

# ***Staking Memory and Place: Claims on Space and Meaning in the Default Neighborhoods of a Mid-Lifer Museum***

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The essay looks into how countermapping was explored as both research and artistic strategy by the art collective called Plataporma as they were invited to engage with the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library's 50th anniversary exhibition in 2010. Their project remains accessible as hyperextensions, a blog they crafted in response to the curatorial prompt to work with the institutional archive and to look past the museum's walls, beyond its mere location (thus the harking back to Pasay from Pasig). In the process, Plataporma helped surface at least traces of what we curators would call 'civilian'/non-artworld perspectives of the workings of an institution that positions itself within the frame of public service. Documentation of the project may be found on <http://hyperextensions.blogspot.com/p/project.html>.

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It might be helpful if we establish outright that this reckoning is being done just over a decade past, regarding an attempt at a 2010 curatorial intervention in the half-a-century marking off of the life of a private research and museal node, the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library (hereon LMM or Lopez Museum) which opened on Lancaster Street, Pasay City in 1960 and subsequently moved to Exchange Road, Pasig in 1986.

Just as in many countries in Southeast Asia, the museal landscape in the Philippines consists of an uneven ecology of sites, in the Philippines specifically it basically consists of a national museum system administered from the political capital of NCR where variously aligned private heritage ventures like LMM stand as parallel sites for exhibition, research, and continuing education. It is in regard to this proffered service to a broad public, and thus a people-directed aspect of an institution that we relate the idea of a discreet space. As curators then working within an institution turning 50, we thought it was an opportune time to look into this idea of space more avidly to spur an iterative rethink that might help redirect LMM's work given who its principals perceived as its public as this presumably included those rooted in variable degrees within its geographically pinned markers. In the case of the Lopez Museum, this has shifted over time across three cities, from Pasay, Pasig, and its projected new home in Rockwell Makati. Reckoning with how each of those loci have specific demographic and socio-cultural and historically pertinent characteristics ideally plays into how public engagement spaces such as museums and libraries are conceived as places within immediate and radial reach.

As a museum albeit privately resourced one, the length of time that Lopez Museum has existed suggests those driving it may have had ample opportunities to recognize and negotiate with at least some of these specificities. This was our hope as we instigated this curatorial intervention during the build-up to the museum's

50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010<sup>1</sup>. The overall exhibition concept then radiated around the notion of a museal and archival space that was no longer merely intent on just keeping itself intact (particularly as the Lopezes had been under severe threat but eventually survived martial law) and internally servicing the Lopez conglomerate. The project could be seen as enacting the question: how might LMM progressively step out of its comfort zone into what the curators framed as *Extensions* (within physical, social, and discursive zones not entirely of its making nor within LMM's definitive control, the word play invoking 'ex-tensions' was indeed quietly but consciously running through our curatorial headspace at the time). Within the *Extensions* exhibit was a specific artistic collective project put together by the University of Santo Tomas-rooted collective, Plataporma (Buen Calubayan, Mervin Espina, Mark Salvatus, and Lauren Villarama). There is quite obviously an outlier aspect too with respect to the work of the two other collectives we engaged with in *Extensions* (these two were the street collective Pilipinas Street Plan, and RockEd Philippines, an alternative education venture primarily driven by artist and musician volunteers). In this essay, we shall focus on Plataporma's negotiations with our curatorial prompts and ambitions and think upon how its work might be seen simultaneously as countermapping, institutional critique, and research-based art practice.

Let us begin by looking back at the curatorial note this author crafted for *Extensions*, thus in itself constituting an archival contribution to Plataporma's looking into LMM's past and imagined future:

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<sup>1</sup> The author with life partner, Claro Ramirez, served as curatorial team to Lopez Memorial Museum and Library from 2005 to 2012.

**Extensions** openly hopes to evoke notions of slippery territoriality, of spatial protrusions in a variety of aspects—altitude, frequency, depth, and breadth. As this exhibition closes out Lopez Museum’s 50th anniversary year, it plays at a sobering self-injunction to intently think upon how this institution attempts to breach fences and reach its variously defined publics.

