

THE ILONGGO ARTISTIC TRADITION IN THE WORKS AND LIVES OF TEN SELECTED VISUAL ARTISTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to define the Ilonggo artistic tradition from the works and lives of ten selected visual artists. Using document analysis and interview, a brief biography and a critique of the works were made based on the photographs of the artworks. Selection was made based on any two of the following: major national award in art, gallery exhibits held, activity in the past two years and group affiliation. [The Ilonggo artistic tradition shows the following characteristics: An easily recognized hallmark of the works that identifies the true “voices” of the artists evidently shows their unique ability to come up with signature styles not yet seen in the usual canons of art. The works- though varied in a range of mediums, subjects, moods and elements- remain hinged in the framework of Ilonggo culture. With no fine arts courses, most of the leading artists were raised up with the help of Hubon Madaas which served as the prime mover of cultural activities in Panay. The artists are products of the admixture of natural endowment in art, presence of cultural activities to participate, challenge of peers and a courageous resolve to continue their art regardless of the lack of patronage by the public in general. The artists still belong to the mainstream art in the country even if they are stereotyped. This is true in the sense that they have been getting their energies from the leading artists in the country such as the interaction and workshop conducted by national artist Jose Joya and their ability to bring top awards in prestigious national contests. They had exhibits in Manila while four of them held solo shows abroad.]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

In the framework of government policy, the art and culture of the country should be given importance. In the Article XIV, sections 14 and 15 of the Philippine Constitution, it is stated that “The State shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expressions... The State shall conserve, promote and popularize the nation’s historical and cultural heritage resources, as well as artistic creations.” In Hortilla’s (1999) paper, he quoted that the Philippine constitution, cognizant of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has enshrined the recognition of our “Rights to Culture” as a basic human right. It is a fundamental right of the communities to freely participate in its cultural life—whether in process of evolution, conservation, preservation, and/or in the enhancement of cultural heritage and artistic traditions.” Yet this right is of little value unless the creative and cultural forces that shape people’s lives are respected and understood by the agents of change—the policy-makers, artists-educators and cultural workers, government agencies, the private sector and the non-government organizations.

Panay island is endowed with nationally-acclaimed talents in the visual arts. Iloilo, in particular, has been considered as the second best which is next to the National Capital Region in terms of visual arts maturity and development based on the NCCA (National Commission on Culture and the Arts) survey. Despite this reality, the region is facing a dismal art scene due to the overall negative art appreciation and development culture manifested by the lack of researches that document and establish an Ilonggo artistic tradition. Only one study has been formally conducted by Defensor (1992) about the works of a local artist Vicente San Miguel. The rest are scant essays and reviews that cannot yet establish a significant pool of knowledge on the Ilonggo artistic tradition.

The lack of formal studies may be caused by an interplay of contributing factors such as lack of governmental support, patronage of local art collectors, philanthropic sponsors, proper venue for exhibitions and the general economic resources of the artists. The prevailing behavioral element of the community is dismal and is perhaps the major cause. In an article “A culture and arts diary of Western Visayas”, Locsin-Nava (2003) eloquently noted: “it (Panay) has fathered its own tales of fabulous frugality, from keeping money under mattresses for so long they smelled rank by the time they were spent, to maintaining only three sets of clothes in one’s lifetime: one to wear, another in the laundry and a third for emergency. Though not as colorful as tales of Negrense profligacy, these stories have reinforced in the minds of many the stereotypical stingy Panayanon with his conservative outlook and his propensity for doing things in a small way.”

Despite the challenges in Iloilo’s art scene, a new era of better consciousness and culture of excellence in art appreciation can begin. Once this pioneering study is realized, the data becomes a milestone to start the long-sought aspiration of a new artistic culture.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to define the Ilonggo artistic tradition from the works and lives of ten selected visual artists.

Specifically, the study sought the following:

- 1) to critique the major paintings or sculptures of each of the ten selected Ilonggo visual artists;
- 2) to make a brief biographical sketch of each selected artist and some extravisual factors that are significant in their development; and
- 3) to synthesize the Ilonggo artistic tradition based on the overall criticism of selected artworks, characteristics of the artists and the state of the arts in the province.

Significance of the Study

This study is in line with the mandate in the Article XIV, sections 14 and 15 of the Philippine Constitution. This constitutional mandate goes in the same vein as the NCCA mandate that to “conserve and promote the nation’s historical and cultural heritage, it shall: 1) support, monitor and systematize the retrieval and conservation of artifacts of Filipino culture...and all Filipino cultural treasures...; 2) encourage and support the study, recognition and preservation of endangered human cultural resources...; 6) encourage and support scholarly research and documentation of Philippine cultural traditions, arts and crafts, as well as significant cultural movements, achievements, and personalities especially in the literary, visual and performing arts...; and 8) encourage, support and systematize the audio-visual documentation of Filipino cultural expressions in the contemporary period.” Being the second formal study ever made on the lives of Ilonggo artists, this research is very significant. The first study was a masteral thesis on the works and the life of Vicente San Miguel, a pioneer in telon painting during the times of the zarzuelas. If there have been reviews and essays on the works of Ilonggo artists, they could not yet derive the Ilonggo artistic tradition for they were very limited and “elitist”, based on highly opinionated interviews which may lack the merit of a scientific method of data gathering. This study will benefit the country in general and Iloilo in particular, in terms of “fostering the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expressions.”

For the NCCA, the results of this study can add to the pool of knowledge needed in decision-making and the attainment of its mandate. This will give the picture of the Ilonggo idiosyncracies which differ from the rest of the colleagues from Manila and the other provinces.

The university can benefit by realizing its cultural objectives. One of the purposes of a local university should be on developing and encouraging the evolution and development of the Ilonggo identity.

The local artists can benefit from this study by giving them a chance to be more recognized in the local and national level, based on their artworks and unique biographical information.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories of art criticism. A very conventional approach is Edmund Feldsman's four step sequential model: description, analysis, interpretation and judgment. Using this approach, there is a sequential relationship as one is guided from concrete details to abstract concepts, from knowledge and comprehension to analysis and evaluation. In critiquing one's own creation, the critic exercises the opportunity to reach the pinnacle in the application of higher order thinking skills.

However, it would be a disadvantageous limitation if the recent approaches will not be combined in art criticism. Most recent approaches have suggested venturing away from the formalist approach of Feldman and exploring the schemes of D.E. Fehr (historical context), T. Anderson (cultural context), B.B. Venabe (personal relevance), G. Geahigan (critical inquiry) and Gadamer's (personal context). In this study, the above approaches will be combined to suit the artwork to be focused.

Operational Definition of Terms

There following terms were operationally defined as used in the study:

Ilonggo artistic tradition. This is the description of the common features of all artworks done by the ten selected Ilonggo artists, using an individual and synthesized analysis. This also includes the characteristics of the leading Ilonggo artists and the state of the arts in the province and the region.

Works. This refers to significant artworks of any medium that an artist has produced. The medium may be painting, sculpture or studio ceramics.

NCCA. This refers to the National Commission on Culture and the Arts.

Local artist. This refers to a visual artist who comes from Iloilo, even if he or she has later based himself of herself in other places to continue in his career as an artist.

Hubon Madaas. This is the oldest and one of the most productive art organizations founded by Ed Defensor. Its gallery is located near the residence of Congressman Arthur Defensor at Barangay Pali, Mandurriao, Iloilo City.

Artist. This refers to a person who seriously chose the visual arts career even if he or she is employed in another full-time job.

Ilonggo. This is a person who is born and lived for at least five years even if he or she has already resided elsewhere.

Scope and Limitations

The research limits to only ten selected Ilonggo visual artists in order to have an in-depth analysis of artworks and the Ilonggo artistic tradition. The rest of the nine who could have also qualified in the selection criteria will be studied in the next series of this study. Qualitative approach using document analysis and descriptive methods were employed. Only four actual paintings or sculptures were analyzed for each selected artist since there is a limitation of time and resources.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

On Art Criticism

Art criticism is the written discussion or evaluation of visual art. Art critics usually criticize art in the context of aesthetics or the theory of beauty. One of criticism's goals is the pursuit of a rational basis for art appreciation. Though critiques of art may have lasted as long as art itself, art criticism as a genre refers to a systematic study of art performed by scholars and dedicated students of art and art theory (*from* <http://www.answers.com/topic/art-criticism>).

Terry Barret, in *Lessons for Teaching Art Criticism* (1994) gathered his contemporaries to share their theories and practical models of art criticism for use. Most recently, art critical studies related to education have suggested venturing away from the formalist approaches of Feldman and Broudy and exploring the schemes of D.E. Fehr (historical context), T. Anderson (cultural context), B. Venable (personal relevance), and G. Geahigan (critical inquiry). Models such as Gadamer's hermeneutics that focuses on personal context suggest a resurgence of interest in resurrected art theory. The attraction is a more relaxed critical relationship with the artwork (<http://www.secondaryenglish.com/using%20art%20criticism.htm>).

The Philippine Artistic Tradition

Like a cultured pearl, Philippine culture has grown through a long and slow process of accretion. Indian, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, American and other foreign influences have added their luster to the original kernel. As a result, Philippine art, literature, beliefs, customs and traditions, morals, knowledge and laws have been significantly enriched. The preservation, enrichment and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity and nurtured in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression is guaranteed in the Philippine Constitution.

The Philippines has an active artistic and cultural life. There are concerts and recitals, plays and drama presentations on stage and television, painting and art exhibitions, museum displays, lectures and discussions, dance performances and workshops, and film festivals. The Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila coordinates artistic and cultural activities throughout the country. It also serves as a national venue for the performing arts.

About painting. Fabian dela Rosa (1869-1937) was the first painter of note in the 20th century. His works were realistic portraits, genre, and landscapes in subdued colors. But it would be Fernando Amorsolo y Cueto (1892-1972), his nephew who would capture the attention of the public and art collectors. If Dela Rosa's works were subdued, cool colors, Amorsolo's landscapes are bathed with the glorious sunlight. Amorsolo idealized the rural life, depicting farmers and fisherfolk doing their work without much effort, with seeming enjoyment in their tasks.

When the University of the Philippines was established in 1908, Fabian dela Rosa was its first dean. Amorsolo, being a faculty member and subsequently dean of the UP School of Fine Arts from 1952 to 1955, students followed his influence and the

“Amorsolo School” was born. Followers included Jorge Pineda, Ireneo Miranda, and Toribio Herrera. Having a long artistic career, Amorsolo was the first National Artist in 1972.

Modernism in the Philippine painting started in 1890’s with Miguel Zaragosa’s two pointillist works. Emilio Alvero later worked with impressionist still life paintings.

In 1920’s, several young painters have ventured to question the Amorsolo School and developed their idioms in expressing themselves. Among them, Victorio Edades in 1928 caused quite a controversy with his work *The Builders*. Instead of joyful farmers, it depicted distorted, naked working men covered with sweat and grime. He showed the hardship of life for the working class.

In 1934, Edades recruited two young dropouts of the UP School of Fine Arts, Carlos “Botong” Francisco and Galo Ocampo to help him execute a mural. Together, they formed the triumvirate of modern art in the country.

In 1935, modernist Diosdado Lorenzo (1906-1984) discarded the style of Amorsolo but surprisingly some of his works were sold. He painted traditional subjects done in modernist style of strong, vigorous brushstrokes, using bright oranges and greens.

Galo Ocampo (1913-1985) developed a Filipinized Western canonical iconography with his *Brown Madonna*. He commissioned to design the coat-of-arms of the Republic of the Philippines. He also served as director of the National Museum.

Carlos “Botong” Francisco (1913-1969) depicted Philippine history in his *History of Manila* mural at the Manila City Hall. He is known for his depiction of important historical events such as the first Mass at Limasawa. Botong was proclaimed as National Artist for painting in 1973.

During the Japanese era, the works were supportive of Japanese occupation. Examples were Vicente Alvarez Dizon’s *A Day Begins* in 1942 and Crispin Lopez’s *Baguio Market* in 1943.

