



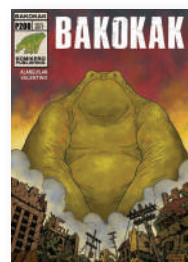
MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF PHILIPPINE GRAPHIC LITERATURE

MARIA CRISELDA SANTOS

It's a new Golden Age for Filipino Komiks. The influx of creators, some as young as 15 years old, is a showcase of diverse tastes, remarkable skills, and unique talent.

Several factors produced the steady rise: Digital technology gave access to local and global influences, that in turn inspired artists to create and post on social media; colleges and universities offered digital art courses; and the blossoming of literary festivals, affordable art markets, and fandom conventions.

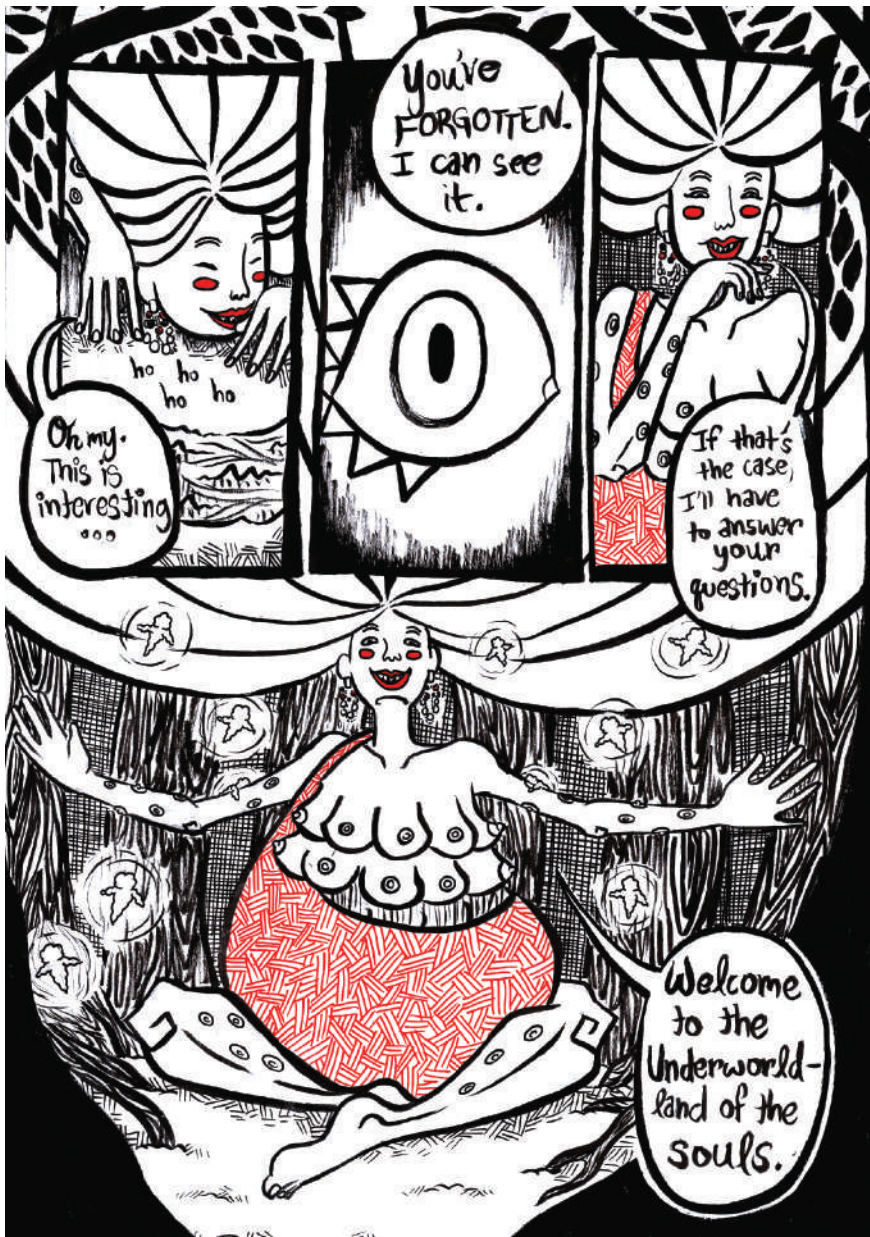
New voices created new experiences for readers. Not anymore limited to fanboys and geeks, the komiks community has space for everyone—including students, women, LGBTQ+, and social advocates. Each work celebrates the creators' individuality and their foray into various possibilities of the art form.



LEFT *Bakokak* illustration by Kevin Ray Valentino



ON THE COVER *Dead Balagtas Tomo 1: Mga Sayaw ng Dagat at Lupa* illustration by Emiliana Kampilan



My Name is Agung

NEW BLOOD, NEW VOICES

At the forefront are student creators from college and university organizations—University of the Philippines Graphic, Lunarock, Anime Manga Enthusiasts, UP Los Baños' Graphic Literature Guild, De La Salle College of Saint Benilde's Animation, and Ateneo de Manila's BLINK emerge with work every school year.

Ma-i Entico, a Grade 12 student at the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA), fuses comics and Ifugao myth, deftly punctuating her dialogues and illustrations with woven basket motif and pre-colonial syllabary, baybayin. Culture creates a vivid backdrop to Entico's works. *My Name is Agung* is an ode to reclaiming one's identity, while the two-story volume *Emla & Bugan* deconstructs and reconstructs gender roles and encourages women to bravely follow their dreams despite the restrictions set by families and communities.



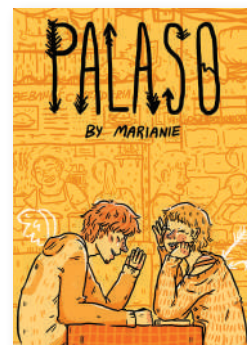
My Name is Agung by Ma-i Entico. Self-published, 2017.



Emla & Bugan by Ma-i Entico. Philippine High School for the Arts, 2017.



Show Your Solution! by Diklap Aytin. Self-published, 2017.

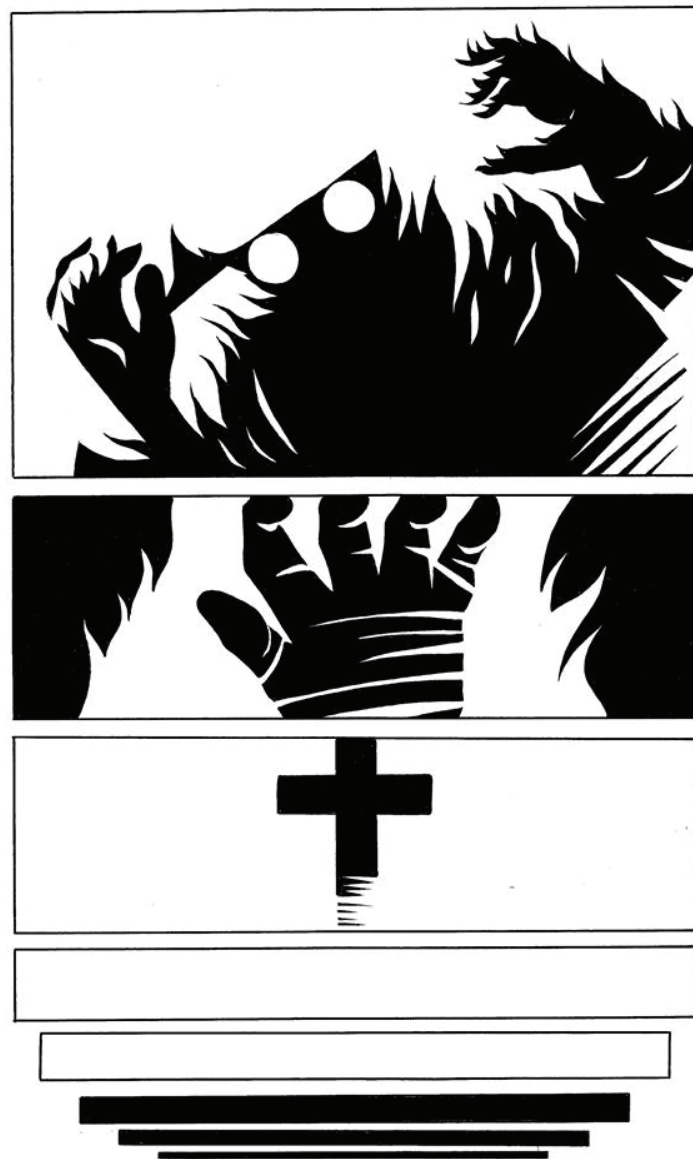


Palaso by Marian Hukom. Self-published, 2017. 20 pages.

History and an apparent allusion to the Italian epic inspire Tristan Guinid’s retelling of **Dante’s Inferno**. Guinid weaves a realistic portrayal of hell—the period of great wars and the Battle of Somme. Guinid expertly explores verisimilitude with a nod to muted violence, and gore painted in black and white, where violence turns men into monsters.

Diklap Aytin started selling stickers and illustrations in a cluster of vintage shops and art galleries in Quezon City. Halved between Grade 9 school work and his love for illustrations, Diklap’s work **Show Your Solution!** demonstrates a daily battle to solve math problems and vanquish fantastic monsters.

In BLINK’s self-care zine, **Kumusta Ka? (How Are You?)**, 15 creators showcase their storytelling prowess to address anxiety, depression, and stress, and various mental health issues. Teresa Carnecer defines self-care in a number of ways, whether it’s laughing hard or “crying oceans upon oceans upon oceans.” On the other hand, Toni Magsaysay’s *Working Hell* creates a pyramid of obligations—pile upon pile of priorities that need reorganizing one step at a time. The zine ends with Aisha Rallonza’s *Gardens*, which reminds readers to make space to breathe, vent, and own a moment in the midst of chaos.



Dante’s Inferno



Bawal Makalimot (Never Forget) by Matanglawin Ateneo and Blue Indie Komiks, Self-published, 2017.



Kumusta Ka? A Self-Care Zine by Pilar Gonzalez, Luis Desquitado, Nico Santana, Andrea Ting, Carmela Magayanes, Kevin Castro, Teresa Carnecer, Rose Hebron, Frank Tamayo, Mikhaella Magat, Toni Magsaysay, Trisha Ong, Justine Choy, Nina Alcantara, Abe Concepcion, Mozelle Ayo, Aisha Rallonza, Gillian Paragas., Self-published 2017. 46 pages.



AKIT (Attraction): A Zine on Sexuality by Eunice Nicole Arevalo, Ninna Lebrilla, Joan “Yuni” Lao, Raph Ang, Sophia Demanawa, Katrina Lasco, Anna Marcelo, DanaVee, Pie Tiausas, Micca Tria, Aisha Rallonza, Yanna Sta. Ana, James Miano, sawwwiii, Yas Liamco, Khukhoy, Jezka Ratilla. Self-published 2016. 52 pages.



Dante’s Inferno by Tristan Guinid. Self-published, 2017.



Daloy

CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

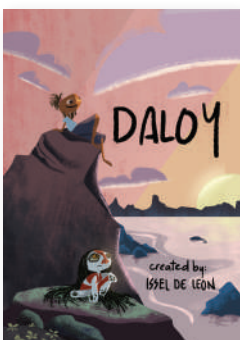
Philippine graphic literature doesn't only cater to comic book geeks and artists; it's also enjoyed by the young and the young at heart. Newbies and veterans tread the ground of children's literature with a balanced mix of ingenious storytelling and age-appropriate language.

The common denominator of these komiks for all ages, is the bold exploration of topics some writers usually shy away from.

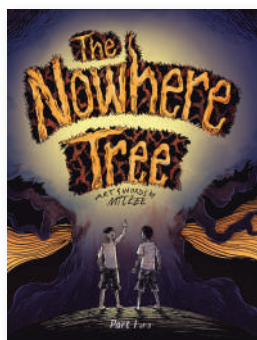
Issel de Leon's **Daloy** aptly translates as "go with the flow," and explores a darker and more complex theme: accepting death as an inevitable part of life. De Leon's modest volume is an ode to life and death, with the latter personified as Magwayen, the Filipino counterpart of Hades, who collects souls. De Leon adds a dramatic element—a child dying of tuberculosis—as the main character and Magwayen's next ward.

The Nowhere Tree carries within its pages the litmus test of friendship, where two boys are forced to make a deal with a malevolent spirit if they want to survive and save their friendship. The spirit, perhaps, can be deduced as one's inner demons.

Kai Castillo's **Patintero** elevates a popular children's game to an international sport. Despite being blind, protagonist Owen perseveres and plays to win. Opening the pages of RH Quilantang's **Weekend Pandemonium** feels like entering a role playing game, as a group of friends get caught in the middle of a



Daloy (Flow) by Issel de Leon. Self-published, 2016. 12 pages.



THE NOWHERE TREE (part one) by Mitzee. Self-published, 2017. 48 pages.



Patintero Comics by Kai Castillo. First published 2010. 140 pages.



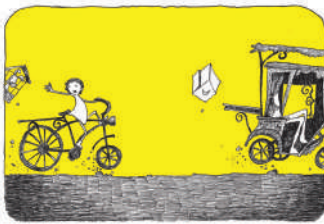
Weekend Pandemonium by RH Quilantang. Self-published, 2015. 98 pages.



Kuting Magiting (Hero Kitten) by Robert Magnuson. OMF Literature Inc., 2013.

war between mechanical mythological beings. Cat's **Nod & Sleep** gives readers a glimpse of adult responsibilities, and why it's important (and better) to slow down and relish one's childhood.

Some creators who have children share their playtime stories to readers. Benjamin Canapi's **The Adventures of Spaceboy**, whose crazy adventures are given life by *Ispiritista* creator Niño Balita's funny and watercolor-like illustrations; Gio Guiao's **Lakan at Makisig** is inspired by his real-life children; and Macoy's zombie thriller **School Run** is a convention favorite.

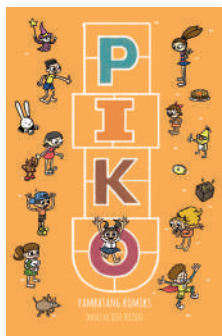


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In 2015, Anino Comics published PIKO, a compilation of 20 one-shot stories for children made by various creators. ABOVE Illustration by Bong Redilla.



Nod & Sleep



PIKO: Pambatang Komiks (Comics for Children) edited by Josel Nicolas. Anino Comics, 2015.



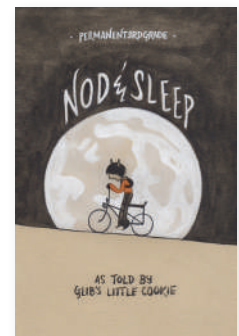
The Adventures of Spaceboy by Benjamin Canapi and Niño Balita. Self-published, 2017. 24 pages.



Lakan at Makisig - Childsplay by giosdesk. Self-published, 2014. 24 pages.



School Run by macoy. Self-published, 2010-2014. 158 pages.



Nod & Sleep by Cat S. Self-Published, 2017. 28 pages.



Itch

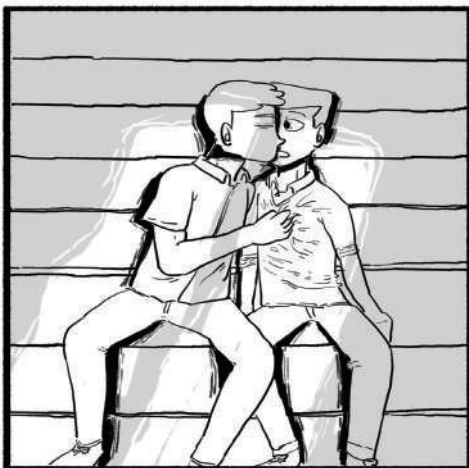
A SLICE OF SELF-CARE

The creator's personal, emotional, and relatable stories also reflects much of the readers' own experiences. Once considered taboo, touchy topics like mental health issues and cultural double standards are now front and center in local komiks today.

Catholic school alumna Mich Cervantes's first comic book **Itch** explores the sexual awakening of a 13-year-old girl. Her next work, **Sediments**, takes a trip to the beach and cleanses the burden of a broken relationship, while **Penpals** laments the disintegration of meaningful communication despite the advent of social media.

