo courtesy of @gumsmiles*

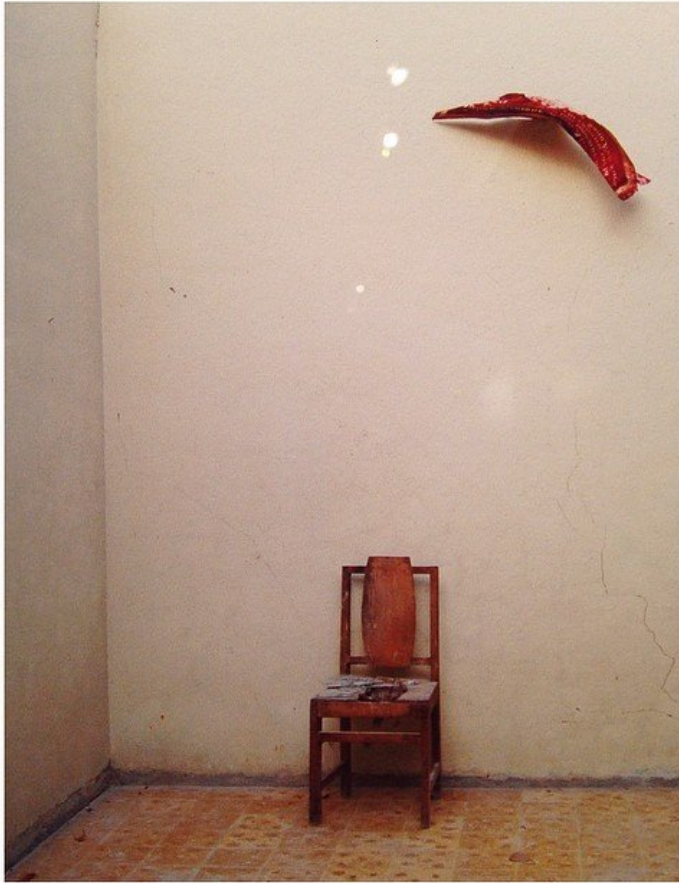
## 2. Neal Oshima

Initially trained as a laboratory and field photographer at the BP Bishop Museum in Hawaii and as a fine art photographer in San Francisco, California, Oshima is best known for over 40 years of award-winning commercial, editorial, and fine art photography in Manila.

His works have been featured in galleries including the Sepia International Gallery in Soho, New York. You may have also experienced his unique vision in advertising campaigns such as Pepsi, Unilever, Coke, San Miguel, Levi-Strauss, Fedex, Bench and Avon, as well as the Boysen KnoxOut Project.

As a participant of Art Fair 2018, he presented his exhibit titled "Kin," where he shared snippets from 40 years of his travels within the Philippines, capturing the life of Austronesian tribes including Filipino ethnic groups.

For him, photography speaks directly to people and is more interesting than mediocre painting, which is why it should be considered as art.



Impetus 3 by Angel Velasco Shaw, *IG photo courtesy of @jefishfish*

### 3. Angel Velasco Shaw

A media artist, filmmaker, curator, cultural activist, and independent educator, Angel Velasco Shaw has had her films aired on screens around the world. Some of the titles include *Blowback and Umbilical Cord* (Cinematheque Suisse Schweizer Filmarchiv, Casa Asia, Barcelona, Spain); *Asian Boys* (Cinematheque Suisse Schweizer Filmarchiv); *Nailed* (The Museum of Modern Art New York and Casa Asia, Barcelona, Spain); and *Balikbayan/Return to Home*.

Her other works have been exhibited and performed at the New York University, the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, and the Guggenheim Museum. She also taught media, cultural, and community studies at New York University, Hunter College, Columbia University, The New School For Social Research, and Pratt Institute.

Along with Oshima, she co-curated the Art Fair 2018 exhibition 'Provocations: Philippine Documentary Photography,' featuring 14 photojournalists and their takes on Filipino culture.





