The Metropolitan Museum of Manila's Exhibition Program from 1976-1986: Signs and Consequences of a Conflated Patronage

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the patronage of First Lady Imelda Marcos at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila from 1976-1986, corresponding to her term as the museum's founding chairperson and president. It elaborates on the conflation of state and private support, motives, and interests that drove her museum patronage. Borrowing from Foucault's concept of the dispositif, this paper views the museum as a dynamic and constantly shifting field of relations, and scrutinizes its key feature – exhibitions – as articulations of Mrs. Marcos' conflated patronage unevenly dominating, contesting, aligning, and giving way to other forces and relations in the museum. The entanglement of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila with various state and personal interests, while still delivering museal public service, thrusts it in multiple roles as a modern art museum, a political instrument, and a private gallery of Imelda Marcos.

KEYWORDS

museum, art patronage, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, exhibitions, art management

The official invitation to the 1976 inauguration of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila seemed to have forgotten an important detail: the exhibition that was going to be opened. Left unnamed, it paled into insignificance as the invitation evidently focused on curtsying to the constellation of patrons involved in mounting it. Looming large among them all was Imelda Romualdez Marcos. Her name was prominently underlined by her title – founding chairperson and president of the museum, and crowned from above by the gold-embossed seal of the Republic of the Philippines, signifying her eminent stature as First Lady and representative of the state.

The situation illustrated by the invitation anchors the two reference points in this paper. Art patronage, as defined by sociologist Judith Balfe, is the "deliberate sponsorship of the creation, production, preservation, and dissemination of the so-called 'fine arts'" (1). It is a form of art support that is channeled towards supply, maintenance, and distribution. Art patronage entails substantial financial investment, and art patrons are presumed to have considerable resources at their disposal. Existing literature often categorizes the art patron into one of three types: the state, the elite individual, or the business corporation (Fox 14-16, Alexander 89-99, Ostrower 92-95). This paper proposes a loosening of this categorization in examining the art patronage of Mrs. Marcos, the biggest patron of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, also known as the Met. A conspicuous collector and consumer of luxury, her selective involvement and interest in only the more prestigious exhibitions of the museum point to her as an individual patron who regarded matters of elite status and distinction as

paramount. At the same time, the museum's archives provide clear evidence that Mrs. Marcos was the state authority who orchestrated the crucial support of government institutions to financially brace the Met. Moreover, her patronage aligned the museum with the Marcos regime's agenda to legitimize state power in the eyes of its citizens and the world. For these reasons, this paper describes her patronage to be neither exclusively state nor individual, but a fusion of both, a conflated patronage.

The other reference point in this paper is exhibitions. Most people visit museums with the intention of viewing them. The International Council of Museums (ICOM), the largest organization representing museums and museum professionals worldwide, cites exhibitions as a main defining parameter of a museum (2). In the field of museum studies, the differentiation between exhibitions and displays is consistently asserted, the latter elevated for its crucial function in communicating concepts, values, and knowledge to the museum audience (Herreman 91, Lord and Lord 109-110, Desvalleés 34-37). This communicative function of exhibits and its role in the production and distribution of knowledge merits scrutiny considering the dependence of museums on art patronage. How do exhibitions communicate the art patronage in the museum? To what extent does patronage support, influence and interfere in the programming of exhibitions?

To answer these questions, this paper examines the patronage of First Lady Imelda Marcos at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila from 1976-1986, corresponding to her term as the museum's founding chairperson and president. It elaborates on the conflation of state and private support, motives and interests that drove her patronage, and scrutinizes its implications for the museum. Borrowing from Michel Foucault's concept of the dispositif, this paper views the museum as a dynamic and constantly shifting field of relations, and probes its key feature – exhibitions – as articulations of Mrs. Marcos' conflated patronage unevenly dominating, contesting, aligning, and giving way to other forces and relations in the museum. The entanglement of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila with various state and personal interests, while still delivering museal public service, has thus placed it in multiple roles as a modern art museum, a political instrument, and a private gallery of Imelda Marcos.

CONFLATED PATRONAGE

Museums, being nonprofit institutions, need patronage (Alexander 88). Even the Louvre, which received a record number of 10.2 million visitors in 2018, cannot operate on gate receipts and membership fees alone ("10.2 million visitors," *Louvre Endowment Fund*). Museums depend on art patrons whose significant support enable them to continue with their public service mandate.

In the Philippines, Imelda Marcos is the icon of art patronage. She established numerous cultural institutions during her time as First Lady, and literature examining her projects in the context of art history and cultural studies are plentiful (Herrera, Paulino, Baluyut). This paper's contribution to the field is the positing of Mrs. Marcos' art patronage as a conflation of the state patron and the private individual, and the examination of the implications of this conflated patronage at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, the art museum she headed for ten years as founding chairman and president.