After the war, the debate between the modernists and the conservatives, with Edades and Tolentino as main protagonists, continued. The triumvirate of Edades, Ocampo and Francisco became the core group of artists informally known as the Thirteen Moderns. The other moderns were Diosdado Lorenzo, Vicente Manansala, Hernando Ocampo, Cezar Legaspi, Demetrio Diego, UTS faculty members Bonifacio Cristobal and architect Jose Pardo, Arsenio Capili who died during the war, two student assistants – Ricarte Purugganan and Anita Magsaysay-Ho, the only woman in the group.

Manansala, Legaspi and Ocampo became the Big Three in the modernist movement after the war. Together with another modernist, Romeo Tabuena, and Anita Magsaysay-Ho, they formed the Neo-realist group based at the PAG. Other stalwarts soon joined them such as Manuel Rodriguez Sr., Arturo Luz, Nena Saguil, Cenon Rivera, Jose Joya, J. Elizalde Navarro, Lee Aguinaldo and David Cortez Medalla.

Jose Joya (1931-1995) would become the country’s foremost exponent of Abstract Expressionism, in the tradition of the American Jackson Pollock. He was posthumously honored as a National Artist.

The year 1955 was an eventful year for the Philippine visual arts. The AAP Semiannual Competition and Exhibition at the Northern Motors Showroom was marred by the walk-out of conservative artists. After the opening of the exhibition, they took their entries and put up their own exhibition across the street. It was their sign of protest for what they perceive as a bias for modernist works in the awarding of the Rotary Club’s

Golden Anniversary awards, all of which went to modernists Galo Ocampo, Manuel Rodriguez, and Vicente Manansala. In 1957, the AAP decided to stop its practice of awarding for two categories, perhaps realizing that there is just one standard for judging art and not two.

In the sixties and seventies, several young artists were now on the rise such as Bencab, Antonio Austria, Manuel “Boy” Rodriguez, Jr., Roberto Chabet, Norma Belleza, Jaime de Guzman, Danilo Dalena, Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Justin Nuyda, and Angelito Antonio among others. These new generation ensured that modernism, in particular, and the Philippine painting, in general, will remain alive and well into the next decades (from <http://www.ncca.gov.ph>).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research used a document analysis and descriptive approaches. It analyzed and made a criticism on some major works done by each selected artist using the elements of art, influences, social and political context, and personal factors as bases. Based on the individual criticism, a synthesis of the Ilonggo artistic tradition was derived. To understand more on the presentations of paintings and sculptures, the background profile of the artists was also described. Since the interest of this study is more on the depth of analyses, only the qualitative approach was employed.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were ten Ilonggo artists, namely, Nelfa Querubin-Tompkins, Ed Defensor, Harry mark Gonzales, Martin Genodepa, Alan Cabalfin, Fed Orig, Zoe Amora, Boyet Zoluaga, Benjie Belgica and Dado Tan. At least two of the following criteria should be met as basis of selection:

- 1) The Ilonggo artist should have a major award in any prestigious national fine arts contests which include the Metrobank Art and Design Excellence (MADE), AAP (Art Association of the Philippines), Petron, Philip Morris, PLDT, Shell, Diwa ng Sining, GSIS and the Biennial Dumaguete Open Terra cotta Festival contests.
- 2) He should have had a major one-man or two-man exhibitions at reputed galleries or museums here or abroad (this criteria may substitute criteria #1); and
- 3) He should be active in the local art scene, meaning, they continue to have exhibits for the past two years and are still recognized in the local art community.

- 4) He should be a member of the oldest art group in the region, the Hubon Madaas.

Data Collection

Primary data of this study included the photograph of paintings and sculptures of the selected artists. They were collected from the artists personally or thru their websites. Aside from the photos, personal interview was used as one of the bases to analyze the artworks and describe the background profile of the artists.

Secondary data were reviews about the artworks, journals, books and internet articles.

Instrumentation

The photographs of the artists' works were the main instrument of the study. Aside from photographs, an unstructured interview was used. The interview focused on the influences of the artists in terms of style, favorite artists and preference on subject of artworks. It also dealt with the background information of the artists.

The materials used were the digital camera and a tape recorder. Most of the artists' recent works are either unpublished or not yet widely circulated that is why taking photographs of their works is very important for analyses.

Criteria for Artistic Analysis

The critique of the artworks combines the formalist models of Feldman and Broudy, and the schemes of T. Anderson (cultural context), B. Venable (personal relevance), and G. Geahigan (critical inquiry). The analysis of each artist's works touches the dominant elements, principle, subject, emotion, medium, style, influence and general feature. However, the analyses vary based on the notable factors which vary in each artist. Some Palanca award poems are also mentioned as they fit the emotion and context portrayed in some works.

Data Collection Procedure

In the collection process, step 1 was setting the criteria of selection of respondents which is discussed earlier. Based on a preliminary interview, those who can qualify in at least two criteria were listed. The names and addresses of these artists were availed from Hubon Madaas headquarters. Step 2 was setting an appointment with each artist. A convenient place of appointment was preferred in the set meetings of each artist such as a restaurant or coffee shop at Robinsons Iloilo. Step 3 was conducting an in-depth interview on each artist. The interview was set with an average of thirty minutes. Step 4 was getting the photos of four major artworks done by each artist. This is done after the interview of each artist. In this step, the artists were consulted about which artworks are major representations of their outputs. Step 5 was the analysis of the artworks and the artists. Based on the photos, interviews and the secondary data, the write-up on the results and discussion followed.

Data Analysis and Organization of Report

This study used the qualitative approach which dealt with two levels of analysis. Level one presented a criticism of individual artworks per artist with correlation to their biographical sketches. Level two is an overall synthesis of the Ilonggo artistic tradition based on the works presented.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First Level Analysis: Works and Lives of the Artists

Zoe Amora: Limner of San Enrique

Biography. Amora won several awards in painting and sculpture. In 1996, Amora won in the Diwa ng Sining as finalist in both the mixed media painting and sculpture categories. A number of times in the annual Pinta Paraw at Villa, Iloilo, he is either first or second placer. Amora also won in other contests such as the belen-making in SM City (grand champion), National Electrification and Administration (second place), Wow Philippines (second place) and the Semana sang Iloilo on-the-spot painting (grand prize).

Amora started humbly with parents who are farmers. As he can remember, he already was perceptive about forms during his early childhood. He was asked to copy something and did not know he was writing his name.

When Amora was grade three, he won third place in the Green Revolution painting contest of his district.

The ambition of Amora was to take architecture; however, because of financial limitations, he just ended up taking an architectural drafting course at ISAT. Even if that course was technical, he was able to benefit from the free-hand drawing lessons which also helped him to develop as a painter.

Before Amora grew as a painter, his boarding house was just besides the house of the Ferraris brothers who are award-winning artists. He was seen by the Ferraris brothers when he made drawings or paintings in his boarding house. That ushered him to join the Iloilo Society of Arts.

Later in 1983, when the Hubon Madaas group was organized, Amora while still a student, was invited to join the group. While he was just new in his serious art with a few pieces made, he recalled that his first buyer was Mrs. Rosalie Sarabia (wife of Mayor Jerry Treñas).

In 1987, Amora tried to work as a cartographer. He lasted with that job for only one year because for an artist like Amora, making circles and connecting them was too boring as a routine task. After he left that job, he continued with his art.

There were also times when Amora had to stop with his art and work with the farm but later, he recalled that his hands would begin to long for a brush.

Having immersed himself with his town's life, Amora also entered into politics. Since 1986, he had been a barangay Sanggunian member. Later, since 2002, he has been elected as a punong barangay.

Critique of works. Hailing from San Enrique, Amora linked much of his life with the rural ambiance of his hometown such that many of his paintings show the activities of farming among his town mates. He is not just a common limner of life in the local milieu. His paintings usually show the dynamism of linear elements in the bamboos or sugar canes reflecting his signature style. As to color combination, the artist Amora is influenced by the vibrant abstracts of national artist Jose Joya. As to choice of subject, his works have a similar sentiment with Amorsolo who always depict the farmers although not as literal in a sun-basked mode. The elements of lines and color combine the principles of rhythm, harmony and balance to show lowly farmers. Like his peers at Hubon Madias, Amora prefers acrylic for its odorless and fast-drying qualities. The artist finds his signature work by the accents of bamboos that separate the different scenes of farming. To the eyes, these bamboos create movement, complementing the energetic work in the farm.

Having started with realism, Amora evolved into a modernist whose manner of presenting rural life gives the viewer a fresh insight of daily living. In his "Obrero sa Tubo" (Figure 1), the workers are individually focused, separated by lines. The atmosphere in the far side and the activities of farmers are separated. There is a message of individuality in diversity and commonality. These concepts are not contradictory as healthy and productive individuals should maintain their individual identity although the task is just similar and routinary.

"Palas-anon sa Matag Adlaw" (Figure 2) is connoting the daily burden of living in the rural scene. As the classical allusion of the Biblical passage, "each one should carry his own load...Anyone who is lazy should not eat."

The relief on mahogany wood titled "Weaving" (Figure 3), is a depiction of diligence. In reality, the lowly folks in the local milieu are struggling even if the work could hardly be enough for the necessities. This work shows Amora versatility to work on different mediums like his colleagues from Hubon Madias. As he emphasized, he could easily come up with a sculpture because even with a given wood or stone, the task is less complicated and less demanding compared to painting in which one should stretch the canvas and spend for the more expensive acrylic colors.

The "Harvest" (Figure 4) painting is a unique rendition of this very common scene in San Enrique. Even if the theme is the end part of the planting cycle, Amora still presented the carabao and farmer tilling the ground before planting the palay seeds, conveying to the viewer the importance of a process before reaping the reward of one's labor. "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy", according to the Bible in Psalms.



Figure 1. "Obrero sa tubo", acrylic by Zoe Amora



Figure 2. "Palas-anon sa matag adlaw", acrylic by Zoe Amora

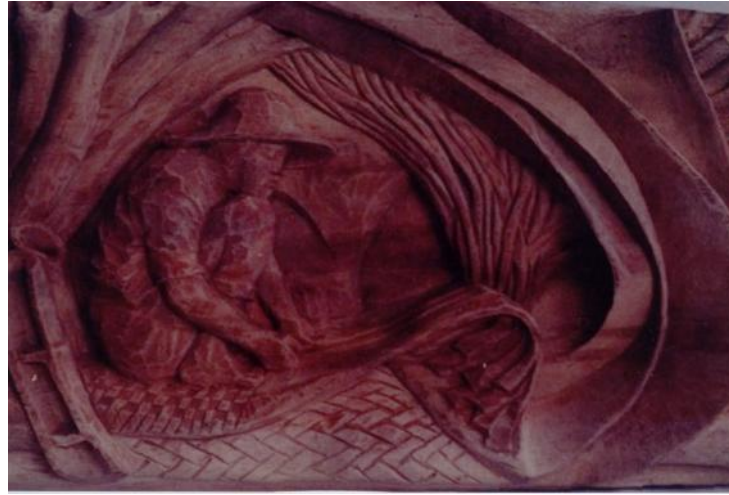


Figure 3. “Weaving”, wood relief by Zoe Amora



Figure 4. “Harvest”, acrylic by Zoe Amora

Benjie Belgica: Sculpting Muted Melodies

Biography. Born in 1950, Belgica comes from a father who was a businessman and Consul-General Larry Belgica. Since he was three years old, he already started to draw for his classmates.

Belgica took BS Management in Ateneo, Manila. While he was in college, he took an elective subject where he opened his eyes about “serious art”. As a student, he doubted whether he will become an artist for his preoccupation was helping his father in the newspaper business.

His growth as an artist started when he became a marketing director of his family's business. In 1977, he joined group shows in Antipolo, Manila. In 1979, his first solo show was held in Iloilo.

Later, Belgica held his exhibitions at Montreal, Canada, Japan, Germany and the US—with a total of seven one-man shows.

Recently, he became an entrepreneur whose preoccupation is on teaching art and holding exhibits and workshops.

Critique of works. Having preferred singing men, women or children in terra cotta, Belgica uses a smooth texture with rhythm and harmony in the presentation of each subject. The technique used is much influenced by Brancusi who abbreviates the presentation of a subject. His goal is to capture the emotion rather than tell a story. Despair is the dominant emotion while the sculptures call the attention of the artist's past experiences. In painting, Belgica's emotion is more on romance. In his rendition in acrylic, *Fil De La Cruz* is a dominant influence although the artist finds his identity with the presence of *patadyong* colors in all backgrounds of his paintings.