Photo by Paco Guerrero, IG photo courtesy of @milonaval

#### 4. Paco Guerrero

Photographer and cinematographer Francisco ‘Paco’ Guerrero was awarded Brooks Institute’s Best Photographer in 1994 and received the American Photo Best Documentary Photography honor in 1996. He has worked in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Spain, and the Philippines, and his photographs have graced several international publications including Conde Nast Traveller (Spain and UK), Travel + Leisure (US and SEA), and GQ (US).

In 2012, he held an exhibit called Rizal at Manila Contemporary. His work was also featured in Art Fair 2018, to demonstrate how photography makes one see the familiar world in a different way. He asserts that “part of the duty of photography is to show the world as would not expect it.” He travelled around the Philippines with a black background for photographing his subjects wherever they happened to be. His photos for this series evolved into a study of people’s belief systems around the country, and it’s still ongoing as he travels.



### 5. Erwin Romulo

Writer and composer Erwin Romulo is known for his work in the movies "On the Job" (2013), "Wanted: Border" (2009) and "Honor Thy Father" (2015). He also won the Best Music Award alongside Malek Lopez for "Wanted: Border" in the Cinema One Originals Digital Film Festival 2009.

He has made his stance clear on whether or not photography is art. "Photography has proven to be the most dynamic – photojournalism especially – is the most vibrant and most alive visual medium art form today."

For Art Fair 2018, he curated the works in his own exhibition "Everyday Impunity." This interactive exhibition features audio-visual material depicting gross injustices against Filipino victims of this administration's war on drugs.



