

# **THE *100 KATAO 100 TAKA* EXHIBITION PROJECT: AN EXERCISE AND EXAMPLE OF TRADITIONAL- CONTEMPORARY ENGAGEMENT**

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## **Abstract**

In 2008, a cultural organization MANLILIKHA Artisans' Support Network mounted an exhibition project to assist the preservation of a university museum collection. 100 papier mache from Paete, Laguna, a craft-making town south of Manila. The result was an explosion and exuberance of creativity, which this paper examines from a variety of angles. Among them, the idea of cultural appropriation as evidenced by the act of borrowing a cultural artifact that is the traditional papier-mâché, or taka. Within this scenario, the authors noted the presence and absence of fair exchange between the borrower and the source culture. It was observed how fair exchange was not always a guiding principle insofar as art-making was concerned. Lastly the new creations, or appropriately transcreations were classified into a typology of creative processes. These creative processes attributed to Filipino artists who participated in this exhibition project were seen to have given rise to works characterized by hybridity. Such hybrid works can only be attributed to the fact that the participating artists have come from a wide gamut of artistic backgrounds, philosophical orientations, and varied exposures to diverse disciplines.

Key words: 'Transcreation', Cultural Appropriation, Hybrid Art, Craft, Contemporary Art

## **Impetus for a Project**

In 2008, a Philippine non-governmental cultural organization, MANLILIKHA Artisans' Support Network, undertook the production of an exhibition project to create a fund for the preservation of the Asian Center museum collection. MANLILIKHA, a non-profit cultural organization was established in 2005 in the midst of a felt need to recognize the cultural contribution of traditional artisans in preserving heritage and cultural identity. Its founders, who are this article's authors, came in contact with weavers from Ilocos and Ifugao provinces, north of Luzon, woodcarvers from Ifugao and Paete, Laguna, potters from Ilocos, and blacksmiths from Ifugao and Lanao del Sur during the course of exhibition-related research in the early 2000s. The close interaction with local artisans forged relationships that saw beyond the demands of exhibition-

making, and fuelled a vision to uplift the lot of artisans and their products. Presently, MANLILIKHA's activities revolve around the promotion of crafts traditions through exhibitions, and the preservation of cultural heritage through crafts collections care. Over the past few years, it has involved itself in collections management efforts related to the museum collection of the Asian Center.

The Asian Center, a graduate school under the University of the Philippines, was first established as the Institute of Asian Studies mandated to "conduct research for the promotion and advancement of studies on Asia" (Asian Center, University of the Philippines, 2008). By virtue of Republic Act 5334, the Institute evolved into the Asian Center in 1968, and was later absorbed by the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, until finally reverting to its original status through a Board of Regents decision. In the 1970s, the Center acquired and accessioned ethnographic materials from different Philippine provinces. Such objects included basketry, woodwork, metalcraft, pottery, and textiles. Over the years, and with the Center undergoing several leadership turnovers, the ethnographic collection gradually receded in the Center's list of priorities.

When the authors first visited the collection in 2004 through a museum loan made for an exhibition at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the objects were in a state that left much to be desired. Hence, through the crafts collection care MANLILIKHA promotes and pursues, the authors, through MANLILIKHA, proposed and volunteered to take steps towards reviving the collection's integrity. However, as the work to be done looms large, MANLILIKHA saw the need to create a fund that would be dedicated to preserving and promoting the collection.

### **The *Taka* Project is Born**

MANLILIKHA decided that an exhibition fundraising project would be a viable means by which to build the fund. The concept revolves around the production of an exhibition that brings in the cooperation of individuals from different fields. As the exhibition required the production of art pieces of considerable craftsmanship, most of the participants were practicing artists.

The exhibition project could not have been better timed. The University of the Philippines (UP) was celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> foundation year in 2008 and MANLILIKHA worked around the occasion to develop the exhibition-fundraiser concept. As such, 100 KATAO 100 TAKA was born. The exhibition was to involve 100 individuals who would create 100 art pieces, hence 100 KATAO (100 people), 100 TAKA (100 papier-mâché).

