

AN ARTIST'S  
PERSPECTIVE OF A  
COMPLETED MILANO  
RESIDENCES

## SPECIAL FEATURE



# Builder of Dreams

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*Robbie Antonio is a renaissance man out to make his mark one building at a time. His latest project is a collaboration with Versace, another name synonymous with creativity and style*

By PAUL JOHN CAÑA

**a**t the ultra-luxurious Plaza District in New York, there is a condominium development called The Centurion worth over \$150 million. The area is reputedly the most expensive in all of Manhattan. Developers peg the average price in the area at approximately \$3000 per square foot, or around P140 million for a 100 square meter apartment, one of the highest average prices for a condominium in the United States. Legendary architect I.M. Pei helped design it, but perhaps what is the most pleasantly surprising is that a Filipino is behind the project.

Robbie Antonio is managing director of Century Properties in Manila and is the founder of Antonio Development in New York, the real estate development company that built the Plaza District property. The 33-year-old son of Ambassador Joey and Hilda Antonio considers the project one of the highlights of his real estate career thus far. "Forming a company with little guidance in Manhattan was like putting pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in the ultimate concrete jungle of business sharks. We

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ROBBIE ANTONIO, SANTO VERSACE AND GIAN FERRARIS

were able to show the New York real estate industry, arguably the fiercest real estate development arena in the world, that Filipinos can compete head to head amongst the very best." It is not surprising that Antonio was awarded the Institutional Investors Magazine's Top 20 Rising Stars in the world in 2008 in the arena of real estate in addition to New York Real Estate Weekly's All Stars list the same year. It is this kind of global exposure and accolades that money simply cannot buy.

first-ever venture of the global brand powerhouse in Southeast Asia. Robbie says he proposed the idea of collaborating with Versace to Century's executive committee when he was based in the Big Apple.

Robbie observes that over the years, Versace has grown into much more than just a fashion house. "Transcending its artistic and creative influences from trailblazing fashion trends to elegant home accents and design pieces via its Versace Home collection, it was only natural for a pioneering real estate developer to tie up with a globally-acclaimed lifestyle brand." Relentless passion for innovation, a company dictum, was instrumental in making the partnership a reality. While there was a need to respond to the desires and specifications of their diverse clientele, they were also not remiss in adapting to their ever-evolving tastes and preferences. "We listen to our clientele; we know that style evolves and trends fade. We focus on the quality in craftsmanship and the sophistication it exudes, which brings about prestige in ownership.

**THE VERSACE CONNECTION**

Closer to home, Century Properties is also behind a groundbreaking project that sees the country's largest privately-owned real estate firm join hands with another prominent name, this time from Italy. In partnership with world-renowned fashion-luxury brand Versace—best known as the fashion house founded by seminal designer Gianni and upheld by his sister Donatella—Century recently unveiled a P3 billion residential project they christened The Milano Residences. This is the



ROBBIE ANTONIO WITH LEGENDARY ARCHITECT IM PEI



THE LOBBY



People purchase things that make them feel good about themselves, and we celebrate this by going beyond the current limits of design and lifestyle so the market can fulfill their heart's whims and desires."

Also working with Century Properties and Versace for the landmark development is the firm Broadway Malyan, a world-renowned architectural practice based in the United Kingdom, which designed the building's aesthetic mold in synch with Versace Home's lavish and awe-inspiring interior amenities. The firm has won numerous international awards, and designed two of the most famous developments in London: Vauxhall Tower, dubbed as the tallest building in the city, and Battersea Reach. Robbie adds that Broadway Malyan is also a steadfast advocate of sustainable design, a policy which Century Properties actively espouses in its developments.

#### DEFINITIVE AND TIMELESS

Due to be completed in 2015, the Milano Residences will have the Versace stamp in its



common spaces, including the grand lobby, hallways, swimming pool, library, pool garden, and spa. Residents will also have the option of having their units outfitted with Versace Home's furniture, décor, tiles and fittings. The development is expected to total 340 units with one to three-bedroom configurations. Prime units in various sizes and layouts include The Penthouses, The Townhouses and Italian-inspired The Loggias which are two-level units that feature breathtaking private plunge pools, a first in a

Makati condominium. It will be located at Century City, a 3.4-hectare property in Kalayaan Avenue that is the flagship development of Century Properties.

"Our mission has always been to create the best developments for all branches of the market," Robbie says. "We believe that there is a specific market for a venture of this magnitude, and we intend to serve their demands and aspirations. Our clientele here is specifically comprised of the upscale, ultra-discerning tastemaker. Versace Home celebrates a lifestyle

that is both definitive and bold, and we hope to manifest these characteristics into the Milano's underlying concept."