In acknowledging its own implication in the propelling of inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms of institutions engaging with the contested construct of culture, LMM assembled three collaborative formations (Pilipinas Street Plan, Plataporma, and Rock Ed Philippines) and the Bicol-Manila shuttling artist, Maya Munoz. Opening up the spaces and object/image trove of the museum and library for their potential intervention (by way of painting, sound and video, photography, as well as installation) was a calculated bid to have them come alongside our own looking back and thrusting forward vis-a-vis the multifaceted and hopefully even more constructively interdisciplinary direction that LMM intends to increasingly apply itself to.

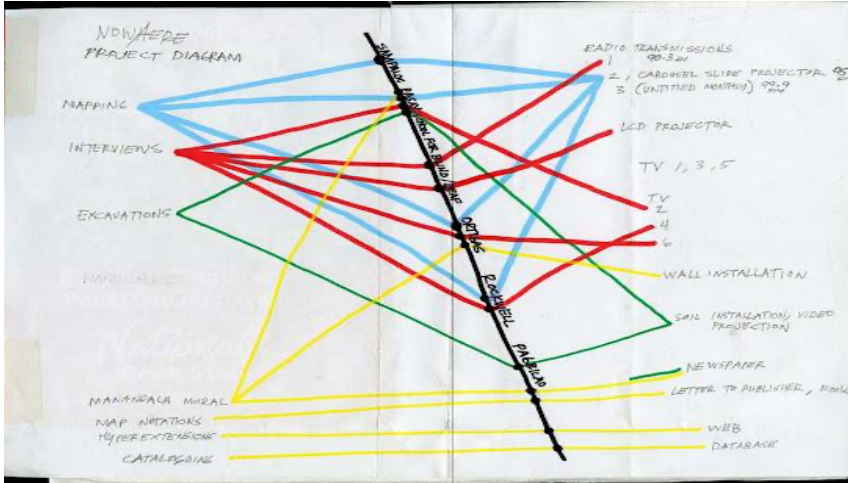


FIG. 1. *Plataporma* project visualization of Project Now/here from <http://hyperextensions.blogspot.com/pl/project.html>

The implicitly festive brief from Lopez higher-ups to the curatorial team set off a series of exhibitions and parallel ventures that were to lead up to the august museum’s turning golden. It would only be fair to say that in the total of seven years during which we served as curatorial consultants at LMM, we carried on with our work largely unencumbered in regard to the exhibitionary narratives and choice of artists we set upon. It bears noting that while this present text is very much after the fact and conveniently so when much personal investment and precarity have dramatically waned, it hopefully stands as a productive look at a juncture of potency enabled by a countermapping exercise at the intersection of curation and research-based creative practice. More than the predictable back-patting, an institution’s getting past a major age marker occasions some degree of public accounting: have we done right by our publics? Do we matter? Where to from here? --were just some of the hovering existential prompts in our heads as the exhibition and programming were conceptualized.

Today in 2022, these key questions continue to figure--to whom, where, and how might a now 62-year old knowledge bank more proactively thrust into the realm of archive and collections-building, research, and public programming? What do those who co-inhabit or gravitate around LMM's locus of operations think or not think of what it claims to do as cultural institution? This evocation of otherwise unheralded voices and unrecognized stakeholders was indeed behind the curatorial impulse in 2010, to ask artists to set off the probing, and a possible reimagining of a future LMM from the time it first formally came under curatorial direction by Renato Constantino Sr. in 1960. Now that a good 12 years since has lapsed since the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and as LMM itself exists merely as a spectral presence<sup>2</sup>, its fate seemingly even more and more given over to speculative fiction, this essay may perhaps lend insight to future curatorial teams who might avidly seek to place people, and thus a more patent shade of folk (albeit dispersed and fractured) and public interface as more centrally in the work of such sites of representation, historicization, and enabling of untrumpeted knowledge.

Historically, LMM was birthed by the Lopez patriarch-sugar-energy-media magnate, Eugenio Lopez Sr. who is more popularly identified with the merged entity made up of the American colonial period companies, Alto Broadcasting System and Chronicle Broadcasting Network. Within the collection and archive

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<sup>2</sup> The last physical site that the Lopez Memorial Museum inhabited as a unitary structure (with its exhibition spaces, conservation laboratory, library and offices all in one place) was Benpres Bldg on Exchange Road corner Meralco Avenue, Pasig. By 2012, It had plans to reestablish itself at the Proscenium in Rockwell, Makati but as of this writing, its holdings have stayed dispersed in off-site facilities. Being one of the non-earning units of the Lopez family conglomerate and in light of the subsequent major loss of its broadcasting franchise ABS-CBN during the Duterte period, one is hard put to project at this point in what form, where and when the museum and library will come back into full-operation mode.

