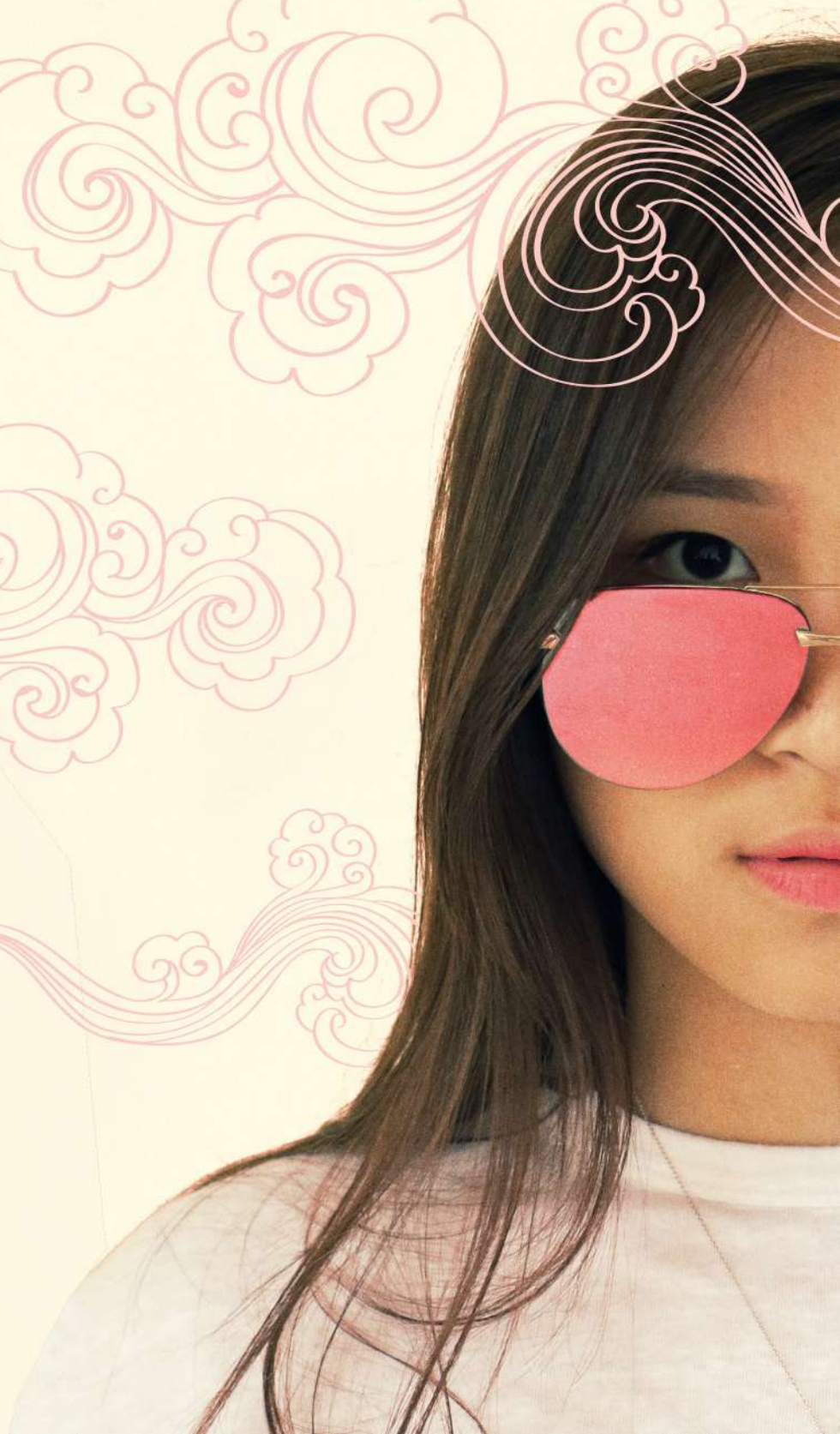


ELEMENTS

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Hello!

Welcome to the seventeenth issue of *Elements Magazine*. Our theme this year is “**Crossroads: Stories Within and Beyond**”. In this issue, we’re bringing our staffers’ personal stories to you and invite you to explore how these stories have come to express the different facets of their identities. It is through this expression where contemporary merges with tradition, becoming a crossroad for all.

By sharing these personal stories with you, we aim to highlight the modern Chinese-Filipino culture. We make it not only relatable, but also relevant to the Philippine society in which we live in today.

With that, we hope that you have as much fun reading this issue as we had making it.

MARK YU
Editor-in-Chief



Documentation and Publications
'17-'18

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In Case You Missed It:

Highlights of A.Y. 2017-18

Memories come and go, but some will be treasured for years to come. This school year, Ateneo Celadon created new memories by continuing to share and enrich Chinese-Filipino culture through many of its unique activities and events both old and new. Let's recap the moments that made the past year special.



◀ Celadon R.E.A.C.H.

With the annual outreach program R.E.A.C.H., Celadoneans immersed themselves in the Pinag-Isang Palad (PIP) Community by sharing culture, playing fun activities, and creating lasting friendships with the lively children of the area.



Binondo Amazing Race ▲

Participants traveled through time to save the cultural treasures of Binondo at this year's Binondo Amazing Race! Held last February 5, the race tested the teams physically and mentally as they raced around Chinatown to emerge victorious. #TreasuresinTime

Leadership Development Program ►

This year's Leadership Development Program (LDP), held in Shercon Resort in Batangas from December 11-13, saw thirty-seven Celadoneans chase after themselves in the spirit of passion, purpose and self-discovery to mold them into their best selves. #LDP2017 #Pursuit



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Rose Sale ▼

From February 12-14, Ateneans were encouraged to express their love to those special in their lives through Celadon's annual Rose Sale. Roses, daisies, stuffed toys and balloons were the products sold during the event. #NowOrNever



Mid-Autumn Festival ▼

Celadon kicked off the year by celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival on October 4-6 through several booths around campus to reflect how the festival is observed around the world. The event culminated with the traditional dice game at the MVP Roofdeck. #MAFtheFinalDestination



Chinese New Year & MandoPop Band Festival ▲

Celadon brought the Chinese New Year spirit to Ateneo through a Food Festival on March 1 & 2 before culminating in the inter-school MandoPop Band Festival. BPM emerged victorious as the festival's grand champion! #CNYFoodFest #MandoPopSeason1



▲ Spring Film Festival

Special guests were treated to the best of Chinese culture at the Gala Night of the 12th Spring Film Festival, held on February 12 at the Shangri-La Plaza Atrium. The lineup included Our Shining Days, which premiered at the Gala Night. #SFF2018

FOOD Photography



*Words &
Photos by:
Tiffany Lim and
Henny Dee*

Nowadays, it is part of our everyday culture to post and share stuff on social media. Through what we see and share online (like what we do, where we go, who we are with), we do not only become updated with the lives of our family and friends, but we also get to interact and let other people discover our identities. For us millennials, social media is really important. A day without it would definitely be incomplete. In fact, the first and last thing that some of us probably do when we wake up in the morning and before we go to bed at night is to check our social media accounts.

Be it a dinner with the family, or a quick catch up with friends over lunch, it has become a norm for us millennials to take photos of our food even before we eat it. We sometimes struggle, but we wouldn't mind retaking these photos over and over again just so we could get the perfect shot. Because of this, we (Tiff and Henny) have come up with simple tips on how to make the photos of our everyday meals picture perfect, eye-catching and social media worthy.

STEP 1

First and foremost is the lightning. A food photo with natural light is definitely the perfect shot. To achieve this, you can put your subject near a window or find a spot where the sun is not directly shining on it. However, if you do not have a good source of indirect natural light, you may also choose to make your own! A white paper towel or cloth is enough to turn your flash into a source of indirect light. All you need to do is to place this white towel or cloth in front of your flash. The next thing you will need is a reflector, but do not worry if you don't have one on hand because you can always use a mirror. Just angle it down to the food so that you can adjust and manipulate the lighting and also bounce the flash toward a different direction.