Richard Mercado's **It's More than That** tells a buddy story that begins with attraction that unfolds into more than just friendship.

In Andrew Villar's **Malate**, readers follow the interesting conversations of Emily and Vincent, and is akin to walking down the streets of Malate. Villar teams with writer Jess Santiago in **-30-**, where a young couple takes a long, quiet walk toward the end of their nebulous relationship.



It's More Than That



Malate



Itch by Mich Cervantes. Self-published, 2015. 56 pages.



It's More Than That by Richard Mercado. Self-published, 2016. 72 Pages.



Malate by Andrew Villar. Self-published, 2017. 54 pages.



-30- by Jess Santiago and Andrew Villar. 2018. 40 pages.

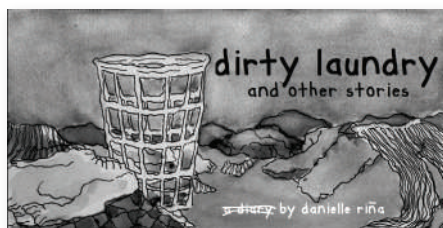
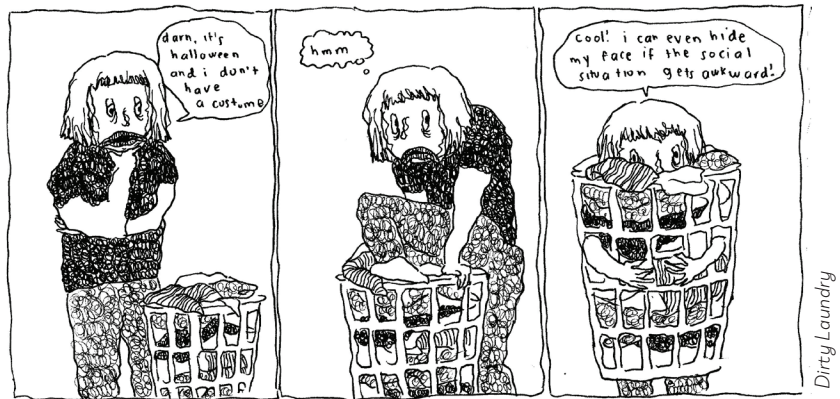


Are You Depressed? by Giuseppe Custodio. Self-published, 2015. 60 pages.

In another collaboration, Jess Santiago and Jez Nabong tackle depression in their poetry zine **Better Now**. The zine is smaller than the standard size—for readers to capture the feeling of “being small” when one is on ground zero. Their first work, **Things to Remember**, is a story about an elderly couple who struggle with Alzheimer’s.

Gioseppe Custodio discusses the many factors that lead to depression in the dialogue-driven graphic novel, **Are You Depressed?**, while anxiety also gets a healthy dose of humor from Dani Riña’s **Dirty Laundry**. The black swirls and rough lines in each panel are symbolic of the silent torment people with anxiety are constantly battered with. Danielle Dy-Liacco and Japhet Marquez’s **Flow** connects two people in the face of death and uncertainty.

After the downpour of rain, a yuppie appreciates the small city details in **Buhos (Pour)** by Ruen Zapanta. Bryan Montillana’s **Grumpy** is about a boss with unmanageable anger issues. Ace Vitangcol and Jee Saavedra’s **Gladys and Furr** revolves around the desperately single Gladys whose demon roommate, Furr, scares all her love prospects away.



Dirty Laundry and Other Stories by Danielle Riña. Self-published, 2013-2014. 24 pages.

I Grew Up I Guess details the struggle of adulting as a new member of the workforce.



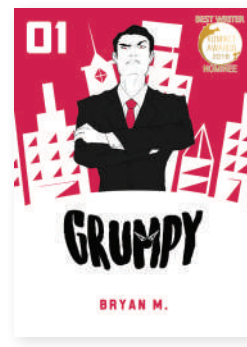
I Grew Up, I Guess by Chocnut-San. Self-published, 2017. 18 pages.



Flow by Danielle Dy-Liacco and Japhet Marquez. Self-published, 2016. 28 pages.



BUHOS by Ruen Zapanta. Self-published, 2017. 24 pages.



GRUMPY by BRYAN M. Self-published, 2017. 28 pages.



Gladys & Furr by Ace Vitangcol and Jee Saavedra. Alturia Hill Publishing, 2017. 72 pages.



Haliya Publishing showcases the diverse artistic talent of female creators in *Kabuwanan*, an all-female comic book anthology. (Illustration by Emiliana Kampilan)

WOMEN EMPOWERED

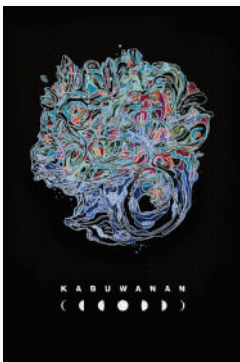
Women creators stir the imagination and challenge the status quo. Jess Guanaco's **Congratulations, You're a Girl** presents various feminist issues such as the social construction of gender, objectification, domestic abuse and gaslighting. The shift in voice is just as empowering; the little, insecure girl finds the strength and courage to fight the tyrannical voice that dictated her choices.

Gillian Pascasio's **The Kiss of the Demons** gives a slight nod to the seductive powers of lesbian romance. Mal, a demones, and Viv, a human, trade money for a kiss. The supposedly professional transaction gets blurry as one party falls madly in love with the other.

Emiliana Kampilan's ingenious mix of socio-political commentary and pop culture references in **Dead Balagtas** quickly grew a cult following online. Her undeterred take (or re-take) on Philippine history, carefully curated and researched to suit modern readers. One example is **La Mujer Filipina**, a graphic novel adapted from an essay written by Leona Florentino (1849-1884), with portions of her life interstitially drawn in some panels.

Kampilan continues her work as editor of **Ligaw Tingin**, published by Gantala Press in celebration of Pride Month. It features mermaids, basketball players, warriors, and other women-loving females. Two Filipiniana-clad women hold hands in the arresting cover by Katrina Pallon.

Comics knows no boundaries, as it crosses age, race, and gender. Proven with a steady influx of feminist writings and stories centering on the LGBTQ+ experience, personal stories can also branch out to social issues.



Kabuwanan by Aliyah Luna, Hulyen, Trizha Ko, Laraine Gazmen & Hannah Puyat, Lizette Daluz, Mich Cervantes & Pauline Rana, Kay Aranzano, Emiliana Kampilan, and Justine Basa. Haliya Publishing, 2017.



Dead Balagtas Tomo 1: Mga Sayaw ng Dagat at Lupa by Emiliana Kampilan. Anino Comics, 2017.



Dead Balagtas: LA MUJER FILIPINA by Emiliana Kampilan. Gantala Press, 2018 (Reissue). 16 pages.



Boobies by Ellezier Ominoreg. Self-published, 2014. 28 pages.



Illustrations from *LIGAW-TINGIN: Huli* by Betina Continuada, and *Paraluman* by Trisha Sanijon. *LIGAW-TINGIN* also features Emiliana Kampilan, Joanne Cesario and Michelle Bacabac, Patricia Ramos, Jasmin Sambac, and Nikki de Chavez. Cover painting by Katrina Pallon.



WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHY AREN'T YOU PLAYING
WITH YOUR DOLLS ANYMORE?

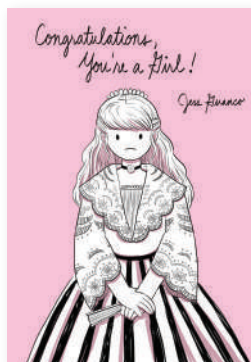


YOU'RE BORED?



YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH HIS ROBOTS
AND CARS AND DINOSAURS?

Congratulations, You're a Girl!



Congratulations, You're a Girl! by Jess Guanco. Self-published, 2016. 28 pages.



LIGAW-TINGIN: Kalipunang Komix ng Pagmamahalang Marilag. Edited by Emiliana Kampilan. Gantala Press, 2018. 92 pages.



The Kiss of the Demoness by Gillian Pascasio. Self-published, 2017. 16 pages.



LDALUZ
Ang Hari ng Komyut

SOCIALLY RELEVANT

Lizette Daluz's *Ang Hari ng Komyut (The King of Commute)* contains short episodes on public travel etiquette. Her kingly character suddenly takes a sharp turn to make a firm stand against jeepney phase outs and corporate takeovers. Mikey Jimenez and Mikey Marchan's *Sandali (Moments)* explores a similar predicament, and exposes a flaw in the everyday traffic and commuting system.

Julius Villanueva's *Keith Busilak* is a taxi driver who witnesses the murder of his godson, and shares the disillusionment of the promise of change. In *Patay Kung Patay* by AJ Bernardo, Noel Pascual and Mike Alcazaren, a child spills her innocent blood on Hacienda Miguera's soil and gives life to a horde of zombie farmers out to kill their abusers. Russell Molina and Kajo Baldesimo turn back time in *12:01* to re-create the Martial Law era to remind readers what dictatorial rule was like. Molina also wrote *Sixty-Six*, a collaboration with *Skyworld* creator Ian Sta. Maria. They reinvent the superhero archetype by endowing a senior citizen with superhuman strength in order to carry the personal burdens of the aged.

GOING BEYOND THE MAP

The landscape of Philippine graphic literature is fertile with stories that capture the Filipino spirit and illustrate the creators' depth and breadth of experience. Every year, the komiks community grows, driving graphic literature to the frontiers of the imaginative experience, and hopefully breaking through to international recognition. ♦



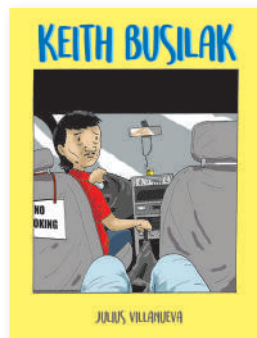
Sixty Six



Ang Hari ng Komyut by Lizette Daluz. Anino Comics, 2017. 34 pages.



Sandali by Mikey Jimenez and Mikey Marchan. Anino Comics, 2017. 68 pages.



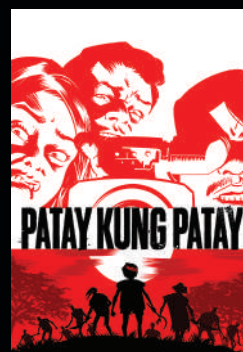
Keith Busilak by Julius Villanueva. Self-published, 2017. 24 pages.



12:01 by Russell Molina and Kajo Baldesimo. Anino Comics, 2015.



Sixty Six by Russell Molina and Ian Sta. Maria. Anino Comics, 2015. 148 pages.



Patay Kung Patay #1 by Mike Alcazaren, Noel Pascual, and AJ Bernardo. Self-published, 2015. 24 pages.



Crime-Fighting Call Center Agents #1 by Noel Pascual and AJ Bernardo. Self-published, 2011. 24 pages.

Patay Kung Patay
illustration by AJ Bernardo



FILIPINO CREATORS THE WORLD KNOWS

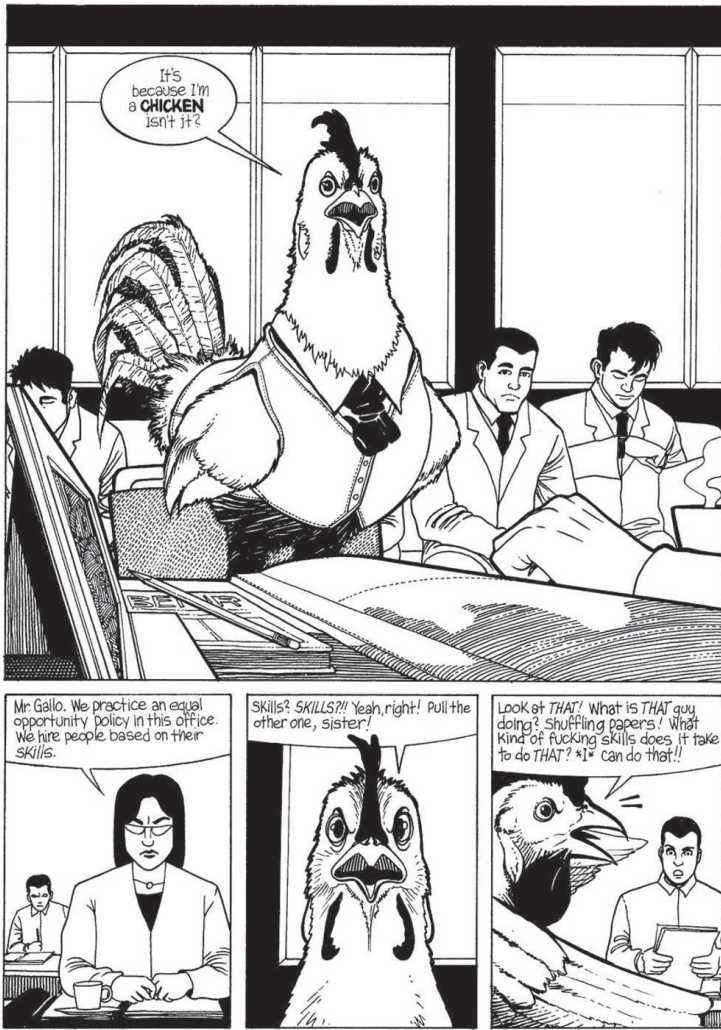
THE
WILL EISNER
COMIC BOOK
INDUSTRY
WINNERS
AND NOMINEES

Hailed as the “Oscars of the Comic Book Industry,” the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards honors American-published comic books and creators that raise the storytelling bar for creativity and excellence. Critically acclaimed worldwide, they are considered to be the prime examples of sequential narrative storytelling of their time.

Four Filipino comic book creators—Gerry Alanguilan, Rod Espinosa, John Amor, and Lan Medina—joined the ranks of Eisner winners and nominees, and pave the way for future Filipino comic creators. They share their memories, struggles, and reflections surrounding their work.

BY JONETTE VALENCIANO





GERRY ALANGUILAN

Creating the gritty, deeply-philosophical world of **Elmer** took many long hours of contemplation—concept creation, rewrites, redraws, and a whole lot of gumption. “The first big challenge was just feeling confident enough to actually start drawing it. For that to happen, I’d have to be comfortable with the story, with the logic of the universe, with all the characters. But once I was able to write a draft of the first issue that satisfied me, it all went really quick. I was able to finish drawing the first issue within two months.”

Alanguilan found printing and distributing **Elmer** in the Philippines easy and affordable enough to do it himself. He had a thousand copies of the first run printed, brought the books to retailers, and sold them at comic conventions.

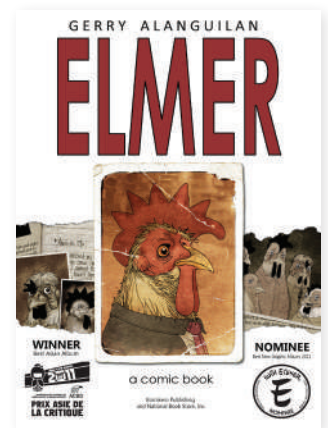
His biggest challenge was finding a publisher in the United States. “I had been trying to find

a publisher for it for many years until SLG [Publishing] found it in their submissions box and decided to take a risk on it. I was happy enough about that.”

One day in 2011, he received an email from Dan Vado, his American publisher, with an invitation to the San Diego International Comics Convention, all expenses paid, and a nomination to the Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album.

His initiative to put **Elmer** on the internet also paid off when a French publisher found a copy online and offered to translate the book in French.

“Getting nominated for an Eisner turned out to be a happy surprise.” For Alanguilan, the nomination was a struggle as much as it was an honor. “It certainly has put pressure on me to do better in whatever I did next... I decided to just have fun in my next two





OTHER TITLES (ABOVE)

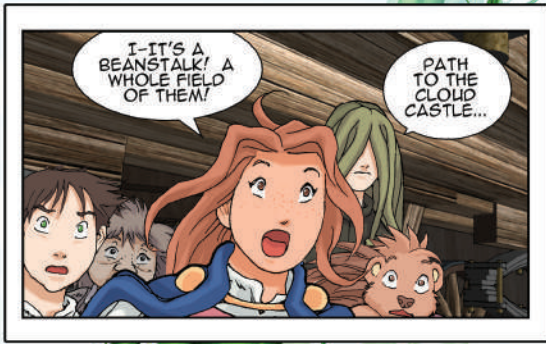
WASTED,

Where Bold Stars Go to Die (with Arlan Esmeña),
and **Bakokak** (with Kevin Ray Valentino);
published by Komikero Publishing

projects, Rodski Patotski: Ang Dalagang Baby and Bakokak." Gerry learned to glean the good from critiques, and ignore destructive comments.