Muñoz, describing the project in the exhibition catalogue, notes the aspect of ‘community’ that the project builds on and relates this to the centenary celebration of the University of the Philippines, within which period the exhibition opened;

The project is not just a celebration of the centenary of the University as an institution but also of the ideals that make UP a community. The event’s participants are mainly composed of artists, designers, members of academe, professionals and public servants, individuals and groups/collectives from various associations and backgrounds. The composition of participants stretches beyond UP’s alumnae in recognition of the ideals of community UP has been known for, that is, one that is not exclusive but more inclusive. And what better mode of engagement could there be than through the use of a community craft – the taka of Laguna. (Muñoz, MANLILIKHA Artisans’ Support Network, 2008, p. 10)

The use of the taka (papier-mâché) as part of a contemporary art work is not a novelty, insofar as Philippine contemporary art is concerned. Worth citing is Imelda Cajipe-Endaya’s acrylic work on mixed media and papier-mâché titled *Musmos* (1990), as well as Ikoy Ricio’s installation *In Five New Flavors* (2002), that took the traditional papier-mâché form of a horse and painted it in the pastel shades of ice cream flavors. In both works by these Filipino artists, the engagement with the taka was deliberate. Cajipe-Endaya traces her roots to Paete in Laguna province which is widely known for the craft. *Musmos* then becomes a Paete native’s direct intervention that sought to incorporate her own community’s craft into a piece of contemporary artwork. Ricio, on the other hand, taps on the taka’s commercial demand: it is a common sight to find multiple taka pieces on Paete streets, awaiting delivery to fill orders. And so, his installation shows a cavalry of taka horses laid out in a room.

The 100 KATAO 100 TAKA project clearly intends to strike an engagement between a traditional craft and contemporary art practice, melding the fine arts with folk art. However, the difference between the project and the two aforementioned works is that in the 100 KATAO 100 TAKA, the participants were given the medium to embellish, which rules out a deliberate preference for the form. Their negotiation somehow becomes doubly challenging as the choice of the material is not theirs, but the organizers’ of the project. They were, nonetheless, free to render and treat the taka as they deemed fit, according to the dictates of their personal aesthetics. The result was an exuberance of hybrids, where no two works were alike and no single classification was enough to categorize the finished works (Reimschneider and Grosenick, 2001, p. 86). Although this paper will later discuss the types of

hybrid art forms based on Jerrold Levinson's article and attempt to group a few pieces under hybrid categories, it would be obvious that no two works were physically similar.

But to begin with, all the participants received was a plain taka – either in the shape of a horse or a country maiden, both traditional forms – that made its way to them from the small town of Paete.

### **Paete and the Taka**

Paete, a town 112 kilometers from Manila, is surrounded by Laguna de Bay and four mountains, namely: Makiling, Malepunyos, San Cristobal and Banahaw. Its total land area is 3,675 hectares, 25% of which is composed of farmland and 11% residences. Its name derives from the local term for chisel, 'paet', a wood carving tool much in use by its townsfolk engaged in carpentry and woodcarving (Fajardo, 2005, p. 18-19).

Fajardo's study cites that in 1577, Franciscan friars came to the Philippines and in 1580, evangelized the residents of Paete. The local woodcarvers were then tapped to build and embellish the churches. According to chronicles, the Spanish priests were amazed to discover excellent woodcarvers in Paete. The natives knew how to carve, build homes and furniture. Among the products that the Paete carvers created that found their way to churches and affluent homes in Europe and the Americas were communion kneelers, church columns, niches, pews, tables and cabinets.

While it was common practice for an evangelized town to take the name of a Catholic saint, Paete's pre-hispanic name was retained. Scholars infer that perhaps this was to support and encourage the town's woodcarving tradition which served church construction projects.

