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## SHIP(S) OF THESEUS: AUTHENTICITI(ES) AND IDENTITI(ES) OF BIÑAN'S ALBERTO HOUSE(S)

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**ABSTRACT:** The Alberto Mansion is significant in Philippine national patrimony as an "extant" heritage structure related to the national hero, Jose Rizal, being his maternal ancestral home. Within the locality of Biñan where it originally stood, the controversy of its dismantling and eventual reconstructions has resulted in two houses, each containing fragments of its original materiality, one in situ: another within a "heritage resort" framing an idealized Philippine past. This paper argues that the notions of authenticity ascribed to both replicas cannot be analyzed on the simple dichotomy of original and copy and must be viewed as a plural system of mutually validatory structures. Through the lens of the Ship of Theseus and the transmutation of originality in Greek mimesis and Baudrillardian hyperreal, the entities simultaneously exist as authentic and reproduction, agents dynamically interacting with each other and the collective memory of their everyday contexts in the substantiation of their significance.

**KEY WORDS:** Reconstruction, Replicas, Authenticity, Collective Memory, Interpretation and Presentation, Mimesis, Paradox

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*"It is not about the survival of materials, it is about the survival of their meaning"*

-Lawrence Carroll

## 1. Introduction



Fig. 1. The Alberto Mansion (left) within the central Plaza of the town. Across is the town hall. Source: Biñan City CHATO. (2020). *Pamana ng Buhay: The Living Heritage of Biñan*. Biñan: City of Biñan Local Government Unit

For over two hundred years, the Alberto Mansion was a monumental presence at the heart of the Biñan townscape, marking the enduring presence of its namesake clan. Today, there are two such structures- an idealized reconstruction within the *Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar* and an in-situ contextual reconstruction. (Laya et al., 2014) In the former, most interior furnishing and structure were transplanted within a fabricated shell, and in the latter, the original exterior houses a replica of the domestic space within.

Constructed in 1775, during the period of Spanish colonization in the Philippines, the Alberto Mansion was a regional landmark occupying a position of prominence at the *Plaza Mayor* (Main Square) of the town, adjacent to the municipal hall and church, within an exclusive zone expressly for the political, religious, and community elite (Fig. 1). (Rabadon, 2020) At the expense of Don Lorenzo Alonso de Alberto, the most affluent resident of the region, the home was realized as a stage for his clan to enact its familial power within its locality from the period of Spanish

colonization to the recent past. (Biñan City CHATO, 2020)

The mansion was witness to the foundation and transformation of Biñan, as well as an integral *place* within the narrative of the Philippine *national hero*, Gat. Dr. Jose Rizal tracing his maternal lineage to Don Lorenzo Alberto's daughter, *Teodora Alonso (1827-1911)*. It stood as the last remaining extant structure with a direct connection to the historical narrative of Rizal.

Within its very walls was identified the room in which the national hero's mother stayed and where a scandal saw Teodora Alonso accused of attempted murder of her sister-in-law, Teodora Formoso. This incident would be the mark impressed by the structure upon the Biñan community: as a symbol of the local gentry, as the home of Rizal's mother, and as the setting for the unfolding of the feud of the two Teodoras. (Biñan City CHATO, 2020)



Fig. 2. The Alberto Mansion was in the 2000s part of a supermarket complex. Note minimal upkeep on the structure, though relatively intact. Source: Rabadon, D. L. (2020). *Final destination: An inquiry into the construction of "Casa Biñan" as the Alberto mansion in Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar*. Pasig City: University of Asia and the Pacific

The last century marked a relatively uneventful period in the life of the structure, passing through the lineage of the Alberto clan, at times adapting to new uses within its changing urban fabric—becoming a cinema and, following a fire that destroyed an extension of the house, a supermarket (Fig. 2). (Laya et al., 2014) The Alberto Mansion would survive the destruction of World War II.

