
**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 profile, and a critique of the works of selected artists were made based on the photographs of the artworks. Selection was made based on any two of the following: a major national award in art, gallery exhibits held, activity in the past two years, and group affiliation. The study showed that the Ilonggo artistic tradition is characterized by an easily recognized hallmark of the works that identifies the true “voices” of the artists manifesting themselves in signature styles not yet seen in the usual canons in art. The works-though varied in a range of mediums, subjects, moods and elements-remain hinged in the framework of Ilonggo culture. Not having enrolled in any fine arts course, most of the leading artists were apprenticed under the tutelage of “*Hubon Madaas*” which served as the prime mover of visual arts activities in Panay. The artists are products of the admixture of natural endowment in art, presence of cultural activities to participate in, 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 country's mainstream art even if they are sometimes stereotyped.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

In the framework of government policy, the art and culture of the country should be given importance. In 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." 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.

An overview of the evolution of the Philippine art relates to the focus on Ilonggo art since it is an offshoot of the national artistic development. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts records a brief history of the Philippine art, highlighting briefly on the luminaries of the field. The classical roots in Philippine painting had its roots from the first painter of note, Fabian de la Rosa (1869-1937). Later, it was de la Rosa's nephew, Fernando Amorsolo y Cueto (1892-1972) who became the first national artist. The works of these artists were literal landscapes.

Modernism in the Philippine painting started with the distorted and naked workmen by Victoriano Edades (1895-1985). Edades recruited two young dropouts from the UP College of Fine Arts, Carlos "Botong" Francisco and Galo Ocampo. The Triumvirate of Edades, Ocampo, and Francisco became the core of a group of artists informally known as the Thirteen Moderns. The other "Moderns" (according to Edades' list) were Diosdado Lorenzo, Vicente S. Manansala, Hernando R. Ocampo, Cesar T. Legaspi, Demetrio Diego, UST faculty members Bonifacio Cristobal (1911) and architect Jose Pardo (1916), Arsenio Capili (1914 -1945) who died during the war, two student-assistants Ricarte Purugganan (1912 -1998), and Anita Magsaysay-Ho (1914), the only woman in the group. Other names which gained significance were Fernando Zobel (1924-84), Nena Saguil (1914-1994), and Jose Joya (1931-1995).

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. This new generation ensured that Modernism, in particular, and Philippine painting, in general, will remain alive and well into the next decades (from <http://www.ncca.gov.ph>)

The article of Leo Benesa (2009) poses the question on what makes Philippine Art “Filipino”. The question was a rephrasing of the old problem of national identity in the visual arts. A great deal of the confusion in the cultural identity stems from the fact that the Philippine art belongs to the western tradition in its use of paint and canvas and other materials, as well as in such influences as impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, cubism, pop, minimalism, and the like (Benesa, 2009).

In the essay, the confusion was clarified on the issue that although the influence of the western models are evident, Philippine paintings have not lost their national identity because of it. Just as the Spoliarium painting by Juan Luna remains “Filipino” even if done in Europe, the paintings on question remain Filipino in origin and tradition (from <http://www.ncca.gov.ph>)

In Iloilo, no formal study was done on the works and lives of local artists. Panay island is endowed with nationally-acclaimed talents in the visual arts. 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.

Even with the challenges in Iloilo's art scene, a new era of better consciousness and culture of excellence in art appreciation can begin.

Objectives

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

Specifically, the study was undertaken to:

1. make a brief biographical sketch of each selected artist and some extravisual factors that are significant in their development;
2. critique the major paintings or sculptures of each of the ten selected Ilonggo visual artists; and,
3. 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 Article XIV, sections 14 and 15 of the Philippine Constitution. This constitutional mandate goes in the same vein as the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (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...; and, 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...”. 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.” The study conserves and promotes the Ilonggo historical and cultural heritage.

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 art colleagues from Manila and the other provinces.