Alanguilan attributes the success of Elmer to, quite sincerely, doing the best he could. "All I really attempted was to make all aspects of my work as professional-looking as I can make it... as worthy of purchase as other books."

Whether or not his work would be nominated for any award, Alanguilan knows creating comics is a passion he would live out for the rest of his life. "This is what I just love doing. So if I'm going to be creating comics, then they better be the best damned thing I could create at that given time."



ROD ESPINOSA

Rod Espinosa knows his fairy tales well. So well, in fact, he feels compelled to turn his attention to the underdogs and forgotten figures of the genre. His hopeful and wildly imaginative work, **The Courageous Princess**, began from one simple question: *what happens to the princesses the prince rejects at the ball?* “That’s pretty much Mabelrose’s story,” Espinosa says. “The beautiful things that happen and all the people she meets would not have been possible. Of course, that was purchased by undergoing terrible trials too.”

Back in 2002 in San Antonio, Texas, it took Espinosa’s friend and Antarctic Press’ Editor-in-Chief to convince him that his comic book **The Courageous Princess [Book One; Part 2]** was nominated Best Title for Younger Readers. The same book garnered nominations for the 2000 Ignatz Awards’ Promising New Talent and Best Artist. “I did not believe them at first... I thought

they just ran out of good candidates that year,” he chuckles.

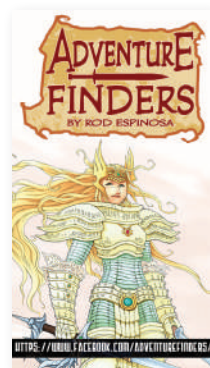
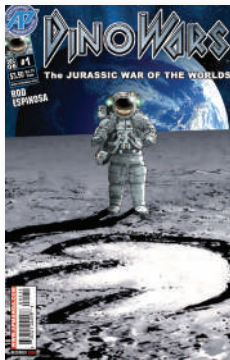
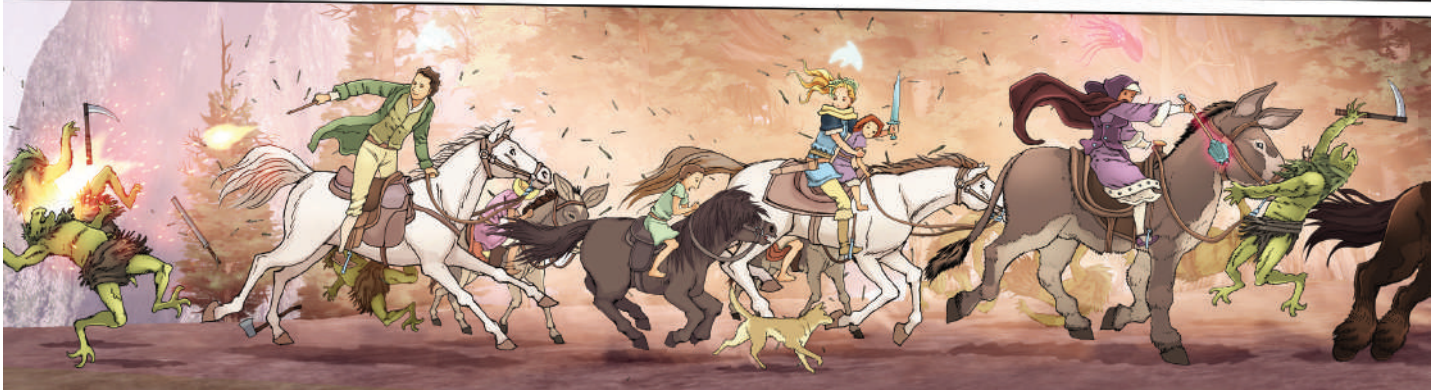
Espinosa fondly recalls the Eisner Awards night. “I shook Will Eisner’s hand (he was still alive, back then). He wished me luck. Those were the good memories.”

After receiving a Max and Moritz Award nomination in Germany from 2003 to 2005, Rod ponders about the continuing quality of his work, but maintains a fine balance with his peace of mind.

No stranger to the challenges of making a living and a career as an artist, Rod has survived dry spells, taken on odd jobs, and has kept afloat in grace and gratitude from the kindness of loved ones and strangers.

“I’ve come to a place in my life where I try to live a zen life. Sometimes I succeed at this, other times, not. It’s a work in progress. I





OTHER TITLES
(LEFT TO RIGHT,
TOP TO BOTTOM)
Edge of Empire,
Dino Wars,
Immortal Wings,
and **Adventure Finders**

do what makes me happy today... When I look around me, I already feel lucky. I am still doing what I want to do.”

Rod’s pragmatic view led him to focus on simply doing the work that mattered to him. “Don’t aim for awards. Just do your work honestly and from the heart. If it is award-worthy, then maybe it will be awarded.”

With much faith in the next generation of homegrown Filipino talent, he is confident that the world is richer with their vision and craft. “I see a lot of talent out there at the conventions nowadays. The young men and women who populate most of the floor are all super talented and I am very happy to see so many taking up the challenge.” He attributes this world-class quality and innovative spirit to an openness to many cultural themes from around the globe.

“I think the key is just to survive and work hardest and have a story people care about.”



JOHN AMOR

During his nightly workflow, Amor was accustomed to receiving emails from Will Maxwell Prince, his collaborator for the short story **Monday** in the comic book **One Week In The Library**. They'd grown to be friends over the years, checking on each other and discussing many shared interests. One evening, he received an email from Prince, containing a link to the Eisner Awards 2017 nominations—and nothing else.

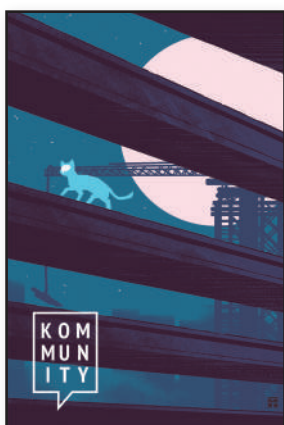
"I was excited, shocked, and humbled all at the same time and couldn't wait to tell as many friends as possible... I left the house my wife and I live in and walked a couple of blocks to

the 7-Eleven for a snack. I was smiling to myself the entire time, thinking, 'yes... I've fooled them all...'"

Drawing "acres and acres of books" can be quite the challenge. "Doing that has taught me shortcuts and tricks that I'll continue to find handy moving forward."

John also learned to turn baffling work conditions into opportunities. "Another challenge was working on **Tuesday** while traveling to visit my family in Cebu. I usually draw on a desktop PC, but while on the road the only option was to use an obsolete laptop that I wasn't sure was going to run. Luckily, it all worked out."





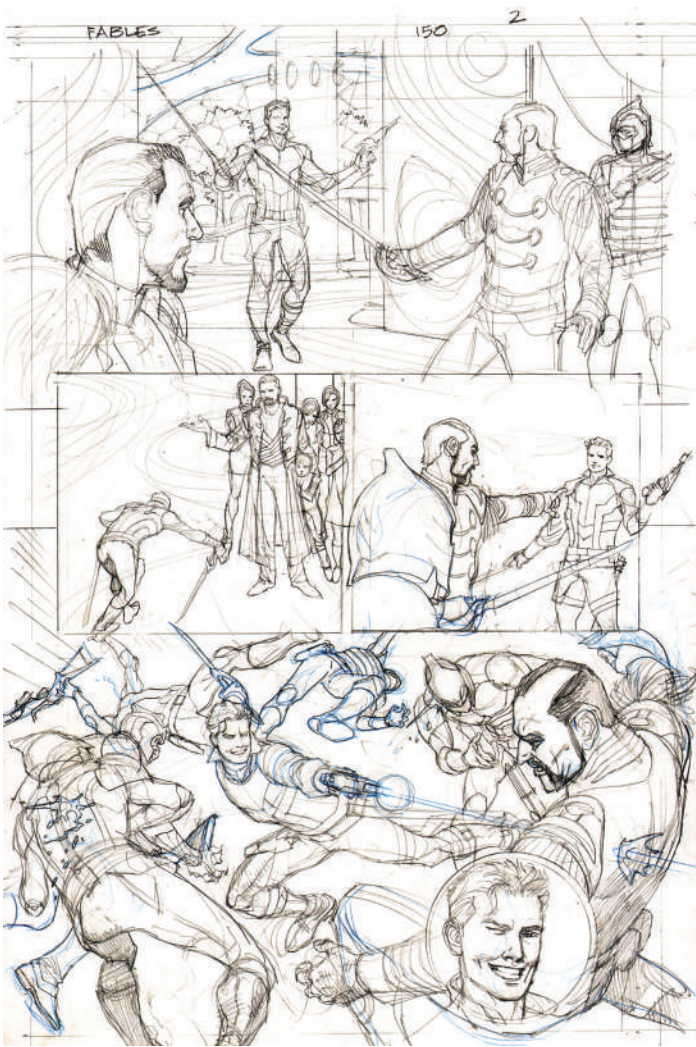
OTHER WORK
 Amor's *Kommunity* cover
 published by Komiket

For Amor, the esteemed nomination is a sign there's no where else to go but up, coupled with much gratitude and hard work. "An Eisner nomination tends to be uttered in the same breath as 'legit', so I'd like to strive to live up to that... Working in this industry, the goal really just tends to be doing the best job possible at your current skill level." He never forgets to commend teammates Kathryn Layno and Prince as partners in this success.

With much introspection, Amor deeply believes that world-class quality is not so much a question of morality, but a question of humanity. "Filipinos like to focus on the challenges of the Every Man. And while this is common in almost all of fiction, I believe the Filipino version of

this is singular because he belongs neither in the East nor the West, owing to decades of colonization. Filipinos are a true race of outsiders, and that gives us a unique perspective."

Amor feels the most important ingredient in creating award-winning work is to aim for excellence at the artists' skill level, to stay passionate, and create the stories they want to read. "If you don't think you're good enough, then work to identify those weaknesses and get better at them. I'll be right there with you, rowing that same boat."



LAN MEDINA

Rolando “Lan” Medina is a private man of few words. He lets his art and his dedication do the talking.

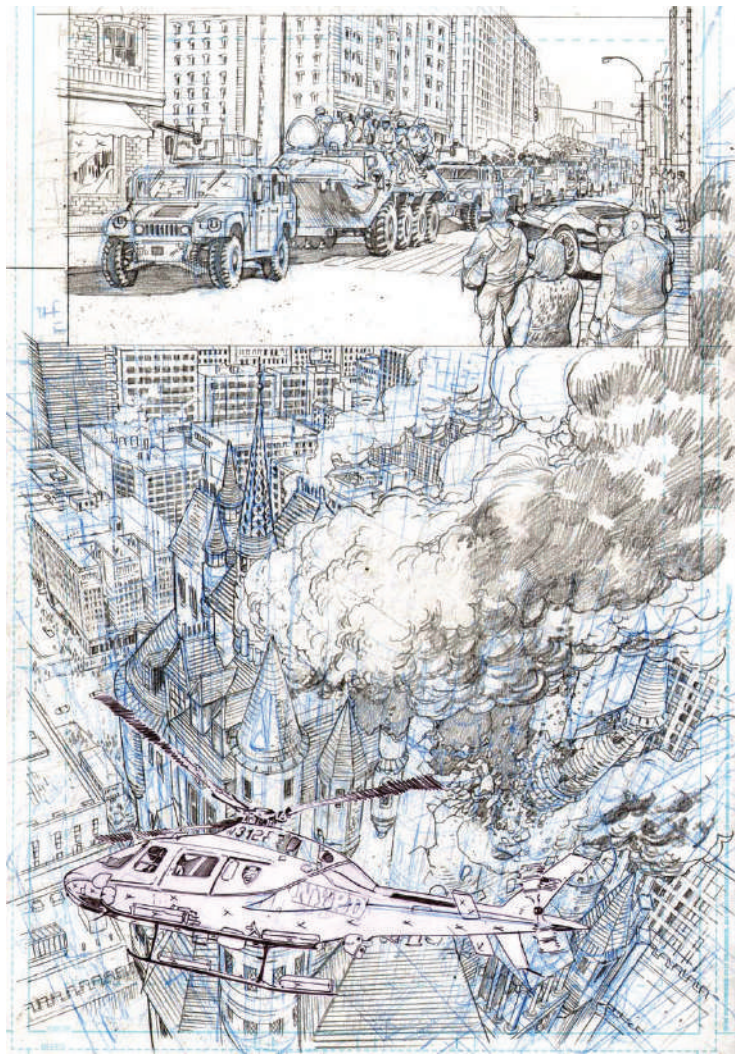
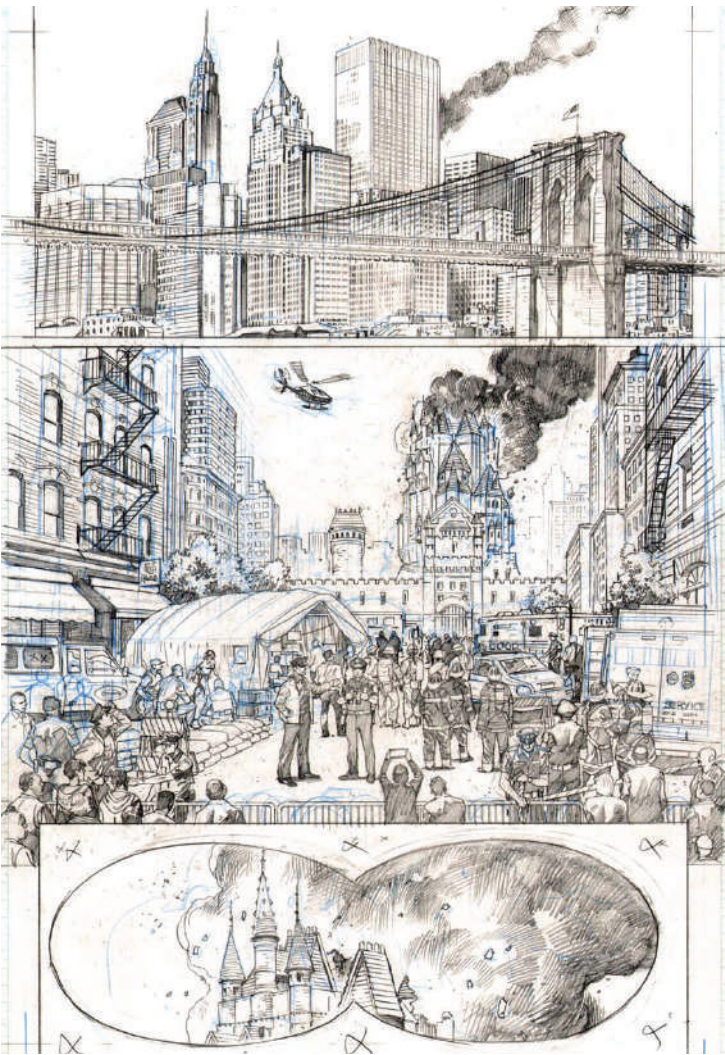
Celebrated for his composition, mastery of anatomy, and impeccable attention to lush details, Medina is best known for his pencil and inking work on superhero titles such as *Venom*, *The Punisher*, *Silver Surfer*, *District X*, *Spiderman*, *Aquaman*, and many other fan favorites. However, he never forgets to acknowledge the humble roots of his artistry—careful study of the masters of Philippine comics illustration of his time, and true, honest grit. In his youth, luminaries such as Nestor Redondo, Vic Catan Jr., and Alex Niño, became beacons that led him to hone his style.

He fondly recalls the fast-paced nature during the golden age of the local comic book industry in an interview with FlipGeeks.com. “[‘Komiks’ back then was running beautifully. It was easy money and there were a lot of jobs, as long as you worked hard. I’d never run out of scripts, short stories, and novels to work on. It was just a pity when ‘komiks’ fell because there were a lot of artists depending so much on them.]”