In existing literature on art patronage, patrons are often classified as either state, private elite, or corporate funder. State patronage takes the form of direct funding and/or indirect subsidies such as tax breaks given by the government (Fox 51-58). Private patronage is the initiative by private individuals to support the arts. Apart from contributing money, private patrons usually have an "overall involvement" through voluntary services such as serving on the board and helping raise funds for the organization (Ostrower 29). Corporate patronage, meanwhile, takes the form of cash or in-kind sponsorship of the museum or its specific programs (Fox 47-48). Patronage has broader and deeper implications and consequences, intended or otherwise, on both patron and the beneficiary museum. State motives are often associated with the public good; corporate patronage with company image enhancements; and the private with motives ranging from a sense of civic duty to personal considerations (Lord and Lord 241-242, Ostrower 98, Eikenberry 144, Alexander 92-98). Judith Balfe proposed a different model of art patronage, suggesting that it is either elitist or populist (300-313). In this scheme, elitist patrons, motivated by private enjoyment, show partiality to supporting artistic

geniuses whom they perceive would sustain and advance the quality of man's civilization (309-310). Balfe contrasts them with populist patrons who are more egalitarian and communitarian, and who look at art as "social glue," akin to a public good that delivers a broad spectrum of social benefits. This alternative classification, however, is still not applicable in Mrs. Marcos' case because it again divides patronage along distinct lines. Locating her patronage within Balfe's structure would once more lead to the conclusion that Imelda Marcos straddled both the elitist and the populist divide.

The multiple shoes that Mrs. Marcos filled provides an informative starting point in examining her conflated patronage. Unlike other first ladies, her role in state affairs was not limited to the symbolic and ceremonial. She was a politically active member of the government who occupied numerous important posts such as: managing governor of the Metropolitan Manila Authority; minister of Human Settlements which also automatically made her chairperson of the Economic Support Fund Council; Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary; and trustee of various government-owned corporations (Chaikin and Sharman 155). Each of these posts came with a power of office, influence, and access to substantial public resources. The Economic Support Fund Council she chaired, for instance, administered millions of dollars of financial aid from the United States government. The impact of this concentration of symbolic and official power of Mrs. Marcos was evident in the inception Metropolitan Museum of Manila. In her capacity as chairman of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), Mrs. Marcos issued a memo ordering CCP President Lucresia Kasilag to organize and administer a Metropolitan Museum of Art to broaden the exposure of the Filipino people to the "cultures of the world" (Marcos "Subj: Metropolitan"). Notably, her memo also imposed on two other independent government agencies to support the Met with building space and financial subsidies. Mrs. Marcos' authority transcended the CCP and bent the institutions of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Museum and the Central Bank of the Philippines into submission for the creation of the new museum. Through this power context, it is easy to understand how Mrs. Marcos was able to create a modern art museum at a phenomenal pace of just a month ("How to Build" 19-20).

This nexus of political power that configures the First Lady as a state patron conflates with her individuality as an art collector/patron. A 1973 exhibit at the CCP, *From the First Lady's Collection,* extolled the breadth and quality of her collection of paintings, prints and drawings, and trumpeted her magnanimity as a collector who shares her private collection with the public. Her vigorous purchasing activities have also been credited for energizing Philippine commercial galleries in the 1970s (Yusi).

As a patron of the Met, Mrs. Marcos' presence was strong, but noticeably inconsistent. The records from the museum's archives bear this out: her name, image, words and presence exclusively appear in the invitations, catalogues and vernissages of exhibitions that are grandiose in scale and are perceived to rank high in the canon of fine art. From this angle, Mrs. Marcos behaves like a typical private patron motivated by prestige and exclusivity while rendering charitable work (Fox 39). Her refined taste and gaze – though not without its critics – embody what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as cultural capital, a symbolic asset of cultural competence that the elite uses to distinguish their class from the rest (7). Historically, art museums have played a role in amplifying social hierarchies since they also serve as "class-segmented public spheres" where the elite dominate and impose their aesthetic standards on (Beckert 267). As a patron, Mrs. Marcos craftily navigates this segmented museum space of the Met. On one hand, her patronage of the museum made it possible for the public to freely access fine art and high culture, and to participate in its privileged space. At the same time, she resists the diffusion of her cultural distinction by leaving her traces selectively with only the most prominent exhibitions in the museum, maintaining the gap between her elite self and the ordinary people.

At this point, a familiarity with Michel Foucault's dispositif is helpful in order to understand how differing schemes, interests, and motives of art patronage can possibly conflate, and how they behave in a museum. Foucault offers the idea of the dispositif as an epistemological way of thinking of a social body not in terms of its individual elements but in terms of the systems of power relations at play. A dispositif is a configuration or arrangement of elements and forces, practices and discourses, power and knowledge - that is both strategic and technical, or in Foucault's own words, "the said as

much as the unsaid." (Bussolini 86). In proposing the dispositif, Foucault was not interested in capturing every element of force at work in a field, but in the arrangements and relations between them, and how they suffuse society (91). Tony Bennett, who writes on museum and cultural studies, underscores that a dispositif is marked by "constant interventions into the existing relations of forces in order to develop, stabilize or block them" (38). The unstable power relations in the museum dispositif thus helps to account for the conflation of a range of motives and interests that sometimes align, dominate, and give way to one another or to other forces in the museum. Mrs. Marcos' memo, for example, demonstrates the fusion of the state patron's muscle that mobilized the resources of the government with the self-centeredness of a privileged patron without regard for institutional autonomy and bureaucratic procedures. Throughout this paper, the museum exhibitions are examined to surface the many alignments, realignments and pushbacks that happened between the conflated patronage of Mrs. Marcos and elements in the museum such as the board, the exhibition staff, foreign cultural institutions, and the museum audience, to name a few.

