

Contemporary SOCSARGEN is different from the way it was in less than a century. There is a remarkable change in the land, the people, and its culture. While it was easy for its political demography to change, some of its cultural resources however, have somewhat endured, albeit some change. These changes are mostly influenced by the movements of people- in, out and around them these movements of people (defined in sociology as immigration, emigration) carry formidable changes along the course as movements bring about influences.

The coming in of people to SOCSARGEN from across cultures brought about changes in the way people of the region sees themselves, experiences the world around them. The Curator of the first annual SoCSKSarGen Indigenous People's Visual Arts Exhibition, Al-Nezzar Ali observed "when people move ideas move." How have these ideas moved?

This exhibition looks at the contemporary SOCSARGEN People's visual art making in the framework of Jean Houston's four realms of human experience: the realm of the physical, the realm of the historical, the realm of the symbolic and the realm of Unitive and Integral. Each is presented in a dialogue between the traditional and the contemporary. Thus, the title for the 2nd Annual SOCSARGEN Indigenous PEOPLE'S Visual Art Exhibition: "DIALOGUES"

The exhibition is divided into the four layered realms of human experiences- from the physical to sociological/historical realm, deeper into the mystical/symbolic down to the very core of human experience which is the integrative. Dialogues between traditional and contemporary modes of expression are presented throughout the exhibit allowing discourses between the works and the following components of art making:

1. The media and their applications (technique)
2. The motifs and their manifestations (subject)
3. The artists and their intentions (Concepts)

The Physical Realm: *the ways the person sees the person*

The consequences of the interactions between the traditional and the contemporary mode of expressions are the mutual influences they derive from each cultures. Oftentimes superficial, appropriation in this level does not go beyond the obvious. This section of the exhibit explores how the human experience of interaction influence the way the person defines the self using the new technologies and medium he can now use to express this new world view.

The indigenous People's interaction with the lowlanders initiated them to the non-traditional technologies that have found their way into the indigenous technology. Painting and drawing techniques have found their way into the indigenous art making along with traditional technologies such as weaving, stitching, carving and metalworking expanding the visual expression of the indigenous people

Portraiture for example is not an indigenous art form. This form of expression and form is obviously the product the interaction of peoples brought about by movements of people described above. The collection of portraits in this section of the exhibit allows us to look in the way the Indigenous Artists see the person in pictorial, almost realistic manner (Fig 1) expanding the non-figurative, always abstract representation of using geometric forms (fig 2, 3 and 4) that are limited by their weaving and needlework that were the traditional technology.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

The introduction of western silhouette in garments, commercially woven fabrics and modern accessories such as zippers, the introduction of the sewing machine also brought about changes in traditional garments and accessories. Although some are still using traditional cuts, the Blouses now have zippers that allow modern comfort and varied sizes allowing traditional embellishment and elements thus retaining its original look (fig. 5 and 6), or altogether assuming a more modern, nontraditional styles, incorporating collars for example (fig. 7).



Figure 5



Figure 6

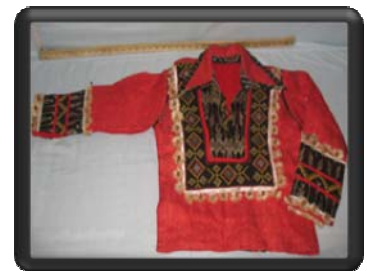


Figure 7

The introduction of commercial dyes has another impact that has reshaped the traditional crafts. Pinks, Lavenders and other pastel colors have found its way into the traditional color palette. The baskets and cross stitched garments, have either a retained traditional look (Fig. 8) with a new color scheme or have a different decorations using traditional colors.



Figure 8

This makes me remember an anecdote shared to me when we did an ethnographic research at Lake Sebu almost twenty years ago. When the Passionist Missionaries established the Sta. Cruz Mission in Lake Sebu in the sixties, they brought with them technologies that would bring the T'bolis closer to civilization. They were amazed that the T'bolis line up every day for plastic tooth brushes. They initially thought that their mission of civilizing the T'bolis was easy because of this clamor for tooth brushes. Only to be disappointed later when they learned that the T'bolis melted these colorful brushes into

beads. The application of new material into their crafts was faster than adopting the practice of western hygiene. This illustrates the advent of appropriating non-traditional material into crafts making by the indigenous communities.

DIALOGUE: *The Realm of The Sociological/Historical:*

the ways the person positions the person

Then effect of interaction will have a deeper and more remarkable impact through the length of interaction. The reason for the similarities in forms and functions of SoCSKSarGen Indigenous cultural materials (in this case their visual arts) were their constant interactions amongst each other before the coming in of the Christian settlers in the early part of the century. The similarities in their use of motifs, the colors, forms and even technologies (carving, weaving, wood working, etc.) reflected the sociological as well as historical commonality of experiences.

The socio/historical implications of the traditional communities' interaction with the west (as the lowlanders were assimilated in the western aesthetics early on) and their visual expression are easily evident in the artworks on exhibit.