The decline of the local comic book industry prompted Medina to try his luck abroad. “[Brian Haberlin, a friend of Whilce Portacio, asked me to do a sample for *Fables*. Then he showed it to the editor, Shelly Bond. That’s how it all began.]”

It was his illustrative work on the *Fables* series that won him an Eisner award, making him the very first Filipino to be given the

IMAGES COURTESY OF
LAN MEDINA



accolade. Recalling feelings of awe and surprise, Medina maintains that the real joy is not so much in the award, but in the work. “[As an artist, it’s really our joy to create comics in the local and international scenes.]” The award opened more doors for him, penciling and inking Marvel’s Silver Surfer being the first of many.

Medina’s creative process relies heavily on sticking to a work routine. “[As a penciler, [I] need to finish 20 to 22 pages a month, so my daily process starts at 10:00am up to 12:00pm midnight, just like other pencilers. Once the editor sends the script, I’ll create the layouts for the editor’s approval... Once it’s approved, I’ll start on the pencils on the actual artboard page provided by Marvel or DC Comics.]”

Medina’s advice to youngblood artists is a tenet he himself has lived -- “ Be humble,... let your art speak for you.” ♦

GERRY ALANGUILAN is currently working on his next book, with the only clue he allowed to let slip being “it’s a bit autobiographical.”

JOHN AMOR looks forward to releasing *Urban Animal* back into the public sphere, and kick his webcomic *Oscuro* into high gear.

ROD ESPINOSA is finishing *Book One of Adventure Finders*, and looks forward to working on *Book 2*.

LAN MEDINA has no personal projects at the moment, but “*Batman is my dream project. Just [let me at] a one-shot project, I’m fulfilled.*”





Doorkeeper by Ethan Chua and Scott Lee Chua; illustrated by Gia Duran, Aaron Felizmenio, Allen Geneta, Bow Guerrero, Bianca Lesaca, Jap Mikel, and Brent Sabas. Summit Media, 2017. 136 pages.



BGM BYN by Redg Tolentino and Jap Mikel, Self-published, 2016. 105 pages.

BGM BYN illustration by Jap Mikel

BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS OF PHILIPPINE COMICS POST-MARTIAL LAW (1980S TO PRESENT DAY)

THE DECLINE OF LOCAL COMICS BEGAN IN THE 1970S—WHEN MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED IN THE COUNTRY. BUT LET’S TAKE A GLIMPSE OF HOW PHILIPPINE COMICS, OR “KOMIKS,” HAS SURVIVED, THRIVED AND EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS.

BY ELBERT OR & CHARLES TAN



Pilipino Komiks

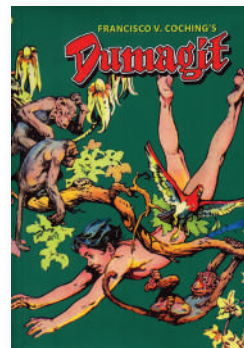
1980s

CASUALTIES OF A POST-MARTIAL LAW ECONOMY.

A comics publication like *Pilipino Komiks* had a circulation of 137,000 copies every week in 1970. By the 1980s, comics competed with other forms of media such as TV, film, and radio, as well as imported comics and toys. The print runs and distribution started to decline. That’s not to say there would be no new comics created during this period. The **Samahang Kartunista ng Pilipinas** was formed in March 1978. *Gospel Komiks* was founded in 1980. Pol Medina Jr.’s iconic *Pugad Baboy* debuted in 1988.



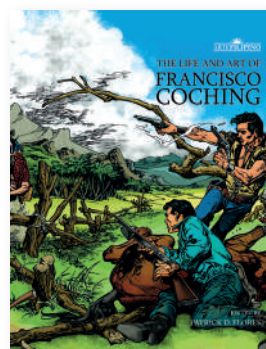
Barbaro by Francisco Coching



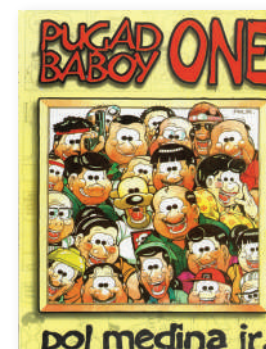
Francisco Coching's *Dumagit*. Originally published in *Pilipino Komiks* by Atlas Publishing, Inc., 1953. 140 pages.



Francisco Coching's *El Indio*. Originally published in *Pilipino Komiks* by Atlas Publishing, Inc., 1953. Compilation copyright Francisco V. Coching and Vibal Foundation, Inc., 2009.



The Life and Art of Francisco Coching. Vibal Foundation, Inc.



Pugad Baboy One by Pol Medina Jr. 1997. 76 pages.



Angel Ace



Exodus



Dhampyr

1990s

A NEW WAVE OF COMICS.

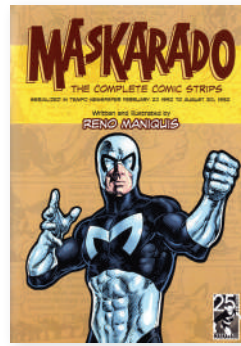
In 1994, a group of independent comic creators Arnold Arre, Gerry Alanguilan, Budjette Tan, and Carlo Vergara self-published their work under their own comics label, **Alamat Comics**. Anime and manga became popular in the Philippines and helped shape the aesthetics and dialogue of the decade.



Angel Ace by Marco Dimaano. Alamat Comics.



Exodus. Alamat Comics.



Maskarado: The Complete Comic Strips by Reno Maniquis. 1992.



Speculations: An Anthology by Reno Maniquis and Carlo Borromeo.



Dhampyr by David Hontiveros, Oliver Pulmarbit, and John Toledo. 1997.



Batch 72 by Arnold Arre. Alamat Comics.



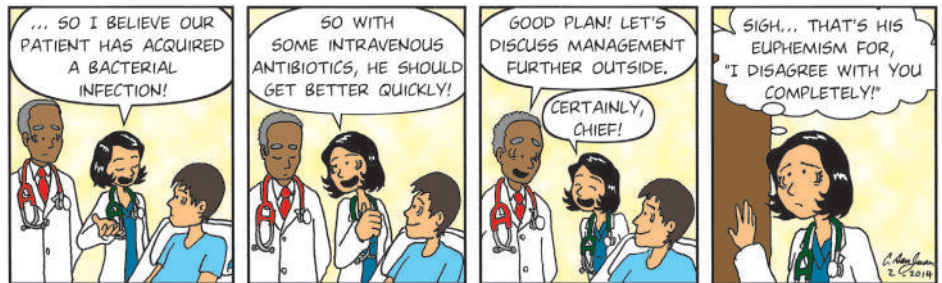
Sexmen by Noel F. Lim.



The Mythology Class #1 by Arnold Arre. Alamat Comics, 1999. 60 pages.



Lexy, Nance & Argus



Callous Comics

2000S

DISRUPTION IN THE INDUSTRY.

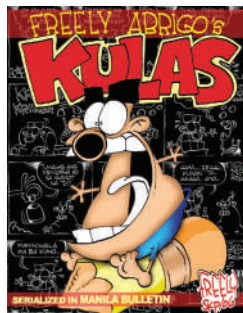
J.C. Palabay Ent., Inc. released **Culture Crash Comics**, a bi-monthly manga-influenced comics magazine in 2000 to 2004. Old comic publishers like PSG Publishing, Rex, ACE, and others ceased operations. Nautilus Comics published **Cast** and **Private Iris: The Secretive Sleuth**; Mango Comics published **Mango Jam**, **Darna**, and **Lastikman**. Traditional publishers took a risk with graphic novels, with varying degrees of success. Children's book publisher Adarna House published Arnold Arre's **Mythology Class** and **After Eden**; Visprint Inc. published Budgette Tan and Kajo Baldesimo's **Trese**, and Carlo Vergara's **Zsazsa Zaturannah**.



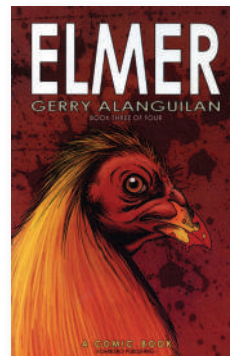
Culture Crash #1. Culture Crash Comics and J.C. Palabay Ent., Inc., 2000. 46 pages.



Culture Crash #15. Culture Crash Comics and J.C. Palabay Ent., Inc., 2004. 80 pages.



Kulas by Freely Abrigo. Visprint, Inc., 2007.



Elmer #3 by Gerry Alanguilan. Komikero Publishing, 2007. 30 pages.



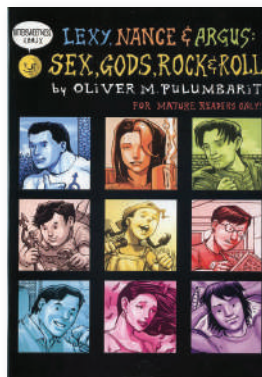
Mars Ravelo's Darna. Mango Comics, 2003. 28 pages.



Trese #1 by Budjetta Tan and Kajo Baldesimo. Alamat Comics, 2005.



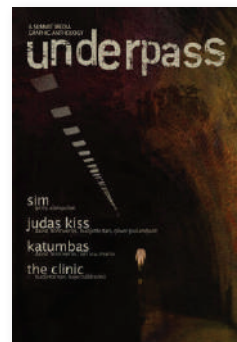
Mars Ravelo's Lastikman by Gerry Alanguilan and Arnold Arre. Mango Comics. 56 pages.



Lexy, Nance & Argus: Sex, Gods, Rock & Roll by Oliver M. Pulumbarit and John U. Toledo, 2004. 68 pages.



Private Iris Book 1: The Secretive Sleuth by Jamie Bautista and Arnold Arre. Chamber Shell Publishing Inc, 2016.



Underpass by Gerry Alanguilan, David Pontiveros, Budjetta Tan, Oliver Pulumbarit, Ian Sta. Maria, and Kajo Baldesimo. Summit Media, 2009. 52 pages.

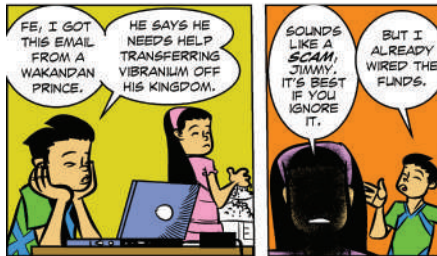


Pasig illustration by Melvin Calingo; from *Culture Crash*.



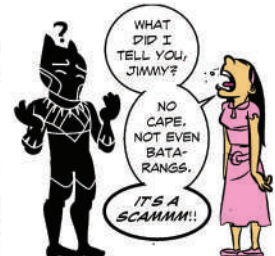
Class

BEERKADA



WWW.BEERKADA.NET

LYNDON GREGORIO



The popularity of anime and cosplay conventions paved the way for local comics convention Komikon in 2005. Self-publishers started to produce and sell small print runs of their comics. The Internet encouraged comic creators to publish their own webcomics as part of marketing and building readership. Initiatives like the 24-hour Comic Challenge was established. Some universities introduced comics into the curriculum, usually as an elective. Carlo J. Caparas received the National Artist award in 2009, and *The First One Hundred Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons* was published by Yonzon Associates, Inc.



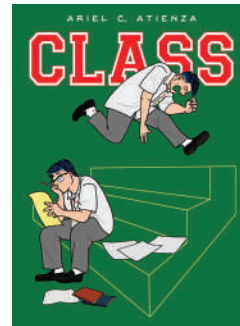
Carpool by Syeri Baet.



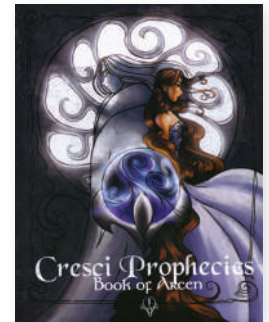
Digmaang Salinlahi: Landa's Tungong Digmaan by Jon Zamar and various artists.



Digmaang Salinlahi: Talaan ng Alaala ng Digmaang Kahimanawari by Jon Zamar and various artists.



Class by Ariel C. Atienza.



Cresci Prophecies: Book of Arcen by Joana Tinio-Calingo. Point Zero Comics, 2005. 212 pages.



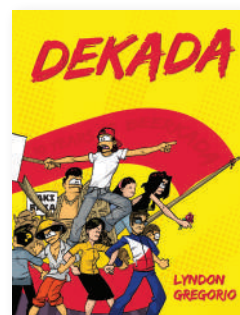
Sulyap by various artists. Komikon, Inc., 2010. 160 pages.



Sulyap #2 by various artists. Komikon, Inc.



Sulyap #3 by various artists. Komikon, Inc.



Beerkada: Dekada by Lyndon Gregorio.



The First One Hundred Years of Philippine Komiks and Cartoons by John A. Lent. Yonzon Entertainment Syndicate, 2009. 154 pages.



FCBD (Free Comic Book Day) Komiks #1, 2012.



Fallen Ash



Boy Ips

2010S

THE DECADE OF REFINEMENT.

Comics-centered conventions evolved to be a home for new comics creators from different backgrounds. Distribution remained the biggest challenge. Aside from the usual retail channels, some comic creators experimented selling online or sought Internet-based revenue models. Supporter of local creators, foreign comics distributor **Comic Odyssey** holds annual Free Comic Book Day, providing free spaces for creators to share their work to the public. In 2013, **Pugad Baboy** was serialized online under Rappler.



Kanto Inc. by Melvin Calingo, Joana Tinio-Calingo, Jan Michael Valenzuela. Point Zero Comics. 166 pages.



Fallen Ash by Kimberly Smith. Self-published, 2013.



Pasig 2 Unang Kabanata by Melvin Calingo. Point Zero Comics, 2011. 16 pages.



Kwentillion by Summit Books. 2012. 110 pages.



Kayaw by Steve Magay, Daz, and Bernce. Hollow Point Studios, 2014. 28 pages.



Drop Dead Dangerous by Chad Cabrera and Mike Banting. Self-published, 2011. 40 pages.



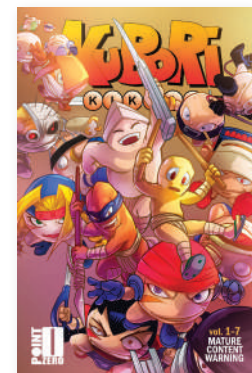
Sumpa by Paolo Herras and Brent Sabas. Meganon Comics, 2014. 78 pages.



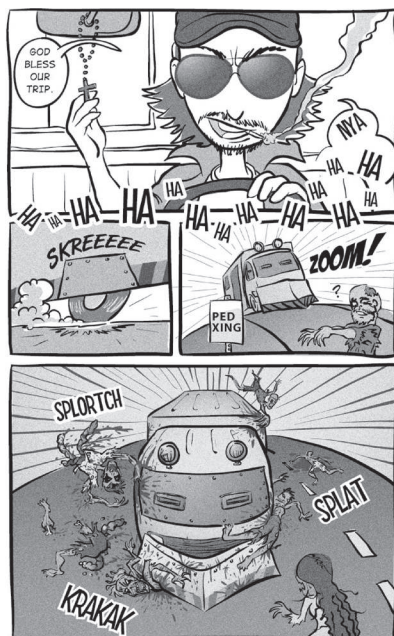
Mythspace: Lift Off by Paolo Chikiamco and Koi Carreon. Self-published. 24 pages.



Ang Astigang Boy Ips by Mike Ignacio and Mon Fegason. Frances Luna III, 2014. 36 pages.



Kubori Kikiam Omnibus (1-7) by Michael David, Melvin Calingo, and Mark Navarro. Point Zero Comics, 2013. 124 pages.



School Run



Talaan ng mga Aparisyon

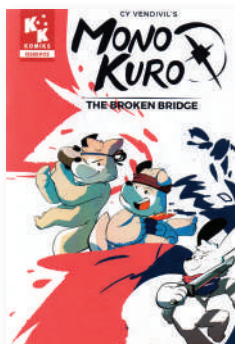


Filipino Heroes League Book One: Sticks and Stones by Paolo Fabregas. Visprint Inc., 2010.

