

Fresh Produce 2019

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Team YS

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by Roberto Orosa and Annika Koteh
Photos by Colin Dancel

We hear the same old tune about every new generation. “See the youth glued to screens, attached to their phones?” To older generations, that’s self-absorption. Never mind that we might be updating ourselves on news from across the globe. “See them become artists?” To them, either that’s a path to starvation or a shield from social realities. And when we show concern about things other than ourselves? “Yeah, like they’d be able to translate that care beyond a tweet.”

Faced with this generational pressure, many of us give in to self-fulfilling prophecies. It’s definitely easier to sit back, let the world think what it does, and take things easy. But letting naysayers have the last laugh also means conceding our place as useful members of society — and that doesn’t bode well for anyone’s future.

Every year, **Young STAR** finds fresh faces that challenge those misconceptions. Fresh Produce is about us — the youth — what we have to say, and the diverse yet meaningful ways we say it. Each year, we round up artists, advocates and innovators who prove that we, the kids, are more than all right.



Farah Ali Ghodsinia, 25, Peace Ambassador, office of the presidential adviser on the peace process (@farahghodsinia_)

My brother and I were always looking for ways to have a more tangible impact within our community. We wanted then to actually promote the educational efforts back home in Mindanao, specifically in the Marawi area. Children of Mindanao was our way of giving back to kids at home.

In Children of Mindanao, we would have storybook and reading sessions. I found it lacking that whenever we would read, they couldn't find stories that would relate to their own backgrounds. There's a space that has to be covered and we could actually supply them with stories that would represent them. I'm kind of dabbling within that sphere, creating stories that could better relate and that they would better appreciate as well. We use storybooks to do that.

Initially we provided different types of educational materials, from books to school bags, and then we moved onto helping create libraries. Schools were totally destroyed, devastated, and kids also lost their libraries. Now we get to partner with a number of very generous and kind organizations in setting up new libraries again. We've also been doing peace workshops while my brother is doing all these science workshops with lessons on molecular biology.

My role is to help mediate and again find common ground because the end goal is for us to have peaceful states for the people — people who need to live in peace, have access to their basic rights, to education, to health care, to better jobs — and you can't have all of those things if you're constantly affected by conflict or if your place is at the brink of another war, right?

The biggest hindrance is breaking stereotypes because when it comes to peace building, you also have to negotiate with people who could very well have deeply embedded stereotypes of not only a particular issue but also of people. So even if you come in with the best intentions, somehow, people will view you within a certain lens. And that lens serves as a barrier for you to further communicate what you really want to achieve within that area. And the moment you go beyond that box or go beyond their perception of what you should actually be like, then somehow they stop listening to whatever you say, and I think that's another hindrance.

Ysa, 22, and Ygo, 17, of Ysanygo, musicians (@ysanygo)



How would you describe your music?

It's like a rollercoaster of emotions. At one part it's R&B, at the other it's synth-pop. It varies per song.

For a duo, how does the creative process come about?

YSA: I'm the primary songwriter.

YGO: And I'm the producer of the music. But recently, Ysa and I collaborate in writing the lyrics!

YSA: And it's actually easy cause we live under the same roof.

YGO: We're siblings so we can just walk into each other's doors and barge in and say, "Hey, I have an idea for a song!"

Would you rather have a gig with a receptive audience or a gig with an amazing sound system?

YGO: Maybe a gig with a very receptive audience because they can cancel out the bad sound system. Dream gig and its lineup?

YGO: I would love to have Tom Misch because he's my No. 1 music influence.

YSA: My dream lineup would consist of Her and hopefully Lauryn Hill, if she's ever up for it.

Who is your biggest fan?

YSA and YGO: Our mom is our number one fan, she and our dad have never missed a gig. Knowing that our mom is there, she will never make us feel like we're lonely when we perform. Even if we're in a room full of strangers, we know that there's this one person that will show support.



Angelo Casimiro, 20, YouTuber/innovator (@angelocasi)

Yung lolo ko, mechanical engineer. *Ako yung naging assistant niya (noong bata ako). We started with smaller projects like lightbulbs, then gumawa kami ng wind turbine that we attached to the top of the house. But eventually nag-pass away yung lolo ko, and I continued*

the hobby.

'Yung favorite YouTube [tutorial na ginawa] ko ay si BB8. *Kakalabas ng Star Wars tapos may new bot na sobrang cute, so sabi ko kailangan kong gawin 'to. At that time, wala masyadong tutorials, so you don't know where to start. Ikaw yung isa sa unang magsa-start ng project or tutorial. I tried to hit two birds with one stone, and it worked. Sinali ko siya sa online contest, and I had one week to finish it. Sobrang pressure and may time noon na hindi ako natutulong.*

My grandfather and I were supposed to make an electric car. Ever since, *na-fascinate ako sa electric transportation. 'Yung idea ko para sa thesis is a 100 kilowatt race bike. It's about energy efficiency and you can drive it with economical efficiency as well.*