DOMESTIC TARGET

On October 3, 1976, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila was inaugurated with an untitled exhibition featuring one hundred eleven American and European paintings, prints and sculptures borrowed chiefly from museums and galleries in the United States ("Inaugural Exhibition"). Digging into the museum's exhibition archives reveals an impressive object list of mononyms that shaped the canon of Western art: Cezanne, Picasso, Monet, Renoir, Gauguin, Braque, Courbet, and Delacroix, to name a few. A year later, Manuel Duldulao published a book on the Philippine art scene in which he gave the new museum and its international art focus a grateful seal of approval:

> "The significance of these exhibits can be seen in the context of the Filipino artist's hunger to get a firsthand look at originals. For years, only a few Filipino artists had the privilege to go abroad for a close eye-view of a great number of the world's masterpieces. The rest has to make do with armchair voyages.
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> To the majority of the Filipino artists, these exhibitions provided a chance of a lifetime. They went to see the exhibitions not just once but many times. It was for them a rare opportunity to see, no more than a yard away, a number of paintings by acknowledged titans in the history of art. They viewed the works slowly, absorbing every detail. Some of them, in moments of wry self-depreciation rare to artists, admitted that they had a long way to go. That way would have been cut shorter if they grew up looking at such outstanding models in their formative years instead of reproductions in books and magazines. To have grown up using printed matter for guideposts is hardly the ideal for it is admitted that the reproduction cannot capture the grandeur of the original " (37-38).

The timing of this gift of international art and culture to the Filipino people is significant and gestures to the motives of patronage. It must be kept in mind that the Met was created by the authoritarian regime of President Marcos through his wife, Imelda, the museum's patron. In the museum, the coercive and abusive power of the Marcos regime that terrorized society became transformed into an agreeable power. By giving the gift of access to originals, to the titans and masterpieces of art as Duldulao marveled above, the state campaigned to win the hearts and minds of the people while still maintaining control over them. Here, the Met became what Bennett calls an "exhibitionary complex" (25). It gave the people an illusion of freedom, access and inclusion, of being on the side of power rather than on its receiving end. As Duldulao demonstrated, this access granted

by the museum to previously inaccessible privileged objects of art excite hopefulness by suggesting the promise of greater things to come (46). Importantly, it also inspires eagerness to participate in "civil society." At the Met, the masses get to share the space of the elite and the middle class and become exposed to their "improving influence." Without being aware of it, they voluntarily submit to the regulation of their bodies and morals according to the code of conduct in the museum dictated by the state's ordering of things (27).

The museum's transformative agenda on the people aligns with President Marcos's martial law rhetoric of the *Bagong Lipunan* or "New Society" that called for the reorientation, replacement and rebirth of the traits, habits, values, attitudes and beliefs of the Filipinos to create a new social order (F. Marcos, "An Ideology" quoted in Espiritu 150). Employing an anthropological approach, Carol Duncan explains that this capacity of art museums to transform and create the identity of its public is due to its ritualized space (281). Duncan notes that museums work like temples where visitors come with an attitude of openness and an ability to shift to a certain state of receptivity. In the ritual space of the museum, they are subjected to a transformative structured experience. In the case of the Met, its modern and vast but artificial space cut off from the gritty sights and sound of Manila was a perfect liminal space that primed the art audience for transformation. The Met served as a tool to ritualize the *masa* museumgoers into disciplined, normalized and civilized citizens that moved in a genteel manner, spoke softly, behaved considerately, and consumed art aesthetically. These measures to regulate behavior was still inscribed in the museum's rules and regulations as recent as 2015, stating that "[g]uests are expected to maintain proper conduct and decorum" inside the museum premises ("Museum Rules").

The orientation of the Met's exhibitions to international art also needs to be scrutinized in relation to the conflated patronage of Mrs. Marcos. In her memo, Mrs. Marcos provided the rationale for the foreign bias of the new museum: "to broaden [the Filipino people's] awareness of the cultures of the world and to provide them with the opportunity of viewing international art in original form." This appears to be a solid and noble objective, especially since Filipino art had been given its own museum, the Contemporary Art Museum of the Philippines (CAMP, later renamed Museum of Philippine Art or MOPA) and was therefore not altogether neglected by the state.

For the Marcos regime, an alleged lack of cultural identity was one problem that needed fixing. Mrs. Marcos was very vocal about this early on, remarking during the 1969 inauguration of the CCP that "[w] e are young and struggling to understand ourselves, trying to construct the nobler meaning of our race " ("Sanctuary" 15). In a 1978 speech rationalizing martial law, President Marcos also emphasized the problem, posing the somber question, "How can a people be proud of themselves if they have no identity?" (qtd in Baluyut 11). To address this supposed void, the New Society provided a two-pronged framework for defining the Filipino self: one that was rooted in the ancient past, and another anchored on the cosmopolitan present (Quizon 288-292). President Marcos advocated the strengthening of "The Great Malayan Culture" which he connected to prehistoric and pre-colonial Philippines. The First Lady, meanwhile, took charge of shaping the Filipino identity according to notions of modernity (Quizon 289, Herrera 16, Baluyut 11).