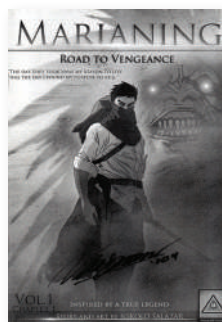
Black Ink published Filipino manga titles. Meganon Comics self-published and forged an event-based path. Studio Salimbal made their comics available for purchase as digital downloads. Adarna House revived its comics imprint, Anino Comics. Summit Media experimented with various comics and graphic novels. Carlo J. Caparas' National Artist Award was voided in 2013, while Francisco V. Coching was posthumously conferred a National Artist for Visual Arts in 2014.



Talaan ng mga Aparisyon by Carlorozy Clemente. Self-published, 2012. 44 pages.



Mono Kuro: The Broken Bridge by Cy Vendivil. 2014. 56 pages.



Marianing: Road to Vengeance by Nikolo Salazar. Self-published, 2014. 60 pages.



3AETA (3 Aeta Hunters) by Dennis E. Sebastian.



Mukat by Mel Casipit. Self-published, 2010. 132 pages.



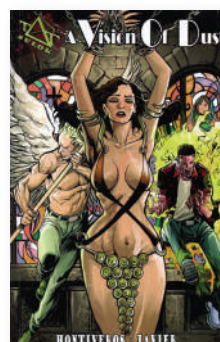
ABANGAN: The Best Philippine Komiks 2014 edited by Rob Cham, Adam David, Carljoe Javier, and Elbert Or. 216 pages.



Mang Jose by Gabriel Chee Kee, Ace Enriquez, Allan Burdeos, and Carina Altomonte-Burdeos. Alamat Comics, 2013. 20 pages.



Zombinoy #1 by Geonard Yleana. Pelikomiks Studios, 2012. 32 pages.



Tatsulok: A Vision of Dust by David Hontiveros and Xerx Javier. Alamat Comics, 2012. 100 pages.



Mark 9 verse 47 by Maika Ezawa and Tepai Pascual. Meganon Comics.



Heart on Your Sleeve



Lindol

2015 ONWARDS

COMMUNITY BUILDING.

Literary festivals and art fairs such as BGC Art Mart, Escolta Art Market and Fringe Manila encouraged public support for affordable art. The KOMIKET, The Filipino Komiks and Art Market, provided new spaces for creators to sell their work, and expanded readership in Quezon City, Las Piñas, Cavite, and Cebu. It also holds annual Comic Book Creator workshops to discover new creators. Pugad Baboy returned to print under The Philippine Star.



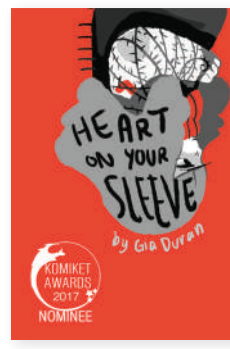
Komiks cum Laude by Komiket Inc., 2017. 282 pages.



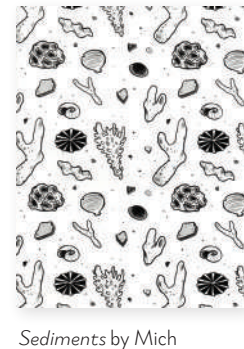
Agila (#3) by JC Panlilio, JV Fuentecilla & Aljon Perdon. Self-published, 2016. 19 pages.



Cadilly Quins by Alane Alunan. Self-published, 2016. 28 pages.



Heart on Your Sleeve by Gia Duran. Self-published, 2016. 20 pages.



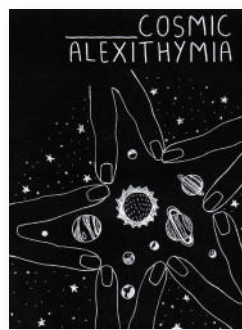
Sediments by Mich Cervantes. Self-published, 2016. 20 pages.



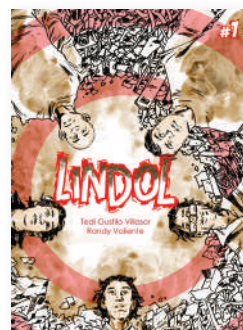
Things to Remember by Jess Santiago and Jez Nabong. Self-published, 2015. 55 pages.



Think Slash Kill by Mong Aya and Paul Salonga. Self-published, 2015. 20 pages.



Cosmic Alexithymia by Elle Ominoreg. Self-published, 2016. 16 pages.



Lindol (Earthquake) by Tedi Gustilo Villasor and Randy Valiente. 28 pages.



Ultimo #1 by Ruvel Abril. Self-published, 2017. 28 pages.



Weekend Pandemonium

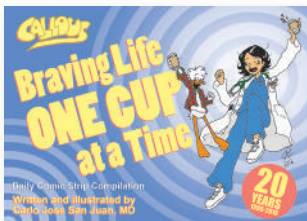


Agila



Ultimo

Zsazsa Zaturannah celebrates its Zweet Zixteen Anniversary, Pugad Baboy celebrates its 30th Anniversary, Komikon organizes its 14th year in local komiks convention, The Samahang Kartunista ng Pilipinas celebrates its 40th year, and Larry Alcala receives the National Artist award for Visual Arts in 2018. ♦



Callous - Braving Life One Cup at a Time by Carlo Jose San Juan, MD. 164 pages.



Sparrows Roar by C.R. Chua and Paolo Chikiamco. Studio Salimbal, 2015. 36 pages.



Zsazsa Zaturannah 15th Anniversary Edition by Carlo Vergara. Visprint, Inc., 2017. 180 pages.



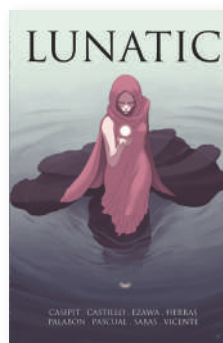
Pugad Baboy 30th Anniversary Special by Pol Medina Jr. Self-published, 2018. 104 pages.



Community 2017 by Komiket, Inc. 96 pages.



The Book of Silent Sky (Issue #1) by M. A. Del Rosario. Self-published, 2017. 34 pages.



Lunatic by Paolo Herras, Tepai Pascual, Maika Ezawa, Brent Sabas, JP Palabon, Mel Casipit, Redg Vicente, and Kai Castillo. Meganon Comics, 2015. 98 pages.



Palarong Bakal by Jan Michael Valenzuela. Point Zero Comics, 2015. 36 pages.



The Pinoy Monster Boyfriend Anthology by Gillian Pascasio, Aram Liwanag, Durch Haliya, Motzie Dapul, Japhet Marquez, and Ryan Kinlan. Self-published, 2017. 44 pages.



Patch by Miguel Luis "Milo" Galang. Kyusi Kompanie, 2017. 55 pages.

YOUR FATHER WOULD RETURN FROM SKYWORLD, CHANGED
TOUCHED BY THE GODS; TRANSFORMED BY THEIR GIFTS.

AROUND HIS NECK THE SKYGODS HAD PLACED **AGIMAT** -
AN AMULET SO POWERFUL AND ANCIENT, ALL OTHER
STONES OF MYSTICAL POWER WERE NAMED AFTER IT.

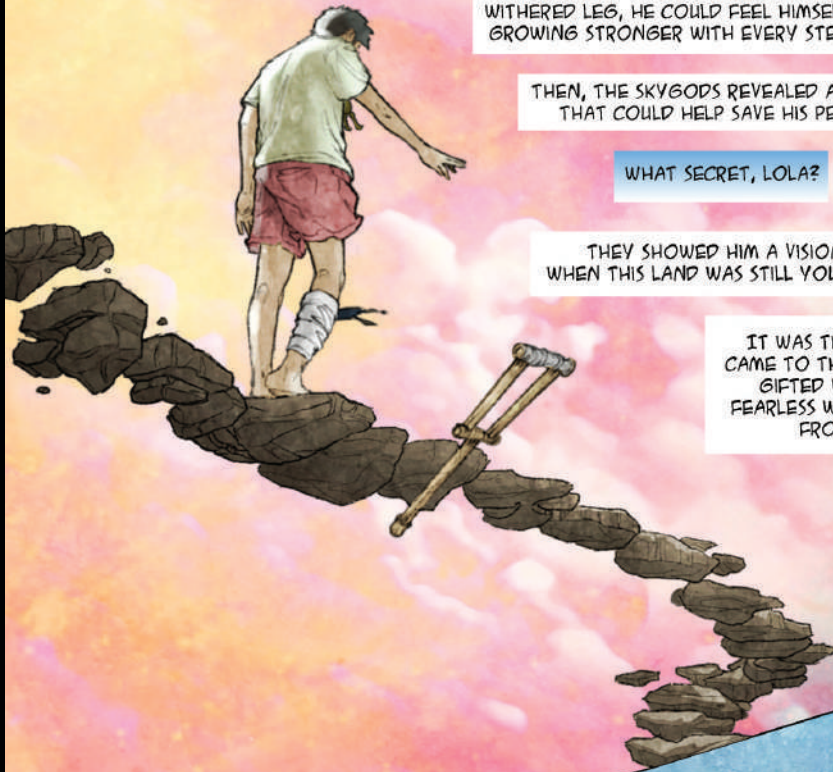
NOT ONLY HAD IT HEALED HIS
WITHERED LEG, HE COULD FEEL HIMSELF
GROWING STRONGER WITH EVERY STEP!

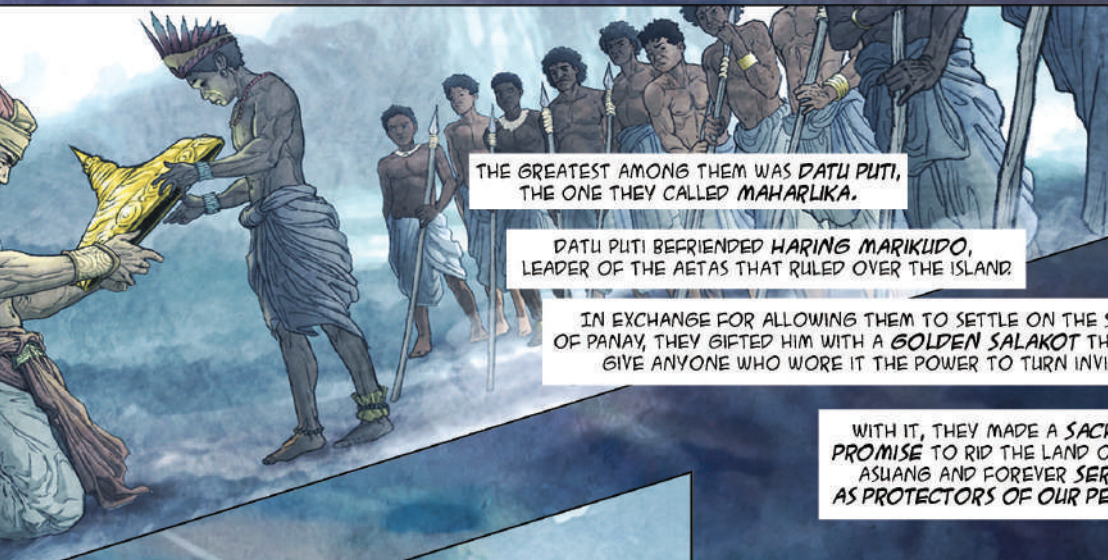
THEN, THE SKYGODS REVEALED A SECRET
THAT COULD HELP SAVE HIS PEOPLE.

WHAT SECRET, LOLA?

THEY SHOWED HIM A VISION OF THE FIRST OF TIMES,
WHEN THIS LAND WAS STILL YOUNG AND PLAGUED BY ASUANG!

IT WAS THEN THAT **THE SONS OF HEAVEN** FIRST
CAME TO THESE SHORES. **TEN DATUS FROM BORNEO**
GIFTED WITH STRENGTH BEYOND MORTAL MEN.
FEARLESS WARRIORS, RUMORED TO HAVE DESCENDED
FROM THE **SKYGOD KAPTAN** HIMSELF.





THE GREATEST AMONG THEM WAS DATU PUTI, THE ONE THEY CALLED MAHARLIKA.

DATU PUTI BEFRIENDED HARING MARIKUDO, LEADER OF THE AETAS THAT RULED OVER THE ISLAND.

IN EXCHANGE FOR ALLOWING THEM TO SETTLE ON THE SHORES OF PANAY, THEY GIFTED HIM WITH A GOLDEN SALAKOT THAT COULD GIVE ANYONE WHO WORE IT THE POWER TO TURN INVISIBLE.

WITH IT, THEY MADE A SACRED PROMISE TO RID THE LAND OF THE ASUANG AND FOREVER SERVE AS PROTECTORS OF OUR PEOPLE.

FOR 100 DAYS AND 100 NIGHTS THE SONS OF HEAVEN WAGED A WAR AGAINST THE MONSTERS.

TRUE TO THEIR WORD, THEY DID NOT STOP UNTIL THEY PROVE THE ASUANG DEEP INTO CAVES, UNDERNEATH THE MOUNTAINS.

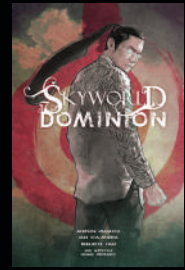
THEN, USING THE POWER OF AGIMAT, DATU PUTI SUMMONED LIGHTNING TO SEAL THEM INSIDE.



A GREAT FEAST WAS HELD BY THE AETAS TO CELEBRATE THEIR VICTORY!

AS A WAY OF HONORING THEIR DARK SKINNED HOSTS, IT IS SAID THAT THE SONS OF HEAVEN PAINTED THEIR FACES WITH SOOT AND STARTED SINGING AND DANCING WITH THEM UNDER THE SUN.

THAT IS HOW THE ATI-ATIHAN FESTIVAL FIRST CAME TO BE.



Skyworld Dominion by Mervin Ignacio, Ian Sta. Maria, Budgette Tan, Joe Azpeytia, and Nonie Cruzado.



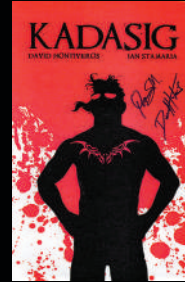
Skyworld Volume One by Mervin Ignacio and Ian Sta. Maria. National Bookstore, 2012. 152 pages.



Skyworld Volume Two by Mervin Ignacio and Ian Sta. Maria. National Bookstore, 2012. 152 pages.



Seven Gifts of the Skygods by Mervin Ignacio and Ian Sta. Maria. Alamat Comics, 2010. 16 pages.



Kadasig by David Hontiveros and Ian Sta. Maria. Alamat Comics. 28 pages.

Skyworld illustration by Ian Sta. Maria

SEQUENTIAL IDENTITY, MALLEABLE TIME, AND PHILIPPINE COMICS

PAOLO CHIKIAMCO

While the definition of comics has been the subject of much debate, it's no stretch of the imagination to say that "sequence" lies at the heart of the discipline known as "sequential art." For comics to create the world within the panel, there must be a "before" and there must be an "after." The past, and the future.

It's fitting then, that Filipino comic creators so often engage with the yesterdays and tomorrows of our nation as they ply their craft. They do so in myriad ways, for reasons as diverse as the creators themselves, but it is beyond question that the past and the present of the Philippines served as settings for some of the best of local comics.



Maktan 1521



Maktan 1521 by Tepai Pascual. Visprint, Inc., 2014. 180 pages.



Tabi Po Volume 2 by Mervin Malonzo. Visprint, Inc., 2014. 144 pages.



Strange Natives: The Forgotten Memories of a Forgetful Old Woman by Paolo Herras and Jerico Marte. Meganon Comics, 2016. 166 pages.



SAGALA 1 by Tori Tadiar. Self-published, 2016. 40 pages.





Sagala

THE PAST AS A FRAGMENTED FIXATION

The past has long had a grip on the minds and hearts of Philippine creators because it both exists and does not. The farther back we go, the more fragmented our recollection becomes, our histories discarded, painted over or intentionally destroyed. Filipinos have always been here, but we haven't always been "Filipinos," and our history in our own lands was recorded as nothing more than a footnote—if at all—until little more than a hundred years ago.