Taka or papier-mâché is Paete's secondary craft. Its production involves the use of a wooden mould, called 'takaan'. The takaan demands the skill of a woodcarver to fabricate. As a mould, up to 14 layers of newspaper are wrapped around the mould that takes the shape of various traditional or non-traditional forms. Among the traditional forms are horses, country maidens, and farm animals. The takaan is used over and over again to produce multiple copies of the same form. Usually, a taka artisan owns several takaan pieces, which he or she may have inherited from relatives or have reproduced from older moulds as the latter suffer wear and tear from constant use. When a takaan has become too eroded from use, the taka maker solicits the services of a woodcarver to fabricate a new mould.

The taka basically serves the purpose of a toy or décor. Its presence at bazaars outside churches during fiestas continues to enchant children and tourists attracted by its vibrant colors and designs. However this sight is limited to the lakeshore towns around Laguna de Bay, where even non-Paete residents take on the production and sale of the craft. Taka forms have become more and more diverse over the years as dictated by the export market. They have also become seasonal. Rabbits during Easter, reindeers and Santa Clauses of varying postures – on a swing, on a hang glider, as a paratrooper, rappelling down a vine, etc. – months prior the Christmas season. Stage and production designers for television networks and theatre companies likewise seek taka makers to provide stage and set props. Other uses of the taka in Paete would be for Holy Week effigies that would represent the traitor apostle Judas. This would be hung in a public place during Good Friday, stoned by boys on Black Saturday, and dragged and burned (Fajardo, 2005, p. 95).

The beginnings of the taka remain uncertain. Fajardo notes that speculation points to the Mexican piñata, which may have been brought on board the Manila-Acapulco galleons, and reproduced in Paete. When asked about its origins, the taka artisan will simply say that it has been there from the earliest times. Or he or she would name the person from whom the process of fabricating was learned.

Despite its origins being largely undocumented and unknown, the process of making the taka is common knowledge. A wooden mould is wrapped with paper dampened by starch glue. After the necessary layers have been applied to the wooden mould, the figure is left in the sun to dry. During rainy months, a dryer is constructed from a steel drum placed on a stove. The paper-wrapped mould is then placed in the dryer and taken out when dry. Along the figure's mid-section, a groove has formed from previous incisions, along which a sharp knife is passed to cut the hardened layer open. The paper is peeled off the mould. With a few layers of paper dipped in the same starch glue, the cracks on the peeled off paper are joined. After the joineries have dried, the hollow figure is passed to the painter.

Taka makers have been so accustomed to such crafts-making that they have likewise determined how best to please their markets, whether local or international. For instance, while taka for local markets retains the newspaper print on the pre-painted piece, those for the export market are covered with a single layer of brown craft paper, to give the final pre-painted form a clean, flat finish.

For the 100 KATAO 100 TAKA project, the participants were handed taka with a plain craft paper covered finish, providing a clean pre-primed look.

## **Project Parameters**

Participants had the option to choose between two traditional taka forms – a country maiden or a horse. After at least one month, the plain takas were retrieved.

Parameters set were simple and straightforward: (1) the taka piece must retain 50% of the original silhouette of the taka; (2) the taka piece must retain the taka's original function as a toy or décor; (3) the submitted piece must highlight and promote the craft tradition; and (4), the submitted work must possess not only craftsmanship, but a recognizable effort to raise the craft to new heights. The last parameter intended to push forward the idea that the taka, as well as other crafts traditions, inherently possesses possibilities that have yet to be explored and that the current treatment of the taka is far from being exhausted. It is an exercise on stretching the imagination, first of the participant, to eventually inspire the local taka artisan.