In the sociological Historical realm section of the exhibit, we see how western form has found its way in the sociological/historical consciousness of the traditional communities. Here, western practices have assimilated not only in the superficial level but in the level that the communities have already claimed ownership in the patrimony of the material. The two multimedia works "Electric Guitar" and Acoustic Electric Guitar" both by Remelito Formentera for example has had indigenous, traditional decorations (Fig 9 and 10) and should it be used in music making, traditional songs and music will be played along with the music of Freddie Aguilar and (Original Pilipino Music) OPM. The painting (see Fig 11) "Man and His Guitar" by Antonio Talon, A T'boli is shown playing the Guitar instead of the traditional two-stringed lute the Hegelung.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

The Paintings "Hello Kitty" by Mybel Formentera (fig 12), and the two paintings "My world" and "Magkakapatid" (Fig 13 and 14) also by R. Formentera show a western consciousness brought about by exposure. Hello Kitty, a Japanese popular icon, have found its way in the indigenous artist's work and metaphors on family life and environment issues, never seen in indigenous art is very evident in this two paintings.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14

The Mythical/Symbolic Realm: *the ways the person feels the person*

Although traditionally, Indigenous visual arts are deeply mythical and symbolic (the traditional patterns of the T’nalak, malong and banig weaves). Traditional artisans based their patterns on dreams this make the process mythical (fig 15, 16, 17 and 18). After years of contact with contemporary practices, the mythical and symbolic realm, a profound human experience is manifested in the contemporary visual expression.



Figure 15

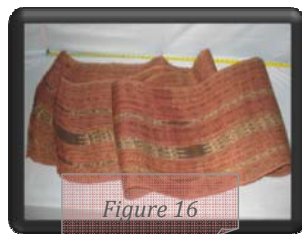


Figure 16

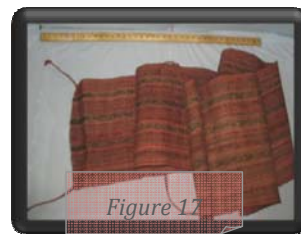


Figure 17



Figure 18

The Artworks in this section, Roland Tamfalan’s “Taminggi (Temptation)” (an allegorical rendition of man’s ideals of beauty and its irresistible charms, Fig 19), Antonio Taleon’s “Mother’s Lullaby” (a take on the mother’s tender relationship with her child, Fig 20), Remelito Formentera’s “Tangkilikin ang ating Musika” (a surrealist/symbolist commentary on patronage of music, Fig 21) elevates the Contemporary Indigenous Visual arts into the realms of the mythical and symbolic.



Figure 19

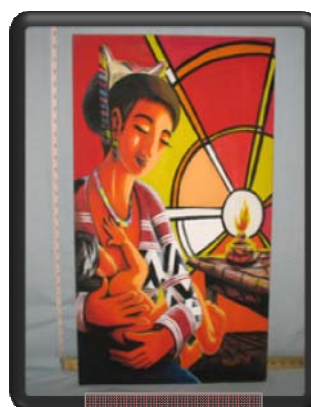


Figure 20



Figure 21

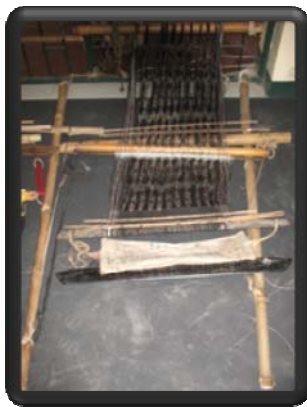
Another work of Tamfalan, “Bud Wen No Gefet (Hope)” (Fig 22) is highly mythical with the representation of western allegorical symbols. The white dove symbolizes hope on one side, the symbols of human frailty like the wheelchair on the other cleverly bisected in the middle by the spring spine of the notebook is a highly complex visual composition using the style very alien to the repertoire of symbols and meanings found in traditional communities.



Figure 19

The works in this segment completes the levels experience that is genetically encoded in oriental sensibilities. This gives contemporary indigenous visual forms in SocSKSarGen depth and meaning negating the notions that the contemporary directions of Indigenous art making are just parroting contemporary art.

The Integrative Realm: *the way the person lives the person*



The evolution from a purely traditional, indigenous forms of the arts and crafts of the indigenous peoples of SoCSKJSarGen into a more contemporary visual arts in form and context allows cultural materials and traditions to move forward and grow instead of stagnating and dying. Having evolved into an experience that go beyond the physical realm and become a social and historical element and

eventually take a symbolic and mystical essence, the contemporary indigenous visual artform gets into the integrative realm wherein the arts become an entirely new way of life.

It is in this completion of the cycle that the contemporary becomes traditional. This new way of looking, positioning and feeling one self, in this case, in the visual arts and using this new paradigm in living that the indigenous evolves as a contemporary form, the contemporary as the new tradition.