# LIFESTYLE ASIA

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P220

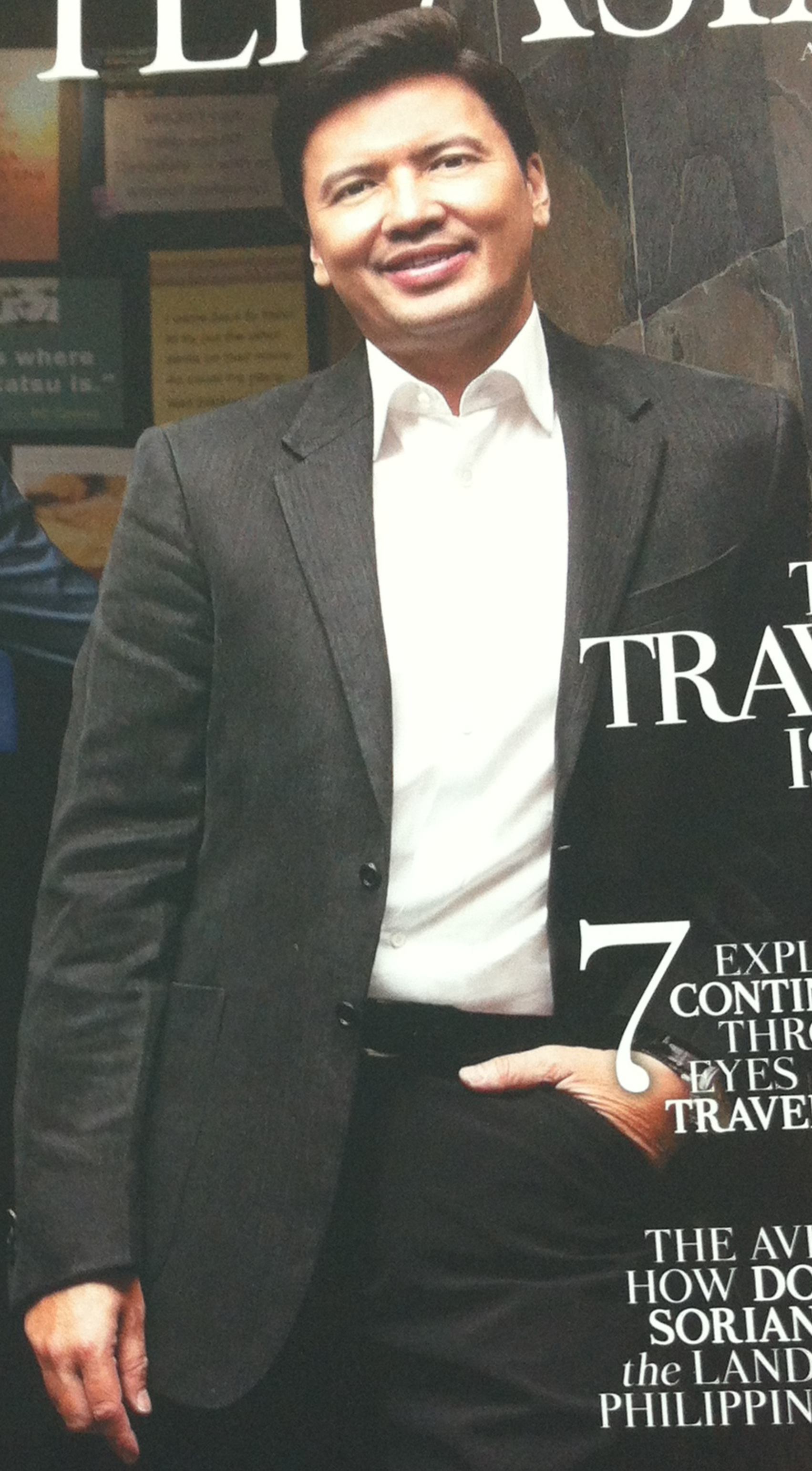*living at its finest*

WINNER
**QUILL AWARDS**
PHILIPPINE

TRIP ADVISOR:
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SAVOIR-FAIRE
PACKING

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SHARE *their*
VANITY KIT
ESSENTIALS