The university can benefit by realizing its cultural objectives in the promotion and conservation of the community's arts. In the mission statement of the university, it is stated that the mission of Central

Philippine University is to carry out a program of spiritual, intellectual, moral, scientific, technological, and cultural training, and allied studies under influences which strengthen Christian faith, build up character and promote scholarship, research and community service. One of the purposes of a local university should be on developing and encouraging the development of the Ilonggo identity.

The local artists involved can benefit from this study by the reorganization of their accomplishments shown by the artworks and unique biographical information.

For aspiring artists, they can learn from the models of pursuing the field discussed in this study.

The readers and audiences of Ilonggo art can also use the results of the study in their efforts to understand the uniqueness of Ilonggos.

Scope and Limitations

The research is limited to only ten selected Ilonggo visual artists in order to focus the analysis of the artworks and the Ilonggo artistic tradition. Selection of the ten artists was based on the criteria specified.

METHODOLOGY

This research used the document analysis and descriptive approaches. It analyzed and made a critique on some major works done by each selected artist using the elements of art, influences, social and political context, and personal factors as bases.

The respondents of this study were ten Ilonggo artists, namely, Nelfa Querubin-Tompkins, Ed Defensor, Harry Mark Gonzales, Martin Genodepa, Alan Cabalfin, Fred Orig, Joe Amora, Boyet Zoluaga, Benjie Belgica, and Dado Tan. At least two of the following criteria were met as bases of selection: 1) The Ilonggo artist should have had a major award in any of the 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 or she 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); 3) He or she should be active in the local art scene, meaning, he continues to have exhibits for the past two years and is still recognized in the local art community; and, 4) He or she should be a member of the oldest art group in the region, the “*Hubon Madias*”.

“*Hubon Madias*” was organized in 1983 under the auspices of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas (UPV). Its prime movers were Dr. Dionisia A. Rola, then Chancellor of the University, Prof. Jose Joya, then Dean of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts and one of the prominent artists of the country, Prof. Dea V. Doromal, Chairperson of the UPV Committee on Culture and the Arts, and Ed Defensor, Professor and resident artist of UPV who went on to become its founding chairman.

As a group they have held a number of group shows not only in the Visayas but also in Metro Manila. They were also in the forefront of organizational and cultural activities, having been charter members of the Arts Council of Iloilo Foundation, Inc., organizers of “*Hublag! The Ilonggo Arts Festival*”, celebrated from 1988 to 1995, as well as co-organizers of the Visayas Islands Visual Artists Exhibition-Conference (VIVA-EXCON), a biennale activity still celebrated in the Visayas area until today.

Primary data of this study included the actual artworks of the artists. If some of their major works were no longer accessible, a photograph of paintings and sculptures of the selected artists was used to analyze the works. They were collected from the artists personally or through 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.

The photographs of the artists' works were the main instrument of the study. Aside from photographs, an unstructured interview was used. The interview dealt with 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 not yet widely seen or circulated that is why taking photographs of their works was very important for analyses.

The analysis of each artist's works touched on the dominant elements, principle, subject, emotion, medium, style, influence and general feature. However, the analyses varied based on the notable factors which likewise differed in each artist.

In the collection process, Step 1 was setting the criteria of selection of respondents which was 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 Madias" 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 Robinson's Iloilo. Step 3 was conducting an 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 was done after the interview of each artist. In this step, the artists were consulted about which artworks were 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.

RESULTS

Following are the study findings of the features of the Ilonggo artistic tradition, highlighting ten Ilonggo artists, namely, Amora, Belgica, Cabalfin, Defensor, Genodepa, Gonzales, Orig, Querubin, Tan, and Zoluaga. The artists' works are described as to their dominant artistic element, subject matter, emotion, medium, style, influence by another artist, and their outstanding general feature (see Table 1).

Joe Amora: Limner of San Enrique

Profile. Hailing from the town of San Enrique, Joe Amora associated 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.

