

Human Rights and Exhibit Space

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Time: 80 minutes

Overview:

The venue where art is displayed and how it is curated impacts how we interpret it as a historical document. The location of an artwork reflects how well it upholds academic tradition or rejects that format. Locale determines the amount of bureaucratic control an artist faces and may determine the economic prospects of their work. Therefore, artworks range from literal to symbolic according to the artists' ability to create their vision without fear of censorship.

Objectives:

- Understand the similarities and differences between works of art.
- Understand the relationship of art history to other histories.
- Identify historical events that have contributed to the evolution of the arts.
- Develop observational abilities in order to critique visual art.
- Justify personal and non-personal critiques of art.
- Gain an overall academic awareness through the study of the fine arts.

Outcomes:

- Analyze the relationship between visual art and human rights.
- Connect human rights to larger social and cultural issues and movements.
- Understand how artists critique and challenge history and cultural conventions.
- Analyze the impact that artists have on improving the lives of those around them and society at large.

Background Information:

Human rights themes in Philippine visual art began in the late 19th century and extend into the present era. Initially, artwork reflected abuses enacted by colonial or foreign powers that were in direct control of the government and military, or were controlling economic and political affairs from afar. Colonialism is deeply embedded in the history and identity of the Philippines and is a controversial topic because many Filipinos want to divorce themselves from this colonial past, while others see the Western world as a positive influence on their culture. Artists have played a major role in illuminating, challenging, and critiquing foreign and domestic issues that impact the Philippines. Artists provide a voice for the voiceless and have the ability to reach the masses through their vision. Artists have utilized direct messages during more tolerant eras, or embedded them allegorically when imagery was more strictly controlled. Art inform our understanding of Philippine aesthetics as a set of values that are changing and growing as socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-religious structures continue to influence artists.

The National Art Gallery in Manila (NAGM) has a large collection of modern and contemporary art. The building has imposing classical architecture designed by an American architect working for the Bureau of Public Works as part of Burnham's plan for the development of Manila. Inaugurated in 1926, the building served the dual purpose of housing the Senate and House of Representatives, and the National Library. In 1996, the Senate moved and renovation began to transform it into the National Art Gallery in 2003. The history of the building is reflected in the collection, with numerous galleries dedicated to portraits of wealthy and influential Filipinos, the history of the Philippines painted by national artists, as well as controversial pieces challenging colonialism, corruption, and abuse of the people. Their collection of works dates from the 18th to the 21st centuries, is the first permanent collection of its size (over 1,000 artworks), and has been curated to display a broad range of style and content in order to represent the best the Philippines has to offer to visitors.

Human rights are also addressed on the streets of Manila. Street art has the potential to reach a diverse audience who come in contact with it daily and do not have to pay a fee to view it. Street art is liberating for artists as well who create work free from censorship, even if only for a short period of time. Street art runs the risk of being removed or painted over, but through the immediacy of social media, the images are often broadcast before they are removed. While there are few monetary gains, street artists enjoy the thrill of the process and satisfaction of reaching a mass audience. Many people consider graffiti to be defacement and vandalism, but it is slowly becoming a celebrated art form. Manila's street art reflects creativity, but are often charged with social and political commentaries that make them controversial.

Visual Art Slides:

Juan Luna, *Spoliarium*, 1884, Oil on canvas, NAGM, Manila (Figure 1A)

- Luna (b. 1857) was a Filipino painter, sculptor and political activist in the Philippine Revolution. He was one of the first recognized national artists.
- Luna was educated in the Philippines and in Madrid; *Spoliarium* was made as an entry to the Exposicion de Bellas Artes in Madrid and won him a gold medal.
- It is set in a spoliarium, where slain gladiators are stripped of their armor before being disposed of. In the center, their bodies are being dragged like dead animals.
- To the right, a woman and old man pick through the bodies looking for their loved ones.
- To the left, their owners and trainers are waiting to reclaim their armor and weaponry. To the far left, a crowd has gathered seeking one last glimpse of the fallen heroes.
- The gladiators are a metaphor for dissatisfaction with Spanish rule; the bodies of the gladiators represent revolutionaries, bloodied from battle. The old man and weeping woman represent citizens mourning the loss of their comrades. The owners represent the Spanish, who profit off the backs of Filipinos and are unconcerned about the loss of life.

Dominador Castaneda, *Doomed Family*, 1945, Oil on board, NAGM, Manila (Figure 2A)

- Castaneda (b.1904) is a Filipino artist who studied at the University of the Philippines and Art Institute of Chicago. He also travelled to Mexico where he stayed for several years.
- He was a historian who published one of the first art history books about Philippine art.

