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Selected Writings, by Dacanay

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SELECTED WRITINGS I: ETHNIC HOUSES AND PHILIPPINE ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS. By Julian E. Dacanay, Jr. Pasig, Metro Manila: One-man Show Studio, 1988. 228 pages.

Because they are published so rarely, books on Philippine architecture and art are always a welcome addition to one's library. Julian E. Dacanay's *Ethnic Houses and Philippine Artistic Expressions* is one such book. Launched simultaneously with the opening of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Balai Vernacular, a photo essay on vernacular architecture, Dacanay's work is not a *catalogue raisonné* of the show, but an altogether independent piece that gathers together the author's essays on Philippine architecture written within the last sixteen years. *Ethnic Houses* is a collection of three essays: the first and the latest, "Ethnic Houses" was written in 1986; the second, "Philippine Artistic Expression," written in 1972 and published as a limited edition by IPC, and the third a compilation of the author's essays published in the ten-volume *Filipino Heritage*.

Of the three essays the second is the most valuable. As a trends report it lays down a benchmark for any future history of Philippine art. Written while the art scene described was still hot property, the essay captures the spirit of '72—before the corrupting influence of art patronage under the martial law regime. Previously circulated as a very limited edition of 100 copies, this essay is now available for use or abuse by future readers.

The third essay, "Postscripts" (pp. 165-79), bears the burden of age. Although many assertions remain valid (e.g., the author's reflection on the *bahay na bato* and the *nipa* house), more assiduous research on Spanish colonial architecture has proven false some things assumed by the author as fact. For example, no Augustinian friar named Antonio Herrera worked on the San Agustin church. Frs. Merino's and Galende's research in Augustinian archives here and abroad prove that the story about a relative of the famous Spanish architect Juan de Herrera working on the San Agustin church is pious myth, nothing more. And the assertion "with the exception of the names of Sedefio, Macias and Herrera, architectural history simply recorded the builders in the islands as 'friars'" is at best equivocation. If "architectural history" refers to works written in English by contemporary scholars, the author may be right. But if "architectural history" refers also to works written in Spanish or works of a previous generation, then the author has betrayed ignorance of these other sources. The Franciscan Fray Felix Huertas in his survey of Franciscan missions has identified almost all the builders of Franciscan churches. Not all were friars, as in the case of the church of Pagsanjan, which was built by the Chinese Miguel Guan-co and the *alguacil* mayor Don Alfonso Garcia. The Jesuit historian Murillo-Velarde mentions other persons by name: the Jesuits Gianantonio Campioni, from Genoa, Manuel Rodriguez and Melchor de Vera—builders and artisans all. And Regalado T. Jose, Jr. of the Ayala Museum is constantly unearthing names of architects, artists, builders, and artisans from the archival records of the Archdiocese of Manila. The author's postscript on colonial art becomes then a statement of the status of research ca. the late seventies, but the frontiers of such research have expanded with new pub-

lications like Galende's (*Angels in Stone*, 1987) on Augustinian architecture, the archaeological diggings at the Bastion de San Diego, the slim but impressive guidebook *Tayabas* written by the people of Tayabas on their church, and a host of other better documented studies on colonial architecture, a number of which have appeared in journals like *Philippine Studies* and the *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*. Not to mention the erudite monographs of Armengol, Merino, and Diaz-Trechuelo. However, the section on Philippine architecture 1898-1940 (pp. 175-79) remains valuable, as this period of Philippine architecture has been badly researched.

The first essay on ethnic houses (pp. 1-95) is a competent summary of the research on vernacular architecture, using sources as old as Worcester's remarks on Bilaan houses (1904). Although the essay depends on previous researches, its typological survey of vernacular architecture serves as an introduction to the vast corpus of literature which the reader is advised to study to enliven the tale that the author paints with deft but bold strokes.

A summing-up observation. These essays can best serve as an introduction to the topics they cover. Like encyclopedia articles, they are popular, speak in generalities, and are convenient reference points. But the more assiduous students will want data, charts, plans, etc. For them this collection of essays will be propaedeutic, and the Selected Bibliography (pp. 195-222) will serve as a most helpful guide.

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THIRD WORLD OPERA. By Simeon Dumdum, Jr. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987.

Simeon Dumdum is a lawyer from Cebu who writes in both English and Cebuano and has received numerous prizes for his poetry. He writes a regular column for the Cebu *Freeman* and at present is involved in several translation projects. Critic Alfredo Navarro Salanga described the style of Dumdum's first book of poetry (*The Gift of Sleep*) as "... elemental ... clear, clean, almost proselike—what may well be the saving grace of, not only poetry, but all other genres in which Filipinos now write in English, for it is the style most open to translation into any of the Philippine languages."

In the Introduction to the present collection, Edith Tiempo writes, "The group of poems ... is pervaded by one large sweep of sensibility which may be designated as variations on the theme of wonder." They retain, she says, "the primal sense of wonder that canny old children hold as a kindly talisman." Tiempo offers several examples of this "canny old wonder": "Because birds will show only / the side / that you're not looking at" ("Why Birds Fly"). Or "... The cows shake off the rain / That vanished before it came" ("Masbate") and "... the wind whips the dog / with rain, forcing him to