spectrum, LMM's strength lies in its holdings from the Spanish and American colonial period with a particular niche lying within its combined media archives (the 'morgues' of the broadsheets Manila Chronicle and Manila Times) from the martial law era. As is the case for most ageing institutions, post-martial law LMM curators have increasingly felt the need to reinvigorate its programming to keep in step with broader publics beyond a narrow remit, in the LMM case, specialist Philippine Studies and heritage scholars. It would be in this light that Plataporma's coming to do project-based work with LMM might be seen. The strategy of inviting fresh and artistic eyes and minds to weigh upon otherwise already heavily scripted readings of antiquarian holdings has been a continuing track taken by museums, research and cultural centers across the globe for some time now.



FIG. 2. *The Nakpil designed LMM at Lancaster St., Pasay City (from LMM's FB page)*



One logical impetus behind this track is to push such spaces to become more avowedly publicly directed even if essentially still privately resourced and managed, to do more work that not only emanates from what these troves were assembled for, but also to genuinely become about and make room for a much broader set of people, users and generators of knowledge who may not initially be so visibly present in the institutional narrative-weaving and purview due to circumstance, corporate agenda, and operative remit.

This could tie into how we might think of countermapping as a resetting or upending of already established cartographic anchors that already lay claim to territories of the known to some extent. The countermapping exercise then also wagers into spaces where the power to make and receive alter-, discrepant, and even contrarian knowledge could be enabled to some degree. In current pop map-speak, this unpinning from sites already mapped, found, and most importantly marked off is gestural and performative, a stepping away to some extent from what is pre-figured and already coded. Conceptually, *Extensions* was analogous to coming clean about how exhibition and institutional history are invariably constructed expositions, and that at least at specific junctures, these could be pried a little more open to surfacing still unworn paths threaded through by cognitive, sensory and discursive cues which could not be so easily entwined in a neat singular narrative. The ‘counter’ in countermapping treaded upon here then is taken to operate on at least three levels, on the curatorial plane, the artist collective plane, and through the invited public participation organized by the collective as this potentially thwarts the desire to establish a reductively communitarian sense of the museum and people relations within the sites’ environs.

Plataporma, with its specific internal chemistry of pragmatic inclinations (drawing from photography, painting, drawing, installation, moving image, sound, and multimodal research) took up our invitation by literally setting out to

probe into LMM’s past, present and future: embarking on low-profile reconnaissance missions into Pasay (where the museum was founded), Pasig (where the museum moved in 1986), and Makati (where it was to move in 2012) and thus looking up and looking into already since reoccupied and built up sites as well as would-be settings for a future discursive entity that remains in limbo for the moment.



FIG. 3. *Project visualization by Plataporma (2010) of LMM’s imagined zones of responsibility. Now/here: Hyperextensions (exhibited at LMM from November 2010 – April 2011)*

As in most cases where we’d sought to enfold the museum’s work into the energizing potency of the practice of contemporary artists, our initial discussions with Plataporma jumped off from making use of material in the LMM archive which serves as both internal memory keeper as well as library trove. One could think of this space and amalgam of historical material as proposed trigger point for a research-initiated track, one of at least three potential ground zero pins of *Now/here hyperextensions*. In keeping with what is now a well-established

contemporary art category alternately called (among other fluid terms in contemporary artspeak) process-based and research-based art, there were no clear indicators at the onset of how sensory materialization, one that could be presented spatially at the museum itself might take shape from these open-ended venturing forth into documentary as well as spatio-social probing. In short, it was one thing to conceive of the museum and library as imagined zones in the past, present, and future, but how could that conceiving take shape within the physical spaces of LMM's galleries?