Amora won several awards in painting and sculpture. In 1996, Amora won in the national *Diwa ng Sining* as finalist in both the mixed media painting and sculpture categories, National Electrification and Administration (second place), Wow Philippines (second place). In the

provincial level, he is either first or second placer in the annual Pinta Paraw at Villa, Iloilo. Amora also won in other contests such as the belen-making in SM City (grand champion), and the *Semana sang Iloilo* on-the-spot painting (grand prize).

Critique of works. 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 depicts 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 Madiaas*”, 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. Some of his works are “*Obrero sa Tubo*” (Figure 1), “*Palas-anon sa Matag Adlaw*” (Figure 2), “*Weaving*” (Figure 3), and “*The Harvest*” (Figure 4).

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 routine.

“*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.”



Figure 1. “*Obrero sa Tubo*”, acrylic by Joe Amora



Figure 2. “*Palas-anon sa Matag Adlaw*”, acrylic by Joe Amora

The relief on mahogany wood titled “Weaving” (Figure 3) depicts diligence. In reality, the lowly folks in the local milieu are struggling with work pay that can hardly support bare necessities. This work shows Amora's versatility to work on different media 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 where 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 3. “Weaving”, wood relief
By Joe Amora



Figure 4. “Harvest”, acrylic
By Joe Amora

Personally, what Amora depicts in his artworks are those meaningful in his family life as farmers. The cultural element comes into mind about sugarcane plantation which is one of the major agricultural activities in Panay island where Iloilo is located. Three activities involved are planting, weeding, and harvesting.

The fields are plowed at least twice before planting the sugarcane. As soon as everything is set, straight lines about two and a half to three feet apart are plowed across the field. It takes ten men to plant a one-hectare lot in five days. Cuttings known as *patdan* is planted using the *tagad* or *topil*, a dibble stick with a blunt-iron blade. When the cane starts to grow, the spaces between the hills are plowed to destroy the weeds which compete with the growth of the plant. This activity is known as *tudling*.

The spaces between the plants are hoed to allow moisture to penetrate the roots. The *tudling* is done at the interval of two months. When the canes are ready for harvest, samples are taken and brought to the sugar central for analysis. Once the inspector's approval has been secured, cutting of the canes starts. This takes place from November to March. The laborers use long steel knives to cut the cane. In some areas, the cane plantation is burnt first before cutting is done. Then men start their work on any spot most convenient for the truck to haul the canes to nearby sugar central (Jocano, 1980).

Benjie Belgica: Sculpting Muted Melodies

Profile. Born in 1950, Belgica is son to businessman father 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 de Manila University. While he was in college, he took an elective subject where he opened his eyes to "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.

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 to 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 for

but did not have --- to be a successful musician. Monumentalizing that sentiment is his way of being reminded of an unfulfilled dream by using 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. “*Patadyong*” is a native cloth made by the weavers of Iloilo which is used for women's clothing. Like the “*Limitless Love*” (Figure 8) which presents two lovers, Belgica's paintings are unique in the sense that they are minimalist and at the same time, ethnic.



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

Profile. Cabalfin took architecture at 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 as to the influencers of his style of expression, he admitted that there were many.

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. As a vessel, the purpose is more decorative than functional. The human figures which Cabalfin creates show 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 with the body's inherent beauty. The linear elements that can be seen in the torso make the presentation go beyond the usual 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^o 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.

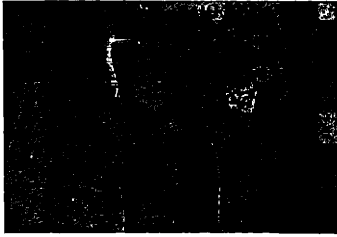


Figure 9. "Torso", terra cotta
By Allan Cabalfin



Figure 10. "Vessel 2", stoneware
By Allan Cabalfin

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 forms an intriguing figure of a woman coming out of a shell. The concept alludes to a story of "Malakas and Maganda" arising from a 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 encourages the viewer to value environmental sustainability for future generations.