This fragmented past is an irresistible canvas for many: a map with bold outlines but little detail, and as others have said before, nothing fires the imagination quite like the opportunity to fill up the blank spaces of a map. And there are plenty of blanks, mythologies lost or marginalized, points of views suppressed or unrecorded. Works such as *Maktan 1521* (by Tepai Pascual) attempt to fill those blanks directly, dramatizing what might have been, while others such as *Tabi Po* (by Mervin Malonzo) and *Strange Natives: The Forgotten Memories of a Forgetful Old Woman* (by Paolo Herras and Jerico Marte) take a more fantastical route, blank spaces a license to use fantasies to fill in the gaps of our past, or to accentuate its contours. In works like those of Ma-I Entico ("*Emla & Bugan*"), oral traditions are brought to life in a minimalistic style and accompanied by copious endnotes, while in the *Sagala* series (by Tori Tadiar), the colonial past forms the base of a story that mixes elements of European legends and traditional fantasy. Even when the past is used but as prologue, such as the beautiful opening chapter of *Dead Balagtas* (by Emiliania Kampilan), the mythological love story of Tungkung Langit and Laon Sina serves to frame and contextualize all that comes after.



Tabi Po (Volume 3)

THE FUTURE AS ANXIETIES OF THE NOW

While the past is frequently explored territory in Philippine comics, the future is somewhat less so, perhaps due to the fact that much of our nation is either alienated from the neon-chrome visions of traditional futuristic fiction, or is already immersed in its sibling, the cyberpunk dystopia. When Philippine comics creators do venture into world of tomorrow, they frequently decorate them with the worries of the present: **Trip to Tagaytay** (by Arnold Arre) features a megapolis that is Manila writ large, with all its dense faults and fleeting reliefs. The final portions of the era-spanning epic of **Doorkeeper** (Ethan Chua/Scott Lee Chua and various artists) brings with it the threat of nuclear war. In the **Saluno Lipas** series (by Jean Estella), the divide between the haves and have-nots plays out in the tension between those who left a dying Earth aboard the Arko and those that were left behind. In each of these stories, the pathways of the future are circumscribed by chasms that grew from the fault lines of our headlines.



Saluno-Lipas II



Buster



Doorkeeper by Ethan Chua and Scott Lee Chua; illustrated by Gia Duran, Aaron Felizmenio, Allen Geneta, Bow Guerrero, Bianca Lesaca, Jap Mikel, Brent Sabas. Summit Media, 2017. 136 pages.



Mythopolis #3 by Marco Manalac, JV Tanjuatco, and Jim Jimenez. 30 pages.



Saluno-Lipas II by Jean Estella. Self-published, 2016. 32 pages.



Ang Subersibo (The Subversive) by Adam David and Mervin Malonzo. Anino Comics, 2015. 60 pages.



BUSTER #3 by Peejay Catacutan. 2017.



LEFT *I'm A Legal Alien*
BELOW *Crime-Fighting Call Center Agents*



THE PRESENT VIEWED SIDWAYS

Creators do not always need to leave the present in order to give context and meaning to it. Instead of setting their works in the past or the future, many creators instead bring elements from there into the present, creating alternate histories that highlight the present through contrast and juxtaposition. Frequently, this is through making the marginalized more visible to us by making them truly Other, such as in **After Lambana** (by Eliza Victoria and Mervin Malonzo) where the Diwatas are pariahs, and **I'm a Legal Alien** (by Francis and Patrick Concepcion) where that role is filled by the titular extraterrestrials.

WORLD (RE)BUILDING AS IDENTITY

The concept of time—the before and after—lies at the heart of sequential art, but in comics, time is a malleable thing. Time may be portrayed as a function of space, or of words, or of the size and shape of the panel. It's that malleability that allows comics so easily to explore the past and postulate the future, and to alter what passes for the contemporary. A people cannot have an identity if they do not have memories of the past or aspirations for the future, and through envisioning these, comics makes them real, and allows us to create a conception of our selves that we can call our own. Identity is a central preoccupation of Filipino creators, and in imagining or re-imagining the past, present, and future of the archipelago, Filipino comics creators have made their presence felt in that ongoing conversation.



Crime-Fighting Call Center Agents #2 by Noel Pascual and AJ Bernardo. Self-published, 2012. 24 pages.



Ang Butiki at Ang Pagong (The Lizard and the Turtle) by Cy Vendivil. Self-published, 2017. 24 pages.



After Lambana by Eliza Victoria and Mervin Malonzo. Visprint, Inc., 2016. 192 pages.

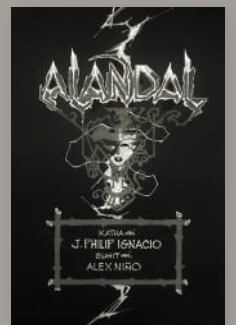


I'm A Legal Alien by Francis Concepcion and Patrick Concepcion. Self-Published, 2016. 45 pages.



Mythspace by Paolo Chikiamco, Koi Carreon, Borg Sinaban, Tina Chua, Jules Gregorio, Mico Dimagiba, and Pol Quiroga. Visprint, Inc., 2014.





Alandal by J. Philip Ignacio and Alex Niño.

Alandal illustration by Alex Niño



THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD WINNERS

Since 1982, the Manila Critics Circle (MCC) celebrates the top locally-published books through the Philippine National Book Awards. Co-presented by the National Book Development Board (NBDB) from 2008 onwards, it is one of the most anticipated literary events of the year.

Publishers and authors nominate the best published books authored by Filipinos. Finalists of the Graphic Literature category are selected for their congruence of verbal and illustrated content, logical structure, consistency of characterization, and precision in the use of visual and literary devices.

Winners receive a trophy and cash prize, but the nominations and titles are highly coveted among authors and illustrators. To date, there are only twenty titleholders for the National Book Award for **THE BEST GRAPHIC NOVEL**.

Mythology Class





Trip to Tagaytay

ARNOLD ARRE

THE MYTHOLOGY CLASS

WINNER, 1999

Publisher Alamat Group of Comics

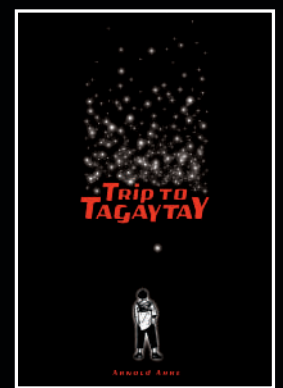
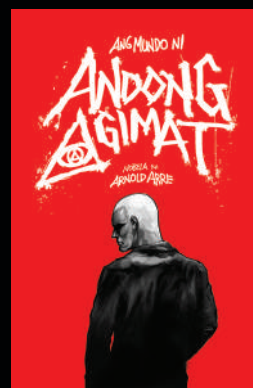
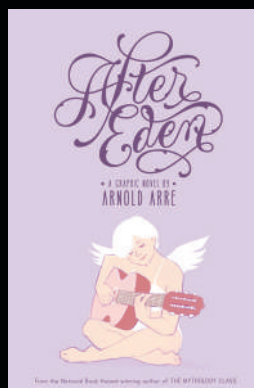
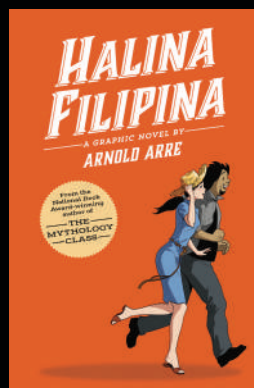
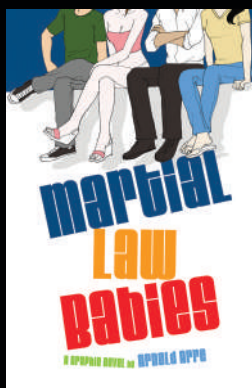
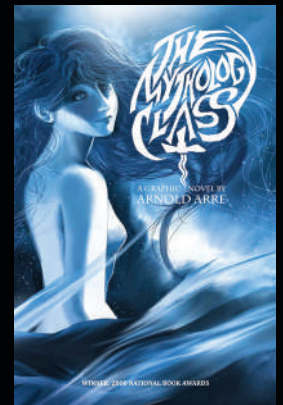
A group of university students are enrolled in Mrs. Engkanta's Mythology Class, where they train to seek and capture elemental spirits called *enkan-tos*. The class must share their abilities and work together to defeat the evil Sitan and his *aswang* minions who want to wreak havoc and take over the world.

TRIP TO TAGAYTAY

WINNER, 2000

Publisher Tala Studios & Quest Ventures

Envisioning 21st Century Manila, *Trip to Tagaytay* is the story of a young man's journey to the newly-opened Tagaytay Ocean Tunnel. All the while, he composes a heartfelt letter to his love in the Orbital Space Station.



OTHER TITLES (LEFT TO RIGHT)

Martial Law Babies (2009), *Halina Filipina* (2015), *After Eden* (2016), and *Andong Agimat* (2017).

CARLO VERGARA

ANG KAGILA-GILALAS NA
PAKIKIPAGSAPALARAN NI
ZSAZSA ZATURRNAH
WINNER, 2002

Publisher Alamat Comics, Carverhouse
Creations, and Quest Ventures

ZSAZSA ZATURRNAH SA
KALAKHANG MAYNILA #1
WINNER, 2013

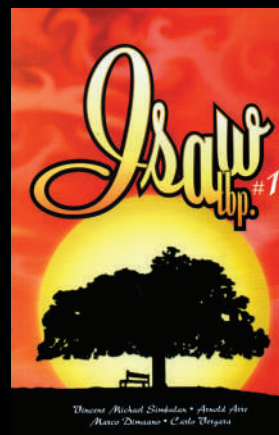
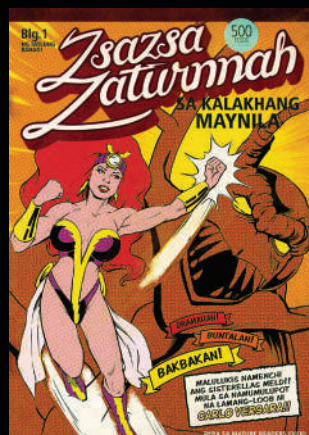
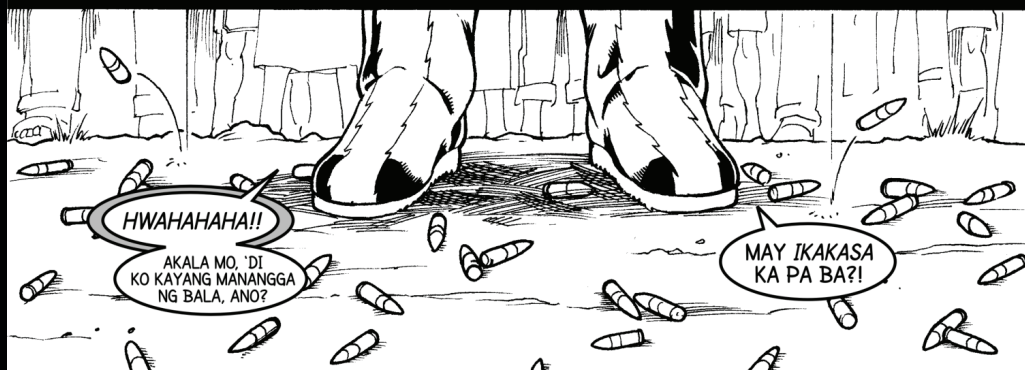
Publisher Visprint, Inc.

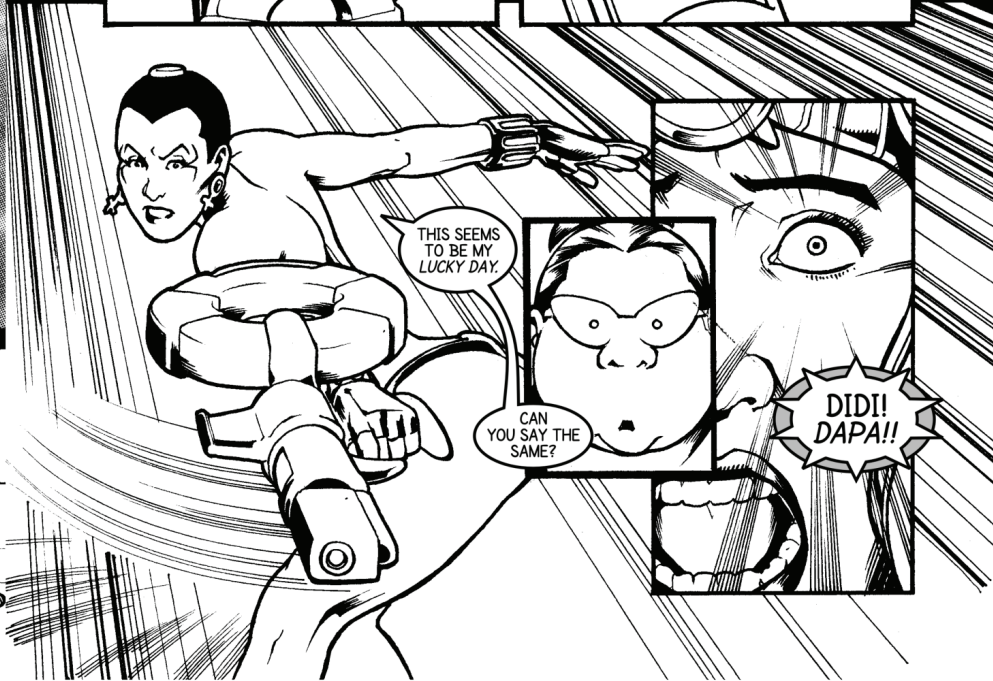
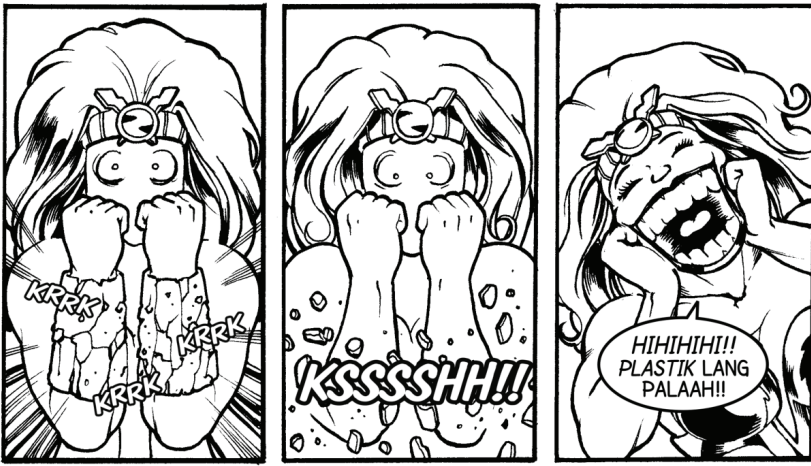
A mysterious stone falls from the heavens, granting gay beautician Ada the ability to transform into **Zsazsa Zaturrnah**, a female superhuman warrior endowed with uncanny strength and remarkable beauty. With his frilly-mouthed assistant Didi and his objet d'amour Dodong, Ada reinforces his belief in acknowledging the decisions of destiny. **Zsazsa Zaturrnah sa Kalakhang Maynila** is the sequel to the award-winning graphic novel.

ISAW, ATBP.
WINNER, 2001

Publisher Tala Studios & Quest Ventures
Vincent Michael Simbulan, Arnold Arre,
Marco Dimaano, Carlo Vergara

Named after a local delicacy, **Isaw, Atbp.** is a collection of three intersecting stories: *Flat* by Vincent Michael Simbulan and Arnold Arre; *Sampaguita Girl* by Marco Dimaano and *He Said, She Said* by Vincent Michael Simbulan and Carlo Vergara. Edited by Nikki Alfara.





OTHER TITLES (LEFT TO RIGHT)
Kung Paano Ako Naging Leading Lady,
Zsa Zsa Zaturannah sa Kalakhang Maynila #2,
 and *Zsa Zsa Zaturannah sa Kalakhang Maynila #3*.