## **The Craft/Art Projects, Hybrid Artworks**

The works produced by the participants were expectedly a motley and multitude of forms and themes, personal concerns, advocacies, and creative processes. Works touched on subjects related to culture, heritage, identity, politics, history, environment, homage, among others. Most interesting is how contemporary engagement was carried out with the use of the taka, uniformly ubiquitous in its town of origin, and yet metamorphosing into near surrealist versions. The taka piece itself became a vessel of ideas as the form evoked or complemented the theme of the work. Other pieces embodied a fusion of aesthetics and form.

The taka as a form in itself was treated as an icon representing aspects of Philippine cultural heritage such as cultural identity, indigenous knowledge and its tenacity/persistence in facing the challenges of modern times. As form follows function, other works further stretched the idea of the taka as a toy, an ornament, and a souvenir item focusing on socio-political concerns. Others probed into the physical and even metaphysical aspects of the craft's form as a point of departure.

The taka's shape became the point of discourse for other works. The horse taka was linked with themes on urban planning, technology, environment, memory and some were manipulated to depict mythical figures and icons. The country maiden taka evoked themes such as culture, fashion and identity, environment, womanhood and the ideals of a Filipina.

As to the methods and materials employed, superimposed, and combined with the folk craft, the range stretches over a wide spectrum: painting

on oil, acrylic, poster paint; decoupage of old maps, photo prints, magazine cut-outs, appliqué work with artificial flowers, sequins, fabrics, iron screws, candle wax, artificial fur, human hair, bamboo strips, wood, decorative pebbles, rice grains, candy wrappers; collage using newspaper clippings, photo paper, film negatives; drawing in ink and pencil, resin and plaster sculpture.

The works submitted sought to engage the fine arts with folk craft. Participants, who were mostly practicing contemporary artists, not only applied fine arts techniques but also contemporary issues and concerns as they would in their current works and art projects. As such, the works may well be coined craft/artworks, as a result of marrying these two spheres or fields of creative production, from which emerged craft/art projects.

Interestingly, in a project such as this, a feature that stands out is the process of “creation via appropriation and a related concept known as “transcreation” (Fernandez, 2010, pp. 86-88). Both involve cultural borrowing, that is, “taking from a culture that is not one’s own – of intellectual property, cultural expression or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge” (Ziff and Rao, 1997, p. 1). Fernandez provides an insight on the borrower’s intentions as he defines appropriation as “using other people’s properties, ...without the permission of the owners, and with no intention of returning whatever has been taken” (Fernandez, 2010, p. 84). For this, he maintains that appropriation is not the same as the act of borrowing, as the latter involves “the exchange of tangible items..and the best exchange that appropriators can offer to their sources is to depict faithfully the culture they appropriate.” (Fernandez, 2010, p. 84). He adds that borrowing becomes acceptable if the expectations of fair exchange are met.

Fernandez links the idea of appropriation and borrowing to the concept of “transcreation,” which he posits, is a re-formation, a re-working, and re-molding. If one goes by the etymology of this word, one is given to understand that there is indeed a “new” or “different” creation produced, as *trans* in Latin means “across, over, on the other side of” (Scanlon & Scanlon, 1976, p. 320). So a transcreation would then come to mean a creation emerging from the other side of a previous point of departure, having a starting point or origin as a reference. This elucidation, however, is missing in Fernandez’s work but the authors of this piece deemed it necessary to offer a short etymological treatment of the newly-coined word. Thus, transcreated forms will not be the original sources and the transcreated work is imbued with new life and new dimension (Fernandez, 2010, p. 88). This is much like the process that the Paete taka went through in this project. The taka was appropriated by the artists as a base of their work, and rendered in a variety of techniques and interventions.