Seeing the usual and most popular subjects of Belgica's terra cotta works as shown by his "Elan Vital Singing Figures" (Figure 5, 6 & 7), one looks at the artist's expression of his sentiment on a career he longed to have but did not achieve much—to be a successful musician. Monumentalizing that sentiment is his way of reminding about a dream not fulfilled by the use of a humble medium, clay.

Clay as a reminder of frailty and fragility is an effective medium used by Belgica since the message is expressing his fragile dream. Contrasting that fragile reminder, however, is the blooming of a more promising career in the visual arts.

Belgica is not only known for his terra cotta singing figures. In his paintings, he usually depicts women rendered with plants in the background and a touch of the ethnic style as seen in the addition of "patadyong" representation in the whole composition. Like the "Limitless Love" (Figure 8), where presented are two lovers, Belgica's paintings are unique in the sense that they are minimalist and at the same time ethnic.

The running motif of Belgica's sculptures may also run in the same vein with Carlos Angeles, the first Palanca awardee in poetry. In the poem "Song", he wrote (Angeles, 1993: pg. 48-49):

The siren warning of a remembered song
Identifying you in the hurt-spilt air
Cuts across the hour to halt eternity
Tall on the burst, unreasoning pavement
Of a stunned, escapeless street,
To panic the heart pedestrian, jam
A sudden traffic in the mousetrapped mind.
It is confusion stirs the monstrous moment
Alerted to your presence, everywhere,
And roots me deepest to the instant spot
Until the drone of ordinary voices
Scythes down your presence and your passing through.
I pick up from the song-stopped street
The wreckage of my footsteps there.



Figure 5. "Elan vital singing figures 1", terra cotta by Benjie Belgica



Figure 6. "Elan vital singing figures 2", terra cotta by Benjie Belgica



Figure 7. “Elan vital singing figures 3”, terra cotta by Benjie Belgica



Figure 8. “Limitless love”, acrylic by Benjie Belgica

Allan Cabalfin: Innovations in Studio Pottery

Biography. For Allan Cabalfin, childhood is remembered with a hobby for drawing. He was known to draw when he was in the primary years. His inclination to the visual arts was encouraged when he enrolled at the Iloilo School of Arts and Trades (ISAT) in his intermediate years in the elementary. He owed it to the school because the concentration was on the shop which trained students on the arts and crafts.

He took architecture at UP in the Visayas and UP Diliman. However, after graduation, his preoccupation has been more on the visual arts. His passion for the arts somehow overpowered his inclination for architecture.

When he studied at UPV, he initiated to form the Students Artists Society. His medium at that time was more on painting. When he went to Manila, he further grew with his artistic talent by more exposures and group shows participated by architecture students.

There were various personalities who contributed to the development of Cabalfin's art. From Hubon Madaas where he was a member, Eduard Defensor as an adviser, contributed in his art pursuit but about the influencers of his style of expression, he admitted that there were many.

In 1987, Cabalfin started to concentrate on studio pottery. That was greatly encouraged when he befriended Nelfa Querubin. By 1988 to 1989, Cabalfin was apprenticed by her and allowed to stay in her studio and use her kiln in Miag-ao, Iloilo.

Later, Cabalfin availed the summer international workshop in pottery at Tokonami, Japan. The funding of that workshop was granted by a Japanese.

All in all, Cabalfin had a total of four one-man shows in Iloilo and a number of group shows in the province and in Manila. His first one-man show was in UP in the Visayas in 1983 after he returned from Manila to finish architecture. The three others were held at the Museo Iloilo in 1987, 1993 and 1996.

Cabalfin's interest in Ceramics started when he was still in ISAT. He observed the processes on how the clay changes its color and how a simple clay becomes a vessel. When Nelfa came to mentor him, it was the realization of the dream to learn studio pottery.

Allan does not stick to a particular style in pottery. He bases his outputs on the availability of the materials and the facilities. He works both on glazed ceramics or terra cotta and jumps from the functional to sculptural works.

Aside from art, Cabalfin derives his income from design services like designing a museum.

Critique of works. Looking at the works of Cabalfin, one is drawn with a dominant feeling of curiosity which the studio pottery evokes. The works in rhythmic and harmonious shapes and textures are either made of stone-ware or terra cotta. Although influenced by Japanese potters who mentored him for a month and the tutelage of Nelfa Querubin, the concepts remain his own. The exciting shapes of Cabalfin's works either suggest a vessel or a human figure. In a vessel, the purpose is more on the decorative side while they are sometimes designed for functionality. The human figures which Cabalfin sometimes create shows a "oneness" of man and his environment or the unique qualities of the human body where the artist gives the viewer a fresh insight.

If allowed to speak for themselves, Cabalfin's works that range from the functional vessel to sculptural explorations tell about the journey of craft and art into a higher elevated form that is "spiritual". His terra cotta "Torso" (Figure 9) is a sculpture making the body of a woman as its subject. Some of the works of the artist show the human figure which indicates his fascination of the body's inherent beauty. The linear elements that can be seen in the torso make the presentation go beyond the normal expectation of the viewer.

The "Vessel 2" (Figure 10) are high-fired tea cups that achieved a unique texture and color. The technique applied which uses a wood-fired kiln is a unique process which heats at least 1000 degrees Celsius to attain the stoneware quality of the cups. The quality attained by this wood-firing method is unique compared to the common electric kiln.

The “Vessel 1” (Figure 11) may seem to be a container but in essence, it is deliberately made to intrigue and arouse curiosity more than its functional intent. As a glazed stoneware, the piece also uses a high-temperature wood-fired method.

“Aurora” (Figure 12) rendered in terra cotta catches an intrigue of a woman coming out from a shell. The concept alludes to a story of malakas and maganda coming from the split bamboo. With this kind of presentation, the theme is on environmental appreciation, showing that mankind is closely linked to his eco-system. The idea invites the viewer to value the sustainability of the environment for future generations.

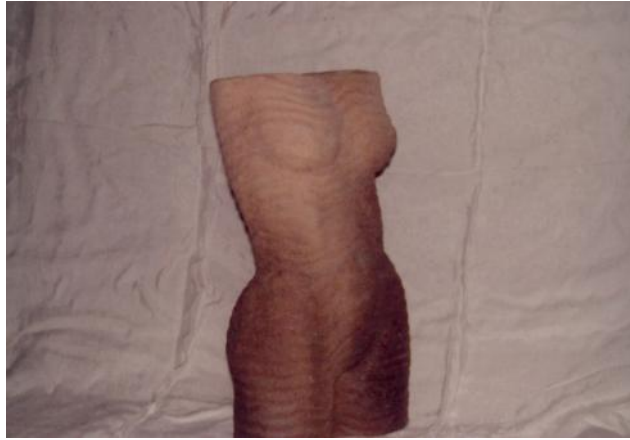


Figure 9. “Torso”, terra cotta by Allan Cabalfin



Figure 10. “Vessel 2”, stoneware by Allan Cabalfin



Figure 11. “Vessel 1”, glazed stoneware cotta by Allan Cabalfin



Figure 12. “Aurora”, terra cotta by Allan Cabalfin

Edward Defensor: Rhythm of the Dance

Biography. Born in March 13, 61-year-old artist Edward Defensor, (the brother of Congressman Arthur Defensor) used to play with ant hill soil of Mina, Iloilo, his hometown and molded them into toys of his choice—until the childhood hobby ceased to be a play and have turned into desirable forms in a well-acclaimed artistic career.

Defensor has a fulfilling career as an associate professor in the Division of Humanities in UP in the Visayas, visual and performing artist. Among his major achievements are: as holder of the Jose Joya Professorial Chair (1996); most outstanding UPV alumnus in the Arts and Letters last 2006; co-congress director during the 2nd National Visual Arts Congress by the NCCA; board member in the committee on visual arts, NCCA last 1995 to 1997; charter chairman in the Visayas Islands Visual Artists Association (VIVA-A) in Dumaguete last 1994; board of directors in the Arts Council of Iloilo Foundation, Inc. (1992-96); Calixto Zaldivar professorial chair holder (1992); Philippine delegate in the 1st ASEAN Universities' Folk Arts Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; artistic director of UP Teatro Amakan (UP in the Visayas, 1986-2000); and charter chairman of the Hubon Madaas: The Panay Art Association.

Defensor has eight solo art exhibits held at Iloilo, New York and Manila galleries. They are: "Pahayag" mixed media paintings at the Philippine Center, New York (2002); "Garden Sculptures" at Defensor bonsai and sculpture garden (1999); "Dancing for the Moon" at Sentro Juan Sebastian, Bacolod (1988), "Dance Sculptures in Wood and Nails" at Cultural Center of the Philippines (1998); "Tapalan" at Museo Iloilo (1992); "Ani" at UP in the Visayas Art Gallery (1991); and "Pahayag 2" (1981) and "Pahayag 1" (1980) at UP in the Visayas Art gallery. Ed also has a number of group exhibits in the region.

Since childhood, Defensor liked drawings. He could recall a family tenant named Fidel whom he idolized because of his skills in drawing horses, knights and palaces. At that time, Defensor as a child would ask his mother to make him stop cutting the sugarcane just to draw.

Defensor finished his elementary in Mina, Iloilo, then went to UP High School. He first took Agriculture in college to suit his mother's suggestion and enjoy his fraternity and cultural activities, although he did not know what he really wanted at that time. When Defensor realized his inclination and pleasure, he took and finished Comparative Literature in UP Iloilo and later a master's degree in Art History at UP Diliman.

His struggle as an artist was about an unfulfilled desire to take a fine arts course. He was discouraged to take it because one who took a fine arts course in his time was outrightly forecasted to be a failure. He was told that, "Maano ka, ma pintor kulapol?". To make way for Defensor's art inclinations, he painted stage backdrops, became an artist of the UP Monthly and involved with the theater group.

When Defensor graduated, he lingered for a while in order to continue with the theater of his school. To pursue his artistic leaning, Defensor enrolled in the Radio/TV production of Channel 7 (the GMA 7 now) and worked as a production assistant (apprentice) for one year. He was discouraged that politics, not talent, could determine one's career so when UP Iloilo called him to teach, he accepted the offer.

Defensor is the founder of Hubon Madaas, the oldest and most accomplished art group in Iloilo. The art group was formed when he was asked by UPV Chancellor Rola to help the artists in Iloilo. In the first workshop of Hubon, national artist Joya, his mentor in UP Diliman, was the resource person. The group had a gallery in Jaro, holding exhibits frequently with visitors from Manila who attended in the opening. Once, the group received a grant from the NCCA (National Commission on Culture and the Arts) during the exhibition "Dihon Sang Lunang".

Defensor was one of the original charter members of the Arts Council of Iloilo and the chairman of the Visual Arts Committee. Through the Arts Council, the yearly *Hublag* exhibits by Ilonggo artists was organized. Later on, when the visual artists members of the Arts Council walked out from the group, the yearly activity stopped.

During the start of visual arts exhibits in Iloilo, there were only three artists—Defensor, Nelfa Querubin and Tim Jumayao. The rest were only into commercial art.

Since there only three active artist in Iloilo in the beginning, there was a move to work together with the Bacolod artists led by Nune Alvarado. That was the start of the Visayan Islands Visual Arts Exhibition-Conference (VIVA-EXCON). The VIVA-EXCON had made several exhibits and conferences hosted by different major cities like Bacolod, Tagbilaran among others. The organization is participated by all provinces of the Visayas except Capiz.

Defensor was elected against his will as chairman of the VIVA organization. That was how Defensor was outrightly taken in as member of the board of the Visual Arts Committee of the NCCA since he represented the Visayas thru the VIVA.

When he started with his art, Defensor first tried realistic paintings on vanishing traditions of rural folks such as harvesting, “haw-as” and the like. Having no formal training, Defensor evolved through peer learning.

Working on his art, Defensor holds to the principle of Matisse that says an artist must not be a prisoner of style, meaning, he cannot confine himself with one form of expression.