The presentation of foreign art at the Met, a cultural institution established by the First Lady, was therefore not merely a simple issue of art access and civilizing the populace, but an overt effort to profile the Filipino as modern. Modernity, in this case, is associated with being educated on the Great Artists and Geniuses of western art. This view of art history is criticized for its monolithic, universalizing and selective approach (Lyotard, Preziosi and Farago 8-13), but was nevertheless a frame often utilized by the museum, consistent with Mrs. Marcos' hope that exposing the Filipinos to the "genius of European masters" will ignite their native spark ("Foreword" iv). Furthermore, Donald Preziosi helps us connect this canon-setting practice of art museums with statecraft by pointing out that the training of the people to adhere to a particular set of standards – in this case, the modern and the Western – also trains them to surrender their control to another power (qtd. in Dewdney 188).

The question now is how successful was the Marcos government in regulating its citizens through the museum experience at the Met? The museum's archives provide some insights. The inaugural show, which ran for twenty-six days, was seen by an audience of 26,327 and was one of the museum's well-attended exhibitions ("Daily Attendance"). However, this number is marginal compared to the population it could have directly influenced. By 1975, the population of the City of Manila, where the Met is located, was already almost 1.5 million, while the population of the entire NCR was almost 5 million (NCSO 1). In spite of the free admission and being open seven days a week, the museum was barely drawing people in. This handicap is actually echoed by the introduction of unrelated activities at the museum such as mini-concerts that were truthfully programming strategies to increase museum attendance ("Musical Presentations"). Worth noting too is the profile of the museum audience, which consisted mostly of students on field trips and members of the art community such as artists, cultural workers, patrons and foreign visitors. It appears that the civilizing impact of the elite and middle-class space of the museum was barely felt by the masses, who mostly ignored the space.

Duldulao's accolades notwithstanding, there were definitely disconnections and resistances against setting the art of other cultures as benchmark for modernity and excellence. The audience feedback forms of pre-1986 exhibits archive the direct responses of those who actually stepped inside the museum and viewed its exhibits. For one, the expressed international art focus of the Met did not stop visitors from wanting to see Philippine art at the museum more than foreign art. There were also remarks that the artworks on view were "beautiful" and "nice," but cannot be understood. Significantly, there were museumgoers who were clearly not impressed, remarking that the foreign artworks were at most "ok… but Filipino artists are better and can equal their output and variety" (Art USA). These museum visitors pushed back against the idea that foreign art is the standard to aspire for, and instead extolled the inherent value of Philippine art.

FOREIGN ALIGNMENTS

The spectacle of modernity and progress promoted by the museum patronage of Mrs. Marcos was not only aimed domestically. There was a conscious effort to impress the eye of the international community as well. The urgent impetus for the Met's inaugural show, and the creation of the museum itself, was the Philippines' hosting of the joint annual meeting of the governors of the IMF-World Bank in 1976. The leaders of the two global lenders and other high-level bankers, technocrats and economic heads converged in Manila from October 4 to 8. Since the country was heavily dependent on foreign aid, this was an extremely important opportunity for the Marcos regime to impress to the international funders that the Philippines was worthy of continued economic assistance (Richter 54). The Met's inaugural exhibition in October 6, along with the other exhibitions and activities of Mrs. Marcos' Manila Arts Festival, were launched in time for the VIPs to see.

The Philippines' major foreign ally was the United States, and inauguration of the Met reveals a great number of alignments with its politics, culture and ideals. The very name of the museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, not only implies the big city aspiration of Manila, but also suggests a connection to the *other* Met, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Its modern art focus also emulated another American museum, the Museum of Modern Art (Sta. Maria Interview). The consultants hired by Mrs. Marcos to put together the inaugural show were also Americans: New York art patroness and Brooklyn Museum Governor Lilian Berkman, and former director of Art Institute of Chicago Allan McNab. All but three of the artworks exhibited were loaned from American collectors. Importantly, even without any clear curatorial connection, the inaugural show was "generously billed" in commemoration of the American Bicentennial (United States Embassy). The political message sent to the U.S. government via the Met was one of submission to superiority, a message necessary for the Marcos regime because of its extreme dependence on U.S. military and economic aid (Duncan 280, Wurfel 190). The American-sounding and American-styled Met in Marcos land signaled to the United States that the ruler and its country is a loyal political ally adhering to American symbols and values (Duncan 279-280).

The usefulness of art museums during instances of global attention is underscored by Duncan:

> … every major state, monarchical or republican, understood the usefulness of having a public art museum. Such public institutions made (and still make) the state look good: progressive, concerned about the spiritual life of its citizens, a preserver of past achievements and a provider for the common good…. And since public museums are, by definition, accessible to everyone, they can function as especially clear demonstrations of the state's commitment to the principle of equality…. Thus, the art museum gives citizenship and civic virtue a content without having to redistribute real power (282-283).

