

Homing On and In Solidarity: Call-and- response in an Anticipated Realm

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The Following text is an introduction to a joint contribution to the Womanifesto Way Anthology by The O Home Collective, Gantala Press and Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez.

This fictive encounter between Philippine-based collectives, The O Home and Gantala Press and Womanifesto's core of senior artists is prompted by a question—in the vein of sub-altern sonography, or like blues and jazz in fields and inconspicuous dives that challenge the narrowed bounds of time and place—what would it take to conceive feminist art history as lived call-and-response?

The texts behind this coaxing of distantiated presences (much like Womanifesto's LASUEMO digital courtyard in 2020) percolated under severe lockdown conditions (the Philippines only essentially opening up by 2022–23). This patently felt constraint, as well as the desire to stretch past spatial and relational limits, underpins the way in which these texts materialised: extended processes, hits and misses, pitches and retreats, reach-outs and withdrawals. As such, these presences gather within Womanifesto's portal of portals, enabled by historians, critics, artists, designers, among a whole slew of individuals which feel an

affinity with what has been pegged as the 'Womanifesto way'.

Off the Art Grid and Uneven Rhythms

It is with much counted on goodwill that these meanderings into the space and time of 'others' are proffered. The hope is that these interjections from the O Home and Gantala would not register as brazen intrusions, but rather as genuine handshakes, which turn into tight hugs over time. It would indeed be a stretch to say I was privy to Womanifesto's early gatherings beyond the strictures of tightly curated and gate-kept exhibitions over two decades ago. Back then, I was steeped in the invisible labor supporting the work of more senior feminist researcher-curators and was thus, not as mobile. Yet, Womanifesto's distinct movement away from the core sites of contemporary art in Thailand, to the slowed and organic pace of village life, became a key signpost for whom I would entice to be part of this 'gathering'. This imagined tete-a-tete between generations, sites of work and relations thus draws from that impulse to find spots quiet and unencumbered enough to attempt interface. The truth is, even by 2026, artists of the O Home, Gantala, and Womanifesto have not 'met' in real life. Yet the argument is made here that the inclination to work intuitively, attentively, and relationally demonstrates how such practices could be seen to unfold adjacently—even when they do not intersect IRL. I hazard to say Womanifesto would not desire to exercise proprietary claim to such a mode of doing, which runs on a healthy regard for difference and situatedness. It is this wager that I draw from in a call-and-response exercise inspired by Womanifesto's own diverse prompts to each other within radical

reach during their own COVID-19 containment.

Thus we have these hypothetical meetings between Womanifesto, the Ohome and Gantala, these not-so tactile, but still felt, stabs at interlocution. At the core is this imagined parallel: keeping at creative practices of care by pricking one's ears, eyes, and soul to life in all its disorderly manifestations.

Sensing Feminist Research Methodology

Paying heed to Womanifesto—particularly at the juncture of 'Procreation/Postcreation' (2003) and *WeMend* (2023–present)—and moving further down their chronology, to where artist-organiser positions of care shift to mothering elder generations and their own selves. These life-markers remain characterised by care—tending to those who are still here; those who come after; and all who keenly feel impinged on by structural weights, imposed social roles and bodily encumbrances.

Gantala Press—whom we meet here through poet, writer-editor, translator and activist, Faye Cura—is a tightly-run and agile ship which publishes and translates the voices of writers, peasants, and urban workers whose stories might not otherwise see the light of day. Womanifesto's own pandemic gathering traces (such as *Udorn Pages of the Book* and even moreso, *Unspoken*, Sydney, 2021) lend diaristic and solicited text traces that take the tone of such intimated assemblies. Further to this imagined coalescence, Gantala Press makes itself present through the stitched books of Cura. At the height of the most violent and repressive

phase of Rodrigo Duterte's redolent exacting of fascist medically-inflected excess, Cura turned to stitching up threads of encrypted dissent. This surreptitiously uttered talk-back, in a made-up language and tucked into a blog, produces—and then shields—an archive of pain from the erasure waged through extrajudicial killings and parallel human rights infractions.

The O Home (Aba Lluch Dalena, Len-Len Malgapo-Domingo, Yllang Montenegro, Zeke Sales, Alley Santos) launches outward—or perhaps more apropos, upward—from feminine tropes of unwieldy interior spaces: innards wrenching from abuse; repressed energy reeking through orifices materialised in a collaboratively sewn skirt punctured through sheer incorrigible pulse and pull. We find in their pegs of self-reflection, strewn as text and intermedia collage, along visibly shifting tracks—the madwoman (gaga), crease (fold), headwind/strongwind (amihan)—each indicative of defiant restiveness. In their shared stories, we find folds opening up to warmth and space to breathe; safe spots to pause, take stock, and reach past refreshed selves readied to engage. The O Home, like Gantala—and imaginably by extension, Womanifesto, with their voices from the courtyard prompts and responses from 2020—meet not only virtually but in such zones of kindredness. They position themselves within sites where mindful baring and bearing might potently happen: in breathing space or unassuming home-apartments; at picnics and workshops with third culture progeny; alongside persons deprived of liberty; and other mind-body-souls acceding to be slowed through open-ended relational practice that veers away from merely proffering art as too precious to attempt and take in.

Trawling through the Womanifesto portal, one clearly senses that much of what has already been done hinges upon a sustained desire to know; to make; to coalesce; to be and do on terms, times and places that seek agentive pulse; in telling, not telling; in showing, not showing; in sharing, in holding back; and leaving and waiting for minds and bodies to shift and settle, then opening up to the flux of life and lives. Participation and relationality do promise such frayed unevenness, moreso amid self-reflexivity, situatedness, and attention to intersectionality alongside positionality. Laying still and keeping apace to felt rhythms have always been distinctive aspects of feminist research, as such, these departures from hapless production in the artworld are certainly important overlays upon these feminist art histories—being written as running stitches which turn into firmer knots.
