

Profile: Ruston Ocampo Banal Jr.

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The following information is a consolidation of my employment and professional history as an interdisciplinary artist and as an academician.

I recently finished my Master of Arts in Designing Education under the Philippines and UK partnership scholarship and conducting research on curriculum development and creation. I took my undergraduate degree which is a Bachelor of Fine Arts major in Art History at the UP College of Fine Arts in 2006. You can check out the program I am involved with at Goldsmiths through this link: <https://www.britishcouncil.ph/tne/opportunities/ma-designing-education>

As a native of Pampanga, I grew up in the woodcarving community of Betis and made an extensive study about the history of my hometown, material culture, and the Catholic religion.

I am a multimedia artist and since 2006, I served as a faculty member in several Philippine universities teaching art, design, history, and photography subjects. My previous teaching post was as a photography teacher at the Department of Communication at Far Eastern University.

I do some freelance work and a regular feature story writer and photographer for GMA News online. I also maintain a photography gallery under the global organization called International Photography Awards in San Fernando where I conduct workshops and seminars in photography. I mounted and curated quite several photo exhibitions of IPA in De La Salle Benilde and IPA Gallery.

I have done a couple of documentary pieces concerning the condition of the aeta communities in Porac and Floridblanca as part of my professional photographic work, which encompasses visual anthropology.

I was able to document the movement of the badjao people of the lahar desert in Mabalacat, Pampanga, and publish those accounts.

For the past 3 years, my recent projects were two coffee-table books where I served as the writer and photographer. One is entitled "Nanay", which is a biography of the former Pampanga governor. Aside from creating the book, I also design and created the wood-carved box. I also finished creating a culinary book that was launched during the pandemic.

Below is the list of things I did for the past 15 years as an artist and as an educator:

To Preserve the Dying Tradition:

My latest project is serving as the author of an OBE program in Woodcarving under the National Commission for the Culture and the Arts and Technical Education and Skill Development Authority where woodcarvers can study and acquire an NC II from both institutions which they can use as a validation and a testament of their skills. It will now become easier for them to apply abroad where there is a great demand for woodcarvers by using this national certification

of the government. Growing up in Betis, I see this folk art as a vanishing tradition where the younger generations are no longer interested to learn the skills since they look at this simply as a backyard industry that won't make them go to places. The idea is to elevate the stature of the tradition and become available nationwide. My co-author for this project is Mr. Gerry Leonardo, former chairman of the Makiling Highschool for the Arts.

In 2012, I conceptualized a film that I ended up doing with Armando Lao (Screenplay, Kinatay) and Brillante Mendoza which is about a story of ecclesiastical sculptor Willy Layug and the vanishing woodcarving tradition of Betis. The film entitled DUKIT won the grand slam awards of the 2013 Metro Manila Film Festival and took home most of the awards.

IN 2017, I also finished the creation of the autobiography book of Willy Layug.

To Combat Fake News:

Aside from this, I enrolled in the scholarship program of the Commission on Higher Education which gave me a unique opportunity to design an innovative curriculum for photography in social media that can be implemented both as a GE program and as a stand-alone course that can be offered online to teach stakeholders the image-creation and visual storytelling within the context of social media. As a key person holding a very good position in observing the global phenomenon in photography, I am a witness to the every-dynamic evolution of photographic practices and theory of visual culture. Every day, I get to talk to professional photographers coming from different parts of the globe talking about stylistic tendencies and concepts which they pitch to our organization as an institution to recognize these creative outputs. With the familiarity of visual culture on a global scale, I am a witness to how society in the social media platform is wrecked through the proliferation of fake news that serves as propaganda. If you look closely at the source of this misinformation, it's photography and the improper use of photography within the context of its technical and theoretical power that is causing the confusion and uproar.

The Philippines, having little data about the history of Philippines photography (In fact, we don't have a timeline of the history of photography because nobody is writing about it) is still in the infancy stage of photographic theory and history while at the same conflicts the idea that we are one of the major countries that extensively use images for verbal communication needs education about image creation and the effects it creates. This is where I find introducing an innovative curriculum in photography necessary. The scholarship is a dual degree program that I am taking at Miriam College and Goldsmiths University of London.