The investment that the Marcos regime poured into the Met, packaged as the art patronage of the First Lady, was a small price to pay for the political reward at stake. By displaying a capacity to mount an exhibition of Great Art, and providing the populace with unlimited opportunities to view it, the Met projected a globally-oriented government that cared for the cultural and civic life of its people. It negated consciousness of the authoritarian rule and the curtailment of civil rights in the country, and created an exhibitionary complex that gave the impression of freedom without actually granting it. The sense of normalcy that the exhibition conveyed boosted the façade of prosperity and legitimacy presented by the Marcos regime to the elite foreign visitors.

While the inaugural show and a few early exhibits were conceptualized by the Met, the more common type of exhibitions at the museum during the time of Mrs. Marcos were "embassy exhibits," ready-made travelling art exhibitions brought by diplomatic missions. Based on the list compiled by Roberto Paulino, a total of ninety-nine embassy exhibitions were mounted at the Met during the Marcos era ("Luz" 34-42). Jose Aspiras, the tourism minister of the Marcos cabinet, declared that every foreigner's visit is "an endorsement of the continuation of the political, economic, and social stability… achieved by martial law" (Richter 53). In the same vein, every exhibit shown at the museum in partnership with foreign countries serves as validation of the regime's legitimacy.

The largest number of embassy exhibitions at the Met during the Marcos era, sixteen out of the ninety-nine, understandably came from the major ally, United States. An interesting contrast to these were the twelve that came from the Soviet Union. The Cold War, it seemed, also played out at the Met, with the embassy exhibitions demonstrating the soft power of art to advance foreign agenda on top of promoting mutual understanding with the Philippines. To begin with, the embassy exhibits presented by the United States and the Soviet Union were easy and relatively inexpensive ways of exporting their respective cultural products and propagating their particular values. For the United States, the wide variety of art exhibits it presented at the Met, from fine art to photography to tapestry to ceramics to fashion, and the popular Pop Art exhibits that it brought to the country that were headlined by American avant-garde artists notorious for eclecticism like Andy Warhol, promoted the image of America as the land of the free, and the arbiter of international culture (Lorente 209-210). On the part of the communist countries, the embassy exhibits were opportunities to introduce their culture and values to a people widely perceived to be ideologically aligned to the United States. Significantly, these exhibits were also timed to spread awareness about the communist countries' political histories. This hijacking of art for ideological projections was no different from the strategy of the United States. The exhibits at the Met thus commemorated the great liberal ideals of the American Bicentennial on one hand, and the USSR's Great October Socialist Revolution on the other.

The Cold War at the Met, of course, was not without the calculated permission of the "venue host," the Marcos regime. Despite citing communist rebellion as a pretext to declaring martial law, President Marcos ironically revoked the previous administration's anti-communist stance and opened diplomatic and cultural relations with countries such as the USSR and China (Wurfel 181-182). Many of the bilateral cultural agreements with the communist and socialist countries were negotiated and signed by the First Lady herself (Salazar 382-384). These were gestures, according to Mrs. Marcos'

defense, to form new friends with other countries while not abandoning old ones. More than a desire for peaceful coexistence and cultural understanding, scholars note that the foreign relations with communist states, articulated in the museum through embassy exhibitions, were "survival strategies" of the Marcos regime to secure reciprocal nods to the legitimacy of its rule, expand economic horizons, and combat local economic worries such as securing alternative suppliers of oil in times of crisis, and addressing the shrinking export market (Wurfel 181-182, Jose 117-120). Scholars also point out that the openness to the communist countries was a tactic by the Marcos regime to leverage more economic support from the Philippines' ally and the USSR's worst enemy, the United States (Jose 117-120). The Met, as demonstrated by its foreign exhibitions, was a site to pursue multiple economic, cultural and political agendas and nurture numerous state alliances. These motives and alliances variably align, overlap and contradict in the dynamic, fractured field of the museum dispositif.

PERSONAL CULTIVATIONS

> A typical working day for Madame Marcos runs 18 hours long. In awe, her harassed aides sometimes refer to her as *Superma'm*. She built the handsome cultural-convention center on Manila Bay – its folk-arts theater in only 77 days. She dared start a popular movement for population moderation in the late 1960s…. She set up a Nutrition Center for young Filipinos afflicted with malnutrition and a National Arts Center for the musically gifted youngsters… (*Human Settlements* 4).

How did Mrs. Marcos emerge as an individual patron when her projects were logically sanctioned by the state? Vicente Rafael, in his study of patronage during the early years of the Marcos regime, points to the answer: image cultivation (290-300). Every state project of Mrs. Marcos was conspicuously publicized, and attention was drawn to her personal touch to see things through, to get things done. The image of Mrs. Marcos as the *Superma'm* with sharp instinct, extraordinary energy and overwhelming resilience ("Human Settlements 4") was in constant circulation, ensured by a prolific government media production office. This image cultivation extended to the Met, demonstrated from the onset by the invitation to the museum's inauguration where Mrs. Marcos' name loomed largest and first, and immortalized in numerous exhibition catalogues prefaced by her full-length portrait and eminent foreword. The conflated message was thus: funded by government resources, *but* through the personal initiative and effort of Mrs. Marcos.

