

Latest masterpiece at National Museum

The classical piece by the last maestro of traditional wood carving in the country will now be on display in Gallery XVI of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Manila

Philam Foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of Philam Life, recently unveiled an artistic masterpiece from its art collection by renowned Filipino artist, Jose Alcantara, as part of its commitment to contribute to nation-building and art appreciation for mental wellness. The classical piece by the last maestro of traditional wood carving in the country will now be on display in Gallery XVI of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Manila.

Jose Alcantara belongs to the few artists who used the Philippine classical wood carving tradition. Born in Pasay City, he trained in the atelier of the prince of Philippine sculpture during the colonial period, Isabelo Tampinco, after which he worked as a carver in the furniture shop of Gonzalo Puyat. His talent took him to numerous shows and gave him countless accolades here and abroad.

Philam Life commissioned the carving in 1961 to embellish

the wall of the Philam Life Auditorium situated beside its former head office along United Nations Avenue in Manila, which was then one of the first international-style design buildings in the area. The auditorium was known for its excellent acoustics which were done by Bolt, Beranek and Newman who are also credited for the Sydney Opera House, the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the United Nations Assembly Hall in New York.

The Alcantara panels made from carved wood relief and lacquer feature elements from Philippine folklore, traditional musical instruments and folkloric characters like Maria Makiling and Malakas and Maganda, all known to have a semi-abstract approach to form. Alcantara's work celebrates the brilliance of Philippine art, exhibiting its distinct culture through the rich details and formal patterns.

Continued partnership with National Museum

As part of its thrust to support nation-building, the Philam Foundation continues to be a strong supporter of Philippine arts. For the past five years, the Foundation has given the National Museum an institutional grant of P5 million

which supplements funding for acquisition, preservation and restoration of artworks, as well as for the upkeep of key pieces of Philam Life's art collection: the Vicente Manansala paintings and Jose Alcantara murals.

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Aside from the unveiling of the carving, the event was also held to formalize the renewal of another five-year institutional grant for the National Museum. "We hope this partnership will pave the way for further appreciation and cultivation of our love for the arts," said Max Ventura, Philam Foundation president. Philam Life, through the Foundation, is a firm supporter in the role of the arts in achieving mental wellness. We want to go beyond physical and financial wellness. It is our intention to come full circle in bringing to life our brand promise of helping people live healthier, longer and better lives," added Kelvin Ang, Philam Life chief executive officer.

The donation was received by Jeremy Barns, director of the National Museum and Ana Labrador, assistant director of the National Museum.

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JOSE Alcantara's progeny taking a photo of his masterpiece. Photo shows (from left) granddaughter-in-law Eunice Alcantara, daughter-in-law Amy Wannamaker and grandson Jose Alcantara III.