Photo 1. *Fashion Victim*

Photo 2. Oliviera and Cobangbang



Photo 3. Muñoz



In both definitions of appropriation, it is clear that the cultural property concerned is the Paete taka, a traditional craft identified with the said lakeshore town in Laguna province. The artists' act of borrowing this cultural artifact is tacit. However, if we highlight Fernandez's emphasis on the difference between appropriation and the act of borrowing and further underscore the idea of "fair exchange", then we may say that only a few of the submitted works can be attributed with this quality. Fair exchange implies a "faithful depiction" of culture or a "correct reenactment" (in this case a correct representation) of the essential features of the borrowed culture. As the variety of art projects submitted would show, not all of the works involve a faithful depiction of the original culture. This happens when the new subject matter or the emerging idea behind the new work is alien to the culture of Paete. Take for example Carlos Celdran's *Fashion Victim – Mura Kami*, which bears prints mimicking the Louis Vuitton insignia or the combined works by Jayson Oliviera and Lena Cobangbang which had the lady taka undressed and inserted between the legs of the horse taka. It is obvious that these works made no other reference to local Paete culture apart from the use of the traditional craft. The environs of Paete continue to be spared from high-end consumerism and the maiden taka continues to be rendered fully clothed. On the other hand, Michael Muñoz's openwork taka bearing the traditional motif of the horse, and some versions of the maiden figure such as the ones by Jess Abrera, Brenda Fajardo and Dots Salvacion utilizing the main lines and dress of the traditional maiden taka can be well attributed with the fair exchange quality.

Over and above the faithful depiction of the original culture, the authors have attempted to organize into a typology the creative processes observed to have been at play in the submitted works. All 100 works cannot be cited, and yet the classification covers the variety of works received by the project organizers.

**Type**  
Embellishment

**Work description**

Flat embellishment; candy wrappers on taka made up one layer of flattened tin foil on the taka surface. *Kin no uma, hashi* by Matthew C.M. Santamaria

Protuding embellishment; copper wires with bullet shells as endings jut out from Peter de Guzman's work.

Other materials used to embellish and form layers were cloth, fur, human hair, and film strips.

Mutilation and attachment

A portion of the taka figure was sawed off, e.g. leg of taka horse, and reworked in a new shape as in *Yoka* by Mac Valdezco or retaining the same shape but introducing a different material as in Plet Bolipata's *Inang Kalikasan* which had the entire torso of the maiden's figure chopped off and replaced with welded iron.

Transformative embellishment

The artist uses embellishment, flat or with protrusions, and re-works the taka into a subject which veers away from its original context of a horse or a country maiden. National Artist Abdulmari Imao transforms the taka horse into the *Sarimanok Horse*, while Aba Lluch Dalena metamorphoses the country maiden into *Cat Taka Takang Dalaga* (literally translates into "bewildering lady").

Descriptive painting and drawing

This type uses the taka as a substrate for paint or pencil. Several examples fall under this type which will also be mentioned later. For this section, the best example by far would be Dots Salvacion's *Dalagang Bukid*.

### Collage and decoupage

Layers of paper or other materials such as wood, bamboo, photo print, rice grains, and pebbles, among others are glued on the taka's surface. One fine example is Jess Abrera's *Global Binibini*.

### Scripted surface

Text of a poem, a prayer, or musing is scribbled on the surface by hand such as Relly Bautista's calligraphy of the Siddham script, Jessica Zafra's *Jessica Zebra*, and Raul Funilas' *Sentauro*.

### Assemblage

Uses the space inside and around the taka as a site for developing the work. Keiye Miranda Tuason's *Girl With A Book* encases the taka to echo the artist's preoccupation with personal space. Claro Ramirez's *Teka* explores the taka's hollowness to house toy soldiers which rattle when the taka is picked up.

### Openwork

Interestingly, as wood is worked by creating incisions, the taka was likewise rendered in the same technique. Michael Muñoz traced the traditional designs on the horse with a carving tool while Vic Balanon cut open the back of the taka horse in right-angled patterns resembling domino chips.

These craft/art projects, taken individually or as a whole, can be noted to possess hybridity in its various forms. Hybridity, in art forms, "could mean the blurring of traditional distinct boundaries between artistic media such as painting, sculpture, film, performance, architecture, and dance..and also cross-breeding art-making with other disciplines such as natural and physical science, industry, technology, literature, popular, culture, or philosophy" (Walker Art Center, 2010).