By the early 2000s, the house was in a state of neglect owing to increased maintenance costs. Meetings between national cultural agencies and the Alberto descendants proved inconclusive, with the refusal of the former to financially support its maintenance and the latter to declare the

structure as a marked historic site, citing economic considerations and the freedom to dispose of the said property. (NHPC, 2010)



Fig. 3. Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar provides a simulated Hispanic Philippine town experience with transferred heritage. Makubex1985, 2017

This status as presumed rather than marked heritage structure will be crucial to its later sale to Jerry Acuzar, developer, and owner of the Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar, a "heritage resort" that manufactures a fiction of the Philippine past made of translocated houses sourced from all over the country (Fig. 3). The sale was discreet and deliberately concealed, as Acuzar systematically dismantled the house from within, consciously avoiding public gaze and scrutiny. (Rabadon, 2020) The Biñan community eventually caught on, realizing the impending loss of the historic structure, banding together in collective action with the local government unit to block the further breaking up of the home. (Ronquillo, 2022) However, by this point, over 60% of the original form had already been transferred to Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar in Bataan, some 160 kilometers away. (Rabadon, 2020)

The salvaged material formed the basis for reconstructing the Alberto Mansion at the "heritage resort," with a replicated façade housing the original interiors. This structure is known as the Casa Biñan (lit. Biñan House). At the Las Casas de Acuzar, the Casa Biñan houses the *La Bella Teodora* (after Teodora Alonso) an Italian restaurant-cum-rentable venue for *colonial*-themed events and is an attraction of the resort's *heritage tours*. Meanwhile, a lengthy legal battle between the Alberto heirs and the local government seeking expropriation further placed the remaining 40% of the structure, already compromised by the aforementioned dismantling including the removal of some interior structural members, in limbo. (Cinco, 2019; Rabadon, 2020) The structure's characteristic heavy tile roof eventually collapsed in 2012, destroying what remained of the wooden second story (Fig. 4). (Cinco, 2019)



Fig. 4. The collapse of the original structure following systemic gutting of its interior components (Burningbatsu, 2012)

In 2017, the court awarded the local government of Biñan with the writ of possession, and the structure was subsequently expropriated from the Alberto Family. The city government allocated Php 55 million (approx. 1 million euros) for its reconstruction. (Cinco, 2019) Ironically, the firm awarded the contract for this project was Acuzar, the very same group that demolished the structure in the first place. (Bongon, 2022) Construction on the house in-situ was completed in 2019, with its design based heavily on limited archival photographs and, critically, the existing interpretative replica at Las Casas. (Bongon, 2022; Rabadon, 2020) The house was repurposed as a city museum named the *Historic Alberto Mansion*.

At present, both structures simultaneously claim *authenticity* and provenance from the original and recognize their hybrid constructions as replicas continuing the narrative of the “original” form. The dual condition of dismantling the “original” house and the generation of two new dwellings partially materially original and fabricated from its remains present a challenging situation in architectural reconstruction and heritage conservation.

## 2. The Ship of Theseus and Mimetic Identity

The Greek historian Plutarch famously grappled with the ideas of *authenticity* and identity in the work, the *Life of Theseus*. Here he makes a simple observation:

The ship on which Theseus sailed with the youths and returned in safety, the thirty-oared galley, was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius Phalereus. They took away the old timbers from time to time, and put new and sound ones in their places so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel (Plutarch & Perrin, 1914)

More salient would be the Sophists' addition to this quandary- suppose the old planks were collected and assembled to make a second ship- would this entail the actuality of two originals? (Jokilehto, 2006) This statement is a logical impossibility, yet at first glance, this supposes the reality facing the Alberto House(s).