STEP 2

The next thing that you should focus on is the the angle. In order to find the perfect angle that suits your shot, you may experiment and take photos of your subject using several angles like the straight-on shot or the overhead shot. Another example would be taking low angle shots. When using this angle, it is recommended to use a wider lense in order for you to get your desired photo.



STEP 3

The third tip is to have a nice background. It is best to have your subject in the middle of the shot. If there are distracting or unwanted things surrounding it, you may either make the subject of your photo move, or if not, you can change your shooting angle. Most people would prefer to have blurred backgrounds as well. This is where the lens comes in handy. The first thing to do is to make sure that your camera's flash is turned off and then adjust what we call the aperture so that you can control the blurriness of the background. The wider your aperture or the lower your f-number is, the blurrier the background would be, therefore making your subject even more noticeable. Next is to zoom in on your subject and focus clearly on it. Hold your camera still, then, finally take your photo. You may also opt to make your own background using things that can be found at home. As the saying goes, "the simpler it is, the more elegant it looks." Learning and understanding the different camera tricks and also practicing how to properly use and adjust your camera settings can definitely help you find the perfect background and take various food photos like a real pro!



STEP 4

Lastly is the arrangement of the food on the table. Whether it be arranging the napkins by doing different kinds of folds, or placing the dishes close to each other to be able to fit all the delicious food in one shot, some things to remember here is to freely express yourself and most importantly:

BE CREATIVE and HAVE FUN!



自然



Wilderness Immersion

Words and Photos by Jerry Feng

Imagine this. 20 kilogram backpacks, camouflaged from head to toe, walking for over 70 kilometers for 3 days through the jungle. There is no bathroom, no bed, none of the usual comforts of your daily life. It is just you, your fellow comrades trekking beside you, the little supplies you brought and the natural jungle environment.

On top of the long, arduous treks and hikes, the three days of jungle training also takes away the ease of accessing basic necessities - like a change of clothes. Because of the difficult situation, participants are forced to stick to one or two sets of clothes only, no matter how sweaty they might be.

After considering all of this, many people would wonder: who would even do that nowadays? Who would go and leave the

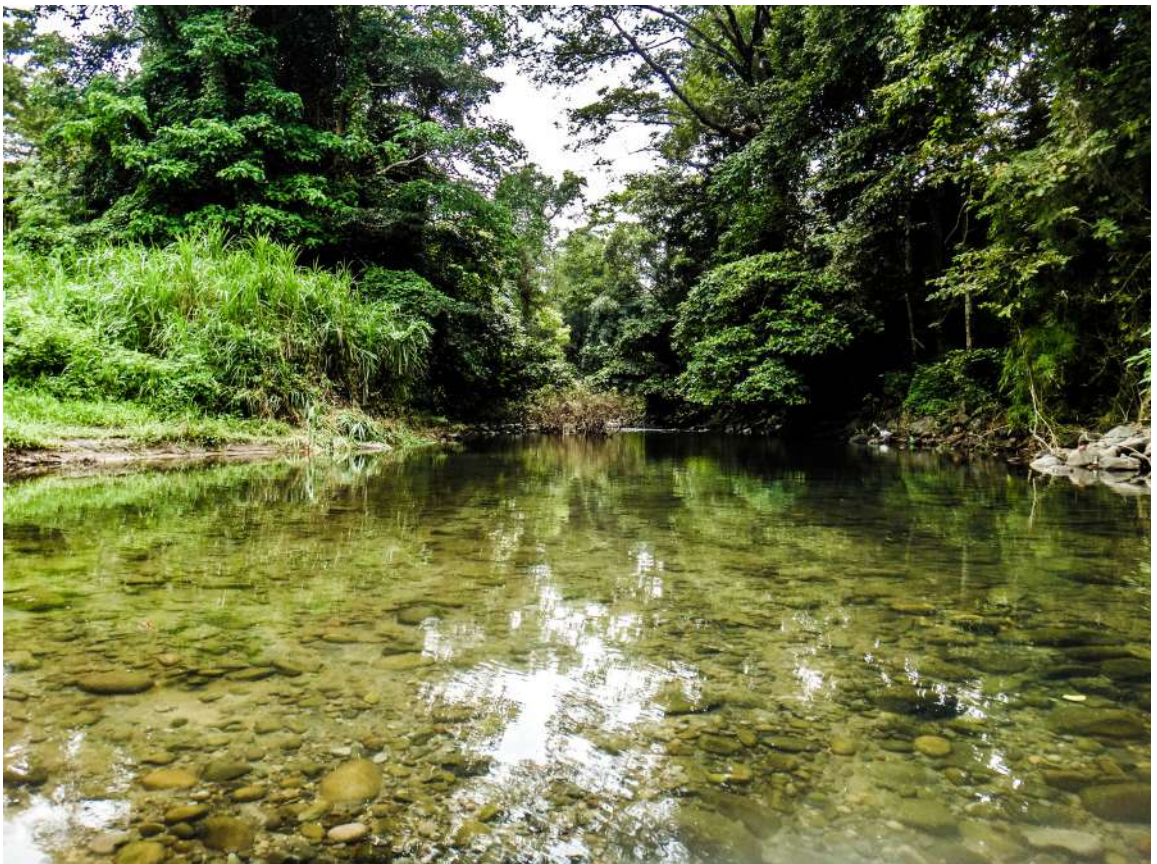
comfort of their own home to go through that hell?

I did. In fact, I'd gladly do it again.

It was the 3-day survival training in the jungle that pushed me to really go out of my comfort zone. I learned what perseverance meant while I continued trekking through the wild. Had I not been to this training camp, I wouldn't have learned and witnessed the many wonders that nature has to offer.

Throughout the 3 days, we cut deep into the jungle, up and down unbeaten paths, drank from springs, cooked using bamboos, crossed streams, swam in the dam, and we even boiled jungle tea.

Our instructor taught us how to survive by



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only using the jungle around us. He showed us plants that could be used as medicine for open wounds, plants that could be used as natural soap and even a tree that produces about 2 liters of water daily from 6 in the evening to 6 in the morning. On our first night out there, a snake was found 5 meters away from where we slept, while it had no intention of attacking us, the instructor still chased it away to prevent accidents. The next day, he showed us that a few meters away from where the snake was found, there were leaves that could be used as antidote for snake venom.

At the end, we didn't only learn wilderness survival skills. Because we adapted and immersed in nature, we learned to step out of our usual comfort zones and, in doing so, allowed ourselves to find new ones.

“

Because we adapted and immersed in nature, we learned to step out of our usual comfort zones and, in doing so, allowed ourselves to find new ones.

”



a memoir on seoul

— words by jodie tanco.

They say that your Junior Term Abroad can be one of the best experiences in Ateneo, if not your entire life. Of course, it *is* a one-of-a-kind opportunity. It is a promise, after all, of something different, something special. A diary of sorts is what this article is, and I pray that words do not fail me now as I try to convey what exactly JTA means to me. My Junior Term Abroad is a time that surpassed my imagination: it is independence; it is seizing the day; and it is meeting new people, immersing yourself in another culture, trying the local food, and exploring the city streets at midnight with no idea as to how you are going to get back home. It is hesitation but pushing through anyway. It is *trying* and *doing* and and and—

So much more.

August - September (Summer)

I came into Seoul utterly clueless—barely having a grasp of the alphabet, containing not one inkling of the identities of my would-be friends, and possessing only Kdrama-induced expectations that hardly served as preparation for living in an unfamiliar country for *four entire months*.

Terrifying. Exhilarating. Exciting.

I stepped off the plane into the Incheon International Airport at 6 am, distinctly feeling stressed about

settling in and interacting with complete strangers. My mother, who had decided to stay with me for a week to help me ease in the transition of being so far away from home, sat in a nearby corner as I tried to introduce myself to the other international students also availing of the bus pick-up service that our host university provided us with. To be honest, maybe it was because of the lack of sleep and my introverted tendencies, but my first interactions with other foreign students were marked with awkwardness, and I was slightly discouraged by the experience. The ride to Korea University was quiet. But still, this was only the beginning of the trip, and I strived to move on.