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



Figure 12. "Aurora", terra cotta by
Allan Cabalfin

Edward Defensor: Rhythm of the Dance

Profile. Born in March 13, 61-year-old artist Edward 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 played and 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, and visual and performing artist. Among his major achievements are 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, among others.

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 to a dance performance medium used in his well-acclaimed theater productions where he is also engaged. Whether in sculptural or painting media, the figures have 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 media. Alice Guillermo, a noted art critic wrote about the artist:

“Certainly one of the most active artists 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 master's 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. Such observations are evident in his *Dancing for the Moon* (Figure 13). *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 round 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.”

Martin Genodepa: Transforming a Stoic Stone

Profile. Raised up in a serene and close-to-nature environment in



Figure 13. "Dancing for the Moon", acrylic by Ed Defensor



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

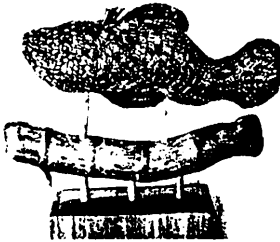


Figure 15. "Fillet o'Nails", nails and wood by Ed Defensor



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

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

Genodepa first showed his works in Manila in Hiraya in 1996. 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 about by respectable people. His works were already featured by Eric Torres in the "Travel Times". Alice Guillermo also wrote about the sculptor's works.

Genodepa was nominated twice in the CCP 13 Artists Award. For the

first time, he was nominated by Cajipe-Endaya, and on the second time, by Brenda Fajardo.

Critique of works. 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 to by the 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 a subtle monument to the aesthetic act and to the observation that women are 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.

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 wants to preserve 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 about 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.



Figure 17. "Wrapped Series", corral stone by Martin Genodepa

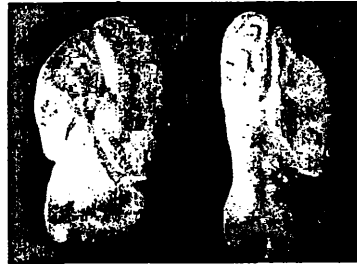


Figure 18. "Bust Series 1996", corral stone by Martin Genodepa

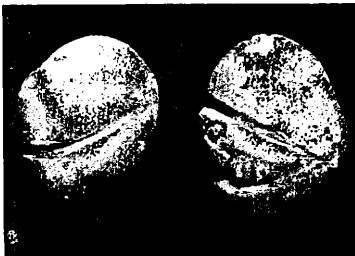


Figure 19. "Bust Series 1997", corral stone by Martin Genodepa



Figure 20. "Bust Series 1997", corral stone by Martin Genodepa

Evident in the sculptures of Genodepa is *kalulo* which refers to tenderness of heart. One of the Ilonggo relational imperatives, *kalulo* can also mean love, kindness, sympathy, unselfishness.

The sculptor's strong Christian principles separate him from the rest. 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.

Harry Mark Gonzales: Avant-garde in Terra Cotta

Profile. Although raised poor, 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. 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).

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 taken from any established canon or particular leading lights of the Philippine or foreign sculpture. The dominant approach shows coiled designs which seem 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 offered 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 and could not be traced to a contemporary artist elsewhere. His innovations in terra cotta figures are 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 breathe 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 with a loss of livelihood and income, extreme poverty, and respiratory diseases. It is but honorable for an artist to mourn, commemorate, and protest the careless venture for profit that resulted in 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 on the viewer: the fragility of one's life summoning the divine is alluded to by the nature of its material. Harry Mark's troubled childhood experiences seemed to lead him to depend on a higher power that can make things turn out for good in this life and beyond. He always shares with close friends the pangs of pain he often felt before. Instead of giving way to the negative effects of his experiences, he mustered the strength to outgrow them and 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 very near the seeker implies His nearness for anyone's frail grasp and accurately interprets 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.



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

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 lifeless 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.