Mrs. Marcos' image and reputation as the patroness of Philippine art is partly due to her use of her official powers to advocate for the arts in the national agenda, and partly due to her art collecting. The articulations of Mrs. Marcos the art collector patron on the exhibition program at the Met manifested most clearly in the inaugural show and in the "filler exhibits" of the museum. For the inaugural show, Mrs. Marcos loaned three works from her personal collection: a Monet, a Picasso, and a Henry Moore ("Inaugural Exhibition," "How to Build" 20). Mrs. Marcos' act of "volunteering" her own collection to augment a grandiose exhibition featuring the art of big museums and collectors from the United States unmasks the allure of self-glorification and distinction to an art collector-patron like her.

Mrs. Marcos' art collecting also manifested in what became the Met's "filler exhibits," temporary shows organized to avoid empty galleries during long gaps in the exhibition calendar. Five sets of foreign art collection were utilized as filler exhibits after their initial exhibitions. The *Contemporary Prints*, *Yugoslavian Naifs*, *Russian Icons*, *Russian Lacquer*, and *Old Italian Masters* were re-exhibited at the Met for a total of thirty-three times until 1986. Of these, only the collection of *Contemporary Prints* belongs to the museum. The four others – the naifs, the icons, the lacquers and the Italian paintings – entered the museum without proper records and were simply regarded as "long term loans" (Scott 83). These are popularly spoken of as the "Imelda Collection," or "Imelda's art" just as the Met is sometimes

called "Imelda's Museum" (83). Since their sequestration in 1986 by the Philippine Commission for Good Government, the government agency tasked with uncovering and recovering the Marcos families' ill-gotten assets, the Met officially refers to them as "PCGG Collection." In an interview, Arturo Luz, museum director during Mrs. Marcos' term, explained how the *Old Italian Masters* collection found its way in the museum without proper documents. He told Margaret Scott, the cultural editor of *Far Eastern Review*, "You have to remember that the museum was an extension of Malacañang [the official palace residence of the Philippine President and his family]. She [Mrs. Marcos] brought them in with Mario Bellini [an Italian art dealer] one day and announced: 'Here is an important collection. It has been given on an extended loan.' I felt duty bound to exhibit them" (90). By the mere endorsement of Mrs. Marcos, the Met accepted the works and gave it the legitimating seal of museum art.

The high-profile exhibitions at the Met particularly served to exalt the personal profile of Mrs. Marcos. This time, her audience was not just the Filipino citizenry, but the more discriminating international community. The first few exhibits that the museum mounted – the untitled inaugural show, *Four Centuries of Printmaking,* and *Photography Since 1900* – were not embassy shows, but were locally organized, and grand in scale, concept, and expense. The success of these exhibits in spite of other people's misgivings was a personal coup for Mrs. Marcos. The Met's bias for the canon of Great Artists and Great Art served as the luxuriously impressive backdrop for the international eyes to view Mrs. Marcos. Even though most of the artworks were loans and not her personal possessions, they still served as her personal trophies by virtue of her unprecedented success in bringing them over and showcasing them in Philippine soil. These artworks symbolize the copious amount of resources at her disposal, further emphasizing her distinction as a person of status and privilege. In these instances where her persona was front and center, we recall Duncan's analogy between the art museum and the private gallery of princes in the 16th and 17th century (282). Such gallery that shamelessly flaunts a prince's luxurious possessions is often used as a reception hall where foreign visitors and local dignitaries are received in order to impress on them the prince's splendor and the tightness and legitimacy of his rule. The Met can be compared to the modern-day princely gallery of the First Lady. A room for her exclusive use was actually built in the museum, remarkable for its stately design that evoked the chambers of a head of state rather than a museum office.

As with every force in the museum dispositif, Mrs. Marcos' agenda for elite distinction was not without opposition. While her supporters praised her patronage of the arts, she was also on the receiving end of ridicule from members of the art community who regarded her as no more than a dilettanti. Described as a gullible and untutored art collector (Scott 83, Sherman 154), she was mocked for her reckless art buying sprees where she ended up, not with beautiful paintings that attest to her superior taste, but with "inferior art purchased for a superior price" (Sherman 156). Post-1986, the *Old Italian Masters* that she brought to the museum and which she took immense credit for, was evaluated by an Italian art scholar as "absolutely rubbish" and "fishy" (158). Even the Italian dealer Bellini who facilitated the alleged sale to Mrs. Marcos admitted that "perhaps some should be attributed to the school and not the master" (158). In spite of her immense resources, Mrs. Marcos was resisted by some members of the elite class, in this case composed of foreign art scholars, connoisseurs and writers, who claimed possession of the so-called "legitimate taste," a scarce disposition that must be cultivated, and which Mrs. Marcos, in spite of all the money at her disposal, can never instantly acquire.

SPACE, AGENCY, OPPORTUNITIES

As a dynamic field of relations, other forces and interests also found space, agency and opportunities at the Met. Not all exhibitions at the Met provided a stellar stage to display patronage. In these instances, Mrs. Marcos faded from the picture, allowing other personalities and agendas to operate. The assertion of museum director Arturo Luz's taste, the appropriation of Mrs. Marcos' power by others, and the professional development of the museum staff evidence the complex linkages suffusing the museum.