To unravel the implications of the paradox above on the Alberto Mansion, we must dwell on the notion of authenticity. Derived from the Greek *Ἀυθεντικός* (*authentikos*), with its roots *authentes*-*autos* (self, author) + *hentes* (doer, being), authenticity is a triadic relationship between *author*, *mode of production*, and the *object itself*. (Barham, 2021; Bross 2019) This relationship formed the basis of *authenticity* in the current paradigm of the materialist approach that underpins the determination of *authenticity* in historic structures. Indeed, a strict materialist approach limits heritage to containers that “privilege visible receptacles of value over the immaterial and intangible”. (Munjeri, 2004) In this case, the physical traces are distributed among two structures, yet the materialist approach is insufficient in capturing the entirety of their binary relationship.

The Greek concept of *mimesis* provides an alternative perspective. Often interpreted as imitation, *mimesis* is not simply copying; in Platonic logic, it is translated as *representation*. The act of *mimesis* is central to the learning process of the ancients in which the enactment of *representation and re-representation of ideas and themes guaranteed continuity* and the elaboration and creation of *new forms*. (Munjeri, 2004) The idea or *essence* of an object can be retained within this new cultural object, allowing for renewed interpretations directed toward the referenced *essence* and the actual *object-expression* itself. *Mimesis* allows for the progression of its authentic narrative and the object-“replica” to simultaneously embody its reference and imbue itself with new meanings through its creation-not, negating the tenets of *authentikos*, but liberating it from its static triadic system. (Foster & Jones, 2019) Derrida refers to this character of *mimesis* in reading texts as “non-disposable” and “double” in constantly referring to something that precedes them- “never the origin, never inner, never outer, but always doubled,” freeing material creations from the duality of original and copy. (Puetz, 2002)

The *Nara Document of Authenticity (1994)* and the *Yamato Declaration (2004)* partially address this relativity, recognizing culturally and contextually dependent operational conditions of authenticity. Notably, as tangible (structure) and intangible (experience) heritages are interdependent, and the intangible is “constantly being recreated,” it enforces Derrida’s *doubling*, in that the meaning and value of the object, even if “inauthentic” by Venice charter standards, or a replica, depends on its textual reading via public perception. (Jokilehto, 2006; Djabarouti, 2020) Reconstructions, in particular, *can* become authentic simply by “transmitting an authentic message,” allowing for the copy distinct from the original from which it was copied- the resulting forms are free to generate and accumulate meaning within their present *lived* context- perhaps becoming “even more authentic than the original from which they were copied” approaching Baudrillardian *hyperreality*. (Djabarouti, 2020; Foster & Jones, 2019; Puetz, 2002) Latour and Lowe call this the *migration of aura* - when re-production (or restoration, re-interpretation, or conservation, whereby alteration happens or is resisted - as in the case of preservation versus decay) adds layers of *authenticity* to a work and allows for *mimetic* transfer of this *auratic* quality

between object-expressions. (Latour & Lowe, 2010) This is of particular value within a postmodern heritage approach that strives to erode distinctions between “original/copy [and] representation/reality”. (Djabarouti, 2020; Puetz, 2002)

As the multiplicity of “copies” in the case of the Alberto Mansion is concerned, authorized heritage discourse, as Smith & Waterton (Smith & Waterton, 2012) define, the most “pervasive and persuasive” or dominant way of defining heritage concepts, and in this case, the definition of authenticity, particularly in the authority of ICCROM’s *Riga Charter (2000)* is brought into question. The Riga Charter, Foster & Jones argue, emphasizes authenticity as the “measure of the degree by which cultural attributes.... credibly and accurately bear witness to their significance,” effectively condensing all replicated heritage, but the most exceptional cases (in which no criteria are given), as misrepresentations of the traces of the past. (ICCROM/Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, 2010; Foster & Jones, 2019) This generalist mindset presents a narrow definition that privileges “original” material whose value is perceived to be somehow embedded within the object itself, relegating all replica objects as fake, inferior, and passive stand-ins for the real thing. (Smith & Waterton, 2012) As the case study of the Alberto Mansion(s) will illustrate however, heritage “replicas” must be considered as cultural objects in their own right with their stories that stand “in complex relationship to other referents and their historical counterparts, and share ‘composite biographies’”. (Foster & Jones, 2019) Their didactic values are brought about by and generate a collective narrative, and their existence utilizing mimetic practice allows for authentic identities that reference the “original” and each other within the sphere of their respective local contexts.

