

**Message delivered by ATTY. ALANIXON A. SELDA
at the Award Ceremony,
Second annual Indigenous Art Exhibit and Competition
8 October 2007, Good Times Café, Dipolog City**

Good afternoon. Yesterday, a hundred or so high school students from all over Zamboanga Peninsula converged in Turno, this city, to attend a three-day Regional Arts Camp. The arts camp offers theoretical and practical training on four fields of arts – visual arts, music, creative writing, and theatre or the drama.

I was asked by the organizer to teach these high school kids theatre appreciation and play production until 5:00 o'clock today but I excused myself and gave them assignment for tomorrow's session to be with you this afternoon. It is indeed fortunate that Dipolog City is a host to the convergence of young and not so young artist. And I laud the *Kalinawa Art Foundation* for laying the ground works for appreciation of arts done by artists of indigenous blood. I also laud the organizer of this event for choosing this place – the Good Times Café – for opening its doors to our artists. We remember in our humanities classes that Impressionism, the art movement that begun to appear in Paris in 1860s, traces its roots from bistros and cafes. People - here and abroad - will remember Good Times Café of Dipolog City as an ever gracious host to our local artists and a patron of arts.

Speaking of impressionism, we also remember that the works of the impressionist painters like Manet, Cezanne, Pissaro, Degas, Monet, Renoir were rejected in the annual Academy exhibits. In fact in 1863, so many were rejected by the Academy that the French Emperor himself intervened and allowed a second exhibit to be opened in his name. Art critics labelled the exhibit “The Hall of the Rejected Ones,” but it drew bigger crowds than the academy. Laughter and ridicule were the general reaction. People were startled by the new modern subject matter, puzzled by the unusual composition, confused by the little dots of pure color. “Why don't you finish them?” they asked. “You mean I am one of those shapeless dots in the street?” one man asked Monet, standing before the painting: *The Parade*. “Precisely so, from where I was,” replied the artist. One angry critic wrote that these were not paintings, but merely “impressions.” The word stuck and the painters found themselves famous overnight.

The *Kalinawa Art Foundation*, as patron to indigenous art, refuses to define art. It also refuses to give meaning to the word “indigenous”. So now we are gazing at works of arts in search of a meaning. Soon, as in that angry critic who labelled the word “impressions” to the works of Monet, Degas, and Gauguin, we would have the apt word for these works of arts before us.

To give pleasure is the greatest purpose of art and its greatest value is that it is life-enhancing. The ideal is to see the great works of art in the galleries, such as the Good Times Café or in their native site. Yet it is possible to become intimate with the works of art, and never leave the comfort of your homes and offices.

I understand that photographs of the artworks displayed in this gallery had been uploaded in the internet. The artworks of the indigenous people of Zamboanga Peninsula can be thus viewed on the web. And so now, people all over the world can enjoy these artworks at home. Andre Malraux, the Minister of Culture in France, has pointed out that the present generation has a “museum without walls,” that was unavailable to its predecessors.

It is also laudable that these artworks are up for sale as artists like other human beings must also live not perhaps by the sweat of their brows but by the stroke of their brushes. The great Vincent Van Gogh was a failure at everything he tried until he discovered painting at the age of thirty. For ten years he painted frantically, turning out almost a picture a day, and selling not a single one. Then he shot himself. Today, a Van Gogh’s painting could easily command a fortune.

Andre Gide, a noted art critic, has these words befitting Van Gogh’s life as an artist. “The artist can not get along without a public; and when the public is absent, what does he do? He invents it, and turning his back on his age, he looks toward the future for what the present denies.”

And to the artists gathered here today, be wary of the admonition of the great playwright George Bernard Shaw to the artists in general:

“The true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art.”

Ergo, do not let your wife starve, your children go barefoot. Enjoy the fruits of your art.

Good day and may God Bless us all.

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