- He was known for landscapes and depictions of the Philippine people.
- *Doomed Family* depicts citizens tortured by the Japanese army. A mother lies on the floor in a pool of blood. Her breast is exposed through a ripped shirt alluding to her rape.
- Her husband is bound; his back shows signs of being tortured. A child sits before him bound and screaming as she looks out towards their torturers. They are bathed in warm light presenting them as innocents or martyrs subjected to unrestrained cruelty.

Gene Cabrera, *Tragic Lesson (Fall of Bataan)*, 1957, Oil on canvas, NAGM, Manila (Figure 3A)

- Cabrera (b. 1934) is a Filipino artist, illustrator, cartoonist, and photographer.
- *Tragic Lesson* depicts the 25,000 Filipino and 2,000 American WWII soldiers marched for days (Bataan Death March) with no food or water, beaten, shot, and beheaded by Japanese troops they surrendered to.
- The skeletal figures are set against a color scheme resembling camouflage.
- The composition is jarring, because even as they are devoid of life, the figures are very expressive. Some stare ahead with empty sockets seeking compassion, while others wail or direct their hollow sockets to the ground pleading for mercy.

Guillermo Tolentino, *Bonifacio Monument*, 1929 – 1933, Bronze and granite, Metro Manila (Figure 4A)

- National Artist Tolentino (b. 1890) created many famous sculptures during his career.
- This monument commemorates Andres Bonifacio, a Philippine national hero who founded the Kataastaasang Kagalanggalangang Katipunan (the KKK or the Katipunan), established to organize Filipinos in an armed revolt against Spanish colonial rule in the 1890s.
- The monument is a reminder of the 1896 Revolution, a pledge to future generations that independence would be restored, and embodies the hope for independent nationhood.
- Emilio Jacinto is behind Bonifacio, as are the priests Mariano Gómez, José Apolonio Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora. Soldiers, woman, and children are depicted as well.

Pilipinas Street Plan Mural, Manila (Figure 5A)

- Pilipinas Street Plan (PSP) is a Philippine art collective dedicated to showcasing and celebrating street art from graffiti, posters, stickers, objects, and live art events.
- Founded in 2006, it embraces creative individuals from various disciplines, and shares knowledge with the public about street art through exhibitions, lectures, and publications.
- This mural depicts indigenous peoples in black and pink) being threatened by modern society, depicted by bright, cartoon-like figures threatening to overpower them, disrupt their traditional ways of life, and trample on their human rights.

Gerilya Mural, Manila (Figure 6A)

- Gerilya is a Philippine art collective formed in 2008. Its three original members were educated at the University of the Philippines.

- Gerilya is involved in various activities such as comics, street art, graffiti animation, fine art exhibitions, and illustration commissions.
- Their work is inspired by Philippine culture and history, exploring socio-political issues and national identity. They also draw influence from popular and mass culture.
- This mural depicts Bonifacio and members of the Katipunan against a bright orange background symbolizing revolution and hope for a better, independent future for citizens.

Technological University of the Philippines mural, 2015, Manila (Figure 7A)

- This is one of fifty-five murals over several city blocks that are very diverse in style, message, and delivery. They were created to commemorate the school's 113th anniversary and showcase award-winning pieces from national competitions their fine arts students won.
- They address human rights violations directly and metaphorically. Fragmentation is present in many of the artworks, suggesting the disjointed mind or body of the figure.
- Many portray only a head, which could represent knowledge, creativity, or the subject losing their mind by becoming aware of how harsh the world can be at times.

Cultural Comparison Slides:

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, “Untitled” (Portrait of Ross in L.A.), 1991, Multicolored candies, individually wrapped in cellophane, Ideal weight 175 lb., AIC, Chicago (Figure 8A)

- Gonzalez-Torres (b. 1957) is a Cuban artist with degrees from the Pratt Institute, International Center of Photography, and New York University.
- From 1987 to 1991 he was part of a New York art collective whose members worked to initiate community education and activism.
- *Untitled* is an allegorical representation of his partner, Ross, who died of an AIDS-related illness in 1991. 175 pounds was Ross's ideal weight.
- Viewers are encouraged to take and consume a piece of candy from the 175-pound pile.
- The diminishing pile symbolizes his weight loss and suffering prior to death; the pile is continuously replenished metaphorically granting Ross perpetual life.