### **3. Relative and Shared Authenticities**

The significance of the Alberto Mansion lies in its function as a home of the Alberto clan, as a place that locates the narrative of the national hero within the local heritage of the town; and as a landmark that witnessed the personalities and events within Biñan. While the two *mimetic* structures embody these *essences* to varying degrees, only one structure can fully claim the title of the *Alberto Mansion*.

The Alberto Mansion’s translocation to Las Casas as the *Casa Biñan* has been universally subject to historical, cultural, and legal scrutiny. Its clandestine removal from its original context and reassembly in the heritage resort runs counter to acceptable heritage conservation practice and was detrimental to the cultural memory and historic built environment of Biñan City. (Cinco, 2019) It was a product of the indifference of local and national government agencies, particularly in supporting heritage properties in private ownership, the unfortunate yet altogether common situation of impoverished owners prioritizing financial gain over supposed national patrimony, and the misguided vision of conservation by Acuzar in purchasing these structures from heirs in similar predicaments. (Rabadon, 2020)

Notwithstanding the interior spaces that made it to the Las Casas, as Acuzar never wholly acquired the home due to the legal debacle, Casa Biñan stands as a hybrid of “real” parts layered with fantastical interpretations of unrecorded portions of the structure based on contemporary Spanish-period houses (Fig. 5). Exploring Ruskin’s patina and the essence of the original fragment within what MacCannell (MacCannell, 1973) terms “stage sets,” spaces “constructed only for sightseers” whose sole reason for visitation is “to see them,” the resort deployed intrigue and feud as narrative vehicles within the reassembled domestic structures. This theatrical simulation for the resort’s guests in the *Casa Biñan* appropriates a narrative limited to the Albertos and their affiliation with Teodora Alonso, capturing only this specific set of “unrestored” and heavily patinated interior fragments that they use to encompass the reconstructed house’s story. The rest of the structure serves merely to contain the connection to this disembodied narrative, re-enacted in the resort’s *heritage tour*.

The residence and the *heritage tour* is included in what Rabadon terms *chistory* (a portmanteau of *tsismis* or hearsay, and history), a presentation that Djabarouti (Djabarouti, 2020) argues is a *hyperreal experience*, a lack of distinction between what is original and copy in a “hotchpotch of real and fake phenomena”. (Rabadon, 2020) Within the context of this performance of the everyday in the heritage theme park, the built environment transforms the material reality of the replica into the Las Casas’ cultural imaginary. In this setting, *hyperreality* is sustained through AlSayyad’s notion of *engazement*: visitors actively inhabit, photograph, and perform within the simulated “stage set” environment, thereby reproducing its illusions. (AlSayyad, 2014; MacCannell, 1973) *Engazement* thus becomes the operative mechanism that stabilizes the *hyperreal*, synthesizing visitors’ feelings of “colonial nostalgia, authentic anxiety, and image manipulation” within this simulation of a Hispanic Filipino past that is neither here nor there. (Rabadon, 2020; Djabarouti, 2020; Puetz, 2002; AlSayyad, 2014)



Fig. 5. The Casa Biñan at Las Casas with its simulated patina (Ramon F. Velasquez, 2013)

The present distortion of the *Casa Biñan* overrides the historical significance of the building, relegating it to a resort facility. This new environment functions as a restaurant, event venue, exhibit, and movie set-piece, creating new present meanings and significances. Unfortunately, its value is still tied to another extant structure that it “re-presents”. (Rabadon, 2020)