This cross-breeding of art-making and other disciplines is evident in the taka pieces which, while painted with either acrylic or poster paint, display text from a poem or essay as in Raul Funilas' taka horse *Sentauro* or Jessica Zafra's

*Jessica Zebra*. In this case, it is art-making that cross-breeds not only with folk art, but also with literature. Sculptor-archaeologist Noel El Farol's taka horse titled *Migration* is pasted with land maps and its four hooves fastened with wheel casters. His craft/artwork here is a product of an archaeologist's outlook, accustomed to geographical data, travel and movement.

Photo 4. *Sentauro*



Photo 5. *Jessica Zebra*



Photo 6. *Migration*



Jerrold Levinson defines hybrid art forms as “art forms arising from the actual combination or interpenetration of earlier art forms” (Levinson, 1984, p. 6). His definition highlights the distinct ‘historical conditions’ that mark one form from the other, and stresses the relevance of the historical development of an art form in understanding works in the form as it currently exists. Hence, he says that “a hybrid art form is an art form with a ‘past’” (Levinson, 1984, p. 8).

Given his definition, hybridity in the taka craft/artworks could be noted as the techniques variously applied in each work draw from methods that belong to different historical periods. Although the taka's origin is undated, it unarguably belongs to some period in the past. The taka upon being combined with some art technique – painting or sculpture, each emerging from a distinct period of artistic development, counts as a hybrid work, if we are to take Levinson's definition of a hybrid as an art form with a past.

Interesting in Levinson's article is the classification of hybrid art forms he provides. According to him, there are three kinds of hybrids: *juxtaposition* (or addition), *synthesis* (or fusion), and *transformation* (or alteration).

Photo 7. *Dalagang Bukid*



Photo 8. *The Dalagang Bukid*



Juxtaposition is characterized by objects or products of two (or more) arts simply joined together and presented as one larger, more complex unit (Levinson, 1984, p. 8). Components retain their identities as in their pure manifestation even after being combined with another object or product, although their distinct shape and quality would be without context in the absence of the other, Levinson further explains. Samples he cited were that of a song accompanied by guitar, or mime accompanied by flute. Within the context of the taka project, among the more successful juxtapositions would be Dots Salvacion's *Dalagang Bukid*, where the classic Amorsolo-like maiden was rendered in oil on the same country maiden taka; Brenda Fajardo's similarly titled work *The Dalagang Bukid*, painted with acrylic and stamped with Fajardo's characteristic gold leafing technique that has come to be known as a genre all her own. In these two works, an art genre was added to the plain taka, using it as a medium as though it were a canvas. The two individual components are distinguishable – the taka and the art genre – and yet united in the art project.

Photo 9. Cordero



Photo 10. Valencia



Louie Cordero's and Ferdz Valencia's are other finer examples of juxtaposition where pop art imagery was applied to the taka horse in materials

themselves characteristic of pop art production – spray paint, permanent markers and ink. The artists’ imageries hark to graffiti and skateboard graphics – both evidently 20<sup>th</sup> century pop art genre. This, added to the folk craft, results in a juxtapositional hybrid.

Vic Balanon’s version presents another juxtapositional hybrid. His taka horse is painted a brown hue and cut open in rectangular domino-like chips to reveal the hollow interior that he coats in white. Aside from his exploration of the taka’s inherent nature as an empty shell, Balanon’s statement reveals the work’s conceptual attributes as he writes:

..by merely decorating, we are just plainly ‘scratching the surface’ so to speak; playing along with its artificiality. By refusing to play along this field, we are led into diverging discourses and challenges, creating more problems and artifices. We are faced with questions about the taka’s materiality, its authenticity. How was it produced? And if it is just a copy, where is the original? How does it look like?  
(Balanon, 2008, p. 27)

By literally breaking the surface of the taka, I seek not to reach an answer but to create an opening that would welcome such queries about the taka. To create tension between the object and how we perceive it, between the surface and what’s underneath, between the illusion and the emptiness of such an illusion.