On a late August day, Seoul was hot—the sun was glaring, the air was humid, and the wind was practically nonexistent. Occasionally, it also drizzled; this amplified the already disgustingly sticky feeling that plagued me during the early days of orientations and touring with my mom, waiting for classes to start. At this point, I didn't have any concrete opinions of South Korea, but I remembered feeling restless. Certainly, I loved the food and the culture that I had tried so far, but I still felt like I was simply a traveling tourist instead of an exchange student.

It takes time to settle in, I would remind myself. But the days grew hotter; the rain fell heavier. There was a short period when rain was actually *rain*—the heavy torrential downpours and not just the light summer sprays that the country seemed to be mostly blessed with. On one of such days, I found myself stuck in the dormitory lobby without companion, an umbrella, or any sense of the direction for where the next orientation would be held. The one person who I became friends with beforehand was already in the venue. I was alone. But then again, with this being JTA, being alone is not exactly an unforeseen circumstance.

This was a time to take initiative; so obviously, I went to the next person whom I saw with an umbrella, introduced myself, and boldly asked if I could walk with her to the orientation. *Ta-da*. German friendship made. And as the orientations progressed, I found myself meeting more people from all over the world: my Korean *oppas* and *unnies*, the American who does modeling on the side, that French business student, the bubbly Mexican girl, and even Ateneans whom I have never personally met before.

The semester started, and soon followed everything else. I found myself surrounded by a myriad of accents, listening to the stories that they tell. I found myself sitting next to a Singaporean student from NUS (National University of Singapore), or a Korean *sunbae* (senior), or a French-speaking Indian-

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Canadian, or a blue-haired American girl who lived in Germany. I found myself touring with strangers; there was an afternoon spent out by the Han River, drinking beer on the fields, riding a tandem bike for the first time with a friend whom I just met that day. There was the exchange of Kakaotalk contacts, with everyone trying to get used to the Korean messaging apps constant alerts of *kako* every time a message goes through. There was getting close with my other Atenean friends from KU (Korea University) and traveling with them around Seoul, and—

Do you know what it is like to feel yourself surrounded by something entirely unfamiliar? Do you know what it feels like to be completely lost? I had no idea what I was doing. I had no idea how this was all going to work.

...And yet, never have I once thought that I wanted to leave.

In my mind, the Seoul summer was warm, bright, and exciting; it was the idea of trying something different—of beginning anew.

September - November (Fall)

"Shall I compare thee to an autumn's day?"

At the risk of sounding pretentious, I referenced Shakespeare in an Instagram post to commemorate my first experience of fall. Nami Island was a marvel, and with the cool crisp air came the changing of the leaves. (I close my eyes now, and I can still imagine the way the season painted the treelines with shades of red and orange, vibrant hues burning into my memory as the world turned a little colder, as the winds blew a little harder.)

Change.

There was a line that blurred more and more as each day passed by. I became more confident walking through the streets; the complex subway system became a map of routine. I became more than just a tourist. I was living in Seoul. Vocabulary built. Habits accumulated over time. (To this day, I still find myself receiving objects with both of my hands and bowing down my head whenever I say my thanks.)

Time. Time. Time.

The clock was ticking, and before I knew it, JTA was halfway done. I went out more with my fellow Korea University-based Ateneans, a group which we jokingly dubbed as KUPalz. We visited palaces, spent ages taking pictures at Kdrama spots, and even went university hopping.

I learned how to bike with them, and it was a frustrating experience when half of us fell over on our knees every five minutes or so. After the first day,

I had all sorts of bruises on my legs—I was sore and exhausted to the bone, bruises and sore muscles all over. *Again*, we said. By the second day, we rode through the wide open space of Yeouido Park and slowly but surely made our way through the biking route, stopping ever so often for another fall but getting back up anyway until *finally*, we finished the path. The third time was glorious—one biker following the next, riding smoothly through the trails with the wind blowing against our faces.

We spiced it up. "Let's go up and down the ramps," someone brilliantly suggested. And we did. Pushed our bikes up and rode them down with a couple of us screaming—because *oh my god, we are going to die*—until one of us fell, and we spent the next few minutes fussing and then laughing from the high of adrenaline because we were so utterly stupid.

More. More.

I learned how to skate with them. Amazingly, Korea University actually has an indoor rink as part of their school facilities. With the rink just ten minutes away from the school dormitory, it was only a matter of time before we decided to go skating. Truth be told, I am an avid figure skating fan, and I was extremely excited to hear that Olympic gold medalist Kim Yuna trained there. 대박(read: *daebak*). Amazing. I was jumping with joy. Of course, we didn't skate with any grace. Less than a handful of us were capable of balancing at the time, and I was no exception. Kids that looked like they were no older than eight rushed passed us.

"Guys, *hindi na* 'to ice skating!" exclaimed the same person who came up with the brilliant idea to bike down ramps as he raised his phone to record us on Snapchat. "Ice standing!"

In hindsight, it doesn't sound as funny as it did before, but we laughed so hard that one of us actually slipped on the ice. It was hilarious.

More. I wanted to do more.

Think of the fragrant smoke rising as the *samgyupsal* grills and the way *soju* burns down your throat. Think of late nights spent playing cards on the grassy fields of the university with *gimbap* and fried chicken on the side. Think of the pretty pictures taken when you were walking down the village, pairing finger hearts with unashamed excitement as you parade about in your *hanbok*. Think of the roar of rollercoasters in Lotte World. Think of picnics by the Han River.

Remember. Breathe.

One of my favorite memories in Seoul was the night of the International Fireworks Festival held by the Han River. My Mexican friend, Diana, and I decided

“Do you know what it is like to feel yourself surrounded by something so entirely unfamiliar?”



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to go to the event after hearing all the hype. The fireworks were fantastic and surprisingly adorable—the classic peony-shaped lights falling from the sky were soon replaced with more eccentric variants: hearts, smiley faces, and stars. It was especially fun to hear the crowds cheer with *Oohs* and *Aahs* with unquestioned amazement all throughout. But at the end of the day, the fireworks themselves weren't what I loved the most.

I loved the part after. I loved walking around the park, sipping *sikhye* (a sweet rice beverage) from the nearby food trucks, and just talking. Prior to this, I've met Diana only twice; but that night, we sat on the ground by the river and chatted as if we were friends for years—we shared stories and compared the languages of our countries, laughed about jokes, and reminisced all that we've already done in Korea until it was well-past midnight, and we were left scrambling to find a taxi because the subway stations were already closed.

November - December (Winter)

The beginning of the end was nigh; the temperature dropped even further, going down by the tens practically every week until snow finally began to fall on the later half of November. It wasn't the first time I had seen snow, but it was the first time I experienced winter.

“삼계탕 주세요,” I'd call out to the nearby waitress in an attempt to warm up. *Samgyetang chuseyo. Please give me chicken ginseng soup.* (If there is one thing that I absolutely miss in Seoul right now, it would be my weekly *samgyetang*.) On a frigid winter evening, my routine consisted of getting dinner, walking across the street to get some warm *hotteok* (sweet filled-Korean pancakes), and buying a steaming cup of rose-jasmine tea from *Ediya*, the local coffee shop before I walk back to the university dormitory.

Sometimes, I'd have dinner with my international friends—and I found it incredibly sad because I only got closer to them at the late end of the previous season.

Winter was spent warming fingers and drinking hot chocolate during the lantern festivals. It was my Canadian friend dragging me to wear *hanbok* one more time before the temperature dipped below zero. It was making plans with my blockmate to travel outside Seoul to Jeonju, where my foodie soul screamed in delight at eating in a UNESCO-accredited City of Gastronomy, and to Damyang, where bamboo beautifully thrived. It was talking about plans going back home, and it was the reminder that I might probably never see many of

the faces that I had come to know ever again.

During the last few weeks, I went out as much as possible—I went with my friends to skate, to explore abandoned theme parks, and to shop for *pasalubong*. I messaged my international friends one more time, asking if I can have lunch or dinner with them before leaving.

One more time. One more time, I pleaded. I just wanted this to last. (No. There was no more time.)