Meanwhile, the *Historic Alberto Mansion*, maintains a close relationship to its original context in Biñan. It grounds new material and space within the locality imbued with the *aura* of its surrounding community, albeit with a renewed function as a community museum (Fig. 6). (Bongon, 2022) Referencing the 1800s structure that once stood in its place (Figs. 2,7), the extant ruins of its exterior were combined with a contemporary interpretation (Fig. 8) based on both limited archival photographs and paradoxically, the hybrid structure of *Casa Biñan*, including architectural inventions of its lost areas (Fig. 9). The curious decision to use the Las Casas structure as the basis for reconstructing the Alberto Mansion in its original location meant that the new Historic Alberto Mansion, is anything but *materially* authentic. (Latour & Lowe, 2010; Bongon, 2022) The community, despite this, acknowledges the 2019 structure’s continuity, maintaining its integrity as a symbol of the town. (Taculao, 2022)

Recognizing the original structure as a private residence, inaccessible to the public, the reconstruction has reconfigured the home into public infrastructure, an active participant in Biñan’s everyday. Authenticity in this case is not anchored to a specific material quality but relies on a relational system of validation provided by the people and stakeholders that imbue the new construction with meaning throughout the seeming absence of its historicity and present realization as a wholly new structure.

At the heart of the story of the *Historic Alberto Mansion* is the awakening of civic consciousness in Biñan (Fig. 6). While the citizens of the city had known of the structure before, interactions with the building were limited to its history and the commercial establishments that occupied its ground floor. Even this historic attachment to the national hero was not enough to garner it enough importance to be allocated financial support or increased market value (it was sold for a mere Php 500,000 or 9,000 euros). Only after the sale of the property in 2010, a last recourse as the heir put it, was the plight of the structure acknowledged, yet it would take a super typhoon collapsing its already dilapidated superstructure two years later for authorities to step in. (Cinco, 2012)



Fig. 6. The Historic Alberto Mansion in-situ after reconstruction. Source: Biñan City CHATO. (2020). *Pamana ng Buhay: The Living Heritage of Biñan*. Biñan: City of Biñan Local Government Unit

An intensive social and broadcast media campaign publicized by investigative journalists, citizens, and netizens made the issue viral nationally (Fig. 10). A campaign to save the house was launched, spearheaded by the local community and heritage advocate groups (such as the United Artists for Cultural Conservation and Development). (Cinco, 2012) With a heavily involved public, the local government enacted the process of expropriation and later reconstruction of the heritage house. (Cinco, 2019)



Fig. 7. The original Alberto house during its dismantling. Source: Rabadon, D. L. (2020). *Final destination: An inquiry into the construction of "Casa Biñan" as the Alberto mansion in Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar*. Pasig City: University of Asia and the Pacific

Through the decline of the structure's prominence within the community, the threat of relocation, and its succeeding expropriation was the value of its *being* in Biñan validated in its introduction into the public sphere and its newfound setting for the generation of local collective memory as the *Historic Alberto Mansion*. (Taculao, 2022) In its debut as community infrastructure within the COVID-19 crisis, it served as a vaccination center and isolation facility for the city, inserting itself into the present public consciousness (Fig. 11). (Deña, 2022) The local city government through the Biñan City Culture, History, Arts and Tourism Office is in the process of curating the *Historic Alberto Mansion*, and it has yet to formally open to the public as a heritage museum. (Bongon, 2022) Within the city's plans are to maintain a portion of the reconstruction as a display of 19th century period lifestyle, while opening a café and bed-and-breakfast as a heritage tourism enterprise. (Biñan City CHATO, 2020) It will thus become a performative space where people participate in enacting an idealized essence of the past within the contemporary present creating new authenticities and narratives. It will become a venue for negotiating the lost past, restored reality, and present society.