Photo 11. *Teka*



Similarly, Claro Ramirez’s *Teka* ruminates on the taka’s hollowness and re-works the craft by building on three references: taka as toy, as a potential vessel of concealment, and the classic literary metaphor of the Trojan Horse. His taka horse is painted a bright red, striking a parallel rendition to the traditional taka version being painted a vibrant crimson to attract children. He then cuts a small opening on it and inserts plastic toy soldiers which rattle as

one shakes the horse. This juxtapositional hybrid offers a multiple juxtaposition as the taka as folk craft has been successfully combined with several disciplines neatly coming together and yet still emerging identifiably one beside the other.

Hybrids marked by synthesis or fusion bring together the objects or products of two (or more) arts in such a way that the individual components to some extent lose their original identities and are present in the hybrid in a form significantly different from that assumed in the pure state (Levinson, 1984, p. 9). He adds that “when A and B are fused, each is modified by the other so that the result neither is nor contains anything that can be comfortably recognized as an A or a B in the original sense” (Levinson, 1984, p. 9). The best example, by far, would be Keiye Miranda-Tuazon’s *Girl With a Book* (2008). Miranda-Tuazon chose a maiden taka holding a book, wrapped this in blue foil and encased it in a lighted aluminum box, to achieve the illusion of a figure floating underwater. The organizers’ favorite, this work cleverly and effectively re-creates the artist’s preoccupation with underwater scenes that pervades much of her works. In her statement published in the 100 KATA 100 TAKA exhibition catalogue, Miranda-Tuazon links this piece with her personal aesthetics:

...usually underwater images of people and objects, familiar or unfamiliar which float, weave through or swim around – constitute the setting of my work. It deals with personal space, time, memory, thoughts and experiences. My work on taka is similar to my previous underwater painting with a girl holding a book. The taka was wrapped with a metallic blue paper and encased in a hazy glass box to signify the condition of change which gives an illusion of a floating figure...entering into a movement of thought. It has a light underneath the image to imply her existence that defines her identity. (Miranda-Tuazon, 2008, p. 215)

Neither the taka nor the apparent form of a lightbox is identifiable as both have been seamlessly and even unrecognizably melded. One cannot easily isolate the taka from the lighted box, for it has come together into a unity that leaves behind the previous identities of the two components. On another note, the work stands out as an example of an art project that incorporates the craft into the artist’s brand of art-making, unlike the majority that accommodated personal art-making processes into taka. The taka enters into Miranda-Tuazon’s sphere of art-making, and loses itself there; whereas other works negotiate with the taka, but retain the taka’s identity, as if keeping a respectful distance from the folk craft.

For his taka submission, Leslie de Chavez shaded his taka horse with graphite. The finished work appears transformed into a stone sculpture, which appears to possess considerable weight. This classifies de Chavez’s work under

synthesis. Drawing, an art technique and genre in itself, is invested with the power to copy reality, as well as create illusion – or at least the illusion that what one beholds is real. De Chavez’s horse acquires the quality of a stone finish by the smooth and even treatment of the taka’s surface. As such, the work is considered a fusion as its lightness as papier-mâché and the drawing technique applied to it melded so seamlessly that it invited a completely new perception from the viewer. The piece ceased to be a taka or a drawing, but was re-born into shaped stone.

Photo 12. De Chavez



The third variety of the hybrid art form Levinson terms transformational is a hybrid of A with B, which is not halfway between A and B but is “A transformed in a B-ish direction” (Levinson, 1984, p. 10). He cites as an example kinetic sculpture, which can be seen as an ordinary sculpture and yet modified in the direction of dance. Furthermore, Levinson explains that the fusion is not an equal fusion but rather “an incorporation of some of the special or distinctive characteristics of dance into what remains recognizably sculpture, though in an extended sense” (Levinson, 1984, p. 10).