A museum director's role is to oversee the day-to-day operations and implement the programs of the museum. Given the leadership structure of the Met – where Mrs. Marcos over-actively but selectively participated, and where the board was non-performing and never set policies or direction for the museum, Director Luz was placed in a position where his personal style and preferences became the de facto vision and style of the museum. Even though the program at the Met was dominated by embassy exhibitions that were pre-curated, it did not totally preclude him from making decisions on exhibitions that visitors will see at the Met. In periods where there were no patron endorsements to accommodate, his partiality to modern art, architecture and design asserted itself. The museum's archives reveal, for example, that several of the United States embassy exhibits were not passively received and exhibited, but were specifically chosen by Luz for the Met.

Apart from being a museum administrator, Luz was a gallery owner and practicing artist known for his minimalist aesthetic. His was not just consistent, but as Patrick Flores describes, tyrannical, in the sense that it was the "singular circuit through which a distinct mode of modernism found its relay" (42). Luz's modernist artistic temperament, as Paulino points out, also became the dominant exhibition design in the Met (15-16). In addition, his personal aesthetics was given space and expression in the museum because it aligned with the state's prejudice against socially critical art. Luz's modernist bias made the Met an austere space for civilized behavior and contemplative restraint. It exactly promoted the kind of passive citizenry that the dictatorial state desired.

The connections of personalities and influence at the Met are also worth noting. In 1979, the Met was officially registered as a private foundation, and a seven-member board was prescribed to run and manage the business and property of the foundation. This board, handpicked by Mrs. Marcos, was a non-functioning board that did not exercise its power and responsibility in the museum. An examination of the museum's records fails to produce even a trace of a policy or resolution made by the board for the institution. The authority still belonged to Mrs. Marcos as the chairman, extended to Bienvenido Tantoco as the museum president beginning 1979, and was appropriated by personalities who had affiliation, loyalty and accountability, not to the museum, but directly to Mrs. Marcos. In post-1986 disclosures, Director Luz revealed that Mrs. Marcos' daughter, Imee Marcos, "liberally borrowed" many of the Russian Icons in the museum, often without returning them (Sherman 157-158). In the case of Mr. Tantoco, his associated power resulted in abuse of authority and irregular use of the museum endowment fund (Butterfield A8, Sherman 157). Meanwhile, Tantoco's wife and Mrs. Marcos' close friend, Gliceria Tantoco, who was also in the art business and owned Gallery Blueu, was implicated in the anomalous purchases of artworks abroad in the name of the Met (Sherman 160, Marcus A1). Several other personalities transacted for and through the museum even though they were not officially part of the institution. The common factor is their affiliation with Mrs. Marcos, as family, as friend, as associate. Mrs. Marcos' autocratic position at the Met was liberally appropriated by the people in her privileged circle. Just like her, their actions compromised the museum as a professional organization and an institution of public trust.

Another aspect of the museum that reflects the complexity of patronage and its influence is the professionalization of the museum and its staff. Within the Philippines' arts and cultural community, the Met enjoys a solid reputation for its nonpareil museum space, international network, and professional staff ("Profile"). The professionalization that the museum had achieved and became known for can be attributed to the museum staff's effort and self-regulation in the absence of staff development policies and programs at the Met. One gleans this in the personal account of Diana Advincula who was registrar and afterwards exhibition supervisor in the first decade of the museum. Her profile is typical of the museum's personnel: someone without an academic and work background in museums but eventually learned the ropes of the profession on the job. Advincula's development as a museum professional came via the international exhibitions at the Met that exposed her and her peers to numerous visiting artists, curators, and museum professionals; provided them with remarkable learning experiences; and developed their confidence in their line of work. This gave them agency as museum workers such that they were eventually also giving advice and suggestions to visiting experts

from abroad and teaching them new ideas in spite of their limited resources (Advincula). It should be noted, however, that this proficiency and competence in the conduct of museum work developed amidst the transgressions in museum procedures tolerated and committed by the museum staff s– such as the unregulated ingresses and egresses of artworks, and the silent and incomplete registry records – that were in deference to the instructions of Mrs. Marcos and her circle. Professional, and by consequence ethical work at the museum, in reality, was a partially-formed system that prevailed as long as no pressure from the patron and her privileged circle was bearing down on it.

LINGERING ENTANGLEMENTS

The patronage experienced by the Metropolitan Museum of Manila from Mrs. Marcos is not an ordinary state patronage of the arts or museums. To put things in context, while the Met was instantly provided a home even before it existed, the country's National Museum languished in a shared, cramped space with other government offices that forced it to keep seventy percent of its collection in storage (Sta. Maria 8-9). The Met was a recipient of special attention, the kind of intimate involvement that individual patrons shower on their specific passions. But just as the patronage given to the Met was not purely state, neither can it be considered entirely private. The fiscal support it received from the government and the bureaucratic accommodations that it enjoyed illustrate that the museum was given particular tangible state assistance. The nature of Mrs. Marcos' patronage at the Met is therefore more accurately described as conflated. In her person, the support of the state, and the support of the individual art enthusiast coalesced.