ACE to FACE
*th* BULGARI
MBASSADOR
RIC BANA *in*
NGAPORE

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PHILIPPINE BUSINESS

FATHER *and* SON
## JOHN & MICHAEL CONCEPCION

*are* BRINGING *the*
BEST *of* WORLD *to*
*the* PHILIPPINES

# HEALING with ART

FOR A DECADE AND A HALF, THE **CHAMELEON ASSOCIATION** HAS HELPED YOUNG FILIPINO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE RECLAIM THEIR CHILDHOODS

By **GABY IGNACIO** | Photography **MIKE CUEVAS**

THE VISCOUNTESS CORINNE DE LONGUEMAR HAS ORGANIZED MEMORABLE AFFAIRS FOR FAVORITE CAUSES HERE IN THE PHILIPPINES. She lives an active life beyond the engagements of the wife of an ADB officer. Besides being an artist and jewelry designer, she gives time and energy to philanthropic pursuits, doing it with flair and elan as is characteristic of her ebullient personality. One of her signature events, accomplished in collaboration with Manille Bienvenue, was a fund raising dinner for the benefit of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parañaque at the Champagne Room of the Manila Hotel. It was a recreation of Belle Epoch with Corinne presiding complete with feathers in her blonde hair.

As she sits across the table, the enthusiasm for another project is unmistakable. "Before meeting Laurence [Ligier], I had no idea that Chameleon existed!" exclaims the Viscountess, referring to the Frenchwoman behind the association helping abused children in the Philippines. "A friend of mine introduced us, and when Laurence told me the story of Chameleon over dinner, I was so impressed. As a woman, the plight of these children struck me." Hearing the challenges faced not only by her compatriot but by the foundation's beneficiaries, De Longuemar immediately offered to help Ligier.

A Chameleon on Your Shoulder

The story of Ligaya in the Philippines
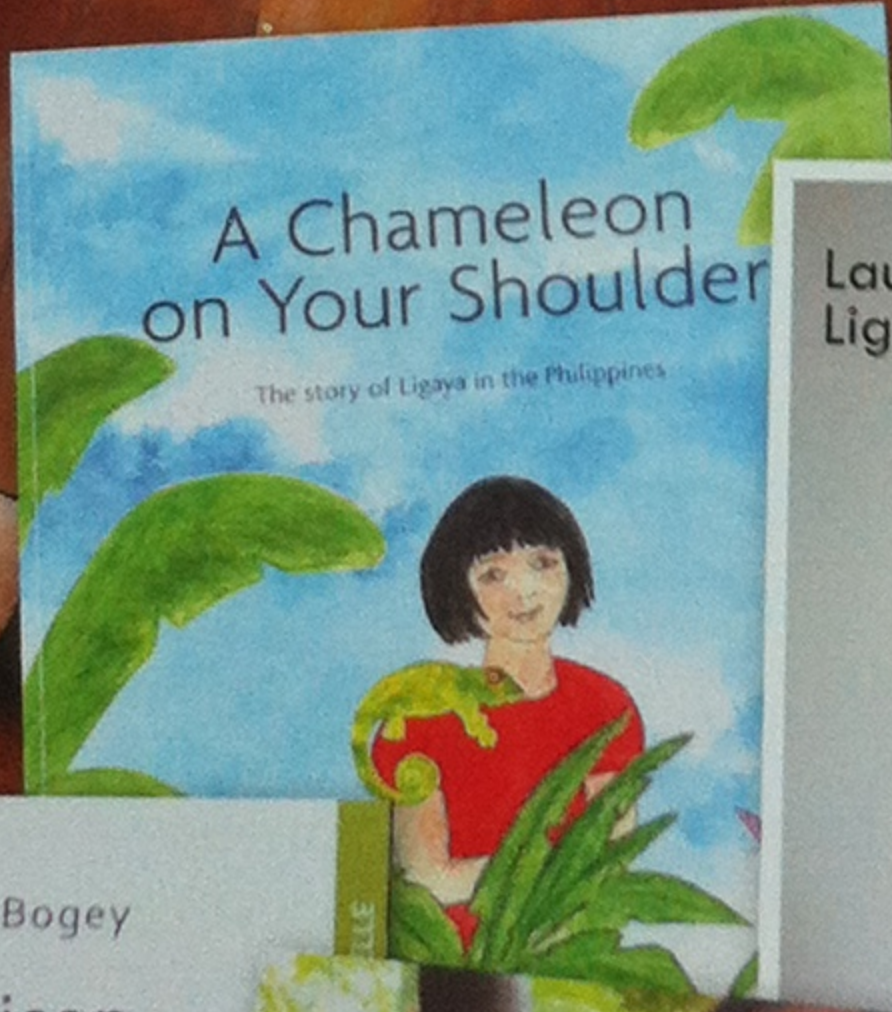
Laurence Ligier

