

ACF 2021 opens

IMAGES BY Jacelle Isha B. Bonus

It was a somber evening of poetry and song last Feb. 1, 5:30 p.m. in UP Diliman (UPD) as it opened its annual Arts and Culture Festival (ACF) with “Barikada Singkwenta: Paggupugay at Paggunita (a late afternoon vigil)” near the Oblation Plaza to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Diliman Commune.



"Barikada" by Toym Imao



The Diliman Commune was a movement of protest by UP students and faculty in solidarity with striking jeepney drivers who denounced the increase of oil price, and later for the move of the military and police to put a stop to the protest on campus, held from Feb. 1 to 9, 1971. The first barricades were set up at the University Avenue to stop the entry of vehicles into the campus.

UPD Office for Initiatives in Culture and the Arts (OICA) Director Cecilia S. De La Paz said this year's festival entitled "Engkwentro: UPD Arts and Culture Festival 2021" celebrates two historic "encounters" — the 50th anniversary of the Diliman Commune and the 5th centenary of the Triumph at the Battle of Mactan and of the Christianization of the Philippines.

A drone shot of the brightly lit art installation "Barikada" was shown followed by a video interview of artist Abdulmari "Toym" de Leon Imao Jr. describing its origins and how it depicts the Diliman Commune. "Barikada" is a massive art installation composed of bamboo and old wooden chairs in front of the Oblation Plaza which served as stage and backdrop.

The video then cut to UP President Danilo L. Concepcion on stage who emphasized the importance of remembering the two historic events. He was followed by UPD Chancellor Fidel R. Nemenzo, who said even those who did not participate in the Diliman Commune will learn a lot from the celebrations.

"Iba-iba man ang naratibo, iba-iba man ang landas na tinahak... iisa ang mithiin na nagbubuklod sa atin bilang mga produkto ng UP: ang maglingkod sa bayan nang may Husay at Dangal, at magpakita ng Giting at Tapang sa harap ng panggigipit at banta ng karahasan," he added.



Then came an omnibus video consisting of various shots of important landmarks such as Palma Hall, Melchor Hall, Quezon Hall and the Sunken Garden superimposed with scans of newspaper articles and photos from that time. The video also contained audio testimonies from several “communards,” recounting their memories of the historic time.

Playwright and activist Bonifacio Ilagan then read a letter from the family of the late Pastor Mesina Jr., the student who was hit by a bullet from a gun of mathematics professor Inocentes Campos who opened fire at the students during the first day of the protest.

This was followed by a live performance of “Unang Alay” as arranged by College of Music professor Solaiman Jamisolamin. It was sung by Greg De Leon and Tapati, accompanied by Jamisolamin, David Savio D. Delos Santos, John Raymond Sarreal and Jacques Duffort. Each live musical number was interspersed by live drone footages of the stage overlooking Barikada.

Next was a dramatic reading of the poem “Kung Kami’y Magkakapit Bisig: Mga Tula sa Hacienda Luisita” by Ilagan and College of Law professor Rowena Daroy Morales. The poem by Gelacio Guillermo Jr. was translated into Filipino by Jose F. Lacaba. As the poem draws to a close, photos of students who participated in the Diliman Commune were projected onto the facade of Quezon Hall. Morales and Ilagan then proceeded to talk about their experiences as students in the thick of the activities of the Diliman Commune.





Ilagan concluded his prepared message and the words “NO TO RED TAGGING” were projected onto the stone columns of the Quezon Hall lobby.

Tapati and De Leon then sang “Paglikas” by Fidel Rillo, music by Ronnie Quesada, arranged by Jamisolamin and accompanied by Jamisolamin, Delos Santos, Sarreal and Duffort.

Next to speak were Professors Emeriti Judy M. Taguiwalo of the College of Social Work and Community Development and Jose Dalisay Jr. of the College of Arts and Letters, who gave their own testimonials.

Dalisay then read Ilagan’s Filipino translation of an excerpt from “An Open Letter to Filipino Artists” by Emmanuel Lacaba. As he concluded, the Carillon bells were rung 14 times. The camera then cut to all the speakers onstage holding aloft placards, which they then added to Barikada.

Ilagan began singing the opening lines of the song “Internasyonal” that Jamisolamin arranged. He was soon joined by De Leon, Tapati and the other speakers present. They then concluded the program by singing “UP Naming Mahal.”

“Engkwentro,” organized by the UPD Office of the Chancellor through OICA, ran from February to April and spanned a multitude of activities ranging from webinars, art exhibitions, live performances to public art.



Clockwise from top left: (1) Barikada at the background with Ilagan and Daroy-Morales; (2) Taguiwalo; (3) The live musical number at the opening; (4) Dalisay; and (5) From left: Daroy-Morales, Nemenzo, Concepcion, Ilagan and Dalisay