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BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR LOREN LEGARDA

RESOLUTION

HONORING CONTEMPORARY ARTIST DAVID MEDALLA WHO CONTINUES TO BRING HONOR TO THE NATION AND TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE, RECOGNIZING HIS REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTIONS AS PIONEER IN THE KINETIC, PARTICIPATORY, AND EARTH ART MOVEMENTS, IN THE GLOBAL ART SCENE

WHEREAS, Article II Section 17 of the 1987 Constitution recognizes the important role of the arts in fostering patriotism and promoting human liberation and development;

WHEREAS, as a member of the community of nations, it is the utmost duty of the State to ensure that the creativity of Filipinos be recognized and supported in the global arena as part of its role in ensuring the enrichment of the human experience through the arts;

WHEREAS, being a unique figure in the history of twentieth-century art, David Medalla is increasingly recognized as a significant figure in the development of installation, kinetic, and participatory art even as his unpredictable and playful approach to art has made him difficult to categorize from the start of his career. His practice deconstructs the idea of sculpture as solid, timeless and monumental by creating objects and situations that can never be repeated and are of a continually changing form;¹

WHEREAS, he considers his artworks as “bio-kinetic sculptures,” such that in an interview, he said that his work differed from other artists as the artworks themselves moved in random organic ways and avoided the monotonous repetitive movements of most machines. His land art projects were born out of the organic and his relation with the dynamics of nature;²

WHEREAS, Medalla’s most iconic body of work, the kinetic sculptures, is best exemplified by his “Cloud Canyons” (or Bubble Machines) in 1963, which—through the use of soap and water mixed with air funneled through an engine he especially designed—produced columns of froth that subverted the solid nature of sculpture, showing how it could be both static and dynamic. This

¹ Queensland Art Gallery, <https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/apt8/artists/david-medalla>

² Mousse Magazine, <http://moussemagazine.it/david-medalla-adam-nankervis-2011/>

work of Medalla was considered a milestone, as it was a first in the history of art,³ pre-dating contemporary installation by over 30 years;⁴

WHEREAS, Cloud Canyons is a result of several personal experiences: flying over the Grand Canyon, visiting a Scottish brewery, a soap factory in Marseilles, observing clouds in Manila Bay, but also of more profound memories, such as the frothing of coconut milk cooked by his mother, or the foam on the mouth of a guerilla fighter dying under the blows of an occupying Japanese. While these are personal experiences, memories of the participants are also triggered by own by this bio-kinetic art. Medalla said that he seeks “to annihilate the barriers between spectators and the work of art, and to give free rein to the imagination;”⁵

WHEREAS, curator and author Guy Brett, who has written extensively on Medalla, best described the experience as “creation proceeded inseparably from destruction, the fullness and monumentality of form was accompanied by its complete evaporation, it was simultaneously a material “something” and an immaterial “nothing.” A seething activity went together with an overall calm. Chaos and order coexisted; motion and rest;”⁶

WHEREAS, Medalla’s work is always informed by the place in which he creates it and the people he meets there⁷ and American writer John Strausbaugh calls him a nomadic world artist;⁸

WHEREAS, in 1997, David Medalla and Adam Nankervis were invited to participate in the 2nd Johannesburg Biennial, curated by Okwui Enwezor. As both were en route to Robben Island, South Africa, where Nelson Mandela was incarcerated, Medalla came up with an idea of creating a biennial that would be open to anyone, regardless of age, nationality and sex, thus resulting in the establishment of the London Biennale in 2000. Medalla’s work was the subject of the solo exhibition *Anywhere in the World*, curated by Guy Brett, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in 2005. His work was included in the Harald Szeemann-curated exhibitions *Weiss auf Weiss* (1966) and *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) at the Bern Kunsthalle, and in DOCUMENTA 5, Kassel (1972);⁹

WHEREAS, Medalla has lectured at many international institutions and universities including the Sorbonne, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art of New York, Silliman University and the University of the Philippines, the Universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht, the New York Public Library, Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Canterbury, Warwick and Southampton in England, and the Slade School of Fine Art, London;¹⁰

WHEREAS, Medalla has won awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Jerome Foundation of America and in 2012, received the

³ David Medalla at Ateneo Art Gallery by Paeng Evangelista, <http://www.philstar.com/arts-and-culture/2012/11/19/868211/david-medalla-ateneo-art-gallery>

⁴ Frieze, <https://frieze.com/article/david-medalla>

⁵ La Biennale de Lyon, <http://www.biennaledelyon.com/uk/floating-worlds/the-artists/david-medalla.html>

⁶ 5,000 Moving Parts, MIT Museum, <http://5000movingparts.mit.edu/kinetic-blog/2013/5/12/d6l7m7gdqf214143380vaf81gkfets>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ateneo Art Gallery <http://ateneoartgallery.org/david-medalla-at-tate-britain/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Gawad Tanglaw ng Lahi, an award bestowed to those that “have dedicated their life’s work to the pursuit of Filipinism and the Filipino identity through any of the channels of culture.” The award recognized his contribution in steering national consciousness towards a clarification, development and enhancement of the essential Filipino image.¹¹

WHEREAS, during the 56th Venice Biennale, Medalla executed four performances at different venues in Venice. The venues were Microclima in Giardini, the Pigafetta statue at Vicenza, Philippine Pavilion at the Palazzo Mora and Peggy Guggenheim Collection;

WHEREAS, Medalla is the only Filipino to be included in the permanent collection of one of the world’s greatest museums, the Tate, where he is exhibiting alongside Hans Holbein, Anthony Van Dyck, Piet Mondrian, and Pablo Picasso.¹²

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the Senate to recognize one of the finest and most distinguished artist it has produced and acknowledge his untiring efforts in pushing the development and growth of contemporary art in the international and local art scenes;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the Senate of the Philippines, to honor contemporary artist David Medalla who continues to bring honor and pride to the nation, recognizing his remarkable contributions as pioneer in the kinetic, participatory, and earth art movements, in the global art scene

Adopted,


LOREN LEGARDA
Senator

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.