On the morning of the day I left, I said goodbye to my dorm room—said goodbye to my private bathroom and heated floors (which I obviously do not regularly experience as an Atenean dormer). I walked down to eat my last Korean brunch—an *albab*, a mixed rice bowl with fish roe—and took pictures of the snow that fell that morning. It was -4°C. By then, I was so used to the cold that I hardly felt a thing. (I actually dreaded the sweltering heat of the Philippines a lot.)

“...it was the reminder that I might probably never see many of the faces that I had come to know ever again.”

And finally:

I flew out at around 10 p.m. that night and arrived in the Philippines four or so hours later. My first thought was to check for the temperature because wow, *it's so hot*, 27°C. Practically a 30 degree difference. My second thought was loss—*it's done, it's done it's done*. It felt so bittersweet, seeing your family again but not being able to completely be happy because everything already ended.

Or did it? Is it ever really over?

안녕 안녕, Korea. *Annyeong*. This is my goodbye note to you. I have a thousand memories playing through my head and a thousand experiences that shaped me to be the person who I am today. You have given me independence, you have given me friends from all over the world, and you have taken a part of me that will always want this back. Having lived through one of the greatest adventures that I think I will ever experience, I want to say thank you—because I've realized that this is only the beginning, and that life can only give more.



A Confession

Written by Andrea Chan

i.

I have always found it hard to throw away things. This includes old literature readings, worn out high school org shirts, receipt of the meal I had in Brown's Gourmet from two months ago, gift tags and empty red envelopes of ampas given to me last Christmas—as well as those of several Christmases before that.

For some weird reason, I always develop a sort of sentimental attachment to almost everything I own. There's always a thought in the back of my mind that all those items either have "sentimental value" or that they'll be useful some time in the future. This kind of behavior has convinced my mom that I'm a bit of a hoarder, and maybe she's right.

I don't exactly know if it's a family trait, but I've heard of stories that my late grandmother also used to keep a tremendous amount of random

stuff, from chinaware to plastic bags. What she mostly kept are boxes of untrimmed cloth, kept in storage even decades after they've stopped running a clothing business.

My dad, in a similar fashion, also likes to keep a large amount of files and paperwork, some of them at least one or two decades old, all stored up in the dusty office upstairs (that was originally supposed to be my parents' bedroom). Now, my mother rarely goes inside that place, but when she does, she complains about all the collecting dust and the papers that my dad still, until now, insists to keep.

I don't know if the way I hoard is the same way as my grandmother or my dad, I only know that when I say sentimentality plays a big part of why I do, it really does.

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ii.

In the deepest, darkest corner of my closet, lies a red metal cash box.

There had been a time when I'd kept all of my savings in it, since my younger self had this habit of stashing away valuables. Now though, it houses a small collection of seemingly useless things, some of which I've already mentioned, such as the empty, used ampao and gift tags. But aside from those, there are also some very special items in there that connect me to a specific significant memory or time; a small ceramic pig figurine is one example of that.

There's nothing really novel about it. It's a figurine of a pig, faded pink in color, wearing a little purple hat. On the back, written haphazardly with a permanent black marker is the name "Yifang."

She was an adoptive sister that I had lived with for three days while I was in a study tour around five or six years ago. In that specific tour, we were able to experience what it was like to be taken in by a Chinese family as one of the highlights of our learning experience.

My memory of that time is blurry, and trying to remember clearly can be likened to someone trying to see through muddy water. I can barely call to mind how my adoptive sister or her mother exactly looked like, but from what I remember, Yifang was your typical normal college student; she had a bob cut and wore prescription glasses, while her mother was a kind stoutly woman who knitted as a hobby

and served me cucumbers in soy sauce at one dinner.

In the course of that short stay, I remember feeling a bit awkward at first. I knew how to speak in Mandarin, but I wasn't fluent. I was also shy and soft-spoken. Yifang was similar to me that way. She didn't seem like an extrovert, and yet she brought me out to watch a movie at the theater, patiently explaining in moments where I didn't understand what was going on in the movie. She would ask me what I liked, share the movie snacks with me long after we've left the theater, tell me what nice places were there to visit, and share her bed with me to sleep in. Yifang took care of me like the big sister that I never had, and in dinners, her mother was as equally sweet, urging me to try food I've never tasted before, such as the cucumbers in soy sauce. She'd knitted me a small mushroom as a gift too, and put in effort to make it into a keychain.

They weren't exactly the perfect family though. I didn't know where Yifang's father was, or if she had one, and there was one morning where I heard Yifang and her mother shouting at each other. They weren't exceptionally the most well-off family too, but despite all of those, they were warm and tender. I could see that in the way they took care of each other.

I loved that about them.

They had taken me in like I was their own although they didn't know me at all, and before





I left, Yifang had given me that pig, and said that if I ever needed anything, I was always welcome in their home. That gesture really touched me, and it made me promise to myself that I would eventually, one day, come back and visit.

Unfortunately, I haven't fulfilled that promise, and perhaps...I never will.

Now, years after, I could no longer remember how to get to their home, nor where it was located, or even what my adoptive sister's last name is. I lost the little knitted mushroom long ago when it fell off the keychain while I was still at China. All I have left is that small ceramic pig figurine that she gave to me as a gift. I will probably never see them both again, but I am grateful for being given the opportunity to meet such wonderful people in this lifetime.

iii.

There's a saying that sentimental people are sensitive, and maybe that's true.

A part of being a sentimental person is feeling more deeply, and so, when you experience happy or tender times, you will tend to immortalize that moment and feeling, and you will always want something that will bring you back to that time and remind you of it. But beyond those happy and tender times, being sentimental also means that you treat every other moment as something

worthwhile, and so I also carry the bad and sad memories within me.

It's largely about not wanting to forget, and I guess that's why I have a huge load of emotional baggage as I constantly move forward with my life. Although it can sometimes get out of control—cue my mother complaining about my ever-growing pile of readings—it also gives me many surprises and moments of nostalgia. One moment, a little drawing will remind me of how I met my best friend, and another moment, a small gift wrapper which I had happy feelings for will instead remind me of another friendship which has already ended. Whichever feeling the items provoke—

“There's a saying that sentimental people are sensitive, and maybe that's true.”

happiness or sadness—I always feel grateful for the memory.

When I see all those gift tags and red envelopes, I get reminded of the many people who think of me every year.

When I see my old books and readings, I remember how much I've learnt, and how much I can still learn when I come back and browse over them.

When I see the pig figurine, I remember wonderful times with a family that I might never see again, and it makes me feel thankful that I still have mine.

Looking back at all of those items has allowed me to discover how much I've grown and changed as time went by, and it's also shown me how similar I still am to that small little girl who first started collecting stickers and coins all those years ago. But perhaps more than that, it makes me grateful for everything and every precious memory that I have.