Defensor is the first to try the nail sculptures. He happened to see the copper nails at one hardware store and began trying the medium. He exhibited a solo show at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) showing the copper nail sculptures.

Defensor strongly believes that art in Iloilo can be developed by getting support from institutions like the government and CCP. For the artists, he encourages the adoption of modern technology such as the one used in digital art.

Critique of works. Ed Defensor creates a name for his works that speak for themselves an outstanding general feature: dancing figures that merge theater and the visual arts. The subjects’ faces may not tell much emotion but with the flow of the body’s movements, rhythm, harmony and balance intertwine with the artistic elements to evoke a dominant romantic emotion. These figures rendered in different mediums have broad sympathies with Brancusi who simplifies the subjects with minimal details. In painting, Defensor renders the dancing figures in a cubist style influenced by Pablo Picasso.

Much of Defensor’s work can be traced in a dance—a performance medium used in his well-acclaimed theater productions which he also engaged. Whether in sculptural or painting mediums, the figures has intensity of expression, graceful movements that can be gleaned from the positions of the hands, feet, heads and the overall drama of the total composition. From different sources of inspiration and a wide range of themes, the figures are allowed to flow, as if Defensor dramatizes a story that happened in Panay, not anymore with actual music and ballet combinations which he directed with equally outstanding noteworthiness. If dance cannot be immortalized in a single moment, he attempts to capture the saga by using the visual mediums. Alice Guillermo, a noted art critic wrote about the artist:

“Certainly one of the most active working in Iloilo today is Ed Defensor, who commutes between several art media: the theater and the visual arts, particularly

sculpture and painting. Seeing Ed, one gets the impression that here indeed is one person who is thoroughly immersed in art, not only in a personal way, but in a large public sharing of narratives, movements and images. An artist thoroughly dedicated to his work, he goes about his art with unflagging enthusiasm, drawing from a wide array of materials and deriving inspiration from diverse sources, indigenous, colonial and contemporary.”

“Iloilo becomes a center of art activity in the Visayas and nationwide in the Hublag festival to which painters, sculptors and installation artists from all over the country have been invited. In one of these festivals, Defensor exhibited an unusual bamboo sculpture consisting of a series of bamboo tubes cut and carved with a built-in mechanism for movements to depict the legendary Visayan serpent, the Bakunawa. Since then, Defensor has already accumulated a sizeable body of sculptural works, as well as drawings and paintings. He also stayed at the University of the Philippines for a time in order to earn his masteral degree with a thesis on the artist San Miguel, a 19th-century *telon* painter who adorned numerous theater stages and studios with his scenographic paintings of gardens and architectural backgrounds.”

“Exhibited in a sculpture garden, Defensor’s three-dimensional works, show the influence of Napoleon Abueva primarily in the modernist approach to form as well as in the adventurous experimentation with all kinds of media. He rarely works with only one material, but invariably combines several different materials to bring out textural interest, and relationships of contrast and complementarity. Often, too, he creates his own media, as in his unusual sculpture *Kneeling Dancer* (Figure 16) made of copper nails ranged closely in tight rows around the figure with its wooden core. This produces a highly textured effect and an oscillating tonal play in the tiny glistening rods of copper. *Folk Dancer* (Figure 14) also makes use of copper nails to shape the stylized human figure, but in addition, it is set on a pedestal of wood with colorful abstractions in acrylic encased in glass on the sides of the stand. The figure and the smooth stand of black wood are complementary elements which makeup a single unit. The eye continually goes from figure to pedestal and takes up the interaction of color and texture. This device combining sculpture and paintings within glass windows is resumed in *Dance Lantern* which plays geometric form, the square lantern with the asymmetrical form of the sculpture. In *Fillet O’ Nails* (Figure 15) the figure of the fish, in which the design of the copper nails brings out the iridescence of fish scales, floats in space above the found object of a piece of bamboo, suggesting the outrigger of a boat, thus suggesting a space as an expanse of water. In turn these two parallel suspended forms are attached to a slightly curving wooden stand with plant-like forms carved in relief, which in turn stands on a squarish base.”



Figure13. "Dancing for the moon", acrylic by Ed Defensor



Figure 14. "Folk Dancer", nails and wood by Ed Defensor



Figure 15. "Fillet o' nails", nails and wood by Ed Defensor



Figure 16. "Kneeling dancer", nails and wood by Ed Defensor

Martin Genodepa: Transforming a Stoic Stone

Biography. The youngest among three brothers from parents who were public school teachers (his father was a principal), Genodepa was born on July 30, 1963. He

stayed most of the time in Guimbal until he was seven and went to Iloilo City to enroll at Iloilo Central School where he finished his elementary. In high school, he enrolled in the University of the Philippines High School. He took veterinary medicine in college when he was first year then proceeded to take Broadcast Communication and a Comparative Literature major in the same university.

Genodepa's appreciation in art already manifested when he was in the elementary years. He could recall when the family were not yet evangelical Christians when they were involved with the Flores de Mayo. That time, he always participated in the altar-making contests and won. He already got interested in drawing when he was in high school where he started to make unstructured caricature renditions of legs and faces.

His formal art consciousness started when he was hired to teach in UP. He never thought of visual arts as a career but Genodepa already loved beautiful things like pageantry. For instance, he reacted intensely on backdrops during coronation activities in his town. Likewise, at a young age, he was doing garden installations using rocks. During Christmas, there were tableaux of manger scenes where he made a belen in the house and arranged a manger scene. Then would call the children around to reenact the nativity. In high school, he already played with paper collage, imagining they were commissioned pieces. During that time there were no exposures to gallery paintings in their homes to start a formal understanding about art.

In UP in 1985, Genodepa started to give thought about gallery art and first became an associate member of the Hubon Madias art group until 1990. He discovered that could sculpt in December 1991. He was in the Nogas island of Antique with Eduard Defensor and the rest of the Teatro Amakan where he saw a piece of stone that looked like a torso. He tried to carve it and from that time on, he worked with coral stone and later on sand stone and marble. He started his solo show in 1992 at the old UP Art Gallery.

Once, he was told to exhibit his hand-made necklace. His necklace was reviewed by a student in which it was written, "a weird professor who made a weird necklace". That strengthened that realization that there is something in the expression of Genodepa that intrigues the audience.

Previously when in college, Genodepa wrote poetry. He joined a poetry contest in which he won. Several of his poems are already published in the Ani publication of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. There is a link between Genodepa's sculptures and poems.

Genodepa first showed his works in Manila in Hiraya in 1996. From that time on, he already established contacts and continued to have solo shows in CCP Small Gallery and Hiraya. For an Ilonggo artist to have a solo show in Manila, one has to prepare at least P30,000 for the freight, transportation and other expenses. He also had a solo show in the US through a Freeman Foundation's Asian Artist Award which was an artist-in-residence. In the Philippines, he was one of the two artists in the Philippines who got it in that year. The award includes round trip, New York visit, allowance, two-months stay in the Vermont studio. Now, Genodepa has a total of nine solo exhibits.

The sculptor joined the Diwa ng Sining sculpture category and won as finalist. For Genodepa, winning in a contest is not the only basis to gauge one's success in the art career. It is by the body of work, the number of solo exhibits, their viewership and being

written by respectable people. His works were already featured by Eric Torres to be included in the Travel times. Alice Guillermo also wrote about the sculptor's works.

Genodepa was nominated twice in the CCP 13 Artists Award. For first time, he was nominated by Cajipe-Endaya, and by Brenda Fajardo for the second time.

Critique of works. Raised up in a serene and close-to-nature environment in Guimbal, sculptor Martin Genodepa derived his spirituality and creative energy from an alchemy of nature and awakened consciousness further stimulated by artists affiliated with the academe. The sculptures of Martin Genodepa reject theatricality and detail in favor of radical simplification and abbreviation. His goal is to capture emotions of human beings rather than tell a story—and render them visible with minimal formal means. Mostly, his sculptures are coral stone, sand stone or marble. Genodepa's minimalist approach focusing on human heads evoke a dominantly hilarious and romantic emotion. The shapes and textures create harmony and rhythm which contribute to the noteworthy quality of the artworks.

The viewer does not miss the stark irony—fragile human beings shaped from stoic, hard and passionless stone. This is both to protest and battle alienation and lack of privacy which are the usual effects of modernization. The stone made soft by tender expressions depicts the struggle to maintain one's dignity and self-awareness in the midst of a more impersonal and busy society which is alluded by a cold and formless stone. If humanity in the 21st century continues to stifle his innate emotions for the sake of efficiency, truly the stones will start crying.

Genodepa often depicts the head with the bust as a unitary irregular circle or oval shapes. As they evoke images of repose like Brancusi's works, Genodepa's heads are usually positioned to convey an ecstatic mood with faces rendered in a cubist approach. The women in coral stone are subtle monument to the aesthetic act and to the observation that women is its inspiration.

Genodepa found a likeness of his coral stone in the country after his fifth solo exhibit. It was the unearthed prehistoric sculpture called *Likha* found at Kalatagan, Batangas. *Likha* as published by the national museum is rendered with cubical face representing a deity; however, the face of the *Likha* is stoic as it resembles an ancient god.

The inspiration on women reminds about the legend of Maria of Makiling in the Philippine Folklore. Renowned Filipino poet Carlos Angeles wrote about her with these lines (Angeles, 1993: pg. 29):

Maria, goddess on Makiling's crest,
Did you not cage impatience in your breast?
While you lay waiting in your shaded lair,
Did you not flout your doubts until you bled?
Did not your lonely fingers weave from air
A sheet to hide an obscene, stainless bed?
You knew he stopped by at a village door,
And piled the golden presents on the floor
(Which gelid pile must be returned to you).
He asked the girl in marriage, and the feast
Was long past over. Still, you'd await you due:
Your gold. Or, then, his mortal self, at least!

Or did you not try on that mountain spire
How much to blend of wisdom with desire?

In the “Wrapped Series” (Figure 17), the woman’s head in an inclined position is almost blanketed with her long hair. Part of the back and hips are made visible. The message it seems to communicate is the typical conservative woman who preserves her dignity and respect.

The “Bust Series” (Figure 18) in 1996, also in coral stone, includes an abstracted torso with the head inclined to face the back. The position and the expression of the face is ecstatic which emotes the woman’s “paglalambing”.

The “Bust Series” (Figure 19) made in 1997, shows a portion of the face in a circular composition. The work suggests timidity or shyness of a woman. She may have hidden herself from someone.

In another “Bust Series” (Figure 20) in 1997, the woman in repose with the head appearing in full, shows a day-dreaming mode. She could have been fantasizing on a lover.

The simple titles used in Genodepa’s works are seemingly done deliberately to leave some mystery that should make demands on the spectator. Giving them too explicit a title takes away the mystery so that the spectator moves on to the next object, making no effort to ponder the meaning of what he or she has just seen.

The sculptor’s strong Christian principles separates him from among many. His convictions came from a transition wherein at one point, he was socializing (with gays) but later on realized that he did not belong to their group. More likely, Genodepa’s manner of faith-walk contributed much to his level of success and fame as an artist.



Figure 17. “Wrapped series”, corral stone by
Martin Genodepa



Figure 18. “Bust series 1996”, corral stone by Martin Genodepa



Figure 19. “Bust series 1997”, corral stone by Martin Genodepa



Figure 20. “Bust series 1997”, corral stone by Martin Genodepa

Harry Mark Gonzales: Avant-garde in Terra Cotta

Biography. Not surprisingly, Harry Mark dominated the 2007 national Metrobank Art and Design for Excellence competition in sculpture, being the grand prize winner. He has been considered recently as one of the three leading authorities (the youngest) of his medium chosen from Iloilo during the recent Biennial Terra Cotta Festival held in Dumaguete City and one of the five selected provincial participants to the Visayan Islands Visual Arts Exhibit Conference (VIVA-EXCON) in Bacolod months ago. Since 2002, Gonzales had been a member of Hebron Artists, a CPU-based art group composed of the researcher and Rymer Gengoni (BS Advertising student).