Fred Orig: Human Figures in Neon Colors

Profile. Considered the best and most experienced figurative painter, Fred Orig is a name remembered in the Ilonggo art scene. Among other awards, Fred Orig is the grand champion of the painting contest sponsored by the National Electrification Administration. Locally, he always dominates the yearly “*Pinta Paraw*” by winning either as a first or second placer.

Orig proved that his skill in drawing and painting is his main livelihood. He started a commercial painting business while staying in Davao and continued this for three years. When he came to Iloilo, Orig was invited to join the “*Hubon Madiaas*” group in 1983.

His affiliation with “*Hubon Madiaas*” 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 into painting and sculpture.

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.

Critique of works. 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 to the screen of the cellular phone as a way of presenting the modern Filipino life that has now become heavily dependent on 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 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 as he saw the plight of his environment during the disaster. 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 tell about Fred's intention to commemorate a tragedy like the oil spill in Guimaras, as some artists such as Gonzales, did.

"*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 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 has become part of the Filipino's life nowadays. The overall composition does not only show a



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



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

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.

Orig's works reflect environmental and social aspects. Seen in his works are reflections of socialization in the urban setting as well as *kakugi*, a moral virtue of Ilonggos.



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



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

Nelfa Querubin: Multi-awarded Ceramics Artist

Profile. 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.

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.

It seems it all started when Querubin got married to an American, Mike Tompkins. In 2003, she was awarded the very elusive first prize in Ceramics in the Colorado Arts Festival.

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 resided, one can behold a very accomplished life and her leap to victory like her works reminding about the role of meticulous process and heat in crating 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 to a powerful transformation of frail human beginnings to a likeness of divinity. They are stressing that life is a testimony of how the Maker can recreate unimpressive inert clay into valuable and admirable pieces. That they do not just stimulate universal concepts with the use of textures, colors, forms, harmony, and rhythm but they also highlight the strength and durability of stoneware. Querubin's subjects 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 the 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.”

Querubin's works have undergone stages of evolution. In her early career, she created more utilitarian bowls, cups, and teapots, among others. They are formed through a combination of the 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 is a reflection of her inspiration from her American environment the 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 lived. 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 in using the medium. “Dressed for the King” (Figure 32) is a stunning abstraction with exploding colors and 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 ceramic artworks are usually heated with as high as 1000^o 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

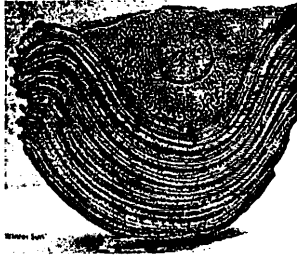


Figure 29. "Winter Sun", stoneware by Nelfa Querubin

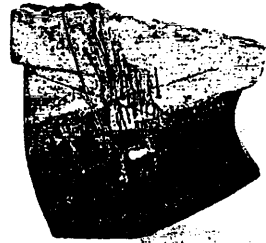


Figure 30. "Tranquility", stoneware by Nelfa Querubin



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



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

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.

Dado Tan: Melodies in Print-making

Profile. A popular voice in the 90's as an 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.

He paints and sculpts using different media. Later, he came up with a signature style that depicts his subjects inside a bottle.

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 as a stress reliever while working. He is contemplating about having a one-man show in Iloilo as of this writing.

Critique of works. Tan's works inside a bottle is a powerful symbolism of environment and ecology. Rendered in explosive colors and textural interplay, the proportion and harmony of the compositions evoke 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. Looking at Tan's works, one remembers that the boundaries of one's upbringing connoted by the bottle is the delimiting factor which determines how far and wide a person can go through the horizons of opportunities given the struggles. Yet in Tan's life as a self-taught artist, the limitations are in fact, opportunities.

Tan, unlike the other "Hubon" artists, paints and sculpts using the terra cotta medium. His signature style that depicts the subject/s inside the bottle 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.

