

FrameWork 12/23/1

Bianca Weeko Martin on Patrick Cruz

Inn On The Park

When my parents and I first immigrated to Canada, the first place we lived was a hotel called Inn On The Park: a soft landing on a small hill, on the threshold of Scarborough and Toronto. We stayed here for a few weeks before moving to an apartment at Kennedy and Eglinton. There is now a condo tower at the site of the now-demolished hotel, sharing the same address as that first “home” of ours: Inn On The Park Drive. I’ve been spending some time here on Inn On The Park Drive, and it has good vibes. I am comforted by the rustling of leaves in the nearby park, when a strong wind passes or when one of the freight trains rattles by on raised metal tracks. There is a Toyota dealership in front of the building, and walking by this reminds me that I still cannot drive. I saw a fox near the entrance the other week. Patrick told me that a fox sighting is a reminder to “increase my awareness

And tune into my intuition.”



Inn On The Park Drive, Toronto, Ontario, 2023

Mount Manalmon, Bulacan

In October of 1987, in the sleepy town of Doña Remedios Trinidad (named after the mother of controversial former First Lady Imelda Marcos) in Bulacan (home province of both my father and Patrick’s), a military offensive is launched against communist rebels, driving them into the

mountains. In 2023, at the end of spring, I dream of going on a hike to round out my last week in the Philippines. My third cousin Kuya Darren, then unemployed, offers to take me on the back of his motorbike, and out of my naïve gratitude I take the long, dreary, smog-filled trip with dignity and joy. We balk at the backs of cargo trucks on the highway. We fumble on the last leg of the route as we search for a certain unmarked path. The motorbike falls on its side in the mud with me at the rear, laughing, before our humid ascent.

At the top of Mount Manalmon, I ask Kuya Darren what his biggest regret in life is. We gaze at the ground below us, a hazy patchwork of greens interlaced with rivers. “I regret not getting to America soon enough,” he mumbles, so softly I wonder now, months later, if I really heard that right.

When we return to the *sari sari* store at the mountain’s base, Kuya Darren makes a beeline for the single *cigarillos* readily available for a few pesos at the makeshift storefront. I smoke one with him, borrowing a lighter tied with string to the metal gridwall set above the counter. We sit in silence. Heading back home to Manila later that night, I get us Jollibee for dinner before hailing my bus from the side of the road. It’s dark, and we are standing across the street from a construction site where Kuya Darren had once worked as an on-site nurse. He was making the equivalent of twenty dollars a day on the job.

I haven’t sent money to Kuya Darren in a while. He pissed me off over Facebook Messenger recently. Everything about Bulacan and Mount Manalmon and Kuya Darren’s regretful life all feel so far away. Patrick did my tarot card reading shortly after he returned from his own trip to the Philippines, and I related the Queen of Pentacles he drew to myself and my small riches. I’ll get around to sending something soon.



Mount Manalmon, Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan, 2023

The Delta

There's another hotel that figures in my adolescent memories of Toronto. Patrick posted a photo of it on his Instagram Story recently: a great brick fortress set against the blur of more forgettable buildings near Kennedy and the 401. "That's The Delta where I went to ratchet debut after parties," I replied to his story. "Local Scarborough lore."

The debut is a traditional Filipino coming-of-age celebration that celebrates a woman's eighteenth birthday, the age of maturity in the Philippines. The first half is full of formalities, debatably fake friends, and soft father-daughter dances, usually staged at a banquet hall. The other, more debauchorous half, the After Party, takes place (in my experience) in a hotel room like the ones at The Delta. I wonder how many Firsts, Betrayals, Fleeting Loves and Tears The Delta has seen. Maybe there are Ghosts lurking in its halls. You can still see the tinted glazing enclosing an indoor swimming pool that, if I remember correctly, always came before the suites. In 2020, The Delta was converted into a shelter for unhoused adults and youth. "Everything is temporary," my dad remarked, unironically, the last time we drove past on the highway.

Ocean

*I sit by the ocean much as I have many times before,
Framed by the particularities of places untouched
Watching waves delineating this break (Pesangan)
On the horizon, like crumbling blue walls enclosing
And opening an island*

*Time passes differently here, I think, as I watch a funeral procession
A truck driving backwards*

To deposit soil on a fisherman's grave

*Time passes without the seasons to mark the axes of other things
Do we shape the seasons, or is it the other way around?
I am the master of only some ends and beginnings
Mold stamped at the point of greatest brightness*

Moving every-day toward the Half-Life of "DIASPORA"

("How far does my life reach, and where does the night begin," wrote Rilke.)

Ritual

"Rituals are architectures of time, structuring and stabilizing life, and they are on the wane... Blaise Pascal once said that instead of despairing over a loss of faith, one should simply go to mass and join in rituals such as prayer and song, in other words mime, since it is precisely this that will bring back faith. The external transforms the internal, brings about new conditions. Therein lies the power of rituals."¹

¹ Borchardt, Gesine. "Byung-Chul Han: 'I Practise Philosophy as Art.'" ArtReview. 20 December 2021.

Bloor Street

I was walking down Bloor Street, on the sidewalk where Patrick and I have run into each other many times. I noticed the absence of some graffiti that had always coloured my arrival at and perception of one particular intersection; this, too, was buffed.