Raised in a poor family, Harry Mark Gonzales had to work with his father after school early in his elementary days to cope with the family needs. Born on February 23, 1982, Gonzales spent his childhood with his parents and some of the twelve brothers and sisters. His father has been a house construction foreman.

In some occasions during his childhood days, he worked with his father in the house repair jobs of Ed Defensor, one of the most marketable artists in Iloilo and a humanities professor at UP in the Visayas. There, he was much impressed by the artworks of the Hubon Madaas artists hanged in the gallery area of Defensor's house. At that time, Defensor already organized Hubon Madaas and they had series of shows. Gonzales was impressed of these works that he made a resolve to become an artist like them. So while working with simple repair jobs, his eyes had always been fixed at the activities and works of these more mature artists. To give way for his desire to develop skills in art, he first practiced painting using his own blanket and industrial paints he could recover from rejects. He began to spend sleepless nights working with his drawings while accepting art school projects. The passion of his early venture in art made his family wonder. At first, his family tried to convince him that in art, he could not earn a good income. Yet, he pursued art with such determination.

As an artist, Gonzales had to work his way to develop his career. At times, he used to go with his father in construction works. In other times, he had to drive the "sikad" if there are no art clients. At one time, he was a delivery man until he decided to stop and give way for his joy and happiness-- art.

New hope to give art a chance started when Defensor took in Gonzales as his assistant in creating sculptures. It was age and sickness that made Defensor need an assistant in doing the laborious processes of his sculptures for exhibits. Secondly, Defensor was also preoccupied with his Teatro Amakan group in which poured much of his time to direct. Having shown diligence and a teachable heart, as well as trustworthiness in work, Defensor took Gonzales as a right hand.

Gonzales had to struggle to learn and grow in his artistic talent which was reason why he deliberately stopped schooling for one year when he was about to start his third year high school. From that time on, Defensor helped him learn as he seriously studied the different visual arts mediums: acrylic, oil, water color, wood, nail and concrete sculptures, and later the terra cotta medium.

Gonzales was a fast and eager learner. Very inquisitive about art at a young age, he gathered ideas from the members of the Hubon and Defensor himself. That was why

later, when he worked with the Museo Iloilo, he was able to answer “profound” questions about his works.

Due to lack of financial resources to spend for his art materials, Gonzales did not continue to create pieces in the different mediums that he learned with some degree of success. In times that he could not have access to other mediums in art, clay was his best partner. Later, he found the enjoyment in manipulating the medium that a day cannot be complete without a touch with terra cotta explorations.

While working with his mentor, Gonzales made terra cotta sculptures at home after working, usually at nighttime.

A turning point came for Gonzales when Lito Sollesta, a friend artist who conducted art workshops at the Museo Iloilo invited him to co-teach due to an increasing number of students enrolling. The curator of the museum, Zafiro Ledesma, as well as other artists, lacked confidence on his skill at first especially that he was only 16 at that time. So what he did to erase their doubts, he brought his unformed clay and demonstrated on a piece. That impressed the curator and other co-artists and they were already convinced about his rare skill and knowledge in art.

The time came for a group exhibit at Museo Iloilo where Gonzales participated. His mentor Defensor was curious about who could be the artist behind a terra cotta artwork included since he did not know of one in Iloilo who is known in terra cotta. (Gonzales did not first tell his mentor about his development). Defensor was amazed to know that his mentee Gonzales was the one who did it.

It may be said that aside from exhibit participations, competitions also contributed in developing Gonzales as an artist. His first participation was with Shell Students Art competition (national level) where he won as finalist in sculpture in the year 2000. That was the first year when he enrolled in a computer course. In the following year, his entry was a painting where he also won as a finalist. In the following years, his entries in Shell were terra cotta sculptures and a combination of nail and wood mediums in which he bagged one third prize and two honorable mention awards. The subjects of his terra cotta were hands and legs with a face protruding rendered in surrealistic style. They were possibly reflections of his personal struggles in a financially deprived upbringing.

In the Metrobank Art and Design for Excellence competitions in sculpture, his first two entries were judged as semi-finalists. Recently, he is the grand prize winner of this contest.

In the local level, Gonzales also joined the “Porma Balas” sand sculpture held in Oton where he got the highest award.

Critique of works. Resistance to stasis is a running motif in the works of Harry Mark Gonzales. As a modernist who intimates a break from convention and a renewal of resources of the artistic agency, his terra cotta expressions are not shared from any established canon or particular leading lights of the Philippine or foreign sculpture. The dominant approach shows coiled designs which seemed to be the signature identity of his recent works. Based on his creations, he is more a starter of his own school of thought than an avid protégée of the past.

In the early stages, Gonzales’ compositions, according to him, did not have much quality to be included in his serious pieces. They were mostly small flowers in a vase rendered literally in oil which he gave to his classmates (more than forty of them received

an artwork). He also made terra cotta ash trays and figures, although not as good and expressive compared to his recent outputs.

In his sculptures, the viewer is proffered the enjoyment of its humble material, clay. Compared to direct carving where various instruments and tools play an “intermediary” role, modeling of clay necessitates the sculptor’s hands directly encroaching into the substance of the material. The works generally have power to emphasize the message which focuses on human struggle. The struggle is effectively portrayed in the elements of shape and texture. Gonzales’ abstract and semi-abstract figures could root from Brancusi and Moore; however, they possess a lot of deviations from the common “schools” of thought in the past nor could they be traced from a contemporary artist elsewhere. His innovations in terra cotta figures is unequalled in the region.

The grand prize winning entry, “A Protest to the Guimaras Oil Spill” (Figure 21), reminds about a memory of poisoned shores and fishes made inedible in areas affected by the national tragedy. The rare cracklings and blackish effect in some parts did not just show dramatic textures and color. The holes in the center are inspired by some of Henry Moore’s sculptures. They eloquently emphasize the effects of pollution to the sea creatures. This was accomplished through unconventional open-firing technique using coconut shells with husks. For the sculptor Gonzales, every trace left by his hands become evidence of the struggle to breath meaning into a mound of inert clay.

Certainly, to those affected by the environmental tragedy in Guimaras, the piece brings emotional resonances of those thousands who had to cope up with a loss of livelihood and income, extreme poverty and lung-related disease that occurred. It is but honorable for an artist to mourn, commemorate and protest the careless venture for profit that resulted to the mass suffering of his less fortunate neighbors, if that is the least that he can do.

Evoked in the “Reaching Out” (Figure 22) is the irony not lost to the viewer: the fragility of one’s life summoning the divine is alluded to by the nature of its material. The troubled experiences of Harry Mark in the childhood environment at home was seemingly allowed to usher a realization of a need to tap a higher power that can make everything turn together for good in this life and beyond. As he always share to his close friends, he often felt the pangs before. Indeed, instead of giving way to the possible negative effects of that environment, he has outgrown them and had the strength to move on. These experiences could be likened to necessary ingredients of the humble material for his true sculptural expressions.

The hand of Christ that is just very near the seeker is meaningfully implying His nearness for anyone’s frail grasp and an accurate interpretation of the Biblical saying, “Draw near to me and I will draw near to you”. The seeker’s facial expression is passionate and one can tell of his all-out search for a relationship with the divine, qualifying the prerequisite of finding the sought-after. “You will find me if you seek me with all your heart”, as quoted in the Old Testament.

The left hand carrying a Bible is suggestive of the balance involved in that search. It is conscious of the possibility that passion without a strong basis of faith is but fanaticism, while having a strong basis without passion is but a deadening orthodoxy.

The color applied in the sculpture seemed to suggest a patinated bronze which shows a creative synthesis, a break-away from tradition.

The “Flesh Struggles Against the Spirit” (Figure 23) is a fitting portrayal of an inner struggle inside us. Based on Christian teachings, the nature of the flesh is ungrateful, lustful, envious, unholy, greedy and selfish. The Spirit, on the other hand, produces the fruit of love, peace, joy, meekness, patience and faithfulness among others.

The “Innovation of the Young, Wisdom of the Old” (Figure 24) is an insightful paradigm for organizational success. The implication is that organizations must base their actions on entrepreneurial skills; however, they must also acknowledge that there are classic principles of management and accounting that govern the long-run stability.

The sculptor draws inspiration from Napoleon Abueva, Ed Defensor, Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore. Known for varied styles and mediums, Napoleon Abueva is known as the first post-war artist who broke away from the canons of his traditional predecessors. Ed Defensor’s sculptures usually show minimalist presentation of figures in their dancing mode which flow from the same vein of creativity as a theater artist which was his past preoccupation. Constantin Brancusi was a Romanian Sculptor who undoubtedly succeeds in conveying a sense of gravity by reducing his work to a few basic elements. Henry Moore’s sculptures show an intimate contact with European surrealism with such artists as Brancusi, Picasso and Jean Arp.



Figure 21. “A protest to the Guimaras oil spill”, terra cotta by Harry Mark Gonzales



Figure 22. “Reaching out”, terra cotta by Harry Mark Gonzales



Figure 23. “Flesh struggles against the spirit”, terra cotta by Harry Mark Gonzales



Figure 24. “Innovation of the young, wisdom of the old”, terra cotta by Harry Mark Gonzales

Fred Orig: Human Figures in Neon Colors

Biography. Among other awards, Fred Orig is the grand champion of the painting contest sponsored by the National Electrification Administration. Locally, he has always dominates the yearly Pinta Paraw by winning either as a first or second placer.

Born in Surigao, Orig stayed in long in Davao for 27 years until he decided with his wife to transfer to Dumanggas, Iloilo in 1980. He was not raised up by a formal mentor in art and attributed his artistic talents from the genes, although Fred could recall that he discovered and started to develop the talent at the age of twelve. At that age, he was curious about what caratola artists were doing.

Fred later proved that his skill in drawing and painting was his main livelihood. So he initiated his own commercial art business which includes movie ads, billboards and

signboards. Personally he considered this experience as a challenge, not a struggle. He started this business while staying in Davao and continued this for three years. When he came to Iloilo Orig was invited to join the Hubon Madaas group in 1983.

Orig also tried other pursuits. Early in his high school years, his hobby was repairing all kinds of gadgets-electronics, electrical and even vehicles. Later, however, he discovered where his true love really was. That preoccupation was diverted when he saw caratola workers. He was determined to learn by first becoming an assistant to a commercial artist. Then later, he started his own business.

Besides trying the commercial art venture, Orig also became a draftsman of a mining company. There, he discovered that his creative nature seemed to dislike rigidity that is why he went back to his commercial art after one year.

His affiliation with Hubon Madaas gave Orig an inspiration to leave his commercial art venture to pursue the "serious art" career. Five years after joining Hubon, he went full time in painting and sculpture.

When Orig concentrated on the "serious art", he was privileged to build the loyalty of the art collectors of Hubon. When he was still an amateur in the serious art, Orig lowered the price of his paintings and sculptures in order to establish his name among those who trusted in his talent.

Known to be prolific in creating art works, Orig admits that for a long time, he only managed to have one solo show in Manila. The reason is that he cannot refuse his buyers to buy his works that is why they cannot stay for a solo exhibit.

Critique of works. Considered the best and most experienced figurative painter, Fred Orig is a name remembered in the Ilonggo art scene. The artist dwells on themes that propagate social consciousness and environmental issues. His distinctive style is known to combine both concept and skill in the overall composition. Recently, his signature style mostly evolves into figures in neon colors alluding the screen of the cellular phone as a way of presenting the modern Filipino life that has now become heavily dependent in the gadget. Fred established his reputation not only through his acumen in attracting art collectors but also through the numerous national and local art awards that he earned.

As it is theatrical presentation in Ed Defensor's works, Orig is known for the poetry of facial and body gestures of his subjects. Their expressions are dramatically loaded with interactive and conversant emotions no matter how ordinary the activity is. The paintings are expressionist men and women in the urban setting conversing in the bars, restaurants or commercial centers. The dominantly neon renditions of the subjects outlined by luminous lines create harmony and rhythm. Not only is the skill of the painter displayed; the concepts are equally competitive.

In Orig's "El Niño" (Figure 25), the watercolor painting shows two banana plants. He painted them during the disaster where he saw the plight of his environment. The colors he used which are distorted from the real brown colors of the actual plants, figuratively shows his sentiment. The bright colors he used perhaps tells about Fred's intention to commemorate a tragedy as some artists like Gonzales did in the oil spill at Guimaras.