The implicit disinterestedness in object-making which underpins this stream of art practice has by now become less polarizing among those in contemporary art who have since much more avidly taken on extended and polymodal ways of working, where process is intrinsically valued over an endgame or showcase even without completely dispensing with sensoriality. In social science research, the most analogous methodology is inductive all the way through the public interface which, depending on the nature of the project and its ambitions, may or may not be informed by more definitive aspects of grounded theory. This is also still very much informed by the continuing soul-searching transpiring in creative and discursive social constellations particularly of those attempting to critically disengage with hyper-consumerism or commoditization in the artworld. That this specific project is instantiated in a museal and thus non-profit context thus figures significantly in the framing of the work. The tactical emplacing within otherwise largely closed-off sites undertaken by agents who seek to broaden the terms of engagement between publics and art is often demonstrated in a slew of private museological ventures that invoke the trope of the museum as public service sphere. The writer-philosopher Jean-Paul Martinon has written provocatively on the attendant problematique:

There is a fundamental slipperiness between ‘public’ and ‘private.’ This slipperiness prevents the establishment of a clear demarcation between the two. For example, private citizens often pursue private goals that end up benefiting a wider public. This is much evidenced in what concerns us here in collectors bequeathing their artworks to museums, for example. By contrast, projects that serve the public good often also benefit private citizens. This is much evidenced, for example, in museums hosting private parties for funding bodies or wealthy benefactors amidst public collections. This slipperiness renders all the more confusing what is understood by ‘serving the public good,’ thus emphasizing once again, its lofty majesty, in as much as it has the potential of being all inclusive and its ridicule, in as much as it often stands for the exact opposite, namely radical exclusivity (Martinon, 2021 p.5).

The anxieties rendered by Martinon implicitly play into both the spatial and social parameters that underpin the work of museums such as LMM. We park this here so that we might temper expectations about the kind of ennobling impulse that gets ferried about upon the opening up of long-tended to and guarded resources (space and archive) and what making these more accessible and malleable actually might allow. Recent interviews with Plataporma members Calubayan and Villarama reveal even more clearly that the countermapping idea was not entirely set upon consciously as institutional critique, even if to us curators mediating between the artists and the institution, this was patent, and in fact in our minds, an indication of healthy skepticism. At the onset, Plataporma’s impulse to trace radii of influence, impact, accountability from the three city sites led to interesting tangents including the staging of a ground-marking/faux geodetic survey exercise in Quezon province (because they failed to get permission

to do this in Pasay and Makati) and the transformation of a by then lost Vicente Manansala mural (because the wall it was on was painted over and eventually demolished in Pasay) into a color-by-numbers image that would be made accessible to anyone through the internet. So it was clear from the start that the expanded zones would not merely be physical nor customarily geographic and in the end, not even locationally accurate. It would be forthright to say that Plataporma launched into the project primarily propelled by artistic and social curiosity with other subsequent motivational charges surfacing as information became available and as triggered by the proposed interaction with ‘people on the street’ that the collective would chance upon as they literally walked around the museum sites’ environs. This fairly unstructured, meandering, and mildly intuitive way of doing research and, in a sense, crowdsourced mapping lent the creative dynamism we were counting on as curators, and as these aspects became even more operative as Plataporma moved from LMM’s archive to speaking and drawing from conversations built up in their street forays, many more unpredicted elements came to shape the work at hand.

The following is a brief outline (extracted from the hyperextensions site) of Plataporma’s *Now/here* project elements as these were decided upon in the course of their research phase:

**Now/here: Graphical map notations**

Notations on Metro Manila CitiAtlas outlining the “imagined zones of responsibility,” locations and activities of several Now/here projects in the Metro Manila area.

**Now/here: Mapping**

Psycho-geographical mapping of directions going to Lopez Museum captured in 35mm film and digital audio recordings. Part 1 - Craig St.,

Sampaloc to Benpres Bldg., Ortigas; Part 2 - Pasay City Hall to Benpres Bldg., Ortigas.

**Now/here: Interviews**

Part 1 - Interviews about art and museums with various respondents within a one-kilometer radius of the 3 sites of the Museum: 1) old site at 10 Lancaster St., Pasay; 2) present site at Benpres Bldg, Ortigas; and 3) future site at Rockwell, Makati. Part 2 & 3 - Interviews about art and museums with students from the Philippine National School for the Blind & the Philippine School for the Deaf.

**Now/here: Excavation/expirative strategy, v.1**

Video of clearing a shallow excavation at Km. 135, Maharlika Highway, Barangay Alupaye, Pagbilao, Quezon, suggesting an imaginary future site of Lopez Museum with reference to the floor area of its old museum building in Pasay, projected on the actual soil taken from the former.

**Now/here: The missing Manansala mural**

Outline of the Manansala mural destroyed along with the old museum building appearing in 2 versions: 1) Life-sized outline drawing of the mural on the wall replicating the lost original; and 2) A coloring activity page.