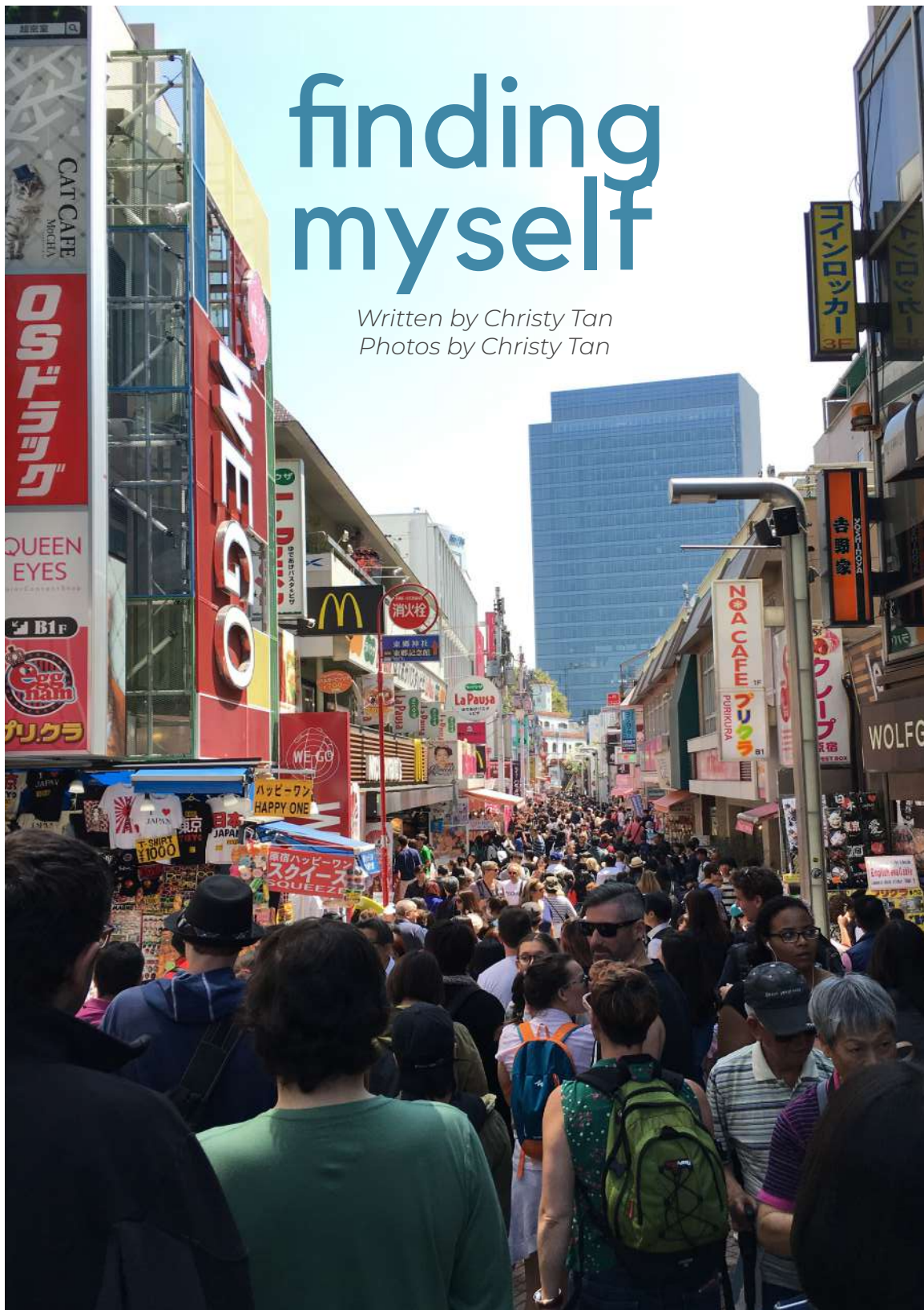
So what if I'm a little bit too sentimental? There's nothing wrong with it anyway.

Fin.

finding myself

Written by Christy Tan

Photos by Christy Tan





Travel

'travəl
Verb.

Make a journey.

Before I was even born, my family already loved traveling. They find traveling relaxing and it helps them forget about their problems. I didn't share the same sentiments though, as I saw traveling as an opportunity for me to brag and talk about historic temples, food, etc. that one can find in various countries. Whenever I hear my parents plan our next trip abroad, the first thing that would come to my mind was Instagram. I would look up the places we're planning to go to and see if they were Instagram-worthy. I wouldn't even bother to read about the place, its history or purpose. No, I would look at the pictures the website has to offer, plan my poses and how I want my picture to be taken. That's the problem with our generation in my opinion; we prioritize social media too much. We often think about the

likes, what hashtags to use, what picture would look great with our IG feed, etc. that we forget to look around and appreciate the beauty found around us. I was like that.

It wasn't until a few years ago when I actually opened my eyes and took in the view around me when I travel. I keenly remember the first time that I took a picture that wasn't meant to end up as a post on Instagram or Tumblr but for the sake of memories. My mom has always wanted to explore Europe and so when my dad offered to take us there, there were no second thoughts. She immediately called the travel agency and began planning our trip. At first, I wasn't too thrilled with the idea of being stuck on a plane for 12 hours. It didn't help that the tiresome experience

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we had with getting our visas approved further lowered my excitement for the trip. I eventually warmed up to the idea though, as the thought of I'm going to freakin' Europe! was on repeat and I got so excited I could barely sleep before our flight.

That trip changed my view on traveling and helped me redefine myself. Yes, it's a bit

"It wasn't until a few years ago when I actually opened my eyes and took in the view around me when I travel."

weird to say that I found myself- the real me- in another country, but I did. It hit me that traveling wasn't just about posting new pictures that are aesthetically pleasing or "Tumblr AF!". Traveling involves a lot of emotions and thoughts being invested and offers new adventures to cherish. Once I realized these things, I forgot about social media and the need to post pictures. Yes, I still post pictures on Instagram and other platforms, but the way I see traveling and the photos I take during has changed.

I also learned to be patient by the way- especially during flights!

Traveling helped me reflect on my identity by experiencing other people's cultures and traditions and appreciate them. Not all countries or religions share the same beliefs and that's why traveling helps us change and expand our perspectives. We share to these foreigners our beliefs and they share their own.

We experience tasting different food

delicacies as well, from the different spices to the various cooking techniques different cultures use. I used to be a picky eater but now I've learned to try new dishes and cuisines.

This wake-up call also led me to finding my passion: photography.

Traveling also helped develop my appreciation of the different people I encounter in our travels. We become one with these people even though we only get to be with them for a few days or weeks. The memories we form with them, aside from all the aspects of the places we visit, also tend to last forever.





Being Kaysiao-able

SO ASIAN AND CHINESE-FILIPINO VOICES IN ART AND SOCIAL MEDIA

*Words by Lucas Po
Photos by Catherine Wu*



As we settled into the comforts of our seats, I wasted no time beginning the interview, saying “So the first question I’m gonna ask you both is, ‘Bo Pa Ba?’ (Are you seeing anyone yet?)” This question was actually a reference to the first comic strip that **Kimberly Mas** and **Cedric Cheng** created that eventually started **So Asian Comics**. Immediately after asking that, laughter burst from the two. Indeed, for the designer-illustrator duo, what started out as an inside joke has now become a viral sensation. Currently standing at 10,000 likes on Facebook, So Asian Comics is a vibrant, social media savvy comic series about the quirks of Chinese-Filipino life that has amassed a solid cult following among Chinoy circles nationwide as well as overseas with fans as far out as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Their work has even been featured in a Southeast Asian conference in Thailand, with all this happening within six months of its creation.



With plots and punchlines as witty as they are relevant, a large part of the appeal of this comic is how many of these comic strips come straight out of the artist's lives. "A lot of our upbringing can be found in the comics," Cheng shared. In fact, he based the balding, business-minded *tao ke* (boss) character on his real-life dad. "My father is really typical Chinese. You know, he grew up in Binondo, has an autosupply wholesale store in Banaue. When he's hungry, he has his lunch in Ling Nam." After a few years out of college, Cheng related that his parents began itching for grandkids. "After serving in church or going out with friends, my dad would just look at me and ask, '*Bo Pa Ba?*' and it just became a running joke between me and Kim." Eventually, Cheng doodled his dad asking that question nonchalantly with noodle bowl in hand and the two decided to post it on Facebook. "At first we didn't think too much of it," Mas recalls, "We were just having fun with this Facebook page we made called So Asian (originally So Chinese) Comics and just shared it on our Facebook walls. We woke up the next day and we were like, *Wow, ang dami palang likes* (there were so many likes)."

"A lot of our upbringing can be found in the comics."

And just like that, the ideas and the fans started coming in. The duo created one doodle after the other, touching on various parts of Chinese-Filipino life like grades, dating, language, *ko tiam* (part time work in Dad's business), and a lot of other shared experiences that most young Chinoys like myself grow up with. As per Cheng, "It's really easy for us to make content. We just observe our parents. We see what they do, we notice that other people's parents do the same and that makes us go, '*Uy, pwede* (That's perfect).'"