"Haw-as" (Figure 26), according to the artist was painted when he saw the activities of fishermen in his hometown of Dumangas, Iloilo. Traditionally, the muscular fishermen regularly go to the shore after a catch and put the fishes in different baskets or

containers according to kind. The catch is usually sold to the town's marketplace or used as viands by the men and their families. In the manner of presenting the subjects, Orig uses a little distortion by positioning the "balsa" behind the figures, giving a closer focus on the subjects with their native facilities.

The "Lunch break" (Figure 27) oil on canvas is the usual approach used by Orig in his other paintings since a few years ago. In this approach, he uses a luminous blue to outline the figures. The purpose why luminous colors are combined in such manner is the artist wants to allude to the cell phone screen, the gadget which becomes part of the Filipinos nowadays. The overall composition does not only show a vibrant color combination. It likewise uses drama in arranging the postures of the women and the musicians taken from an actual scene at the Mary Mart mall in Iloilo City. The artist uses a little application of shading in the subjects. In this presentation, the artist has made an identity of his own which is not shared by other artists even in Manila.

"Yakap sa Kalikasan" (Figure 28), Orig's painted relief and oil, is a passion for environmental preservation. Women are symbolic of fertility and abundance. In this presentation, they are made to symbolize nature and its bounty.



Figure 25. "El Niño", acrylic by Fred Orig

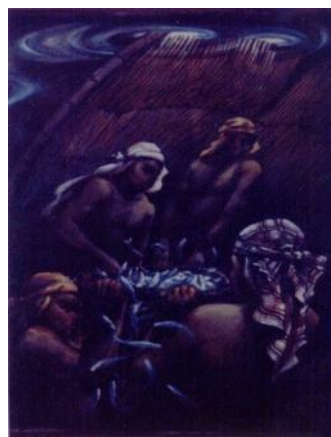


Figure 26. "Haw-as", acrylic by Fred Orig

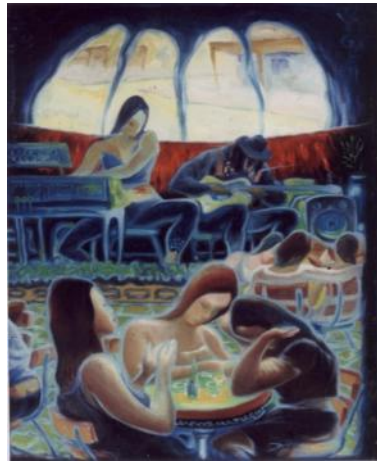


Figure 27. “Lunch break”, acrylic by Fred Orig



Figure 28. “Yakap sa kalikasan”, acrylic by Fred Orig

Nelfa Querubin: Multi-awarded Ceramics Artist

Biography. Hers is a triumph like her high-fired ceramics that masterfully attained the blend of technique and material. Nelfa Querubin hails from an island seashore of Concepcion, Iloilo, where she spent her humble childhood with her twelve brothers and sisters. She recalls a poor upbringing which was her past challenge. With a scarcity of resources in the beginning, her creative energy, nevertheless, refused to be repressed. When she was still in her elementary years, she used banana leaves in the absence of drawing materials.

Querubin was trained in drafting from the Iloilo School of Arts and Trades (or WVCST now). After graduation, she moved to Manila to work as a cartographer of the Bureau of Soils and as a draftsman at the Philippine Sugar Institute. These jobs supported her during the early stage of her development as a part-time artist.

Her good friend Leonardo Villaroman introduced her to pottery in the early 70's and became her first mentor. She also befriended the now popular artists like Brenda

Fajardo and Pettyjohn. As Querubin produced her works, she was able to hold a solo show in Manila where her works were discovered by the Design Center of the Philippines headed by painter-sculptor Arturo Luz. That paved a way for her to get the first major commission work from the Design Center. The P10,000 became her seed money to prepare her own kiln and atelier.

With what she learned, Querubin returned to her hometown to set up a beachside atelier in Maig-ao, Iloilo. In that quiet environment, she built her wood-fired kilns in which her early experimentations—teapots, teacups, bowls, vases, figurines, among others. Looking back, she recalls that she poured out the strength of her youth into these early works.

Querubin had the opportunity to visit Japan in 1984 as guest of a fellow artist. The brief sojourn widened her horizon and enriched her life. “I came home with new ideas as a result of my exposure to Japanese culture. My friend taught me to keep in mind the motive to go anywhere we go. Ideas, most of all, are the secret of the trade.”

A new beginning started as Querubin got married with an American husband Mike Tompkins. In 1988, Querubin left the Philippines to start life anew in Colorado, USA. Her husband made an atelier and electric kiln for her use, and provided the support that enabled her to continue in her art. At first, she acknowledges the very competitive environment in the US art scene. Finally, a positive review of her work by a perceptive art critic became the first recognition of her efforts in her adopted homeland. In 2003, she was awarded the very elusive first prize in Ceramics in the Colorado Arts Festival.

In Querubin’s unpublished *The Potter’s Memoir: The Clay Found Me When My Heart Cried to Create*, Nelfa wrote what could be her credo: “To us potters who scarcely have anything, the difficulty never ends. We purely rely on our creative potentials. It’s mostly improvisation, and within us something is strongly built: hope, faith, growth, achievement, enthusiasm, and the continuous flow of the creative power that drives us to create and create and create...The spring of creativity is our wealth. I envy no one.”

Critique of works. Looking at Querubin’s recent accomplishments as one of the best ceramic artists and printmakers in the country (based on the opinion of artists at the Dumaguete Biennial Terra cotta festival), and later in Colorado where she have resided, one can behold a very accomplished life and how far she made the leap of victory like her works reminding about the role of meticulous process and heat that created the masterpieces. Considered a luminary by contemporary artists, Querubin has evolved in her craft from vessels to stunning sculptural colorful patterns that earned awards and distinction abroad, including the Grand Prize in Ceramics at the Colorado Arts Festival in Colorado, the U.S.A., where she is currently based.

Of her works, clay is poetically alluding a powerful transformation of frail human beginnings to a likeness of divinity. As if they are stressing that life is a testimony like how the Maker can recreate unimpressive inert clay to valuable pieces that call for one’s admiration, not just for the universal stimulation of concepts made strong with textures, colors and forms with harmony and rhythm but with the longevity of stonewares made durable and strong. The subjects of Querubin are semi-functional vessels which evoke a dominant feeling of curiosity and intrigue. Japanese and American potters have a way of influencing the methodologies of her works although the artist stands out in the sea of studio potters for her passion and penchant for fresh ideas. In a gathering of known potters during the recent Terra cotta Festival in Dumaguete last 2007, Querubin is

considered by fellow artists as the most respected Filipino in the clay medium because of her “quite advanced explorations not yet attained by other potters.” With Querubin’s creations, the call is for a deeper understanding of how a life is transformed, like clay, to attract inspiration and encouragement.

Dr. Thelma Kintanar, a famous art critic, said about Querubin’s “*Retrospective Exhibition in Celebration of UP Centennial*”: “It is not just the acceptance of clay as an art medium which Querubin has helped to bring about her pioneering venture. More important, she has contributed to the indigenization of contemporary Philippine Art”.

Of this same solo show, another famous critic stressed: “Her forms carry the usual context of the potter’s art: seemingly functional pieces aspiring to be functionless. Objects moving from utilitarian dimensions to a sort of a spiritual function called art.”

A critic from Colorado, Mary Voeltz Chandler made another view of her works: “And for the most unusual work, count objects that look as if someone used clay to create fiber or a non-representational painting. Nelfa Querubin-Tompkins’ *Abstract Landscape* and *Deep River* might suggest specific themes in their titles, but the result is the best reflection of a work of art: They attract, prompt questions, never give up their secrets right away, and demonstrate a universal truth about the power of clay, which in this case mixes vessel and sculpture to create a third entity.”

The works of Querubin have undergone stages of evolution. In her early career, she created more utilitarian bowls, cups, teapots, among others. They are formed through a combination of potter’s wheel and manual molding. Her middle career is described as a penchant for decorative works displaying abstracted compositions that emote a colorful visual tradition of high-fired and glazed quality. Her later stage becomes a reflection of her inspiration from her American environment—color of sunset, the texture of the snow, lichen, coral, wood. Almost all of her later works are slab-built, hand-formed, resulting in unique shapes and uneven surfaces that portray the dramatic pieces.

Querubin’s “*Winter Sun*” (Figure 29) showcases a bold use of colors and harmony in textures. It is inspired by an American environment where she has stayed. The “*Tranquility*” (Figure 30) with a gradiated blue and exciting linear textures tells about how simplicity and mastery of medium blend to present a rare composition. “*Two Fishes*” (Figure 31), a large vase in a shape of a fish, is a whimsical piece reflective of her playfulness using the medium. “*Dressed for the King*” (Figure 32) is a stunning abstraction with exploding colors textures in the body. All these artworks are high fired and glazed, the types that Querubin has evolved in her later career as an artist. High-fired ceramics artworks are usually heated with as high as one thousand degrees Celsius. They are more difficult to achieve given that the percentage for breakage in that temperature is higher.

Pottery is made by forming a clay body into the desired objects and heating them with high temperatures in a kiln to induce reactions that lead to permanent changes, including the increase of their strength and hardening and setting of their shape. Pottery is durable and fragments, at least, survive long after artifacts made from less durable materials have decayed past recognition. The study of pottery may allow inferences to be drawn about a culture’s daily life, religion, social relationships and the way the culture understood the universe.

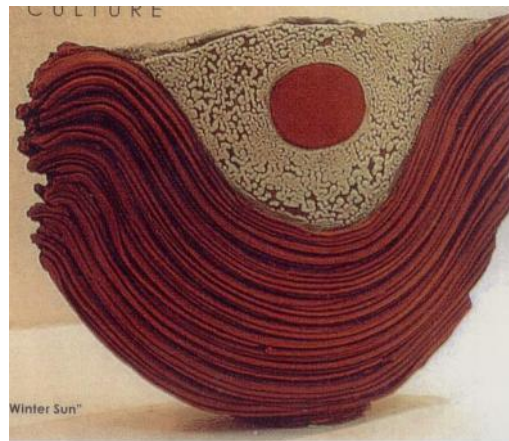


Figure 29. "Winter sun", stoneware by Nelfa Querubin



Figure 30. "Tranquility", stoneware by Nelfa Querubin

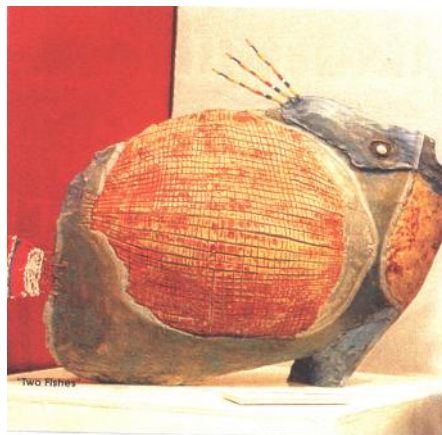


Figure 31. "Two fishes", stoneware by Nelfa Querubin



Figure 32. Dressed for the King, stoneware by Nelfa Querubin

Dado Tan: Melodies in Print-making

Biography. A popular voice in the 90's as interpreter of the song "Iloilo Banwa Kong Pinalangga", Fundador "Dado" Tan gave way for another rhythm in print-making and sculpture. He started as the lead singer of the Tunog Amakan band in his college days at UP in the Visayas under the directorship of Ed Defensor. The band plays for the theater presentation of Teatro Amakan, the once popular and multi-awarded theater group funded by the university. Tan found singing and visual arts interconnected with energies coming from the same creative spring where he gets the passion.

Most of Tan's childhood days was spent at Bacolod City until he was grade five. From the time he was grade six until college, the family transferred to Iloilo City. He is a product of San Yat Sen High School being of Chinese descent (one-fourth blood).

Tan's late father is a visual artist and he could remember observing him in his drawing sessions when Dado was a child. Perhaps those experiences were good starters for him to seriously pursue the art career. In his mother's side, an uncle and a grandfather are also practicing visual artists.