Photo 13. *Sarimanok Horse*



Among the craft/artworks submitted, notable would be the piece by Abdulmari Asia Imao. Abdulmari transforms the taka horse into a figure reminiscent of the *sarimanok*, a mythical bird prominent in Maranao folklore. *Sarimanok Horse* is a transformational hybrid as the taka horse (A) has been reworked to become a sarimanok (B). The horse, although retaining its four legs, had grown wings and its hooves have been replaced by a bird's claws. Further, its body was painted over with the characteristic motifs of Maranao aesthetics. Significantly, the artist (named Philippine National Artist for Sculpture in 2006) is credited for stylizing and popularizing the sarimanok icon. Himself a Tausug by ethnolinguistic affiliation, Imao's recasting of the taka horse into the sarimanok is further proof of his potent art-making verve.

Photo 14. *Global Binibini*



As a successful transformational hybrid example, Jess Abrera's *Global Binibini* (Global Maiden) takes the country maiden taka and encrusts it with layers of silhouettes made from magazine clippings, acrylic paint, and pandan fiber, attached to a sinamay covered tin can. As an editorial cartoonist, Abrera metamorphoses his taka into a social commentary on Filipina womanhood that takes up present day global and local issues. He explains that:

The outer shell of the Binibini shows the effects of globalization on women. With globalization came a new cultural invasion mainly through the new technology and the contract-worker phenomenon. Culture is becoming homogenized, and it has narrowed down our concept of beauty to the Western standard. This homogenized ideal comes with the consumer products that are marketed to us in order to conform to this mold. Cosmetics, grooming and hygiene products, fragrances, fashion, accessories, even aesthetic surgery and body enhancement – it is actually a chop-chop “beauty industry” that presents the woman not as a whole person but only as body parts. (Abrera, 2008, p. 15)

The Binibini within represents our cultural identity that is a result of our own particular geography, history, and values. This recognizably Filipino image indicates our nationalist struggle to maintain our own identity and strengthen our own cultural roots. Our values, among them family and faith, our language, our traditions and practices are integral to who we are.

That said, Global Binibini is an editorial cartoon in 3-D.

### **Conclusion**

The explosion and exuberance of creativity emerging from this project was examined from a variety of angles. Among them is the idea of cultural appropriation as evidenced by the act of borrowing the cultural artifact that is the taka. Under this concept, the presence and absence of fair exchange between the borrower and the source culture was discussed. It was observed how fair exchange was not always a guiding principle insofar as art-making was concerned. Lastly the new creations, or appropriately transcreations were classified into a typology of creative processes. These creative processes attributed to Filipino artists who participated in this exhibition project were seen to have given rise to works characterized by hybridity. Such hybrid works can only be attributed to the fact that the participating artists have come from a wide gamut of artistic backgrounds, philosophical orientations, and varied exposures to diverse disciplines.

The 100 KATAO 100 TAKA exhibition project fulfilled its goals. The proceeds gathered served to build the museum collection's initial heritage preservation fund. Its objective to meld the traditional craft of Paete with contemporary visual arts accomplished gains which validated MANLILIKHA's mission to promote traditional crafts-making, and vision to see an active interaction between folk and fine arts. It likewise proves the point that while it is commonly held that craft and art are two different spheres, one can derive inspiration from the other. Engagements such as this one promise to benefit Philippine traditional crafts at present as they brings local traditions up front to be widely appreciated by the public. They also infuse innovative ideas on how to treat the craft for traditional local artisans to make the tradition relevant to contemporary times and responsive to present needs. Upon release of the exhibition catalogue, copies were given to Paete taka artisans to serve as guide and help expand the frontiers of their own taka making.

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