Of course, So Asian Comics' sleek design and unique art style very much comes from the fact that both Mas and Cheng are fine arts graduates of De La Salle College of Saint Benilde (DLSU-

CSB), a far cry from the stereotypical image of Chi-Fils taking up business or medicine. If anything, So Asian Comics and its creators show that in our generation, Chinese-Filipinos have finally found their voice outside business, that we can now be seen in every sector including the world of art and mass media, and we're finally seeing content for Chinoys by Chinoys. As in Mas' own words, "It's great that we can create something that could represent Chinese-Filipino in the arts by Chinese-Filipino artists, and that we finally have stories about our community outside of movies like *Mano Po* which, while not inaccurate, were our stories told by someone from an outside perspective."

"...if it's something that's truly yours, and if it's a story only you can tell, then it's a story worth telling."

In the internet where so much happens and everyone is fickle, it's easy to be viral but hard to stay relevant. What makes So Asian Comics so impactful, so "Kaysiao-able" (marketable)? For the duo, the answer is simple. Be consistent, give a good punchline, but most importantly,

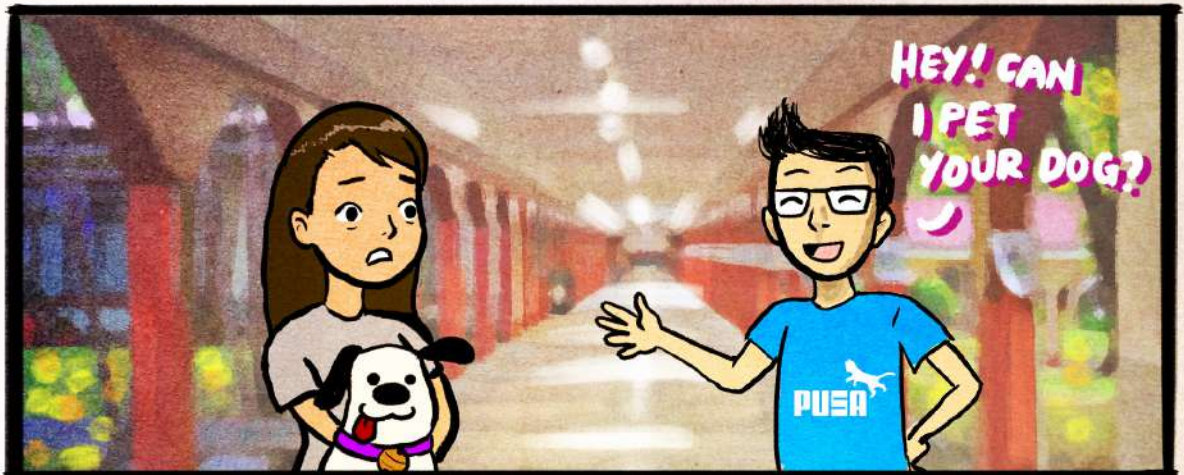
put out your own story. "I mean, for So Asian Comics, everything in the comics is based on our experiences, for us source material is readily available. We just go home and look at what's around. In general, people can tell if the story you have is something that's *pilit* (forced) or if it's something that's truly yours, and if it's a story only you can tell, then it's a story worth telling." For Mas and Cheng, they told theirs, and no matter how innocuous a couple of dad jokes seem, their little Facebook page hasn't stopped growing since. Since their little doodle in April of last year, Mas and Cheng have seen fan meet-and-greets packed, their merchandise sold out, and full house speaking engagements in schools and college campuses all across the country. Already, as of January, there were already plans on new T-shirt designs as well as a new series on the Great Wall.

So to So Asian Comics' creators, the question of "*Bo Pa Ba?*" may still remain, but that little question has certainly opened a lot of doors not only for them, but for our community as a whole. And we can only really get bigger and more *Kaysiao*-able from here.



Celadon Special Comic

"Dog Lover"



Special thanks: Catherine Wu

But us Chinese-Filipinos love pet dogs too. :(



Life Through The Lenses

Photos and Words by Archie Onglim and Calvin Choi

College. What is college? College is a place where you can finally be free and be yourself. It is a place where you can meet new people and experience new things. It is a place where you can meet people to go out on parties and drink with on Friday nights. It is a place where you can join and immerse yourself in multiple organizations. Each college freshman has their own definition of college and it is usually based off their experiences during the first few months of college. Most people find these months fun but to me, it was a rather different experience.

Entering college, I did not know



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what to expect. All I knew was that it would be difficult. I was nervous of what I would see. Before college, I did not really know who I was or what I wanted to do. I felt lost in life and that made college way more terrifying.

I came from a small conservative Chinese school wherein I had studied in for the past 14 years. Being in a small school, almost everyone knew each other so opportunities to meet new people were scarce. The culture in school was very conservative as we were not allowed to be too liberal. We were not allowed to go outside school after dismissal and we were especially not allowed to have relationships. I wondered how different the environment in college was.

know myself and I had no passion. I already felt lost in life and college made it even worse. I ended up stuck, in a mid-life crisis, not knowing my identity or who to be.

One Saturday morning, a friend messaged me telling me to go to a Documentations and Publications workshop hosted by Ateneo Celadon. At first I was hesitant to go because the invitation was last minute and the workshop was on a Saturday. I mean who would want to go to school on a Saturday right? Nevertheless, I decided to go because the photography workshop piqued my interest. I was generally interested in photography but I never had the time or energy to pursue it. I was extremely



Questions filled my head, but I knew that those questions could only be answered when I enter college.

Going into college I was surprised. College was so different compared from the school I came from. People acted differently, people did things differently, and people were a whole lot more open and liberal with the things that they do. Everywhere and everything I saw was different. The environment was completely different. The people were completely different. Not knowing what to do and who to be, I felt lost. I did not know what to do in life. I did not

lost during the photography workshop as expected because I did not understand a single thing, but I thought to myself that photography was not so bad and it was actually pretty fun. I borrowed a camera from a block mate, made a photo portfolio then applied for the Documentations and Publications team and the rest is history. After joining the Documentations and Publications team, I was able to participate in a lot of events and I was given plenty of opportunities to take a lot of photos and develop my love for photography.

At the beginning, photography was an enjoyable hobby but eventually I realized that it was



“Photography for me became a journey of finding myself.”



more than that. Photography for me became a journey of finding myself. I grew a passion for photography but deeper than that passion, photography aided me in grasping the fact that I have a passion for capturing, hearing, and telling stories. Photography helped me find myself in a way that I realized how much I love stories. For the rest of my life I realized that what I wanted to do was hear other peoples' stories and I wanted to tell my own stories and others' stories as well through my love of photography.

Reflecting on how lost I was before and at the start of college, I'm extremely grateful for all the opportunities I was given but more importantly I am extremely happy that I was able to discover my way and find myself through photography. Photography is a journey, but it is a journey that I will definitely enjoy taking because photography will enable me to capture moments and memories that will surely turn into stories that I will tell but most of all, I am just glad that I can live my life through stories and through the lenses.



朋友

(Péngyou)

FRIENDS

Words and Photos by Janelle Chan

We all remember our childhood friends. The ones we look forward to seeing in school, the ones we saw at family dinners, the ones we had play dates and kiddie parties with, and even the ones we fought with over petty things. If I had to describe my childhood, it would be the names of the four people who filled my childhood with annoying laughter and a lifetime worth of memories.

Our little childhood *barkada* (group of friends) came to be simply because our parents are *barkada*, and we had dinners in each other's houses every Sunday night. There's me, my cousin Johan, the siblings Amber and Joshner, and Chawne. We grew up in a city called Tacloban in the province. We had afternoon swimming sessions, sleepovers, and all sorts of fun. We were our own team against our yayas too. Back then our battles were as simple as trying to get our bedtime pushed back. One night during a game of pretend, we made Joshner our little guard, and when their yaya stuck her head in the room telling us it was time to sleep, he charged at her, pushing her out the door (yes, we locked the room after).