The drug war 05.30.2018, IG photo courtesy of @carlogabuco

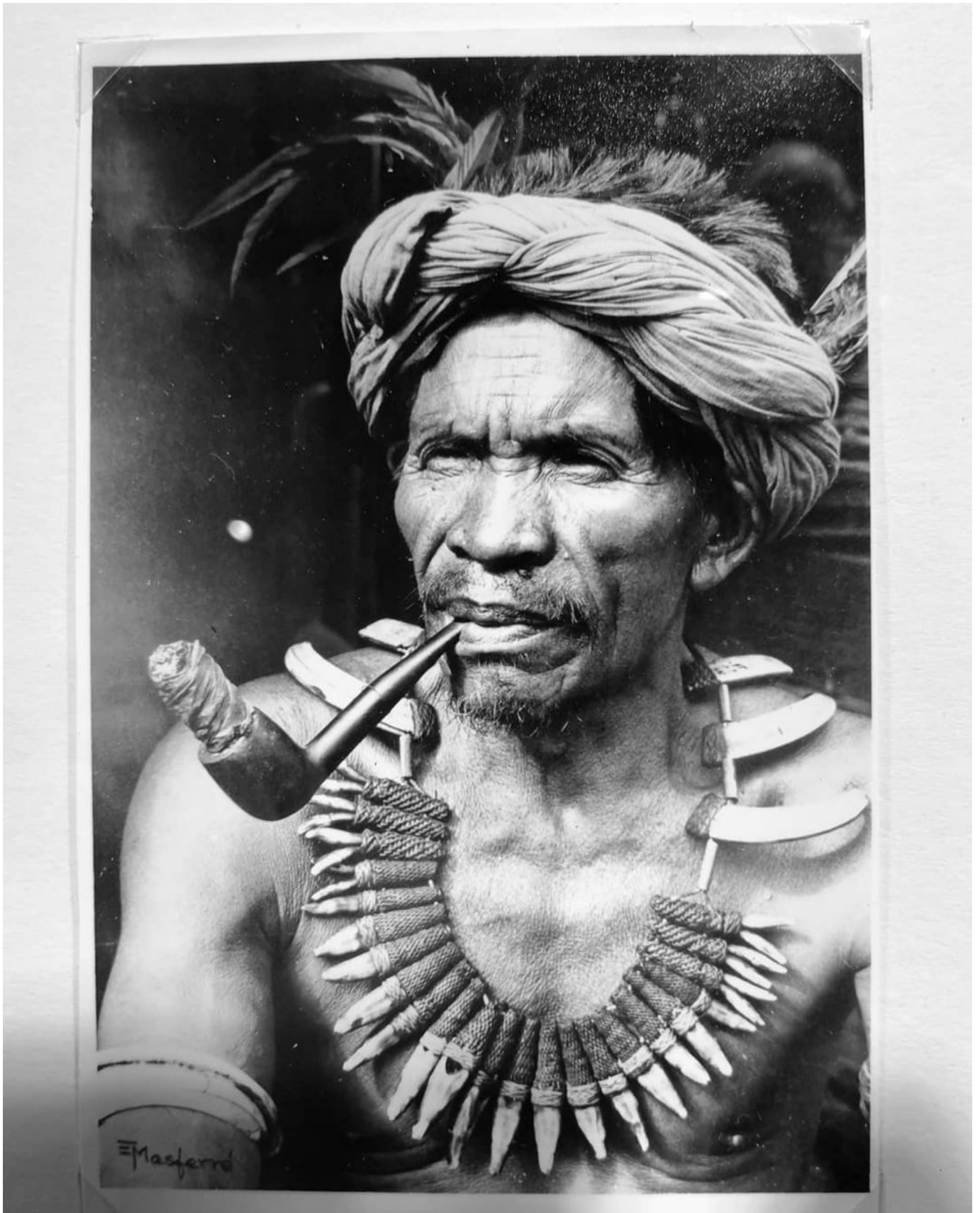
### 6. Carlo Gabuco

For his tireless pursuit of exposing the truth surrounding local poverty and crime, artist and freelance photographer Carlo Gabuco was awarded the most sought-after Magnum Foundation grant. He has worked with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and his photos have been published in both local and international publications including the BBC, Time, National Geographic, Cicero Magazine and Der Spiegel.

His work took the spotlight at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and in various group exhibitions across the Philippines, Malaysia, South Korea, and England. He was also a 2006 Philippine Art Awards finalist, and completed a series of artist residencies at CASA San Miguel in Zambales, Project Space Pilipinas, HOM in Kuala Lumpur, NEAR Dangsan in South Korea, and The Artesan Gallery + Studio in Singapore.

"It's an art form in itself," he says of photography. "There's a whole lot of thinking and ideas that go through each photograph."

His photos on the War on Drugs are showcased in Erwin Romulo's 'Everyday Impunity' exhibition for Art Fair 2018. Accompanying him in the show are Mark Lacay for sound, Juan Miguel Sobrepeña for music, and Lyle Sacris for light.



Black and White photo by Eduardo Masferré, IG photo courtesy of @ericbanes

#### 7. Eduardo Masferré

Eduardo Masferré (1909 – June 24, 1995) is known as the father of Philippine photography. With his self-taught camera skills, he built his legacy documenting the lives of indigenous Filipino tribes, particularly the Igorots.

He was the only Filipino to have his work featured in Les Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, the world's most prestigious photography exhibition in Arles, southern France. Later his photos were also showcased in the American National Museum of Natural History, the University of Pennsylvania, and at Yale University.

In Art Fair 2018, his work graced the Mabini Projects exhibition.



Black and white photo by Weegee, IG photo courtesy of @andyharhar

#### 8. Weegee

Weegee is the pseudonym of photographer and photojournalist Arthur Fellig (June 12, 1899 – December 26, 1968), who is known for his black-and-white street photography. His work depicted the grittier side of street life, crime, injury, and death.

His work graced the exhibitions Action Photography, and later, 50 Photographs by 50 Photographers, both of which were held at the Museum of Modern Art. He also became a commercial photographer for various publications and movies, and after his death, his work -- 16,000 photographs and 7,000 negatives -- were donated to the International Center of Photography in New York.

Other participating photography institutions in the Art Fair 2018 are: Julius Baer Art Collection; Steidl Book Award Asia: 8 Books from Asia; and Silverlens Galleries.

In the "Provocations: Philippine documentary Photography" exhibit, these photojournalists and artists told their stories of life in the Philippines through old digital images buried in their drives or negatives that were partially damaged by time.