Recently, through my image analysis expertise, I was able to get in touch with the key people handling Ferdinand Marcos Jr. records at Oxford. My story was published recently. Below are the links:



Oxford: Bongbong Marcos' special diploma 'not a full graduate diploma'

The special diploma given by the prestigious Oxford University in England to presidential aspirant Ferdinand

"Bongbong" Marcos Jr in 1978 "was not a full graduate diploma," said Oxford University ...

www.rappler.com

Oxford Gets Pulled Into Philippine Row Over Marcos Jr.'s Degree - BNN Bloomberg

Oxford University has waded into a row waged on social media over the education credentials of Philippines presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos Jr., with an official saying that he was awarded a "special diploma" in 1978.

www.bnnbloomberg.ca



Marcos Jr's 'special diploma' from Oxford: You can have it, too | Inquirer News

The Marcos camp has been consistent with its claim that Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was an Oxford "graduate" since he matriculated in one of the world's ...

newsinfo.inquirer.net

For more than 7 years, I am involved in one of the most reputable photography organizations in the world. Here is my profile posted in Farmanigroup page as one of the 3 Filipinos involved in the most prestigious and biggest photographic organization in the world:

Support - Farmani Group (www.farmanigroup.com)

Ruston Banal is a multimedia artist and visual ethnographer based in his hometown called Betis in the Philippines. He took his undergraduate degree at the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts where he majored in Art History. He has been teaching art history and visual communication courses for the last 10 years in local universities. Ruston also worked as a contributing writer and photographer of the Philippines' leading online news organizations since 2013.

Since 2014, Ruston has been involved in International Photography Awards and Lucie Technical Awards as a visual effects artist. He was the collaborator of IPA's founder and President, Hossein Farmani in setting up the IPA Philippines competition-now considered as the largest regional photography award in South East Asia. Ruston currently manages the IPA Philippines Gallery

Center for Photography in Pampanga put up by its president, Hossein Farmani, and handles the support team of IPA.

As a Visual Ethnographer:

Since 2012, I have been working as a multi-media artist and feature writer for GMA news online wrote articles about heritage, culture, and tradition. I have excellent skills in cinematography, video editing, visual effects, and publishing:

You can find the link below:

From Nachtwey to Avedon: Exhibit brings together 200 iconic photographs

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/artandculture/612970/from-nachtwey-to-avedon-exhibit-brings-together-200-iconic-photographs/story/>

Sisig with egg and mayo? Thanks, but Kapampangans aren't having any of

that<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/food/651699/sisig-with-egg-and-mayo-thanks-but-kapampangans-aren-t-having-any-of-that/story/>

'The Forgotten Americans': Fil-Am photographer puts focus on Amerasians

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/artandculture/613319/the-forgotten-americans-fil-am-photographer-puts-focus-on-amerasians/story/>

You can also find some articles I wrote on other blog platform:

Bagani issue:

<https://medium.com/@rbanaljr/bagani-why-we-should-resist-its-misrepresentation-26e547a60b73>

Steve McCurry of the National Geographic Issue on photo manipulation:

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/139774/photographys-many-realities-in-defense-of-steve-mccurry>

As a visual-effect artist, you can find some of my work at the Lucie Awards site:

<http://www.lucie.tv/>

I can only write in here what comes into my mind but whatever you need, please do contact me, so I can send them all. I attached herewith a TEACHER evaluation in FEU. This will give you an idea of what kind of teacher I am.

I also attached the picture of the book I made for Willy Layug.

Thank you so much for giving me the time in reading my application letter. I am hoping to work with you.

Sincerely,



Ruston Ocampo Banal Jr.

CHED Scholar, Transnational Education Program

Miriam College-Goldsmiths University of London

MA in Designing Education

www.rustonbanal.art