We were a handful as kids, and sometimes things got out of hand — getting stuck out on the balcony thinking it would be a good idea to start shouting and hitting the windows like never before (resulting in the window screen falling three floors down. Whoops.), or Joshner climbing too high up the library ladder and then jumping off, causing it to fall on our uncle Henry's new wooden chairs. Not to mention diverging all our parents' attention from getting

upset to saying the ladder hit his head so they got all concerned instead. We knew it was a complete lie, but we gave him an "I'm judging you" look instead of selling him out. We were those kids willing to squeeze in a shoe room, or even hide in a laundry chute just to play our favorite game called Sardines. It was basically a reverse hide-and-seek where the "it" is the one who hides. Everyone else looks for the "it" and hides with him or her. Once everyone finds the hiding spot, the first person who found the "it" becomes the new "it". Since our Sunday dinners were on a school night, we always gave our parents a headache by hiding and running away to delay going home.

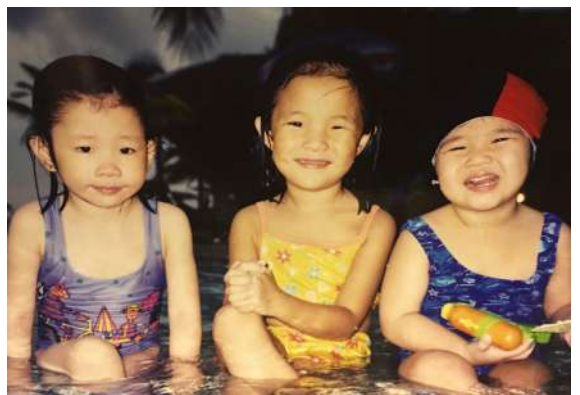
We had so many memories like these. Sometimes, we embodied stupidity at its finest, but we didn't care. From trying to suppress our giggles in our hiding spots, to running away from our parents, to flying lanterns after dinner, to making little bonfires on the driveway, to the little games we made up, all we knew was that we were having fun; and it gave us such great times together. Apart from Sardines, we had glow in the dark hide and seek too where all the lights are turned off, but each person had a glowstick.

Birthday, holidays, special occasions, and Chinese traditions like the Mooncake Festival dice game were spent together as well. My favorite Easter would have to be when Amber and Joshner's mom ordered a hundred easter eggs and had them hidden for us so that we could have an easter egg hunt together. The one who found the most eggs got an easter

bunny as a new pet.

As we grew up, our typical Sunday night changed with us. We went from care-free swimming and playing, to cramming for our classes together. We stopped running away and hiding in the dark when it was time to leave. Instead of bringing toys to Sunday dinners, we brought our laptops and books. We would work on unfinished school work while sharing stories. We grew out of our gameboys and Nintendo DS's together. Soon, our schools changed, our schedules differed, and our trips abroad together became more and more unlikely. What ultimately stopped our regular Sunday dinners was Super Typhoon Yolanda. Johan was already in college at the time, but after the typhoon, Amber and Joshner also moved to Manila. I was gone for half a year while Tacloban recovered. I studied in Manila for a semester, but went back for my senior year. Chawne went to Cebu, but went back home after some time as well. For a year it was just me and Chawne, but soon I had to leave for college too.

Though in time most of us ended up in Manila, we couldn't bring back our regular Sunday dinners with all the parents and kids separated between Manila and Tacloban. Our paths started to diverge and our lives started to become less and less intertwined. I've had this bunch my whole life and now that we barely see each other anymore, it reminded me of how precious this little childhood *barkada* is to me. About two years ago, we went on a Disney cruise trip to Alaska. We're noticeably more toned down now with our shenanigans, but we couldn't resist completely. We found the floor where they kept a lot of wheelchairs, and decided to have "wheelchair tours" around the ship while avoiding staff. After finding an empty deck, we just pushed each other's wheelchairs back and forth for the thrill of it. Compared to our last trip abroad together, which was so long ago that I can't even remember the year, we've grown so much and changed so much. However, no matter how much we grow up, I realized we'll always remember how we used to be. We'll continue to grow and change, but so will our shenanigans.



Despite our being so out of touch, they still feel like constants. I guess the point is, it's just the natural process of friendships. Everyone drifts apart, but not necessarily splits up. We just become less involved in each other's lives. From watching each other grow and mature slowly, it has become watching from a distance. We get updates through social media posts, or the occasional questions, congratulations, and birthday greetings. We may not have our regular Sunday dinners anymore, but I'm still able to see them make major decisions as they go through life. Johan did a semester abroad (which he later convinced me to do too), graduated college, and recently started his job. Amber passed college entrance exams, choosing Ateneo initially, but ultimately UP. Now she's the representative of her batch. We were in our high school's student council together, and now I see her enjoying her role in the student government of UP. Joshner shared that he asked a girl to prom using doughnuts, and now he'll be joining us in college soon. He's still undecided, but I'm lowkey hoping he'll come to Ateneo. Chawne recently switched schools and moved to Manila with her mom (so now all the kids are here yay). These are the low maintenance friendships I treasure more and more as time passes.

All these developments don't change the fact that for a time, we grew up together side by side. It is because of the childhood we shared that we get to share the joy of every accomplishment and every milestone each of us have. As much as I miss the old times,

I'm grateful we all grew up well and I'm proud of who they've all become. It was a pleasure and a joy to see them grow up into who they are today, accomplishing what they have so far. We all go through the natural process of friendships. At some point in life, we become busy and caught up with our own routines or goals. People drift apart, but that's just the way it is. Doesn't mean these friendships are gone, they just aren't as present as they used to be. I barely see my little childhood *barkada*, but they are something I can always come home to, a comforting constant I know I will always have.

Friendships are natural. They are things that ebb and flow in our lives easily. As we hold onto past friendships, it's also important to appreciate the ones coming our way. It's normal to get caught up in the past sometimes, but we should also focus on what we have now. Our friends will always be there like a silent presence as we journey through life. To my little childhood *barkada*, maybe our Sunday dinners will be back sooner than we think. Maybe it won't too. Whether it's in the next month, year, three years, five years, or even ten, we know those dinners will come eventually. Maybe one day we'll have our own kids as well, and they'll have the same Sunday dinners and trips we had. Maybe then we'll experience the kinds of trouble we gave our parents, but we'll understand. Good times and crazy friends, we know all about it. Until then, whenever that may be,

Let's see where else life takes us.



HANDS

Words by: Rodge Chanco and
Patricia Jose

During supper, the hands of my family are always doing different. My father would eat with his rough, brown hands, scooping the food into his palm before pushing the tuyo, kamatis and sinangag combination into his mouth. This was how he ate back in the province, “a Filipino art passed down for generations,” he would joke. His other hand would hold his plate up to his face, making sure that the rice and other bits wouldn’t fall onto the floor. “*Sayang lang kung mahulog,*” he explained. My mother would roll her eyes as she fiddled with her chopsticks as she gulped down a batch of Yangzhou Fried Rice. Her parents had taught her to eat with chopsticks, her pale, slender hands looked graceful clutching and manipulating the instruments. Her side of the family hailed from China, and though she was born in the Philippines, her family would follow and celebrate Chinese traditions.

My father’s hands were rough, as in the province, rough play is just about normal play. He would tell me stories about how he would catch insects with his hands, play *holen*, *patintero*, and *agawan base*. He would always get callouses from the rough play, but those were the most memorable parts of his childhood. He also tinkered with a lot of machinery, leading him to his job as a mechanic, his hands toughened for the job. He could easily repair car engines, clocks, you name it. He would get a few cuts here and there, but as he says: “*parte yun ng trabaho.*”





My mother was born in Tondo to a pure Chinese father and a Filipina mother. She would claim that my grandfather (or *waigong*) was very conservative, and wouldn't let her horse around too much. Instead, he lead her to study and study as much as she could so that she may be successful, and successful she became. Her hands were quick on the calculator, and her writing strokes were both quick and elegant. As she grew up, she became the manager of her father's company before creating her own business.

They found each other through my aunt, and they fell for each other the moment they found each other. My father would always say that the most amazing memory he had with my mother would be when they held hands for the first time, her soft hands pressed against his rough palms. He felt embarrassed at first, but seeing her smile for the so earnestly made calmed him.

After a few months, they married (my *waigong* didn't care if the one she would marry was chinese or not. My father won him over with car talk.) and ever since then, they've never let each other go.