The conflation of two forms of support in Mrs. Marcos also showed that she embodied multiple motives. Mrs. Marcos' patronage aligned the museum with the state agenda. The martial law regime declared by her husband gave him autocratic power, but it was a kind of power that was constantly questioned for its constitutionality. In this situation, the Met helped create the image of a legitimate state for the Marcos regime. It served as a state apparatus that made the regime look good and in control. It was an exhibitionary complex that promoted the illusion of normality, civil freedom, equality and progress amidst the reality of the repression, unrest and poverty in the streets. It also articulated alliances in international relations. These state agenda conflated with the private motives of elite distinction and self-glorification of Mrs. Marcos who was an openly voracious art collector. The Met and all its sophisticated high art became, in essence, her international self-portrait.

Two lingering entanglements of the museum resulting from Mrs. Marcos' conflated patronage are worth noting: one is with the PCGG, the government office created by the Aquino government in 1986 to run after the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses; the other is with the BSP, the Met's oldest institutional partner.

Mrs. Marcos' passion for the arts was tightly intertwined with her insatiable consumption and acquisitive personality, and her drive to acquire and possess recognized no boundaries and respected no proprieties. This is where she caused enormous complications for the museum. There arose a confusion of ownership of artworks – those that she left at the museum, those she allegedly spirited away, and the unknown number that she and her cohorts supposedly purchased using the museum's name. Within nine days after the fall of the Marcos regime, the PCGG sequestered the museum, including all its assets, building, and works of art in it. The sequestration has long been lifted and four decades have passed since the overthrow of the Marcos regime, yet the artworks are still the subject of a legal ownership battle between Mrs. Marcos and the Philippine government. In this situation, the Met is forcibly involved as an important non-party. It has been thrust with the critical responsibility as custodian, registrar and curator of the sequestered artworks but does not receive any kind of support, compensation or liability protection from the enormous task that, from all indications, will drag on for decades. The continued presence of the "PCGG Collection" at the Met also sustains the association of the Met with "Imelda's Museum," an infamy that the museum has attempted to move on from since 1986 by rebranding its identity as an "Art for All" museum (Paulino "Luz" 22-24).

Another lingering entanglement resulting from Mrs. Marcos' conflated patronage is the relationship between the Met and the Central Bank, now the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). Mrs. Marcos' powerful memo ordered the latter to assist the museum "in every way possible…with regards [sic] building repairs and maintenance, services and utilities, and full use of the premises, rent-free." The central bank subsidy provided the Met with an instant home and enabled it to offer museum-grade facilities that satisfied the requirements of international exhibition lenders without the burden of a huge utilities bill. After the fall of the Marcoses from power, this arrangement has been scrutinized and serious questions raised about the legality of a non-profit foundation being housed and subsidized by a government agency, even resulting in threats of eviction in the 1990s (Paras-Perez in Paulino "Metropolitan" 38). Since 2004, the relationship between the museum and the central bank has been formalized and protected by a utilities-for-curatorial service type of agreement between the two institutions, but questions regarding the legality of the Met-BSP arrangement still surface every now and then. And just like with the PCGG, the BSP entanglement also gave rise to a confused perception of the Met's identity. While the Met continues to assert itself as a private non-profit institution that independently sets its own vision and direction, it also has to constantly nurture its strong affiliation with the BSP to keep the museum stable. The result is a prevalent misperception that the Met is government owned and operated, when it is not.

The impact of Mrs. Marcos' patronage at the Met cannot simply be categorized as bad or good. Her conflated patronage, ultimately, was still only one of many forces in the museum in a Foucauldian dispositif, a complex entanglement of relationships of different entities, interests and agendas that affect and were affected by the museum on varying levels. Thus, while the museum and its exhibitions were instrumentalized by the Marcos regime and by Mrs. Marcos locally and internationally, they also, among other things, advanced the foreign policies of other states, asserted the individual taste of the museum director, served as training ground for the professionalization of its museum staff, and unfortunately, also got exploited for the personal gains and caprices of those aligned to Mrs. Marcos' power. The statements made by Arturo Luz, the director of the museum during Marcos period, is telling of this complexity. While Luz asserted that Mrs. Marcos never interfered with his program (Sta. Maria "Culture" 5), he also described the museum as an extension of the Malacañang Palace, where "she'd come and pick things up whenever she wanted, even in the middle of the night" (Butterfield A8).

Viewing the museum as a dispositif helps to account for the substantial overlap of objects, means and discourses in it (Bussolini 89). The pursuit of contradicting objectives and interests at the Met are not aberrations, but manifestations of the "decentered totality" of the museum dispositif, where forces are always inscribed in power play and no singular politics of opposition dominates (Bennett 17). Even the lack of enthusiasm of the general public towards Mrs. Marcos' so-called "gift of culture to the masses" (Sta. Maria 8) may be discerned as a form of resistance that necessarily runs through the network of forces at the museum. The patronage of Mrs. Marcos was an enormous force in the museum, but it did not fully and consistently control the museum. The serene and organized environment of a museum exhibit stands in stark contrast to the jostling for authority, agency and opportunity at the Met that is unsystematic, volatile, evanescent.

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