**Now/here: Nowhere**

Features different radio-based programming and sound-based work.

**Now/here: Radio/active**

Audio playback on site-specific FM micro-transmissions (pirate) broadcast within the Museum, composed of Now/here: Mapping, Now/here: Interview with the students from the Philippine School for the Blind, and Now/here: Nowhere.

## **Digging up the Dirt**

Among these, the psycho-geographical mapping and interview elements of *Now/here* were to us curators most starkly telling as we sought to think upon the programmatic track of the museum and library. The propositions were simple enough (do people in the museum/library environs know where LMM is and understand what it does?), even as the consequent revelations were still mildly distressing from a strictly public relations purview. For us curators now looking back in hindsight, Plataporma's staging a mock jobsite in the shape of the old Pasay structure all the way in Quezon province, a place that had absolutely nothing to do with the museum and library's history, was benignly absurd icing on the cake. Plataporma had dutifully even tried accessing building plans of this Angel Nakpil-designed artifice but the attempt came to naught. This tug and pull between fact and fiction fit in with the levity with which Plataporma addressed the institution throughout the project.

Couched in the rhetoric of service and self-situating as provider of public good, museums and libraries (not just LMM) continue to struggle with the problem of encasing the supposedly exceptional and then serving this up as critically important to everyday life. This is at least one of the impasses John Dewey's seminal writing on the democratizing potencies of aesthetic experience as resituated in daily living (*Experience and Education*, 1938 and *Art as Experience*, 1934) surface but do not completely resolve. Dewey then was arguing in behalf of recognizing the transformative power of intensified raw (and thus direct) experience of material in non-clinical contexts (like museums), but this is a century before our now hypersensitized and commoditized sense scapes of today where vending culture has become fully embedded in the glut that numbs and has turned into flattened fizz. Further, in today's benignly put catch-all phrases such as "the experience economy" we are conveniently made to forget how experience is

mediated by contending interests born of intersections as well as collisions across class, gender, creed, ethnicities et al.

Failing to register as cultural marker in Plataporma's pseudo-indie-guerilla mapping, LMM instead becomes apparently effaced by more ubiquitous and sensorially aggressive markers. From a curatorial lens however, this surfacing of LMM's 'illegibility' if not 'non- or poor registration' on pedestrian-neighborly perceptual maps was rife for earnest contemplation. Plataporma members with interns from the museum's neighbor, University of Asia and the Pacific would themselves craft psycho-geographical maps (enabled by photography and sound recording) of their journeys across the pinned points in Pasay, Pasig, and Makati. For the interviews, they would set out within 1-kilometer radii from the three sites and randomly (with an implicit interest to still approximate a cross-section) find people they could ask 'help from' by soliciting spoken directionals to Lopez Museum with the end goal of reaching LMM within museum hours and despite being waylaid by people telling them instead to go to other more prominent Lopez properties like the ABS-CBN studios in Quezon City. What Plataporma revealed through their notations and extrapolations from this direction-seeking exercises and interviews (covering baseline knowledge about art and museums) only played further into our lingering suspicions about how 'invisible' the museum itself still was to those moving and working around it.

To be fair to LMM's Director Mercedes Lopez and the LMM Board, none of this rather impish and potentially offensive tactics were trifled with nor hindered from being undertaken nor discussed publicly within the museum space as exhibition as well as through public programming. The most prominent irritant was in fact the plan to bring in real soil (which we fumigated) as well as the temporary de-installing of ceiling insulation-covers which we did eventually get greenlit for to be able to realize an installative element of *Now/here* that resembled



a faux excavation site. As a former curatorial consultant at Lopez Museum, I can still say without hesitation, that it was one of the more fair and relatively generous institutions among the pack I had the opportunity to work with over the years. (e.g. Ateneo Art Gallery, Ayala Museum, Bahay Tsinoy, Museo Pambata, among others as the museum world has since further networked through formations like the Alliance of Greater Manila Area Museums). In other words, LMM literally took this project on the chin and ran with it, surprisingly and to our utter relief. I suspect we were able to ‘make up’ for this somewhat by mounting a more celebratory one-night event at Rockwell Tent earlier within the LMM anniversary calendar.