The project may be daunting and the challenges along the way numerous, but for Century Properties, this new undertaking is yet another test of the Antonio family's resolve to offer only the best for their clients.

#### ART AND BUSINESS

The third of four brothers, Robbie studied in Northwestern University and took his MBA at Stanford University. Even early on there was no question in the career he wanted to pursue. "I wanted to do something entrepreneurial and to be involved in the realm of real estate. Century Properties is an entrepreneurial company. We are bottom line-driven yet we are creative; we are nimble and decide expeditiously. Whether it is selling a US \$10 million Manhattan loft or a high rise Manila condo unit with a private pool, we focus on quality and ingenuity."

The quest for excellence and desire to prove himself not just in the land of his birth, but on a global stage is reflective of the people he looks up to in admiration and respect. These include Abraham Lincoln, who he



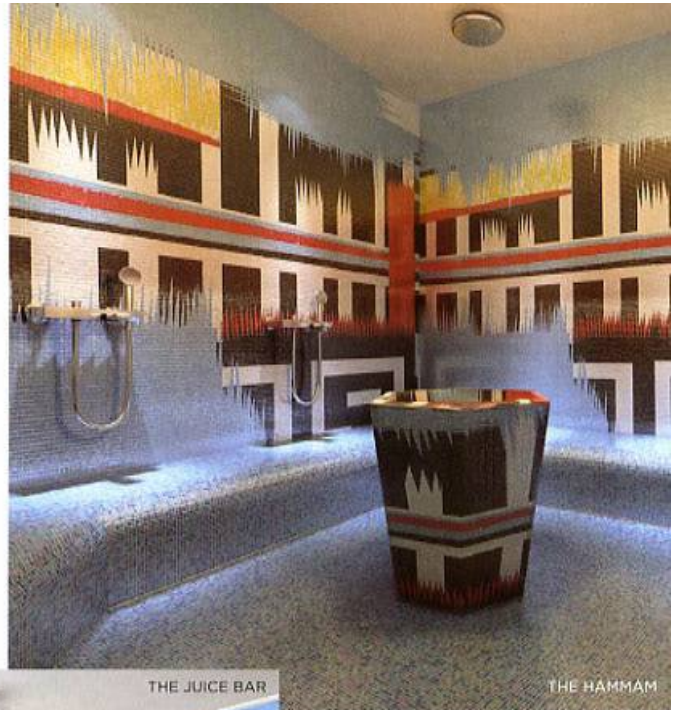


believes is the best President the US has ever had, scientist and humanitarian Norman Borlaug, who developed agricultural production techniques that is believed to have saved over a billion people from starvation, luxury goods stalwarts Bernard Arnault and Francois Pinault, whom he says have 'impeccable taste in art, fashion, design, and architecture. "I also marvel at Steve Cohen not only for his astute financial mind but for possessing one of the most impressive art collections in the world. Bacon, Rothko, Picasso, Matisse, Warhol, Johns, Pollock, Cezanne,

Koons, you name the artist, he has a major piece by him or her."

The fascination with art almost equals, if not surpasses, his interest in property development. "If I didn't do real estate and if I had unlimited resources, I would be a full time art collector because the pursuit of the ultimate collection of masters is my obsession," he says. "There is no day that passes wherein I am not connected to the art world. I am constantly on the phone with dealers from London, Paris and New York or emailing various auction houses."

Robbie gets to further



THE HAMMAM



THE JUICE BAR



THE SWIMMING POOL

indulge in his passion for art during visits to the homes of his collector friends when he travels, which, in his line of work, is often. The last 12 months alone he has been to Europe five times, the United States twice and the Middle East three times, all for work. He has grown so used to packing his bags and jetting off to locations near and far, he considers himself a veteran traveler. There are also some regular trips the jetsetter takes every year, including the Art Basel Fair (both in Switzerland and

Miami) and St. Tropez. "My friend and I would often joke that having a casual lunch at Club 55 and Le Palmier is like being in one of the most powerful boardrooms in the world."

Robbie is constantly on the move and possesses a near-obsessive commitment to build the business exponentially, providing quality housing to Filipinos in the process. "I have lofty goals for our business and I would like to ensure they are all achieved this decade," he says. His art collection is another thing he wants to expand significantly. The collection of Modern, Post War and Contemporary European and American masters is ever-growing and his dream is to have a fraction of the collection of established art lovers he admires like the Agnellis, Eli Broad and David Geffen. Most of all, Robbie says his main goal in life is something deeper and more personal. "At the end of the day, I just want to be truly happy, in every sense of the word!" □

For more information on the Milano Residences, visit <a href="http://century-properties.com">century-properties.com</a>