In the "Rebirth" (Figure 33), the idea is regeneration which sentimentally looks at the plight of the environment. The "Panagang" series (Figures 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 for protection reportedly 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 are determined by a particular mind set.

The native food *tinala* is apparently a pleasant reminder about 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.

As seen in many of Tan's works, the spirit world which is part of the Ilonggos' beliefs is manifested.

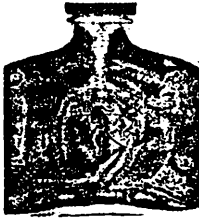


Figure 33. “Rebirth”, print by Dado Tan



Figure 34. “Panagang sa Kalautan”, mixed media by Dado



Figure 35. “Panagang sa Katalagman”, mixed media



Figure 36. “Panagang”, print By Dado Tan

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

Profile. Born on February 1, 1958, Boyot Zoluaga is a native of Guimbal, Iloilo. 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*”.

After graduation, he went to Saudi Arabia to work with the help of a

former teacher. There he spent two years until he realized that he was not meant to stay longer in that job. So Zoluaga returned home to continue his artistic pursuits.

In 1998, Zoluaga won as one of the five jurors' choice in Philip Morris and went to Vietnam to further compete in the Asian Art Awards but unfortunately, he did not win. However, he saw it an opportunity to interact with productive artists from other countries.

Critique of the works. The darker side of life expressed in bold lines and overall composition that evoke 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 sentiments for his community that suffers the plight of a third world setting and the harsh realities of modernization where exploitation, corruption, and dehumanization of man abound. Using a social realist style, the influences of Munch and Chagall are evident in the works and effectively convey the intended messages.

Zoluaga's deepest sentiment expressing itself 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. At 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 destroy 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, the presence of evil is dealt with through supernatural means. The work calls to mind the people's desire for a 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 need 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, these 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 into the unknown. Naked human figures with halos on their heads walk in a highway towards a bright light ahead. The pilgrimage appears to have a positive culmination but seems to be restrictive as the feet of the travelers 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 his open right eye looks through the gadget. The message of this social realist painting gives awareness of the distorted vision of the 21st century Filipino whose preoccupation is giving in to pleasures, wasting much of his time, while dismissing the more serious issues about his existence. The closed left eye tells about how he disregards the primary issues of life in favor of modernism.



Figure 37. “Deliverance”, color etching acrylic by PG Zoluaga

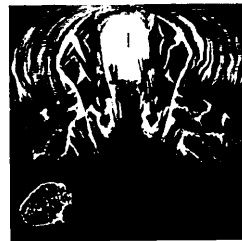


Figure 38. “Deliver Us from Extinction”, by PG Zoluaga



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



Figure 40. "Awareness", acrylic
by PG Zoluaga

DISCUSSION

This pioneering study considers the fulfillment of the Constitutional mandate where, "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." Rarely have institutions been diligent in documenting and preserving the local and national heritage as implicated by an absence of this research despite the presence of competitive Ilonggo visual artists who are well-respected in the cultural community. This study is therefore a milestone in Iloilo's cultural development.

Hortilla's (1999) mention of the "right to culture" based on the universal declaration of human rights by the United Nations makes Ilonggo visual arts a basic human right where participation should not be taken only as a privilege or a luxury in the mindset of the typecast stinginess among the local community. In this perspective, the agents of change-the policy-makers, artists, educators, cultural workers, government agencies, the private sector, and the non-government organizations have more reason to give more respect and understanding on the creative forces of the society.

When Philippine art that reflects the western tradition as pointed out by Benesa (2009) in its use of paint and canvas and other materials, as well as in such influences as impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, cubism, pop, minimalism and the like, it has not lost its being Filipino. The argument is settled on the issue on what makes Philippine art Filipino because the artist and the culture presented are of the country's origin. The

same is true with Ilonggo artistic tradition reflecting foreign influences in the manner of presentation. The Ilonggo identity is retained by the one who made the artwork and the context of culture.