Fig. 8. The reconstructed interior space of the Historic Alberto Mansion (Ong, 2025)

In discussing both structures together, it is recognized that some copies are perceived to be more valuable than others. The reconstruction in Biñan is privileged by its local community as it retains locational, social and urban continuity as opposed to the structure in the non-context scenography of Las Casas. It is necessary to understand however that the replica in-situ is dependent as well on the *authentic* narrative that generated its re-valuation within the present context including the action of its relocation and the popular culture generated by the reconstruction in Las Casas half a decade prior. This replica formed the basis for the interpretative re-construction on site as well as the factoring of the heritage-in-absentia into the civic pride of the people of the city. The replica is recognized as replica in the trauma of the absence of the original, and the longing for the return of that which was lost to the city, however impractical, validates the interior fragments ex-situ as real.

Despite the shortcomings of the Las Casas and Biñan reconstructions, it is an injustice to merely say one is a copy and one is original. This ignores the capacity of both structures to generate their *authenticities* in the present. The two houses stand within their idealized hyperreal contexts, a “hodgepodge of fabricated and authentic phenomena;” in another sense, the cop[ies] offer a new “reality” rooted in the boundless realm of idealization and fantasy- *mimesis*. (Djubarouti, 2020) They nonetheless create a greater public fascination of built heritage sites by offering a “more intense emotional experience of *essence* and *aura*”. (Jokilehto 2006)

It is important to emphasize that what is “authentic” in Las Casas refer only to the uprooted materials of the original, representing an authenticity only with regard to the physicality of the structure. In fact, although the resort professes to preserve the very best of Philippine heritage, it falls short of

taking care of the very object that gives them this semblance of authenticity by introducing historic materials to a new environment very different from where it came from in Biñan.



Fig. 9. The reassembled fragments of the same room as Fig. 8 at Las Casas de Acuzar, facing the opposite side. Source: Rabadon, D. L. (2020). *Final destination: An inquiry into the construction of "Casa Biñan" as the Alberto mansion in Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar*. Pasig City: University of Asia and the Pacific

Thus, it is necessary for the *Casa Biñan* to come to terms with the issues of its transfer, redeeming itself as an idealized “re-construction” with its honesty to its fabricated context and incorporating this into the *Heritage Tour*. While it can continue to refer to the Alberto Mansion in Biñan, the narrative of the structure must acknowledge the challenging history of its inception. Undoubtedly, it had an active role in the awakening and valuing of heritage in Biñan and it still is disputed heritage from the locals’ point of view. While it is quite paradoxical to say that one has visited the ancestral home of Teodora Alonso in visiting Las Casas, as the structure in Biñan is extant, its value as a resort facility affords it the capacity of *touch-visitors may* live out the experience of it as a domestic space, not possible within its “original” counterpart which is now a museum, and its Hispanized environment may yet allow a depiction of this particular past no longer possible in Biñan’s urbanized reality.

The *Historic Alberto Mansion* on the other hand must face the challenge of its reintegration into contemporary Biñan society, synthesizing the memory of its historic past with its present success as a case of communal collective action and the role of its stakeholders in its narrative. It must avoid a decay of social and physical association with its context through excess musealization and capitalize on the renewed awareness of the values and philosophies it expresses for the Biñan community. (Munjeri, 2004). Indeed, its story is still being written today.



Fig. 10. Community action was central to raising awareness on the state of the heritage house. Source: Biñan City CHATO. (2020). *Pamana ng Buhay: The Living Heritage of Biñan*. Biñan: City of Biñan Local Government Unit

As mimetic structures, both are ideal constructs that attempt to approximate a past now lost and are distinctly products of the present. Their authentic values are levied from their everyday experience. Both restored structures are material recreations of an idealized image of the “Alberto Mansion”, and are placed within carefully constructed surroundings that facilitate a desired immersive and hyperreal experience of the home. (Djabarouti, 2020; Puetz, 2002)



Fig. 11. The Historic Alberto Mansion and its recent use as COVID-19 facility. Source: Biñan City CHATO. (2020). *Pamana ng Buhay: The Living Heritage of Biñan*. Biñan: City of Biñan Local Government Unit