SIGLO: Passion

ZACH YONZON AND LAN MEDINA

MARS RAVELO'S DARNA
WINNER, 2003

Publisher Mango Comics

For its 60th Anniversary, **Darna**, the Filipino superheroine returns to print in this three-issue comics set. Originally created for a weekly magazine in 1951 by prolific comics writer Marcial "Mars" Ravelo, and first drawn by Nestor Redondo, Darna flies high once again as she saves her friends from archenemy Valentina. *Images courtesy of Yonzon Entertainment Syndicate.*

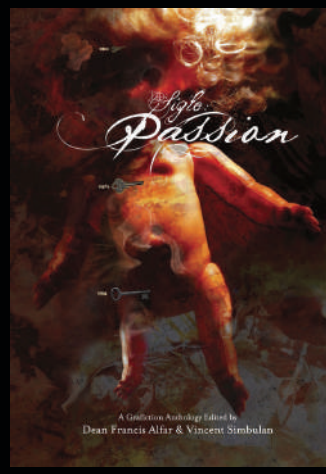
FRANCIS ALFAR AND VINCENT SIMBULAN

SIGLO: FREEDOM
WINNER, 2004

SIGLO: PASSION
WINNER, 2005

Publisher Mango Books, Quest Ventures, and Kestrel IMC

SIGLO (Century) captures various points of 20th-century Philippine life, creating snapshots of the decades that lead to the year 2000. Each book has stories tied to recurring themes of freedom and passion. No matter how things change, human nature remains the same.



BUDJETTE TAN AND KAJO BALDISIMO

TRESE: MASS MURDERS
WINNER, 2010

**TRESE 4: LAST SEEN
AFTER MIDNIGHT**
WINNER, 2012

TRESE 5: MIDNIGHT TRIBUNAL
WINNER, 2013

Publisher Visprint, Inc.

When crime takes a turn for the weird, the police call Alexandra Trese. Protected by two masked bodyguards called the *kambal* (twins), Trese fights supernatural crime and restores order in the natural world from supernatural criminals.

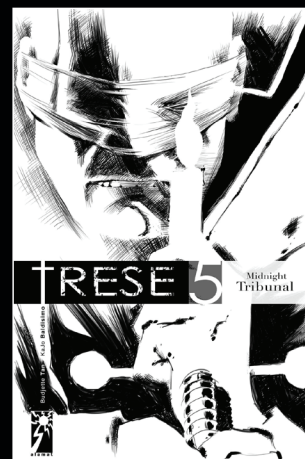
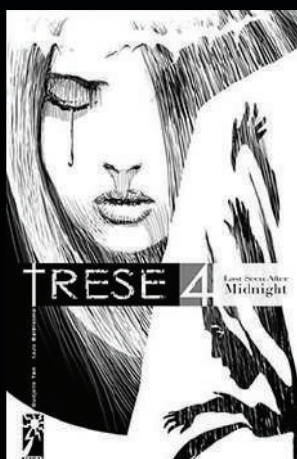
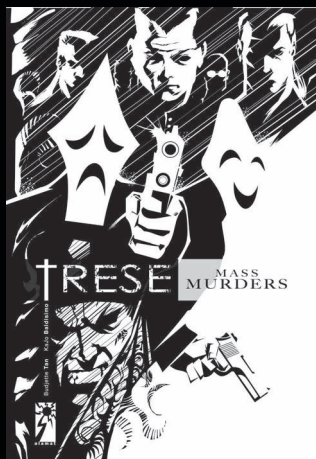
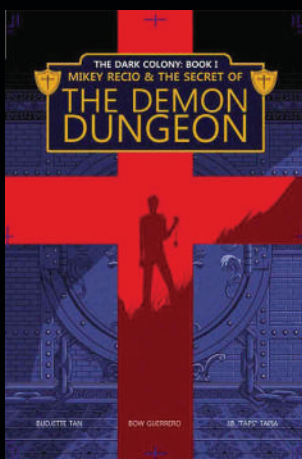


BUDJETTE TAN, BOW GUERRERO AND J.B. TAPIA

**THE DARK COLONY BOOK I:
MIKEY RECTO & THE SECRET OF
THE DEMON DUNGEON**
WINNER, 2014

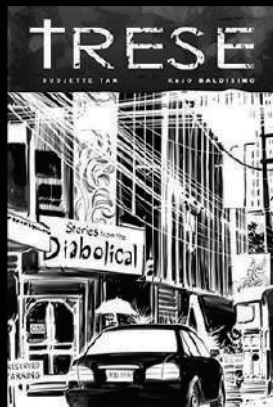
Publisher Visprint, Inc.

Mikey Recto had plans for the holidays, but driving for his grandfather was not part of it. Nor did it involve stumbling upon a very unholy secret, forcing him on a demon-battling adventure.





The first six books in the Trese series

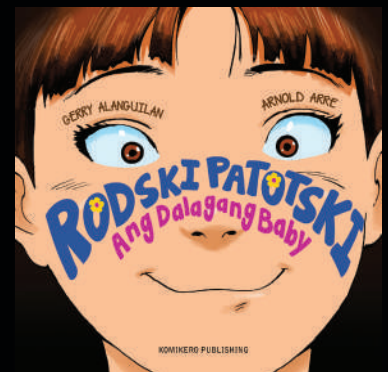
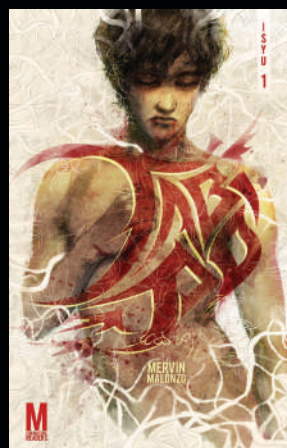


OTHER TITLES IN THE TRESE SERIES (LEFT TO RIGHT)
Trese: Stories from the Diabolical, and Trese: Book of Murders.



Pilandok Komiks Isyu 2: Mga Pagsubok ng Karagatan

OTHER TITLES IN THE
PILANDOKOMIKS SERIES (BELOW):
Isyu 1: Ang Tatlong Sumpa





Tabi Po Volume 1

BORG SINABAN

**PILANDOKOMIKS ISYU 2:
MGA PAGSUBOK NG KARAGATAN**
WINNER, 2014

Publisher Adarna House, Inc.

Pilandokomiks is a modern retelling of the popular Filipino folk tale character, Pilandok. This street-smart fox gets himself out of tough situations as he helps protect his animal friends and nature spirits from man's greed.

MERVIN MALONZO

TABI PO (VOLUME 1)
WINNER, 2014

Publisher Visprint, Inc.

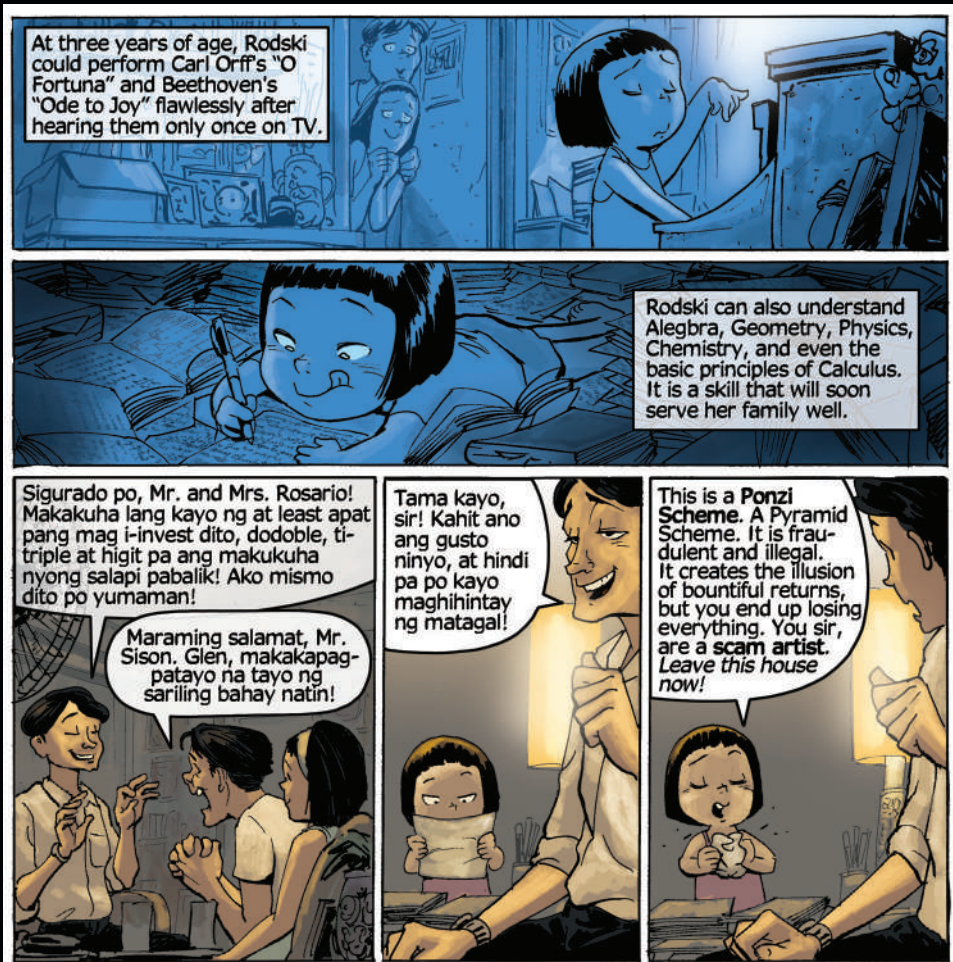
Inside a hollow tree, a young man wakes up with no memory of who he is, or where he's from. The only thing he knows for sure is the image of a young woman, and the maddeningly painful hunger that grows inside his navel-less belly—a hunger for flesh and blood.

GERRY ALANGUILAN AND ARNOLD ARRE

**RODSKI PATOTSKI:
ANG DALAGANG BABY**
WINNER, 2014

Publisher Meganon Comics

Rodski Patotski is born a genius child who grows up to be the most intelligent girl in the whole country. But when she falls in love for the first time, she starts to lose brain cells. Will she be smart enough to save both the city from destruction and her childlike heart?



Rodski Patotski: Ang Dalagang Baby

MANIX ABRERA

14'
WINNER, 2015

NEWS HARDCORE! HUKBONG
SANDATAHAN NG KAHAGGARDAN
WINNER, 2016

Publisher Visprint, Inc.

14' is a wordless comic book that features Philippine mythological beings portrayed in a different light. Meet different creatures, mortal and otherwise, in funny and philosophical tales.

News Hardcore headlines the extreme conditions, harsh situations, larger-than-life characters, and behind-the-scenes of the laugh-out-loud world of the media.

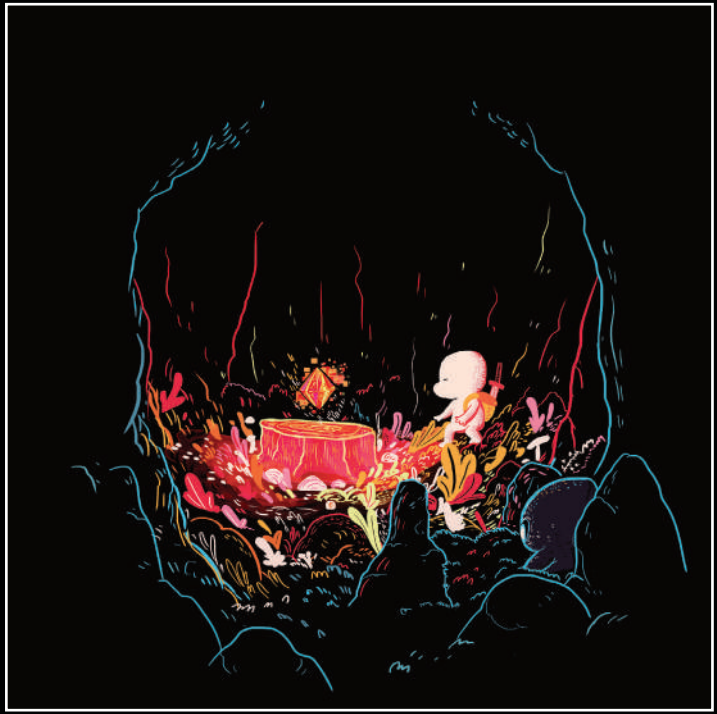




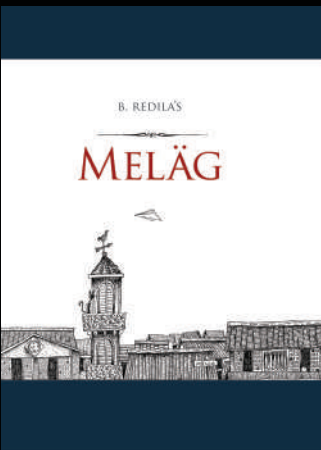
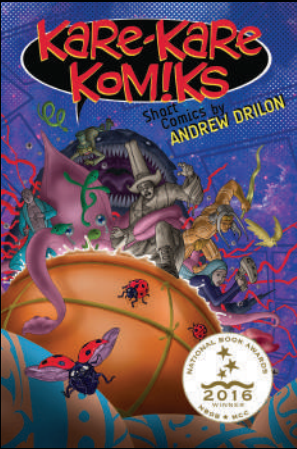
OTHER TITLES (TOP TO BOTTOM)
Kikomachine Komix Omnibus,
Kikomachine no. 12, *Kikomachine*
no. 13, and *12*.



OTHER TITLES BY ROB CHAM
Lost



Light



Kare-Kare Komiks



"Kay husay nilang maglaro ng taguan," sabi ni Lourdes.
 "Papa labas na ang buwan at di pa rin natin sila matagpuan."



ROB CHAM

LIGHT

WINNER, 2016

Publisher Adarna House, Inc.

Follow the exploits of a backpack-toting adventurer in a quest to find a mysterious treasure. Framed in black, the wordless illustrations offer delightful bursts of color and are sure to entertain readers of every age.

ANDREW DRILON

KARE-KARE KOMIKS

WINNER, 2016

Publisher Adarna House, Inc.

A metafictional hunter faces an apocalyptic entity threatening the very fabric of stories! In order to defeat it, he must dive into this collection of more than twenty delicious comics stories and enlist the aid of its colorful characters. Satisfy your hunger with *Kare-Kare Komiks*.

BONG REDILA

MELÄG

WINNER, 2017

Publisher Adarna House, Inc.

Take a trip to the whimsical town of *Meläg*. Meet the town's residents, discover fantastic stories, and navigate through childlike dreams and heart-breaking memories.

