

Curator's Notes on the
SOCSARGEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' VISUAL ART SHOW in
General Santos City, July 25- August 01, 2007

Socskargen is blessed not only with natural resources but also the best of culture. Tribes like B'laan, T'boli, Maguindanao, Maranao, Kalagan, Tagakaolo and Sangil live side by side for generations. Their existence as cultural people contributed to the well being as well as the foundation of roots of the land.

Kalinawa Art Foundation with the mission of bringing the talents and the cultural motifs of these people to the forefront as often described as vanishing and going to extinction had invested a great amount of time and efforts in realizing such big and ambitious endeavour. By taking local partners, an exhibit for these undiscovered talents is materialized, and the effort paid off.

The event in SocSkSargen was successful, no less than the Mayor of the City and the Governor of Sarangani were present together with the presidents of two of the largest institution in the area.

But we have to learn that dealing with the cultural community takes a lot of patience and true heart. Take out those requirements, however grandiose the occasion, would certainly defeat what vision we want to project and achieve. And the *Foundation* has many things to learn about their project and in time it would concretize not only their mind but also their hearts.

However, in the long run, people need each other and by true understanding, respect and appreciation, we can achieve the best of our endeavours. In fulfilling these dictums, then we can justify the importance of art as not only for the elitist few, but for everyone who wants to express his free mind and feelings, hence putting art into its right place. In the end, the most important thing that we would realized, is that in the process we all have learn, and by learning we understand, and improve and create another best of ourselves.

Our kudos to the Foundation for a job well done.

AL-NEZZAR B. ALI
Curator, SocSKSarGen Exhibit
3 October 2007



COMMENT: It is important to understand, that the intention of the curator's report is to provide an opportunity for that person to comment on the activities of the *Foundation*, especially in relation to the program of exhibitions in regional centers. By doing so, it provides the necessary stimulation, not only for the *Kalinawa Art Foundation* to improve upon its activities, but for others to learn from these events as well.

And this is the first important point to be derived from Al-Nezzar Ali's report: "the *Foundation* does have many things to learn", but while doing so, two points of caution should be expressed. First, this project is dear to the hearts of all those at the *Foundation* who work on it, but despite our commitment to it, we will never be

able to tap the lived experience of being an Indigenous Person. This passion, which Ali speaks of is very important and was conveyed through his work to support this event, especially in relation to organizing, and then acting as the Master of ceremonies for, the formal opening of the event. But of equal importance to understand is that this lived experience is the source for Indigenous Peoples' visual arts, in the Philippines and elsewhere.

The second point is this: While it is fully appreciated that Al-Nezzar Ali' is writing in English for our benefit, and may, therefore intended otherwise, but should the *Foundation* ever arrive at a point where it becomes concretized in our minds and actions, then the project will be dead. Each event is unique, even when returning to the same city, as some of the participants will change, as will those the *Foundation* has worked with on previous occasions. But this points to the important question alluded to in the report: whose event is this anyway?

The answer to this is pretty straight forward: This is a community event. The real genius of this activity does not come from the *Kalinawa Art Foundation*; it comes from the community that in the first instance, provides the artists and in the second, provides the volunteers who are willing to participate and build this activity. It is true, that the *Foundation* provides the budget for this, but there will never be enough budget to adequately reward all of those people who participate in this event. This needs to be clearly understood so that it can be equally understood that when Mr. Gilinsky, who is the sole funder for the *Foundation*, remarks that his contribution is relatively small, it is not false modesty, but a very clear vision of who the responsible people are for these Indigenous Peoples' visual art shows.

The final point is two-fold. First, that building sustainable relationships requires commitment and trust, but equally important, the perfect is the enemy of the good. In other words, sometimes it is better to leap in and begin a process to build a relationship, even if it is not the perfect moment to do so. While mistakes and errors that are made by doing so may or may not be better learning tools, at least the process has begun. And once begun, the mutual learning and sharing of experiences becomes easier.

Secondly, it has been the experience of the *Foundation* thus far, that it is extremely difficult to describe the activities that it undertakes during an Indigenous Peoples' visual art show in a way that makes for easy comprehension. Thus, it has always been better for others to see the activity, but as this is not always possible. As a result, someone and/or some group in the local community has to make a risky decision about whether to have such an event with the *Kalinawa Art Foundation* or not. This decision is an important one that should never be overlooked.

Carlton Hughes
Kalinawa Art Foundation
10 October 2007