#### Jes Aznar

He's a full-time documentary photographer whose works have been published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Getty Images, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, International Herald Tribune, California Sun day Times Magazine, Asian Development Bank, UN World Food Programme, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

#### Geloy Concepcion

A freelance professional photographer, videographer and street artist, Concepcion's works have been featured in Europe, Japan, Singapore, India, Australia, Kosovo, Indonesia, US, and Philippines. He champions the underdog and the disenfranchised in his photos.

#### Kawayan de Guia

Specializing in painting, installation and sculpture, he's had his works on show in various galleries around Asia including Ateneo Art Gallery, Mo Space, The Drawing Room, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, Soka Art Center. He also curated artworks for the Singapore Biennale 2013.

#### Alex Baluyut

Multi-awarded photographer Alex Baluyut was named one of the Most Influential Asian Photographers by Invisible Photographer Asia, from 2012 to 2014. He co-founded the Philippine Center for Photojournalism (PCP) where he became a long-time board member. He also led the first Philippine masterclass in documentary photography and taught photojournalism at the Ateneo de Manila Konrad Adenauer-World Press Photo course.

#### Nana Buxani

Documentary photographer, filmmaker, and painter Nana Buxani focuses on social injustices that plague mostly children and marginalized groups. Her work has been published in international publications including The Guardian (UK), The New York Times (NYC), Time Magazine (Asia Edition), Interviu Magazine (Spain), Il Venerdì (Italy), Marie Claire (London), I Magazine (PCIJ, Philippines), Newsbreak (Philippines), ME Magazine (Philippines), Helsingin Sanomat (Finland), The BUND Magazine (Shanghai), The National (UAE), the Chronicle of Philanthropy and Higher Education (Washington, DC), and Bloomberg News.

#### RJ Fernandez

Independent photographer and printer RJ Fernandez has produced work for publishers such as Aperture Foundation, Prestel, Phaidon, Rizzoli, and Assouline. She is also the founder of Mapa Books, an independent publishing company that's centered on Southeast Asia. Her 2012 project Moving Mountains was nominated for the Prix Pictet in 2015.



**Kat Palasi**

Kat Palasi is a Manila-based photographer who focuses on stories from her homeland in the Cordillera, as well as women's issues, urban poverty, and other facets of Philippine life. She has worked with several local and international organizations, and joined exhibits in venues like the UP Vargas Museum and the Hong Kong Arts Center.

**Marta Lavina**

Photographer Marta Lavina's work graces Art Fair 2018 with a collage featuring her discovery of Philippine civilization through artifacts and photos.

**Derek Soriano**

Bar owner and photographer Derek Soriano brings us a much closer look at the everyday lives and relationships of patients at the National Center for Mental Health in Mandaluyong.

**Veejay Villafranca**

A documentary photographer, he works on editorial assignments and projects on Filipino culture and religious practices, the long-term effects of climate change, and the migration behavior of Filipinos in different locations throughout the country.

His photos have been published in circulations including The Guardian, International Herald Tribune, World Policy Report, The Sunday Times, and Bloomberg Businessweek. He has also worked with charity organizations like U.N. World Food Program, Oxfam International, U.N. FAO, UNFPA, UNICEF, and Greenpeace International.

**Boy Yñiguez**

Cinematographer Boy Yñiguez' visual work is featured in the films "Kubrador" (2006), "Trespassers" (2011), and "Puti" (2013). For his Art Fair 2018 exhibition, he showcases photos expressing his stance against the architectural changes that Baguio has undergone over the years.

**Tommy Hafalla**

Documentary photographer and CCP Thirteen Artists Award recipient Tommy Hafalla held numerous exhibitions in the Philippines, one of which was the UP Vargas Museum in 2015. After having volunteered on a medical mission to the Cordillera region, Hafalla spent over 3 decades photographing the local indigenous communities including Benguet, Kalinga, Ifugao, and the Mountain Province. Some of the photos he took there are included in the Art Fair 2018 "Provocations" exhibit.

*Catch more episodes of "State of the Art" every Sunday, 11 p.m., on ANC.*

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