

(AT RIGHT) "Mila". (BOTTOM, FROM LEFT) "Cityscape"; "Loida Lewis".



Photography did not come to Phil Dizon in a dream. The muse he met as an exchange student in Colorado when he got hold of a borrowed camera. He pursued it all the way to UCLA where he met a *Vogue* photographer who would one day be his mentor.

"In high school, I was an exchange student in Colorado," he began. "My foster dad lent me his Canon FTB, and with the breathtaking views in picturesque Colorado, I found myself interested in landscape photography."

Phil and camera have been inseparable ever since, capturing stunning shots of Colorado's mountains, roadways, and charming sceneries. His American foster dad taught him how to develop black and white photos in a darkroom, so Phil was well grounded in the basics way before the advent of the handy digital camera.

At UCLA, where he was enrolled in General Studies, Phil attended a fashion photography workshop where he met a photographer who traveled the fashion capitals of the world to do the covers for *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*. This fortunate encounter would take his photography in a new direction.

PHIL DIZON: BALANCING WORK, FAMILY LIFE, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

BY CRISTINA DC PASTOR

"I got so inspired by my mentor who did fashion photography. I thought it was such a glamorous job and was inspired to do the same," he shared.

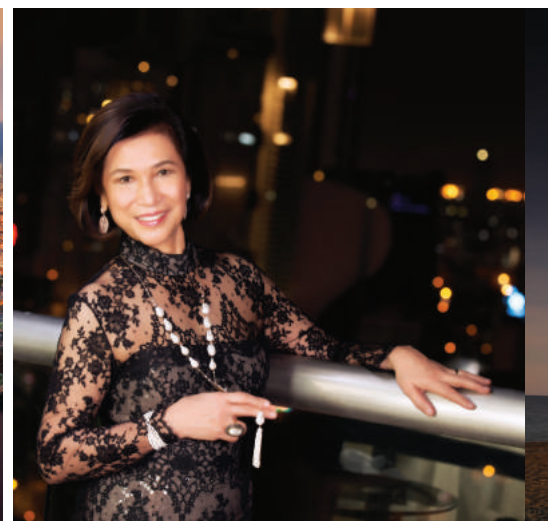
Last July, Phil had occasion to unveil a carefully selected collection of landscape and fashion images. In his solo exhibit **Philippine Faces and Places**, presented from July 5 to 15 at the Philippine Center on Fifth Avenue, he debuted a collection of pictures meant to "highlight the uniqueness of Philippine scenery and culture."

"For this project, I traveled to iconic landmarks of the Philippines, as well as beautiful places that are less known," he said in his

artist's statement. "If you are from the Philippines, hopefully this brings back beautiful memories of your homeland. If you are from elsewhere, may these photos inspire you to visit our beautiful country."

"Very realistic" was heard from many who viewed Phil's lustrous photos. His glamour portraits featured prominent personalities, such as CEO and philanthropist Loida Nicolas Lewis; president of Seven Seven Corporate Group Marcario Fojas; and Mila Sering who is senior managing director for Asia Pacific Sales and Marketing for Seven Seven Global Services.

His landscape photos were, whispered one patron, "mesmerizing." Two images stood out.





One, the Tayid lighthouse in Batanes snapped at 3 in the morning to capture the stellar attraction of the Milky Way. The second, the Mayon volcano at 5:30 a.m. Nursing a fever, he trekked the Albay Gulf looking for the right location for the volcano's superb symmetry. For Phil, it has to be the perfect shot. No technical tweaking will do.

During the exhibit, Phil's children, Jessica and Justin, helped entertain their father's many guests. Phil lost his wife eight years ago, and his children have remained at the center of his life.

"Being a single parent keeps me grounded, my priorities are my kids," he told *The FilAm* in an interview. "I'm trying to pass on the right values to them."

Phil reveres photography as art and also makes it work for him as bread and butter. On his return from studies in the U.S., he opened a studio, Voyer Visage Studio, in Shopesville Mall in Greenhills. That storefront has recently acquired the eponymous name Phildiz after its owner and founder. There are now two Phildiz studios in Manila. A third one is

slated to be inaugurated by the end of the year, and a fourth in Tagaytay is "still in the works," he said. In-house and freelance photographers handle school portraits, weddings, family events and other commercial assignments.

In his opening remarks, Consul General Mario de Leon Jr. noted how Phil is equally an accomplished businessman. He is CEO of Vendiz, the family-owned pharmaceutical company founded by his father Ven Dizon.

"Mostly we sell ophthalmics, optics, cream and ointments, capsules, and tablets," he said, explaining how the family has been in the business of eye care for more than 25 years. "I've been the CEO since November 2007."

Phil is also the vice president for business development at Ashford Pharmaceutical Laboratories, Inc., which manufactures the products sold by Vendiz. Ashford was acquired by his family 26 years ago and is currently managed by his brother Gary. He stressed that all of their products meet global standards.

Being on a constant quest to photograph an alluring face or an intriguing location has "taught me a lot," he said. Photography has

been with him for half of his life, allowing him to travel to many places, meet important people, and establish enduring friendships. He is reminded of what his grandfather used to say, "If money is lost, nothing is lost. If health is lost, something is lost. If character is lost, everything is lost!"

He reflects on this aphorism every now and then and hopes his children will understand the wisdom behind it.

Up next for Phil is his photography exhibition on October 1 at the Grand Hyatt Manhattan. Phil's exhibition is part of a benefit gala dubbed "Couture, Culture...Change," which is being organized by the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce and the US-Philippines Society. The charity event will also include cocktails, dinner and an after party, a book launch, and a fashion show featuring the collections of Francis Libiran, Albert Andrada, and Jackie Peñalosa. Tickets are available at www.13dnorth.com.

This article was first published on Cristina DC Pastor's website (TheFilAm.net) and is being reprinted with the author's permission.

(BELOW, FROM LEFT) "Bangui"; "Boracay". (TOP, FROM LEFT) "Mayon 2"; "Kapurpurawan".