In the end, our hands do not segregate or tell us what we are. Rather, our hands help us form a life that we want.

Y I N Y A N G

No more.

I don't need to wonder about it.
Love was always black and white.

And never will I say
that my Yin matches your Yang.



Words and Photos by Chenelle Co and
Gabby Dizon

How impossible could that be?

How could it be that I had a chance to actually meet someone as weird as you?

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Thinking that I could be able to find and
be with someone like you;

That would be the worst.

I don't care about you.

It would be an absolute
lie to say that

You complete
me.

The truth is

To cut you out of my
world forever

is the best thing that I could do.
I wouldn't dare

To love you for the rest of my life.

Now try reading it backwards.



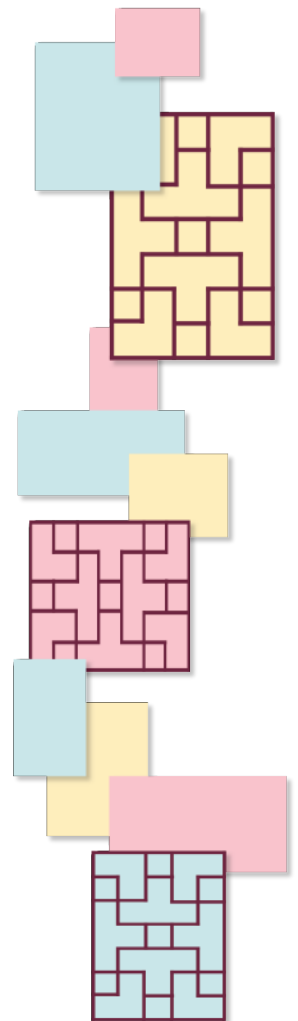
Mulan, the Beacon of Hope We Didn't Know We Needed

Words by Caitlin Anne Young

Mulan. The legendary Chinese woman warrior has become ubiquitous—not just in Asia, but in the whole world. Perhaps you could say the whole universe even, if you count the crater on Venus named after her. Part of Mulan's popularity can be attributed to Disney since the media conglomerate created the critically acclaimed 1998 film. However, its success lies further than just the animated movies and toy figurines we see today. Mulan herself is a cultural icon, and a feminist one at that. It is Mulan herself that makes herself so admirable to so many people and to so many cultures. Why? To discover that, one must first delve into Mulan's rich history.

Hua Mulan (花木蘭) is said to have originated from a poem written during the 6th century, entitled, The Ballad of Mulan (木蘭辭). First transcribed in the Musical Records of Old and New, the entirety of its completion took place around the Northern and Southern Dynasties, sometime between 420 to 589 AD. What matters though is that ultimately, the story, at its very core, is as we've always known: The strong and beautiful daughter takes her aged father's place in the army. Although the tale has several variations, including Xu Wei's "The Female Mulan" set in a Ming Dynasty backdrop, Mulan remains as she has always been. She's remains powerful and admirable; a true role model.

What makes Mulan so iconic is how she personifies almost every virtue of importance in Chinese culture, while simultaneously

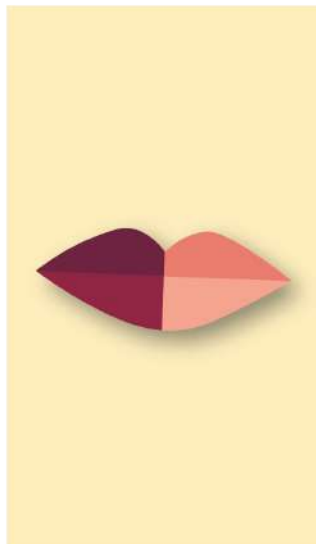


going against it. Filial piety, for instance, is one of the intrinsic qualities Chinese know all too well. It's a child's utter devotion and obedience to his or her parents. Mulan goes above and beyond what is expected of her when it comes to caring for and respecting her parents. Mulan indeed sacrifices her life and possibly even her so-called femininity to take her father's place in the war, and that is where the contradiction lies.

See, while Mulan embodied several virtues and traits, she did not meet the standards then for 'proper' women. A 'proper' woman would never fight in battle. A 'proper' woman would never cut her hair that short. A 'proper' woman would not even be expected to leave her home while she was yet unmarried. A 'proper' woman would probably be married at Mulan's age! Despite this, Mulan chose to stand up for herself and went against the current, tearing the very fabric of conservative Chinese society. Mulan defied all these expectations—and she continues to do so to this very day.

Truly, you would be quite pressed to find a woman who'd exchange her silk robes for metal armor during those days. It is exactly that which makes Mulan so remarkable. Her ultimate sacrifice—physical, mental, and emotional—is what makes her the powerful role model that she is today.

In this day and age, women have more freedom; but are generally still bound by the unspoken rules of society. They are expected to be meek and subservient. They are expected to be quiet and passive. While outspoken



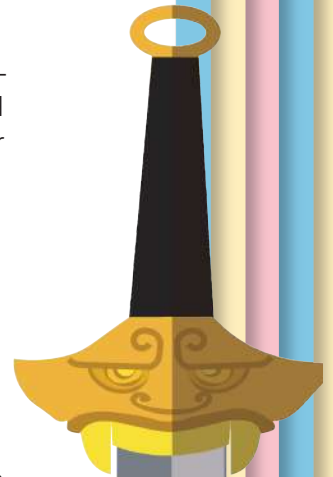
women do not get as much backlash as they once did, they're still being silenced now. The inherent sexism at society's core has not disappeared over time—it has merely become worn and frayed. This is where Mulan comes in.

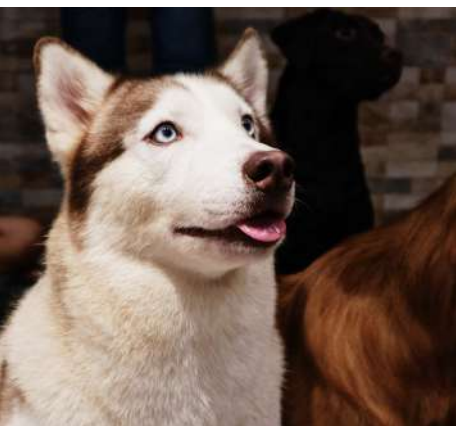
Mulan defied the standards during that time. She defied the lily-like grace expected of a young woman of that era. She eschewed formalities and arranged marriages. She traded her embroidery for a sword. She was revolutionary for her generation—and for ours, too.

“She was revolutionary for her generation—and for ours, too.”

This is why Mulan is so important. If she can defy society in a time when sexism was more rampant in ancient China— maybe we can learn to stand up against sexism together today.

Thus Mulan is not only a symbol of a modern woman; rather, she is in every woman. She is what women should aspire to be. She defies sexism, never mind its difficulties or shallow consequences. She represents those oppressed by sexism, and shines a new light on feminism. Indeed, every woman deserves equal rights and opportunities as men do. Mulan has proven for us why we are worthy of these. She is a beacon of hope for all of us.









Fleeting Dream

Words and Photos by: Richmond
Ong and Bryce Ching

Tears flow like rivers from mountains atop,
From the vast sorrow emotions;
I stand my ground like the great alps of the
north,
Hoping for that one day I can reunite with you
once more...

I believed that I have control over Hope,
Sadly I don't,
All I can do is stand by and watch the north star,
They give me hope,
Tears they flow,
They may break me, but I still stand my ground.

The North Star,
You call upon me,
shining brighter than all the treasures here on
earth.
I am but a mere rock that sits on earth,
Unworthy to be gazed upon a celestial like you.
I am sorry for thinking such.

I am sorry,
The pain burrows through me.
Knowing that, We may never be together;
O Celestial of the North,

You are my fleeting dream that I can only hope
for.
The morning rises...
The pain burrows deeper,
Fear ensues,
Wondering when you'd come back.

Oh what great pain,
The pain of the what ifs,
The things that could've...
And the thought of you leaving me forever.

Everyday,
The fear grows,
And a thought of...
Who am I a mere alp to you
Oh ever beautiful North Star.

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