Georges Bogey

La Maison des Caméléons

Books written by Laurence Ligier and supporters of the organization raise funds and help tell the story of Chameleon

PRINCESSES DES RUES

Quinze ans au secours de l'enfance aux Philippines

LAURENCE LIGIER

## LIFE CHANGING ENCOUNTER

Fifteen years ago, Laurence Ligier was a young law student who traveled from her native France to the sunny shores of the Philippines. She had volunteered to help educate street children for a year. What she discovered upon her arrival in Iloilo was a situation which required more than teaching. There were victims of child abuse, some as young as five years old. Ligier returned to France and began to get involved in social development and humanitarian action. In 1997, she made a decision to move to the Philippines, leaving her friends and family behind to create what would eventually become the Chameleon Association.

Dedicated to helping female abused minors, aged five to 17, the Chameleon Association is a Department of Social Welfare and Development-accredited, non-profit organization. A secure complex in the Panay Island countryside is the physical home of the Chameleon Foundation. It is here that dozens of girls receive the attention and help they need to rebuild their lives.

## EUROPEANS REACH OUT

More than 30 permanent employees from all around the Philippines have dedicated their lives to helping these young girls, but assistance has come from across the globe. Volunteers from France, Andorra, Switzerland, and Luxembourg have thrown their support, whether with their time or money, behind the organization's thrust to preventing child abuse and promote children's rights.

In the decade and a half since the Chameleon Association was founded, it has continuously provided the victims with basic needs like education, psychological support, and legal assistance. The organization also facilitates longer term assistance through career guidance, job placement, and autonomy coaching, as well as extends aid to impoverished communities in the area. For her work with Chameleon,



Ligier with some beneficiaries of Chameleon Association

> "THOSE LITTLE GIRLS, THEIR DEVELOPMENT, THEIR EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE DAMAGED. PAINTING, WRITING, DANCE ARE WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE TRAUMA AND THE SUFFERING"

Ligier has been granted such accolades as the Philippines Presidential Award, the French government's Award for Civic Spirit and Devotion and Knight of the National Order of Merit, and Clarins' Most Dynamic Woman of the Year Award.

## ENLISTING THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY

To commemorate its 15th anniversary, the Chameleon Association teamed up with several institutions, both local and international, for its first ever fundraising gala dinner. Held at the Manila Polo Club last March, the event was conceptualized as a means not only to raise money

for the institution, but to raise awareness for an organization that is relatively unknown even in the country in which it operates.

Two separate events make up the entirety of the project. A gala dinner, supported by such companies as Rustan's, Clarins, Bacchus, and the Rotary Club, was held at the Manila Polo Club, where patrons were treated to a special signature menu developed by French chef Jacky Robert. Several days later, the works of famous Filipino artists, including Gus Albor, Imelda Cajipe Endaya, Olivia d'Aboville, Phyllis Zaballero, Valeria Cavestany, and Yasmin Sison, were put up for sale at the Salcedo Auctions showroom. All proceeds from the dinner and the auction were granted to the Chameleon Association to contribute to the annual P32M budget needed to sustain its daily operations.

## ART AS HEALING

For her part, De Longuemar reccomends art as a way to heal for the victims of abuse. "I told Laurence that, to find a way to communicate the cause and the plight of these girls, we should use art," De Longuemar says. "Those little girls, their development, their emotional relationships are damaged. Painting, writing, dance are ways to deal with the trauma and the suffering."

To date, the Chameleon Association has helped more than 600 young girls reclaim their lives, and seek to do the same for more victims of the nearly 100,000 cases reported annually. "It is a drop in the ocean. It is better than nothing, but there should be a Chameleon shelter in every province. The first thing we need to do is to not deny that this problem exists, and the best solution would, of course, be prevention," says Longuemar. "This should not happen to anyone. It is the worst thing that exists in the world, because it kills the essence of a child, of the woman she is going to be in the future. We want to create awareness and spread information about Chameleon and the work they are doing."

For more information on the Chameleon Association, visit <chameleon-association.org>