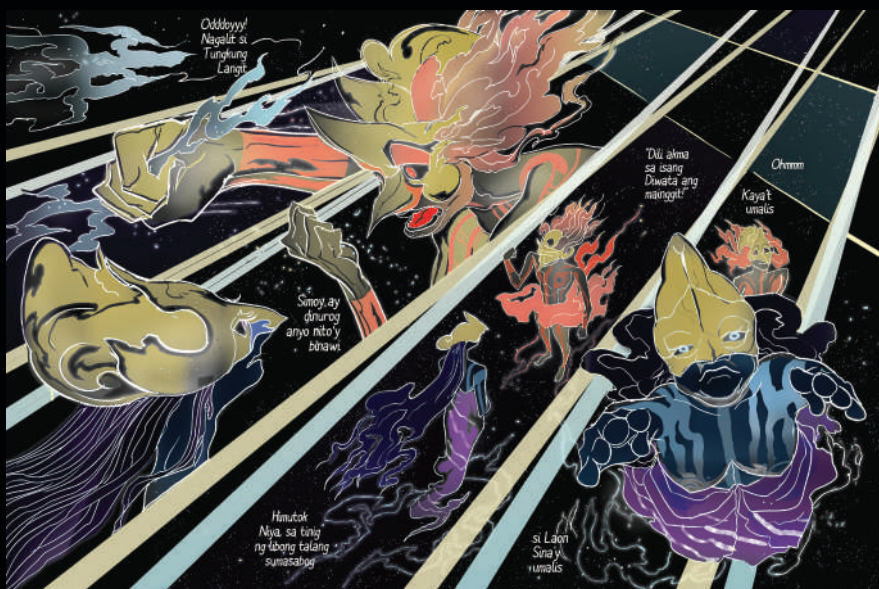
EMILIANA KAMPILAN

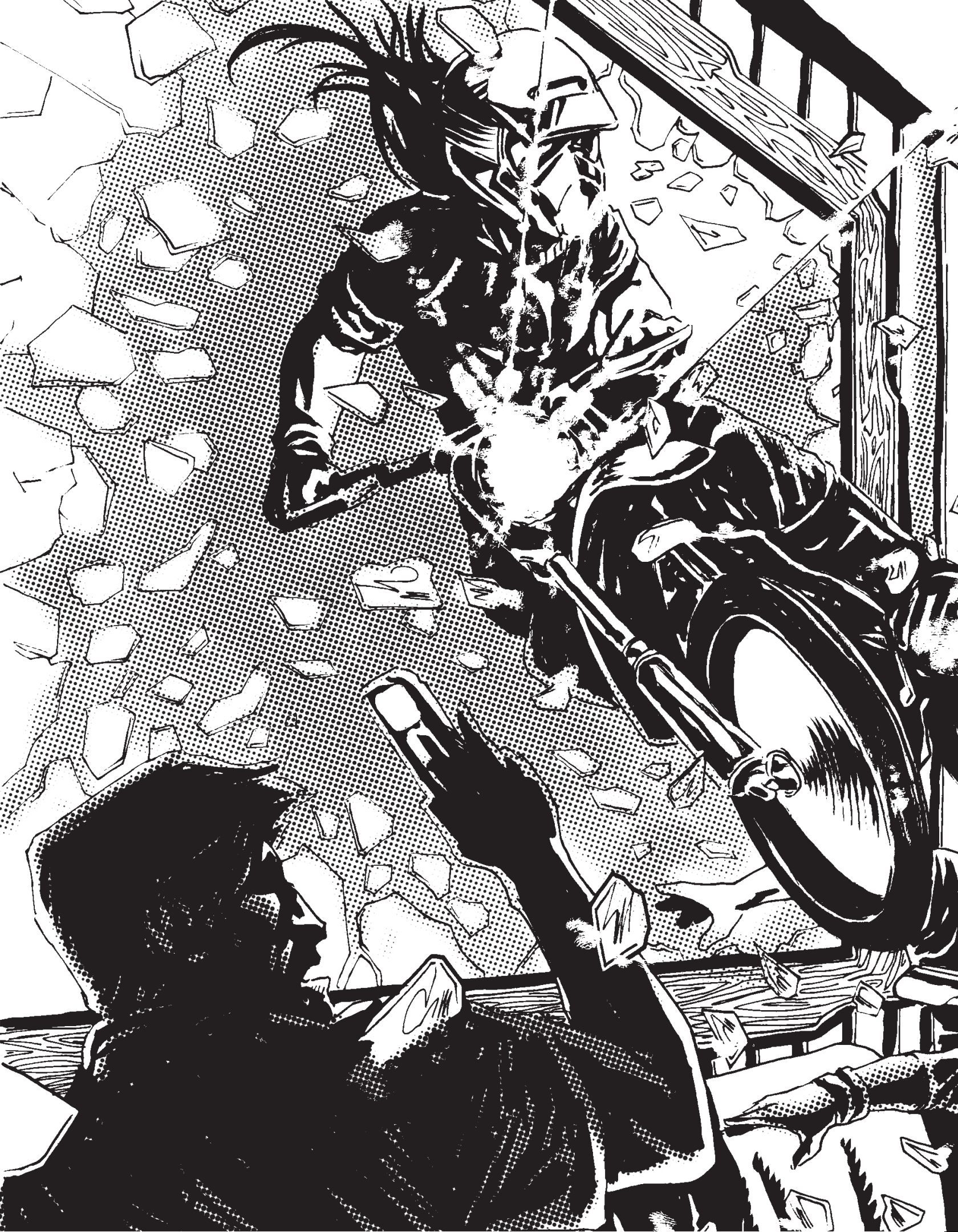
DEAD BALAGTAS TOMO 1:
 MGA SAYAW NG DAGAT AT LUPA

WINNER, 2018

Publisher Adarna House, Inc.

A divine priestess retells the passionate love story of the gods *Tungkung Langit* and *Laon Sina*, birthing the land and seas of the Philippines, and the equally passionate love stories of its folk.







Gwapoman 2000: Ang Huling Baraha by Aaron Felizmenio. Published 2012. 132 pages.



Minkowski Space Opera 1 by Aaron Felizmenio. Published 2014. 40 pages.



Pangil by Aaron Felizmenio. Published 2015. 40 pages.

Gwapoman illustration
by Aaron Felizmenio

ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE OF KOMIKS

BY KYRA BALLESTEROS

THE EVENT TREND

Events including the annual Independent Komiks Market (Indieket), The Filipino Komiks and Art Market (Komiket), and even small press expo Better Living Through Xerography (BLTX)—often showcase the work of students, young professionals, or other creatives who are new to the Philippine komiks scene, all willing to expand the existing

market or create demand for new kinds of stories. The venues offer a glimpse of the diversity—of stories, content, illustrative styles, and handling of the comic form—that Filipino komiks creators are capable of. The schedule of these fairs and events is also noteworthy: spaced far-enough apart, but with satisfying regularity that komiks creators who write and illustrate their original work while studying or working full time.



Opismeyts



Lakan at Makisig

DAD JOKE

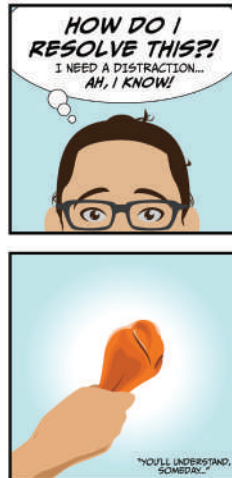


A SHORT COMIC BY TOTO MADAYAG
FACEBOOK.COM/LIBRENGKOMIKS

CHICKEN SKIN LOVE



BY BK PEÑA



Comics by Ardie Aquino

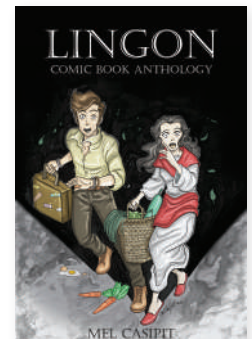
PAREKOYS COMICS



MEL CASIPIIT



The Propaganda Project by Maou Mao.



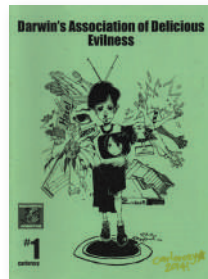
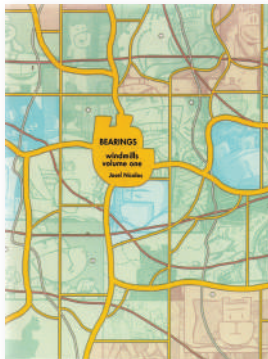
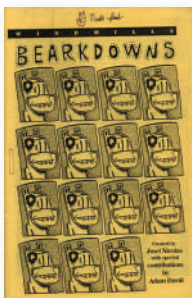
Lingon (Look Back) by Mel Casipit. 136 pages.

Komiks available at these fairs are often episodic, featuring shorter narratives, or works-in-progress moving slowly through larger story arcs. A brief survey of these up-and-coming stories reveals an unsurprising dearth of superhero-narratives that perhaps signals the end of one trend and, hopefully, the beginning of another.

THE PUBLISHERS ARE COMING

While the overwhelming trend among commercial Filipino komiks publications was to publish stories about Philippine lower-myth creatures, noir and mystery, and Filipino superheroes, there is little competition between commercial publishers and the community of independent creators because readers of Filipino komiks will usually read a mix of

independently-published stories and more widely available fare. Apart from availability, a deciding factor for creators hoping to sustain readers' interest is in remaining visible. This usually entails launching stories with a measure of regularity: via events, or even via the staggered release of teasers and other peripheral content—like quick sketches, peeks at works-in-progress, and even reimagining characters and stories as reacting to national or international news. More and more komiks creators are therefore taking the essential second step of tapping into a community of readers on social media, in tandem with richer platforms that allow for and are geared towards interaction. Staggering smaller releases will keep readers interested and keep these projects in more regular rotation.



Josel Nicolas published *Windmills: Bearndowns* in ashcan form in 2008, and the compiled *Bearings: Windmills Volume One* book in 2015.

Carlorozy Clemente published *Darwin's Association of Delicious Evilness #1* in ashcan form in 2012, and the compiled book in 2017.



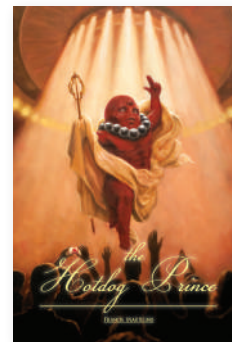
Beyond by various artists. *Beyond the Box*, 2016. 78 pages.



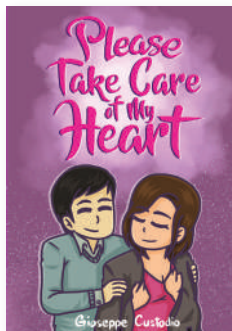
*P*cha, E 'Di Komiks Vol. 1* by Toto Madayag. Silaw Publishing, 2016. 164 pages.



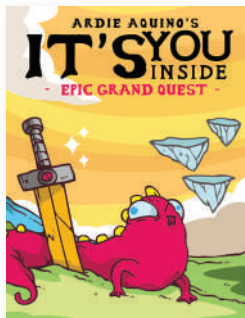
Hunghang Flashbacks by D. Borja. Published by Summit Books, 2017. 148 pages.



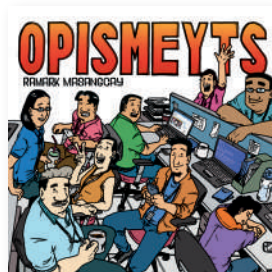
The Hotdog Prince by Francis Martelino.



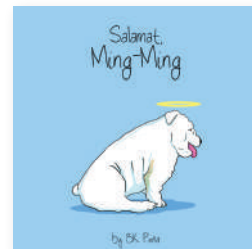
Please Take Care of My Heart by Giuseppe Custodio. Self-published 2017. 40 pages.



It's You Inside: Epic Grand Quest by Ardie Aquino.



Opismeyts by Ramark Masangcay.



Salamat, Ming-Ming by BK Peña.



Cosmic Reaction by Sean Sonsona. Silaw Publishing, 2018. 56 pages.

THE TORCHBEARERS OF SELF-PUBLISHING

While independent publishing offers the allure of full creative control—in terms of production, pricing, and marketing—commercially published komiks are often produced in larger print-runs, and creators who choose to go this route no longer have to worry about shouldering the cost of production. Going commercial offers other benefits, including availability in some brick-and-mortar bookstores and increased visibility, while opening opportunities for komik artists to build their brand: inclusion and features in events and other media, providing a network of other artists for collaboration, and continuous marketing efforts.

Regular interaction between creators and their readers also make creatives accountable to their fans. Successful

long-term projects like Mervin Malonzo’s *Tabi Po* (Haliya Publishing), Manix Abrera’s long-running *Kikomachine Komix* (Visprint, Inc.), and even Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldesimo’s *Trese* (Visprint, Inc.) remain visible because of regular, smaller releases, and active social pages.

A NEW AGE OF CONTENT

Komiks creators and commercial publishers interested in maintaining a relationship with readers while continuing to write, illustrate, and publish amazing stories need a third party charged exclusively with creating and discovering opportunities for original work. While the trend of print-to-film (taking stories from books and recasting it to fit other media forms, like films and television series) took off internationally, few contemporary Filipino writers have been



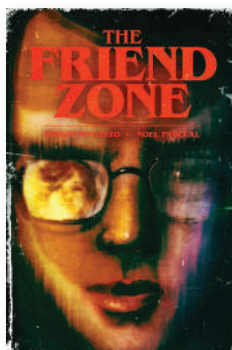
UGH by Hulyen: from ashcan form (2014) to a book released by Haliya Publishing (2017).



Tabi Po by Mervin Malonzo: from online comic to TV series (2017).



Ella Arcangel by Julius Villanueva: first self-published in ashcan form, it was released as a book by Haliya Publishing in 2017, and is currently being adapted for an upcoming animation project. SCREENSHOT FROM MERVIN MALONZO ON FACEBOOK



LEFT *Tabi Po* Volume 3 by Mervin Malonzo, *April & May Forever!!* by Hulyan & Hulyen, *The Friend Zone* by Mervin Malonzo and Noel Pascual, and *Pakikisalamuha* by Mervin Malonzo; all published by Haliya Publishing, 2017.

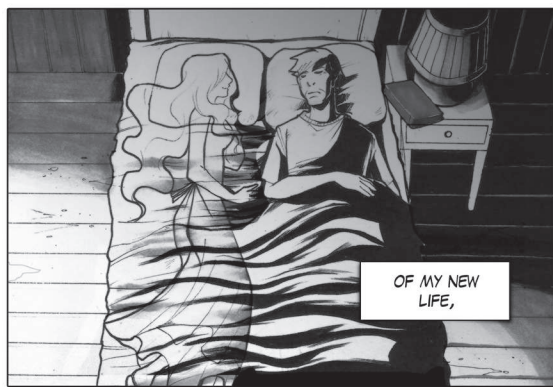
able to find similar platforms—a notable exception is Carlo Vergara’s fabulous **Zsazsa Zaturannah**, which spawned both a film (Regal Entertainment, 2006, dir. Joel Lamangan) and a musical. For the 2016 CineFilipino Film Festival, Paolo Herras directed the film adaptation of his graphic novel **Buhay Habangbuhay** illustrated by Tepai Pascual.

Mervin Malonzo’s **Tabi Po** has successfully crossed that bridge; Cignal TV’s SARI SARI Channel released an adaptation of Malonzo’s graphic novel, which aired from 27 October to 01 December 2017. And soon to follow is Manix Abrera’s **Sorrowful, Sorrowful Mysteries**.

Epik Studios has been publishing graphic novels of Francisco Coching’s **Pedro Penduko**, **Bernardo Carpio** and

Osyana, which are planned to hit the big screens with Viva Films.

Lack of representation directly translates to fewer opportunities for independent creators and publishers to market original content. Given the challenges of sustaining a creative project, publishers and independent komiks creators alike face the problem of sustainability: is it possible to develop and practice at once the creative impulse necessary to write and illustrate original stories, the discipline necessary to produce and distribute komiks, and the business acumen to profit from and manage their creative work? ♦



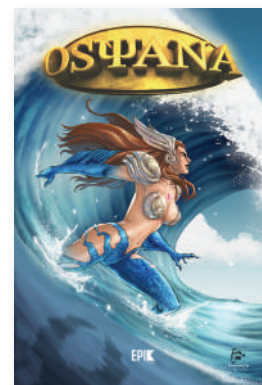
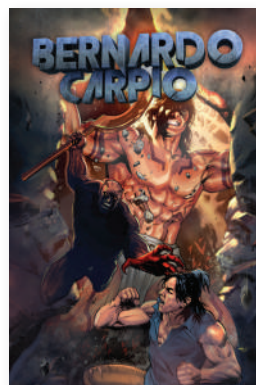
Buhay Habangbuhay by Paolo Herras and Tepai Pascual: the book (Meganon Comics, 2014), and the film (2016).



Zsazsa Zaturannah: Ze Muzikal Original Cast Recording 2006. Music, lyrics, & musical arrangement by Vincent A. DeJesus.



Sorrowful Sorrowful Mysteries, by Manix Abrera. Visprint, Inc., 2011. 94 pages.



LEFT *Pedro Penduko*, *Republika*, *Bernardo Carpio*, and *Osyana*, all published by Epik Studios.

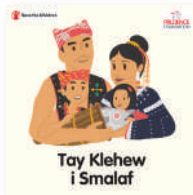
THE TEAM



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📍 Rubber Ducky Stamp Co. / Hello Ms. Alex



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📍 storiesbyelbertor



PAOLO CHIKIAMCO writes prose, comics, and interactive fiction. He's the Managing Editor of Studio Salimbal (SalimbalComics.com), the editor of *Alternative Alamat*, the co-editor of *Kwentillion*, and the writer behind works such as *Mythspace*, *Muros*, *Sparrows' Roar*, and *Bravos: Manila*.



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