A reflective look at the works of the top Ilonggo artists reveal a diversity of artistic elements, principles applied, subjects, emotions, media, styles, influences, and general features. This diversity shows 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.

The unbridled expression is proven by the visual presentations of the artists which, according to observers, give a new philosophy that is not yet seen in any existing art book. The philosophy has apparently evolved and has gone beyond just being a synthesis of local and national artistic influences.

The leading lights of the Ilonggo visual arts, whose works and profiles were analyzed, are avant gardes of their respective media and adventurers in a rough sea. 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.

The Ilonggo artistic tradition is not about the dominance of a particular style, medium, principle, subject matter, emotion, or influence of another artist but rather a presentation of the Ilonggo communal life, beliefs, moral virtues, and personality.

The temperament of art in Iloilo is generally less turbulent compared to that in 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 from hunger was sensationalized decades ago.

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 to	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, Nella 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

CONCLUSIONS

Unique among the Ilonggos was their individual identity as reflected in the works and lives of the artists. That identity cannot be described as a simple, collective entity for even in the communal upbringing where the environment was similar, the personalities, medium, style, and subject preferences of the artists made 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 artists had developed an easily recognizable hallmark that identified their individuality and described their true “voice”. An example of this is Joe Amora's use of linear elements of sugarcanes that dominate his works. Regarding the prevailing range of the colors, the artists mostly preferred warm and explosive hues also observable among great Filipino modernists such as national artists Jose Joya, Ben Cabrera, and Manansala, among others. The works, although in a variety of media, subjects, moods, and elements- remained hinged in the framework of “Ilonggo” and “Panayanon” culture observable in the customs, beliefs, symbols, values, and norms of the place such as the tradition of planting and harvesting sugarcane, the belief on the existence of the supernatural world, and the cardinal virtue of *kakugi* among Ilonggos.

The unbridled expression of the top Ilonggo artists was proven by the visual presentations of the artists which, according to observers, gave another philosophy not yet seen in any existing art book. The works may have had some influences from famous foreign or Manila-based artists, but the manner by which the works “re-presents” reality evidenced an undebatably fresh innovation which characterizes Ilonggo art. Even if they may be classified as modern, these paintings and sculptures are not stripped of a unique identity as they build an artist's name behind a particular style or medium recognizable even without one's looking at the signature of the works.

In a state of flux, Ilonggo art had been constantly changing and what was common among the ten leading artists was 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 regarded their outputs. This scenario successfully substituted the absence of a formal course in the fine arts among the leading artists. The artists still belonged to the mainstream art in the country even if they may be “stereotyped” because they were not Manila-based. This was true in the sense that they were getting their energies from the leading artists in the country through interaction and

workshop while the competitiveness of their works was also evident in their ability to bring top awards in national contests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Philanthropists, the government, and the university administrators in the province should 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, the region, and other countries if they have the chance.

3. The University should be a prime mover of cultural activities not just limited to its students but also for leading artists. This can be realized by:

a. publishing this manuscript into a book or journal to be sold to libraries in the region and to be donated to the National Commission on Culture and the Arts; and,

b. commissioning or patronizing the works of some local artists with a sense of cultural obligation not just utility; and,

4. More related researches should be conducted on other top achievers in “*Ilonggo*” and “*Panayanon*”.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The challenge in coming up with critical analyses of the works of the Ilonggo artists is a new realm that I just ventured into with an aim to improve awareness and appreciation in the visual arts. I wish to thank the following for their contributions: Dr. Expedito Señeres, for his encouragement during times of exhaustion from the task of writing. His involvement was a wind beneath my wings; Harry Mark Gonzales, for providing a way to contact the artists in this study; the University Research Center under the leadership of Dr. Randy A. V. Pabulayan, for giving this study a chance to spark public interest; the ten leading artists who willingly gave their time for interviews about their lives and works; and the Ultimate Artist, God Almighty, who gave me the skills and the joy in appreciating art.

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