My dream is to start an R&D company. *Sa 'Pinas, ang research and development mostly focused on production. So inisip ko, if I try to start a business na wala pa masyadong kalaban, pwede siyang mag-click. At the same time, pwede mong tulungan ang projects and innovations ng countrymen.*

I have this freelance page pero hindi masyadong active. If you're a business student, and you want to pitch a project, *tapos kailangan mo ng soft or working prototype, I'll give you quotes on how much it would take to make the project, and then I'll give a prototype.*

Sa college, pinakamababa ako sa mga math subjects. *Pero sa mga majors, matataas. I guess it's a misconception that you need to be smart at numbers to do projects that are associated with tech. May mga parts na kailangan ng numbers, but sometimes you have software to do it for you. You don't necessarily need to crunch all those numbers to arrive at something; you need to consolidate things and have a creative mind.*

Colin Dancel, 21, photographer (@colindancel)





I was a fashion design student. But two years ago, (my love for photography) started because I wanted to venture into styling and I had to shoot my portfolio myself. I kind of liked the photography side more as opposed to the styling.

The chaos backstage makes up everything that people see onstage. And I feel that people overlook the backstage part. I feel like it's also important for them to value what happens before everything is laid out.

I've shot backstage for several fashion shows. I liked Carl Jan Cruz's show the most. That was his first show in the Philippines. Seph Bagasao's (recent show) for Bench Fashion Week (was good) also. I liked them best because it was so emotional, there was more heart to it because it was their first time. I felt super honored to have been a part of it.

I think I'm leaning more towards very cropped, very detailed shots. For The Fore, I shot a ballet dancer in a super detailed way. I showed just parts of her body and I feel like that kind of encapsulates and defines who I am as a photographer.

I'm not a "pro" pro. It was just lately that I felt that I could start calling myself a photographer. It takes a lot of maturity for you to call yourself a full professional, and I have so much respect for the professionals who have studied and who have worked hard to get to where they are now. I feel like in order to call myself a pro, I'd have to try harder, have more mature work, and shoot more.

Half of the work is done once you're there and you show up. That's one of the things I learned because I'm a shy person, especially when socializing. I learned that you just have to show up, be there, talk to a few people, and then go, so long as you were there.



Favour Ajah, 21, multimedia artist (@favour.ajah)

I'm most proud of my piece that had a couple of girls of different shade ranges. I called it "Own Your Tone" and it explores colorism in the Philippines. I asked a bunch of people I knew and we just kind of had a conversation. I had voice notes of them talking about their

experiences growing up and I think this was definitely one of my favorite pieces to date because it showed that there was a need for conversation.

One of the main things I love as an artist is bringing up conversations and having conversations that we tend to sometimes skip over.

I believe you just have to be willing to do whatever it takes to get the best of whatever you're trying to create. I value vision because you need to think out of the box first of all, and then the drive to be willing to actually push and achieve that vision.

I really love blogs, but I realized that there weren't many blogs here in the Philippines. So I made cult.her, a space wherein I could create content about fashion, beauty, and think-pieces such as my "Own Your Tone" piece. I also wanted to do things around business, career, etc., that actually help women.

I would like to be Emily Weiss, the creator of Glossier. I would like her business skills because she's actually really smart — way smarter than a lot of people give her credit for. I think she's created an innovative beauty business structure and that's really interesting because then you'd have to be really smart to think ahead of the curve.

I still do wanna use cult.her but on a smaller scale, and then kind of work up to a bigger piece. It's definitely harder when it's just one person making that type of content. I want to create a segment on it called Her Files, where I could just profile different women in different industries like leaders and just kind of pick their brain and have a conversation.

I'm only 21. I don't think I can necessarily describe my whole life's work, or my art because I'm changing so it's still changing. You get better with time!

Zen Flores, 17, photographer and cinematographer (@zenflores)





My dad's a cinematographer, so it pulled me towards that direction about two years ago. I was 15 years old then. My dad introduced me to the whole industry.

My preferred equipment is my dad's Nikon camera. He had it when he was my age, so this is my favorite piece of gear to work with. I think deep down, he has a lot of influence (on my work). But on the surface level, not as much.

I like (looking for) cinematic environments. The more desolate, the better. Typically those places don't really have emotions to begin with, so it's fun for me to bring out feelings from those types of environments.

My shots are really spontaneous. Most of my photos are taken when I'm walking and I see something. What catches my eye is something out of place.

We once shot a car flipping over, with a big explosion. You could really feel the explosion in your chest. It was probably 200 feet away from us, but you could feel the fire when it exploded. That was really fun to shoot. It almost hit the wall of the camera, actually.

I'd like to do music videos or really, really short films. He's gone now, but David Bowie is my dream subject for a music video.

If I'm good with my style, then something's wrong. I always have to be kind of worried. Self-doubt isn't the right word for (this drive), but maybe curiosity. (I have) no plans. Just whatever happens, happens.

Just do it. Don't overthink. If you keep doing what you're doing, eventually your style is going to come out as it is. It's the unique you.



fresh

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produce

Photos by COLIN DANCEL
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