It might also be further noted that the dissonant if not disinterested tones which surfaced in the course of the mapping exercises and interviews were literally left unmuted as the project took shape as an exhibition. The interviews, particularly of students from the Philippine National School for the Blind and the Philippine School for the Deaf (the schools’ location falling within the 1-kilometer radius from the old Pasay site abided by the self-set rule by Plataporma) were made accessible as sound files played on a pirate radio frequency, and alongside visuals from both the upended replotted of the new would-be museum alongside interview talking heads screened as video elements. As of this writing, it should also be said that no extant record or summing up exists of how the *Now/here* project with both its non-exhibitionary and display elements were eventually read by museum visitors and those coming to the library and setting upon the work by happenstance. Recognizing this as a temporal attempt and without overstating the case, this essay is posited as a recollection of how contrarian sense scapes were lent room at this specific juncture within what would have expectedly been institutional discretionary sites, thus in one sense a countermapping venture was

both enabled and left to play out in spatial parameters that could have been but were not essentially policed



FIG. 4. *Projection on soil taken from the Pasay site, from LMM's Blogspot*

Perhaps it would be apropos at this point to round off this account with pronouncements coming from Plataporma itself. Here, we find Mervin Espina writing in post-opening mode:

There was a large degree of public participation, and a not so conventional idea of audience, particularly if you frame the projects (as Buen suggests) within a performative aspect - under the banner of investigating/critiquing a museum. But what happens when you bring these back to the museum (as documents), is it subsumed back into the system it's been trying to investigate/critique? Does it become 'artefactual', dead signifiers, in a place deemed safe, clinical and separated from the actual world, specifically the actual world just outside the museum's door? I see no conflict, because the process informing the projects already had the exhibition in mind. They weren't institutional critique in the

way that it is destructive, antithetical, but more a series of questions, proposals, and considerations brought into attention. The exhibition to us was not the end product, but documentation of process and questions posed between practice and theory, between production and mediation. The meat of it was the process, the performance, and seeing these as positive interventions into the public spheres, as scattering of seeds provocation (few and diminutive they may be), which inform (and hopefully entice) both publics (participants), investigators (us, Plataporma) and institution (the Museum). A modern Museum should be unafraid to support works of question, works that question, knowing beforehand that we can't actually have all the answers.<sup>3</sup>

From the get-go, the curatorial prompt was in fact not to slide into some mindlessly triumphalist and nostalgic strain, and the selection of the artists we sought to engage for *Extensions* appeared to concur in principle. It might also be material to state that as consultants rather than employees, we enjoyed leverage and wiggle room which we hoped to extend to the artists we worked with across the time we engaged with LMM. The overall *Extensions* project was lightly laced as somewhat of a taunt, from what I still think is a healthy discomfort with the calcifying and lethargy that confronts institutions as these accrue self-importance and settle in too comfortably among their usual suspect supporters.

Apart from allowing artists to take certain liberties with the institutional site and its history, the curators had perhaps also then too utopically hoped that some mild re-worlding could be triggered—a remapping of institutional vision to whatever minute degree, a reimagining of the limits to which LMM's work could be attempted, perhaps even a tendentious tracking off to directions not previously explored within the first 50 years of LMM's life. By literally revealing at least some

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<sup>3</sup> Extracted from Mervin Espina's blog entry on Plataporma's hyperextensions site: <http://hyperextensions.blogspot.com/2011/>

of the museum's interior workings, even physically dislodging the ceiling, bringing in organic (soiled matter) and laying out albeit clunky pirate radio tech, juxtaposing ubiquitous and post-it logged maps and other sundry traces of research, we held on to the idea that a semblance of a counter-imagining could be sensed. As Plataporma set out to define radial discursive spaces to launch work upon from and with the museum (touching upon its past, present and future iterations) as pins and staging points for reflexivity, Plataporma did, to our mind, establish itself as “a process-based arts and cultural research collective geared towards investigating notions of spectatorship and the relationship between culture and technology with different public spheres”. It was a privilege to have to some extent enabled that enfleshing to take place.

Per our own arguable reckoning, this working with the collective's own impulsive materializing of the project – the churning of physical maps, interviews, fieldwork, even the mildly transgressive pirate radio element, among others, constituted a generative charge that we daresay would not have gotten past ground zero if we had too tightly hovered and poked into their work as micromanaging and agenda-checking curators. This was clearly a wagering of a beginning of a much longer phased and commitment-requiring undertaking that would certainly outlive our curatorial term.