#### 4. Collective Memory & Misplaced Identities

While there exist two extant structures claiming to be the Alberto Mansion, it seems that such identification as being the “Alberto Mansion” is further diffused into: (1) the “Historic Alberto Mansion” in Biñan; (2) the “Casa Biñan” in Las Casas Filipinas de Acuzar; and, of course, (3) the “Alberto Mansion,” in general, which refers to the idea that both the Historic Alberto Mansion and the Casa Biñan is attempting to embody. Thus, how things are named forms a key aspect of their identity. (Hosey, 2018)

What is known as the “Alberto Mansion” exists only as a fictional structure that traces its historical authenticity directly from its establishment by the Albertos in the 18th century until the time it ceased to form part of the sociocultural life of Biñan and eventual partial transplantation. The “Historic Alberto Mansion” as it now stands in Biñan references to the “Alberto Mansion,” but it is not quite the same thing. On the other hand, the “Casa Biñan” is no more than a 1:1 scale model of an interpretation of the “Alberto Mansion” that happens to comprise some of its original parts.

As they stand now, the house(s) have been imbued with new meanings and authenticiti(es) beyond the original home that once stood on the property. No longer a structure of the 18th century, they are *mimetic* creations of a present nostalgia that approximates its *essence*. Their authenticity remains, not with the materiality of form, but with the validation of the palimpsest of

their narratives. As “replicas,” they enhance the meaning of the elusive “original,” materially lost to time but whose intangible *aura* has indelibly migrated to these present constructs, providing an opportunity to experience the past while simultaneously providing venues for a firmer anchoring of their present stakeholders’ collective memories and pride-of-place. Operating as an object of today, they generate and imbue new meanings upon the everyday context in which they now reside.

The threat of demolition and relocation provided an impetus for the declaration of the structure as a historical monument, officially canonizing it within the roster of nationally significant heritage properties, initially as *ruin*, a home that was, while its restored, idealized form off-site within the Las Casas Filipinas simultaneously located itself within the theme park’s canon of heritage homes. The architecture here takes on primary public importance, or at least, the significance of structures under threat is magnified “when uncoupled from their traditional ground in real space”. (Lending, 2017)

Both structures as “replicas” and the processes by which they were constructed and reconstructed are inextricably tied to the re-realization of the civic value of the Alberto Mansion and its enshrinement in the national and local heritage canon. (Biñan City CHATO, 2020) The material integrity of the structures, particularly those in Las Casas, remains contested, as the citizens of Biñan long for their return, while the reconstruction, far from standing in, has become part of the lived experience of the townspeople.

*Authenticity* expresses the significance of the structures in their own communities, on their own terms, challenging present assumptions that replicas are merely copies referencing an “original.” The present challenge is in understanding and “nagivat[ing] the layered values and expressions of authenticity” brought about by multiple gazes and viewpoints. (Foster & Jones, 2019) For the Alberto Mansion(s), present international charters and local regulations prescribe a narrow criterion for the structures’ valuation that neglects the overlap of the two as part of their *authenticity*, particularly as replicas. (Djubarouti, 2020; Foster & Jones, 2019)

However controversial and illegal the transfer of the structure to Bagac was, the orchestration of this exchange and exhibition consciously refer to both the original and the “reconstructions” as monuments- these “travel across media and materials,” creating “complex entanglements of copies and originals”. (Djubarouti, 2020) This case emerges as a product of the unique conditions of the heritage law in the Philippines and the context of acquiring these structures.

As a relationship between the dynamic performance of people and the reconstructed structures, their *authenticities* become “catalysts of negotiations between this restored reality and present society. (Djubarouti, 2020) In both cases, therefore, the tangible simulation of the idealized Alberto Mansion and the divergent, ritualized experience within either venue generate *authenticity* within their contexts that go beyond the limits of their physical localities toward a plural system of mutually validatory structures.

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This is a co-authored study. The authors jointly developed the research design, analysis, and manuscript.

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