Tan's formal introduction to serious art, however, came later when he as member of Tunog Amakan associated with Defensor and was encouraged to join the Hubon Madaas group of artists.

During his elementary days, Tan already participated in art contests sponsored by Red Cross on-the-spot painting. Drawing was already his hobby but his signature style in printmaking came out later.

Tan started to join the Hubon Madaas when he was in the junior and senior years in college. He was a participant in the major shows of the group such as the "Iloilo Festival" at Holiday Inn Hotel, Manila and the print exhibit held at the Ayala Museum. In Iloilo, he was among the participants with the Hubon members in the "Dihon Sang Lunang" terra cotta exhibit at SM City.

The print exhibit at Ayala Museum was a showcase of the outputs from the donation of the late National Artist Awardee Jose Joya. One time, Jose Joya, a friend of Defensor, conducted a workshop for the Hubon Madaas Artists. Joya also sold one of his paintings and donated the proceeds for the show of the Hubon group.

Tan confessed his strong admiration of Fil De La Cruz's prints and Jose Joya's pastels.

Considering the practical side, Tan does not yet go full-time in art. He is presently connected with Xeno Pharma as a medical representative. He finds his art a stress reliever while working. He is contemplating about having a one-man show in Iloilo this year.

Critique of works. Tan does not stick to a particular medium in art as the other Hubon artists. He paints and sculpts using the terra cotta medium. Although, he came up with a signature style that depicts the subject/s inside the bottle. This came up in one of the workshop sessions with Hubon artists. Using the signature concept, he depicts *tinala*, *panagang sa ati*, *tinabal* and *sinamakan*. In similar modes of presentation using the bottle as a parameter, Tan also presents women. During the Dihon Sang Lunang Exhibit with the members of the Hubon, he showed mother and children artworks in terra cotta. They are peculiar in a sense that the mother is rendered in a bottle shape and the children are usually eight to twelve.

Tan's works are all inside a bottle, a powerful symbolism of environment and ecology. Rendered in explosive colors and textural interplay, the proportion and harmony of the compositions emote curiosity. The works are influenced by the environmentally focused renditions of Fil De La Cruz. With the use of bottle shape in every composition, the artist's voice stands out among many.

In the "Rebirth" (Figure 33), the idea is regeneration which sentimentally looks at the plight of the environment. The "Panagang" series (Figure 34, 35 & 36) prints and mixed media are revelations of the Ilonggo folks' belief in the spirit world which is an extra-scientific phenomenon that governs the affairs of men. The word connotes a talisman to ward off evil in a household. Iloilo had been stereotyped as one of the places where the "aswang" or flying beast in the night existed. That is why the talisman had been a common method possessed by many old folks.

Tan's mentor encouraged him to continue with the particular presentation that no artist has yet done elsewhere which is presenting his subject inside a bottle. The concept is unique for it parallels the reality that one's world exists in the context of an environment which shapes one's world view. Dealing with how one lives a life, it shows that one's sentiment about his environment and the things that make him happy or sorrowful is determined by a particular mindset.

Looking at Tan's works, one remembers that the borderline of one's upbringing is the delimiting factor which determines how far and wide a person can go through the horizons of opportunities given the struggles. The native food *tinala* reminds about the contents of one's delicacies which builds up the entirety of a well-lived life. The "delicacies" may comprise the basic motivations one possesses which according to McClelland are the need for power, achievement and affiliation. Whatever these motivations are, they are deliberately encouraged and treasured and can be products of a specific subculture.



Figure 33. "Rebirth", print by Dado Tan



Figure 34. "Panagang sa kalautan", mixed media by Dado Tan



Figure 35. "Panagang sa katalagman", mixed media by Dado Tan



Figure 36. “Panagang”, print by Dado Tan

PG “Boyett” Zoluaga: Limning the Bane of 21st Century

Biography. Born on February 1, 1958, Boyet Zoluaga is a native of Guimbal, Iloilo. He spent his elementary days at Guimbal Elementary School then later went to Iloilo City to enroll at Saint Joseph Junior Seminary where he graduated in high school. In college, he spent a few years in the University of the Philippines, Iloilo then later transferred to UP Diliman where he earned his Landscape Architecture course.

In his childhood, he already started to draw using tracing technique from favorite comics characters. In high school, he was exposed to music and theater which enhanced his inclination to art. There was only limited exposure to gallery art those days but he got acquainted with the shows of Nelfa Querubin who started to have exhibits during that time.

He started to show his artworks when he studied in UP Iloilo. His initial breakthrough came in 1976 when he won first place in the painting contest with his entry “Kahayag”. From that time on, he was taken as illustrator of the student publication “Pagbutlak”. Then he started to have interactions with other artists. Although an architecture student, he usually spent more time to interact with the fine artists in UP Diliman campus. After he finished the Landscape Architecture in UP, Zoluaga came back in Iloilo to take Structural Architecture at the University of San Agustin.

After graduation, he went to Saudi to work with the help of a former teacher. There he spent two years until he realized that he was not meant to stay in that job longer. As far as he is concerned, there was no joy in pursuing a job that demands his full time under an employer.

So Zoluaga returned home to continue his artistic pursuits. With his inclination in the visual arts, he befriended Eduard Defensor, one of those who belong to his close inner circle. Working with Defensor, Zoluaga is one of the charter members of the Hubon Madaas, the oldest art group in Iloilo established in the early eighties. Even before Zoluaga joined the Hubon Madaas, he already had three group shows at UP Diliman together with other architecture and fine arts students.

An honorary member of the UP Teatro Amakan, Zoluaga also had achievements in music. He was the composer and writer of the once famous “Iloilo Banwa Kong Pinalangga” with artist-singer Dado Tan as interpreter. He was able to record six songs in Ilonggo until the producer stopped producing and went back to the U.S.. Copies of this album are unfortunately not preserved.

He believes that an artist should not be stagnant but should explore in the different approaches, mediums and styles so that he will grow and evolve. Later on, an artist, according to Zoluaga, should decide about his identity in expression. Zoluaga's artwork started with a realistic approach then evolved into linear and impressionistic styles. He tried experimenting with a lot of approaches in terra cotta and installation art. Although, one can note an influence of social realists such as Edvard Munch and Chagal.

In Zoluaga's philosophy in art, he believes an artist is a barometer of society such that he should be relevant and aware to what is happening. One has to be concerned about issues around him—environmental, socio-political, even spiritual—so that an artist must be very vigilant.

Zoluaga's main source of income is art-related, considering that art-making is not really viable in Iloilo to support an artist. He accepts commissions like landscaping, architectural and interior designs and book illustration on Iloilo to support his serious art-making.

Zoluaga owns the Graphitto Gallery in Robinson's Place. The venue is purportedly prepared to support not only his art but also the exhibition of other artists in Iloilo. It is also intended for interactions among artists in Iloilo. Overlooking the economic viability of the investment, he rather considers this investment as an advocacy for his passion for the purpose of showcasing artworks.

In 1998, Zoluaga won as one of the five juror's choice in Philip Morris and went to Vietnam to further compete in the Asian Art Awards but unluckily, he was not chosen as winner. That was an opportunity to interact with productive artists from other countries.

Zoluaga had a solo show at Norway and a number of group exhibits aside from awards in contests.

Critique of the works. The darker side of life expressed in bold lines and overall composition that emote fear, loneliness, hopelessness and concepts such as phobia, isolation and death are symbolized in the works of PG Zoluaga. With emphasis on environmental destruction and alienation, these are intended to portray the artist's deep sentiment for his community that suffer the plight of a third world setting and the harsh realities of modernization where exploitation, corruption and dehumanization of man abounds. Using a social realist style, the influences of Munch and Chagall are evident in the works effectively convey the intended messages.

Zoluaga's deepest sentiment that found a way of expression in the visual medium was popularized in the 90's through his original song composition "Iloilo Banwang Pinalangga" (Iloilo My Beloved Town). In the message of the song, the place is "duog sang mga damgo" (a haven of dreams) which captures one's affection. In the end of the song, Zoluaga made a plea for his town, "San-o mo ako mabatian?" (When can you hear me?) Such plea as seen in his social realist paintings and drawings reflects his protest to stop the "acts of men" which either destroys the environment or take people's dignity and rights.

In his color etching "Deliverance" (Figure 37), the theme is exorcism. The scene is a tribal dance with a "shaman", the main subject, who performs a ritual to cast out evil spirits. The background with textural elements is a representation of the natural habitat in the rural scene with colors rendered in an almost monotonous range of black, sepia and green. In a natural environment where the ritual is performed, it suggests of a presence of

evil that needs to be dealt through a supernatural means. The work reminds of people's desire of an unknown power beyond them which, in the Filipino culture, is summoned to counter horror or demonization. Horror or demonic activities are alluded here as the social ills that needs to be "exorcised".

"Deliver Us From Extinction" (Figure 38) effectively communicates humanity's struggle for survival. Two people in the center personalize the bamboos which are abundant in the community. In the background are faces of human beings floating in a lake of fire and burning bamboos that gradually turn into ashes. The entire mixed media painting is a prophetic message that warns about an impending doom both in the natural and spiritual levels. In the natural plane, it may be the disasters that follow deforestation. In the spiritual plane, it suggests of the "second death" which is possible for the deserving. More than suggesting destruction of natural environment due to "kaingin" (burning of trees), the painting eloquently emphasizes that people--considered to be most important in the entire creation--are actually the endangered species.

The "Pilgrimage" (Figure 39) pen and ink is a journey to the unknown. Naked human figures with halos on their heads walk in a highway towards a bright light ahead. The pilgrimage seems to end up in a hopeful goal but seems to be restrictive as the feet of the travellers are imbedded in cement blocks. Zoluaga communicates the effort of people to live dignified lives in order to receive their reward physically and spiritually; but in the journey, they are constrained by a weight beyond their control. This speaks about the depravity of man which is a teaching of Christianity. On his own, man is helpless unless he calls on a "savior" to redeem him.

In Zoluaga's "Awareness" (Figure 40), the distorted man is holding a cellular phone while the right eye that opens looks through the gadget. The message of this social realist painting gives awareness to the distorted vision of the 21st century Filipino whose preoccupation nowadays is expressing his warm passions, wasting much of his time, while overlooking more serious issues about his existence. The closed left eye tells about how he overlooks primary issues of life in favor of modernism.

Zoluaga's sentiments are shared by a Filipino poet and first prize Palanca Award winner Edgar Maranan who penned these lines in a poem titled "In the Beginning":

In the beginning was the valley
Of the river, slope of vineyard,
Mills of driving winds, the lily
Of the fields, dollhouses basking
Through golden seasons of the sun.
In the beginning was the green
Of forest, blue of water, gold
Of furrows, pink of babies, sheen
Of feathers, stun of hair, the red
Of hearths, a certainty of prisms.
In the beginning was a village,
City, country, planet of all colors.
The end is blast of ancient rage,
All colors die, love ends, no child
Cries out. There's only the rush of
Gutted fleeing souls.



Figure 37. "Deliverance", color etching by PG Zoluaga



Figure 38. "Deliver us from extinction", acrylic by PG Zoluaga



Figure 39. "Pilgrimage", pen and ink by PG Zoluaga

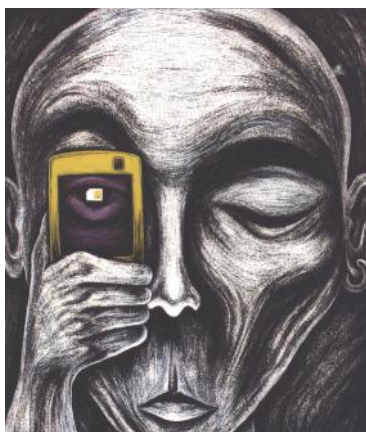


Figure 40. "Awareness", acrylic by PG Zoluaga

DISCUSSION

A reflective look at the works of the top Ilonggo artists reveal a diversity of artistic elements, principles applied, subjects, emotions, mediums, styles, influences and general features. This diversity tells that even with similarities in upbringing and local environment, the works of the top artists derive their energies from different sources of inspiration, messages and personalities. What is common among the works is the strength of resolve to present the true voice of the artist without any pretense, and this they did without a formal preparation in a fine arts degree. Moreover, the range of the colors used by most of the artists are warm and explosive similar to the prevailing trend in Philippine art as opposed to the Western art. The works are also culture-bound in which the context of beliefs, traditions, customs and symbols of Iloilo provide a framework of reference.