Espina further avers:

I see *now/here* as bringing some of these issues to light, especially because they (both collective and the Museum) took a chance at looking inward before looking outward, something the Museum should have done before: investigating itself within itself - it's geographic and institutional history as well as how it stands in the public imaginary (which is especially juicy because of the Lopez slant - which immediately suggests oligarchic, bourgeois tendencies

within other publics). And there was a lot of (good) humor involved, in both our process and documentation and the institution's involvement.

This is not at all to say that LMM has, since 2010, remained moored to where it was when we instigated this project with Plataporma. In fact, the Lopez Memorial Museum and Library has become subject to much more formative internal dynamics within the Lopez conglomerate as well as the fallout from the Lopezes' downward spiral in congenial relations between key recent past and current state actors and formations. Looking at *Now/here* and *Extensions* with 12 year hindsight-tinted lenses now engenders a deep appreciation of the operative limits of strategies however well thought through and creatively wrought given the skewed power relations and logistic binds. What we could say is that that instantiation of discomfort brought on by the engaging of artists with this long established institution provides a schematic rather than realworld re-placing of pin locations, loci of agency, and lifting of bodily encumbrances. The cumulative project's gestures undoubtedly remained contained within rather than extended into larger spheres beyond the museal. One could say that within *Now/here* we might find fleeting instances of power upending. Back then, the play on now/here as nowhere for instance while both punny and witty clearly suggested the possibility that time and space remain implicative as well as promising indices of a history that may be reshaped, but only if enough warm bodies and minds risk getting past erratic spurts and jumpstarts. The reimagining is constantly undone and must be taken up again and again. Reverting to Dewey and his assertion about the contingency of democratic utterance, we recall the prodding: "Only continuous inquiry, continuous in the sense of being connected as well as persistent, can provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters (Dewey, 1927 p. 403)." Needless to say, no singular, albeit institutionally nodded-to countermapping effects shifts that will make counteraccounts stick.

Perhaps it would be a fitting way to end this by invoking one of Plataporma's possibly least indicting projects for *Now/here* and thus *Extensions*. Just as Plataporma itself proposed, we conjure spotty memory to make room for new meaning-making that can no longer be fully reigned in by the institution itself. This serves up a peg suggestive of an unfinished and iterative emptying and refilling of form. Very early on in their research, Plataporma discovered in the LMM archive a photograph of a once prominently installed Vicente Manansala mural at the original Pasay site. The eventual act of demolition essentially releases the work from the confines of physical space. The photograph of the work having been taken in black and white (thus stripped of sheen and affective feel) incidentally leaves room for beholders taking up the invitation to access the downloadable line-traced version of the image and thus apply colors upon it as they see fit. Tellingly, only this trace of a once storied work by a National Artist survives the onslaught of time with consequent forgetting and possible misremembering. Only by the taking of such liberties, albeit symbolic, might official scripts become increasingly undone and remade over consequent fiddlings with tonality and saturation.

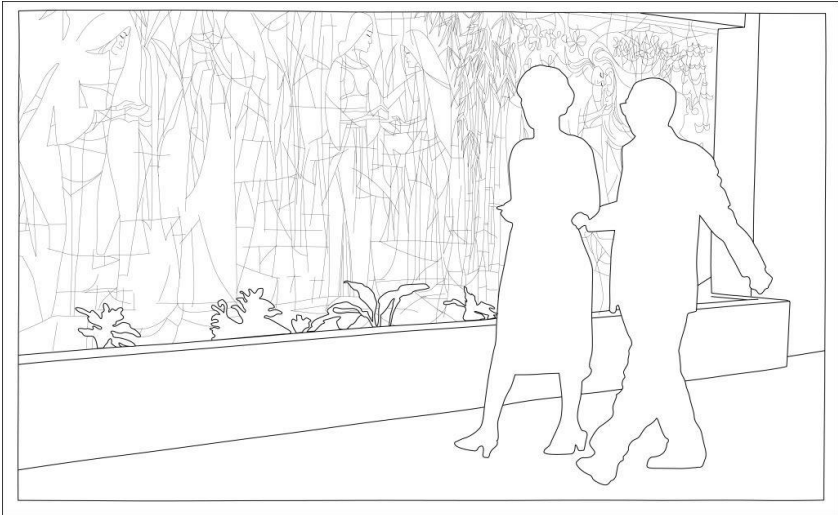


FIG. 5. *The Lost Manansala mural as color-at-will taunt.*

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