

## THREE FILIPINO ARCHITECTS GRADUATED FROM ONE OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS AND HIGH-RANKING ARCHITECTURE SCHOOLS IN THE WORLD

April 27-28, 2022 marked the culmination of the graduate studies of three homegrown Filipinos: Eliza Del Castillo, Nina Camille Pilapil, and Miguel Francisco Sebastian III. The three Filipino architects graduated from one of the most prestigious and high-ranking architecture schools in the world, Politecnico di Milano. In this article, we feature their profiles and some words from the graduates themselves about their lives and journeys while living and studying in Italy.

Despite being off to an exciting and promising start in *Bel Paese*, the three students soon found themselves caught in the onslaught of the global COVID-19 pandemic when Italy was one of the hardest hit countries in the world.

*“It was already a struggle giving your best academically in Architecture, what more the ups and downs of the pandemic period, surrounded by people getting hospitalized while trying to focus on your studies. It makes you question everything that you do– if everything will be worth it.”* Eliza expressed that she was tested mentally and physically while pursuing her master’s degree with the toughest times during the pandemic.

*“Schools and universities were mostly closed so we rarely had the opportunity to have face-to-face interactions with our mentors and colleagues to improve our architectural discourse and drawings. There was no other way but to scratch our architectural projects beneath the surface of the computer screen,”* continues Eliza.

Nina shares her own experience amidst the lockdowns and changing restrictions. *“We went from having classes in campus all day and working in groups all night to being isolated and in front of a screen nearly 24/7. It was a challenge to have one outlet for everything: school, family, friends, entertainment. It made us realize how important it is to take breaks, to go out, and to socialize. Then suddenly it was back to ‘normal’. We were going to different countries doing internships almost as if nothing had happened! It was a very surreal experience.”*

Nina recalls, *“the first thing we did when the lockdown was lifted was to bike, breathe in some fresh air, and lay in the grass of our local park. I’m grateful that Italy has so many beautiful sights within arm’s reach.”*

Miguel echoes their sentiments with a take on the international experience. *“When I came to Italy, I was very excited to see how I would grow and change in such a foreign country. What I realized was that the values I grew up with in the Philippines helped me with my experience abroad. Studying amidst the pandemic was very challenging yet it was made easier with the support of my loved ones, here in Italy and back at home. While I learned from my fellow international students and their respective cultures, I too shared my Filipino culture with them as best as I could. It was my privilege and honor to somehow represent my country through these studies.”*

*“Learning from other cultures, seeing our own culture from others’ perspectives, and the doors and opportunities that studying in Italy has opened up for us are some of the best things about the whole experience,”* said Nina. Eliza also adds, *“At times we were overwhelmed with anxieties and expectations for ourselves, but we turned to our friends, who became our families by choice, and to our families and friends back home for their non-stop support, even though we are thousands of miles away from them. It’s very important to have a strong support system to put yourself into perspective and to see the bigger picture.”*

As the three fresh graduates prepare for their next steps and their next big adventures, they encourage other Filipino students to tap into their inner potentials and to strive to live not just for themselves but also for the community. Miguel ponders, *"with the rest of my life ahead of me, I will proudly stand for and by my country."* They believe we can do anything we set our minds to through consistency, hard work, and compassion for ourselves and others. They remind us to be present and to not forget to smell the flowers along the way.

Nina Camille Pilapil



Miguel Francisco Sebastian III



Bicol-native Eliza Del Castillo graduated with honors from Politecnico di Milano – Milan Campus with a Master of Science (MSc) in Architecture-Built Environment-Interiors. Del Castillo received her Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Architecture at De La Salle College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB), School of Design and Arts in Manila.

Iloilo-born and Manila-raised Nina Camille Pilapil graduated with honors from Politecnico di Milano - Piacenza Campus with a Master of Science (MSc) in Sustainable Architecture and Landscape Design. Pilapil received her Bachelor of Science (BS) in Architecture at the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman Campus in Quezon City.

Manila-native Miguel Francisco Sebastian III graduated with honors from Politecnico di Milano - Mantova Campus with a Master of Science (MSc) in Architectural Design and History. Sebastian received his Bachelor of Science (BS) in Architecture at the University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman Campus in Quezon City.

All three received their degrees with a final score of 110/110 con lode (with honors), the highest possible grade at a graduation in Italy. Pilapil and Sebastian completed their studies with merit-based scholarships from Politecnico di Milano.

Eliza Del Castillo