The unbridled true expression is proven by the visual presentations of the artists which, according to observers, give another philosophy that is not yet seen in any existing art books. The works may have some influences from famous foreign or Manila-based artists but the manner by which the works "re-present" reality are undebatably fresh innovations which characterize Ilonggo art. Even if they may be classified as modern, these paintings and sculptures are not stripped from a unique identity as they build an artist's name behind a particular style or medium even without looking at the signature of the works. For instance, if Vincent Van Gogh has been known for his bold colors and strong lines, each of the top Ilonggo artist is also able to establish his own forte such that he does not become oblivious in the sea of modern painters and sculptures.

In a rural setting depicting farmers, one easily remembers Zoe Amora when the presence of swaying bamboos intrigue in the overall composition. Open-mouthed singing figures in terra cotta has often been attributed to the poetic symbolism of Benjie Belgica. When it comes to non-commercial studio pottery which are more decorative than functional, the name of Allan Cabalfin comes to mind easily. In a group of dancing figures done either in sculpture or black and white cubist painting, no other name is remembered in Iloilo except Ed Defensor. Hilarious or romantic faces of coral heads brings to mind the Guimbalanon sculptor Martin Genodepa. Viewing innovations in terra

cotta depicting abstracted or semi-abstracted figures, one mostly remembers the most authoritative artist behind, Harry Mark Gonzales. Expressive socializing men and women both in body and facial gestures that are rendered in acrylic carries the name of Fred Orig. Advance experimentations in glazed stone-ware that attracts a higher price is easily attributed to Nelfa Querubin. An ethnic presentation of subjects within a bottle done in print or painting brings Dado Tan in the picture. Finally, the social realist distortions of figures and environmental degradation gives the limelight to PG Zoluaga.

The leading lights of the Ilonggo visual arts, whose works and profiles were analyzed, are avant gardes of their respective mediums and adventurers in a rough sea. Amid the lack of loyal patronage by local art collectors, patrons and government support for their development, they continue to express with passion and have made a substantial body of works that gain their respect from the art community. They even excel in the national contests—as if no tribulation nor wars could keep them from singing their songs that innately spring from the humanity of man.

Perhaps they could be the most celebrated achievers in their own right, having attained a high level of development in their art regardless of the prevailing stingy culture of Panayanons who generally do not have much regard on their expressions. When there is something to celebrate, it is the Ilonggo artists' persistence, aggressiveness, undaunted courage and an admirable penchant for excellence that manifest in their unorthodox styles that challenge the prevailing canons seen in the art books. Not only are they creators of their own styles unlike the artists of other provinces; they have constantly and diligently been working on their pieces regardless of season, whether or not it is time to exhibit their works or just another day to explore. They are not looking much on the financial returns of their unprofitable art endeavor. They have other sources of income for in Iloilo rarely can the artists survive if they go full-time in art. In their mediums and manner of presenting their art, it can readily be gleaned that the Ilonggo artists have something fresh to present, a trait that makes Iloilo the second best next to the national capital region in terms of artistic development.

The Ilonggo artists are offshoots of modern art whose works tell about self-consciousness, or consciousness of the self. This self makes sense of time and space—a knowledge that plays out in the context of a marked presence. The Ilonggo artists share this disposition. Sculptors Harry Mark Gonzales, Martin Genodepa, Allan Cabalfin and Nelfa Querubin might have been influenced by either Brancusi, Japanese pottery or the American abstraction but would root their images in a local milieu where they reside. The painters Ed Defensor, Benjie Belgica, Zoe Amora and Dado Tan might have broad sympathies with Jose Joya and Fil De La Cruz but their inspirations were nourished by the unique Ilonggo culture. Boyet Zoluaga might have looked toward Europe in his fascination with social realism but his sensitivity toward the nuances of lines would take him to the visual culture of environmental issues in the rural as well as the alienation of man in the urban. Fred Orig might have looked to Botong Francisco in terms of theme, but his sensitivity toward neon colors in most of his recent works would lead him to the socializations of men and women in the urban setting.

The temperament of art in Iloilo is generally less turbulent compared to Negros province. This is correlated to the general social condition of the province which does not have much social tensions to commemorate like Negros wherein the suffering of hunger was sensationalized decades ago.

The noted Ilonggo artists do not generally have an affluent family upbringing. Except for Ed Defensor and Benjie Belgica, most of the leading artists belong to the middle and lower middle class. Their childhood usually begin with a discovery of their artistic aptitude. However, their exposure and development in the realm of “serious art” was highly dependent on the role of Hubon Madaas, where the leading artists, except Harry Mark Gonzales, became bonafide members.

Most of the leading artists started with representational styles of sculptures and paintings until they reached the point of discovering their signature styles where they became known in the art community of the province and the region.

The ages of the renowned Ilonggo artists vary, ranging from 26 to 61. This varied range simply means that the creative spring and capacity to excel among the leading artists have nothing to do with their ages but on natural endowment further enhanced by the challenge of peers. Nine of them, through Hubon Madaas, may have received a mentoring of Jose Joya through a seminar but their progress can be traced more by their continuous effort to create their pieces at their own pace.

The artists’ participation in the cultural activities in the region and elsewhere has much bearing on the growth.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study analyzed the paintings and sculptures of the leading artists in Iloilo. These are: Zoe Amora, Benjie Belgica, Allan Cabalfin, Edward Defensor, Martin Genodepa, Harry Mark Gonzales, Fred Orig, Nelfa Querubin, Dado Tan and PG “Boyet” Zoluaga.

The analyses of the works and lives of these artists lead to the observation of the Ilonggo artistic tradition. The features of this tradition are summarized in Table 1. In the table, the works of the ten artists are described according to dominant artistic element, principle, subject matter, emotion, style, influence by another artist and outstanding general feature. The works differ in most aspects, especially in the outstanding general feature and style, although in some ways, they have similarities.

The paintings and sculptures of the artists are expressions of their true “voices” executed in their respective styles. The absence of formal training in a fine arts course worked in favor of the leading Ilonggo artists for they were able to come up with their respective styles which are mostly fresh evolutions of existing canons not yet familiar in the art academes. What harnessed the talents and skills of these artists is the role of the art group Hubon Madaas which facilitated peer mentoring, workshops, regular exhibits and challenge that contributed to the growth of their art career.

The artists are products of the admixture of family upbringing, natural endowment in art, presence of cultural activities to participate, the challenge of peers and a courageous resolve to continue their art regardless of the lack of patronage by the public in general.

Table 1. Summary of the Features of the Ilonggo Artistic Tradition

Artists	Dominant artistic element	Dominant artistic principle	Dominant subject matter	Dominant emotion	Dominant medium	Dominant style	Dominant influence by another artist	Outstanding general feature
Amora	color, lines	rhythm, harmony, balance	farmers	expectancy, struggling toil	acrylic	modern genre painting	Jose Joya, Amorsolo	bamboo forms that depict a fresh presentation
Belgica	shape, texture	harmony	singing men, women and children	despair, romance	terra cotta, acrylic	minimalist sculpture, ethnic painting	Brancusi, Fil De La Cruz	the singing figures have a singular message that pose a question
Cabalfin	shape, texture	rhythm, harmony	semi-functional vessels, men, women	curiosity	stone-ware, terra cotta	conceptual studio pottery	Japanese potters, Nelfa Querubin	defines an Ilonggo studio pottery
Defensor	shape, texture, color	rhythm, harmony, balance	dancing women and men	romance	nails and wood, terra cotta, acrylic	minimalist sculpture, expressionist paintings	Jose Joya, Brancusi, Picasso	the dancing figures in different mediums tell of a merge between theater and visual arts

Continuation of Table 1.

Artists	Dominant artistic element	Dominant artistic principle	Dominant subject matter	Dominant emotion	Dominant medium	Dominant style	Dominant influence by another artist	Outstanding general feature
Genodepa	shape, texture	harmony, rhythm	men and women heads	romance, hilarity	coral stone	minimalist sculpture	Brancusi	expressive faces in coral stone are very fresh
Gonzales	shape, texture	emphasis on message	abstract, semi-distorted figures	struggle	terra cotta	abstract and semi-abstract	Brancusi, Henri Moore	innovations in terra cotta and expressive presentations
Orig	color, shape, line	harmony, rhythm	men, women in the urban setting	interactive and conversant	acrylic	expressionism	modern painters	both concept and skill are applied; figures are very expressive
Querubin	shape, texture, color	harmony, rhythm	semi-functional vessels	curiosity	stone-ware	conceptual studio pottery	Japanese and American potters	experimentations in stone-ware are quite advanced among potters
Tan	color, texture, shape	proportion, harmony	native delicacies, woman and habitat in a bottle	curiosity	print	conceptual presentation of environmental and ethnic themes	Fil De La Cruz	presentation in a bottle is very fresh and competitive
Zoluaga	lines, shapes	emphasis on message	distorted men, destruction of nature	phobia, hopelessness, protest,	pen and ink, acrylic	social realism	Munch, Chagall	distortions and expressive lines effectively portray the message

Conclusion

Unique among the Ilonggos is their identity as reflected in the works and lives of the artists. That identity cannot be simplified in a single descriptive work for even in the communal upbringing where the environment is similar, the personalities, medium, style and subject preferences of the artists make art a complex presentation of various dominant moods, seasons and the evolution of the society. Even with influences from foreign and Manila-based icons, each of the leading Ilonggo artist has developed an easily recognized hallmark that identifies their individuality and describes their true “voice”. Regarding the prevailing range of the colors, the artists mostly prefer warm and explosive hues that is also observable among great Filipino modernists such as national artists Jose Joya, Ben Cabrera and Manansala among others. The works- though varied in a range of mediums subjects, moods and elements- remain hinged in the framework of Ilonggo and Panayanon culture which is observable in the customs, beliefs, symbols, values and norms of the place.

The unbridled true expression of the top Ilonggo artists is proven by the visual presentations of the artists which, according to observers, give another philosophy that is not yet seen in any existing art books. The works may have some influences from famous foreign or Manila-based artists but the manner by which the works “re-present” reality are undebatably fresh innovations which characterize Ilonggo art. Even if they may be classified as modern, these paintings and sculptures are not stripped from a unique identity as they build an artist’s name behind a particular style or medium even without looking at the signature of the works.

In a state of flux, Ilonggo art is constantly changing and what is common among the ten leading artists is the role of a group that served as a prime mover of cultural activities, and the aggressiveness and undaunted determination of the artists to continue in their art regardless of how the community in general regard their outputs. This scenario successfully substituted the absence of a formal course in the fine arts among the leading artists. The artists still belong to the mainstream art in the country even if they may be “stereotyped” because they are not Manila-based. This is true in the sense that they have been getting their energies from the leading artists in the country through interaction and workshop while the competitiveness of their works is also evident in their ability to bring top awards in national contests.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are presented:

- 1) Philanthropists, the government and the academes in the province be sponsors of grants for materials, allowances and appropriate venues for the Ilonggo artists mentioned to make them concentrate on their art. This is fulfilling the role of preserving a unique and rich culture.
- 2) The artists themselves need to continue working on their pieces for one-man exhibits in Manila.
- 3) The university be a prime mover of cultural activities not just restricted for its students but for leading artists. This can be realized by:
 - a) publishing this manuscript into a book to be sold to libraries in the region and to be donated to the National Commission on Culture and the Arts;

- b) commissioning or patronizing the works of some local artists with a sense of cultural obligation not just utility;
- 4) More related researches to be conducted on other top achievers in Ilonggo and Panayanon art not yet covered in this study.

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- Interview with Fred Orig, June, 2007.
- Interview with Nelfa Querubin, June, 2007.
- Interview with Dado Tan, June, 2007.
- Interview with PG Zoluaga, June, 2007.
- Interview with William Querubin, March, 2007.
- Pictures of paintings and sculptures from the ten artists interviewed.