



Silvana Diaz: A Heart for Art

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Galleria Duemila, the country's longest running private gallery, was born out of a broken heart. But first, Italian-born gallery owner, Silvana Ancellotti-Diaz, fell in love. In 1970, while working as a flight attendant for Alitalia, she came to the Philippines where she met artist Ramon Diaz. In less than a year, they were married. They spent their honeymoon in Italy and New York.

In 1973, her sister-in-law, New York-based artist Isabel Diaz, decided to hold an exhibit in the Philippines. Silvana, who was tasked to look for a gallery, found the Miladay Art Center in Makati. The exhibit was a success. All 21 art pieces were sold. Diaz went on to work at Miladay, together with its art director, the late pilot-artist Lino Severino.

When the gallery closed in 1974, Diaz was broken-hearted. "I went to my best friend, Christy Pagaspas. I was desperate because I had found the job that made me happy", she relates. Pagaspas suggested they open their own gallery.

Galleria Duemila opened on December 5, 1975. It was known for promoting and exhibiting the works of the country's best

contemporary artists such as Cesar Legaspi, HR Ocampo, Vicente Manansala, Romulo Olazo, Justin "Tiny" Nuyda and Onib Olmedo. "I love modern art-- abstract, expressionist, surrealist and conceptual art," Diaz says. "I'm one of the galleries that specialized in pushing this forward."

In 1992, Galleria Duemila was invited by SM Megamall to join a row of contemporary galleries at the mall. "It put the galleries in contact with the public," Diaz remarks. "I stayed there 13 years."

Galleria Duemila is presently located in an old house in Pasay City that Diaz restored to function as her residence and art gallery. It hosts monthly exhibitions, installations, videos and conferences. Her files on artists and their works are immense and detailed.

"I was the first gallery who started computerization and documentation," says Diaz who has documented more than 20,000 artworks. Other collaborative works include retrospectives of Roberto M.A. Robles, Duddley Diaz, and Julie Lluch. Silvana was managing editor and committee head of the book, "Diosdado Magno Lorenzo, From Art Rebel to Legend",

with the Philippine-Italian Association.

She is one of the experts that collectors go to for authentication of artworks. "There are only a few of us who have seen so many works and knew all these artists, their styles, paints and strokes. Unfortunately, there are so many fake works being passed off in the market. Experts are here to help make sure that the collectors are protected."

"The purpose of an art gallery is to educate the public," Diaz says. "We have to put art in the curriculum. Even tourism has to be associated with the arts. People need to go to our museums, not only to the beach. If you do not know the arts, how will you know who the Filipino people are?"

"I love the Philippines with all that I am". Diaz says. "I've lived here longer than in Italy, which I left when I was 18. My husband and my children all grew up here. My relationship with my artists are decades long. I always want to be part of the growth of the Philippines because beneath my green eyes, white skin and red hair, I am 100 % Filipino"! Indeed, spoken like a woman still in love. ☑