Kiki Smith, *Blood Pool*, 1992, Wax, gauze, and pigment, AIC, Chicago (Figure 9A)

- Smith (b. 1954) is an American artist who creates life-size figures that challenge human representation by treating the body as a site of biological, genetic, social and political battle.
- Main themes in her work are life, death, reconstruction, and loss.
- *Blood Pool* evokes the texture and color of flesh. The figure becomes an emblem engaging viewers in issues of health and disease, heroization and victimization.
- She asks the viewer to consider bodily control; our own and the control others exert on us as we die, suggesting that relinquishing this control may be as liberating as it is devastating.

Bruce Nauman, *Human Nature/Life Death*, 1983, Neon tubing with clear glass tubing suspension frames, AIC, Chicago (Figure 10A)

- Nauman (B. 1941) is an American studio and performance artist who examines the playfulness and deceptiveness of language.
- His neon pieces are bright and festive, using common yet momentous words to communicate juxtapositions of thought and action.
- The flashing light offers meaning that disappears and reappears randomly.
- They also refer to neon signs we see often in modern society, yet rarely stop to examine.
- *Human Nature/Life Death* was created for a public sculpture exhibition in Chicago, and was originally installed at the subway entrance on State and Madison streets.

Marcos Raya, *Prevent World War III Mural*, Chicago, 1980/2010 (Figure 11A)

- Raya (b. 1948) is a Mexican-American artist working in the Mexican muralist tradition.
- *Prevent World War III* is a public art piece whose message about the threat of nuclear, environmental, and cultural annihilation has remained relevant today.
- After the election of Reagan in 1980, socially conscious artists created the mural in an effort to rally citizens against Reagan's destructive social and foreign policies.
- It was located on a wall at 18th Street and Western Avenue and sought to revive the spirit of activist art in Chicago. It was also used as a community-organizing tool and means of addressing issues of local, national, and global concern.

Tatyana Fazlalizadeh and Columbia College student volunteers, *Stop Telling Women to Smile* mural in Chicago at 8th and Wabash, 2015 (Figure 12A)

- Fazlalizadeh (b. 1985) is an American artist, illustrator, and activist.
- Her street art project addresses gender based street harassment by placing portraits of women who have experienced harassment with captions that speak directly to offenders, outside in public spaces.
- The artworks are placed on the street to create a bold presence for women in an environment where they are made to feel uncomfortable and unsafe.
- The travelling series (began in 2012) will gradually include many cities and participants.

In Class Discussion Topics:

- What techniques do the artists use to get their message across?
- How does the medium help to convey the message of an artwork?
- What makes these artworks successful or unsuccessful?
- What works fall under our traditional understanding of what art is and what works fall under contemporary art? Why?
- How does each work of art engage with a human rights issue?

Homework Activities:

- Bring in an object from home that symbolizes a human rights issue to be used as part of a collaborative class project.
- Make a compilation of human rights images found on the Internet to share with the class during discussion.
- Look for a poem or short story that correlates with one of the artworks presented in class.

Resources:

Books:

Alice G. Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines, 1970-1990*, University of the Philippines Press, 2001.

- Documents social realism and other protest and revolutionary artists. Begins with the origins of protest art in the 19th century and pursues it to its full flourishing during the Marcos regime and variations during the Aquino administration. Projects the trajectory of art in the future as new issues emerge to engage political artists.

Flaudette May V. Datuin, *Home, Body, Memory: Filipina Artists in the Visual Arts, 19th Century to the Present*, University of the Philippines Press, 2002.

- Charts the itinerary of the history of Filipina artists in the visual arts and contains a comprehensive demonstration and discussion of how women's artworks present the female body using different media.

Wayne Baerwaldt, ed., *Memories of Overdevelopment: Philippine Diaspora in Contemporary Art*. University of California, Irvine, 1997.

- Exhibition catalogue commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Philippine drive toward democratic independence, a movement that caused thousands to flee political persecution or depart to find employment outside the country. Identifies contemporary artists whose work touches political issues like traditional materials and cultural icons.

David Brody, *Visualizing American Empire: Orientalism and Imperialism in the Philippines*, The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

- Explores the way visual imagery shaped the political and cultural landscape, drawing on sources including photographs, tattoos, the decorative arts, popular press, maps, parades, and material from world's fairs and urban planners. Argues that the way Americans visualized the Orient greatly influenced the fantasies of colonial domestication.

Lucila Hosillos, *Originality as Vengeance in Philippine Literature*, New Day Publishers, 1984.

- Concentrates on nationalist-Third World literature to help formulate its aesthetics and develop methods of studying it toward fulfillment of its humanist commitments.

Stanly Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, Random House, 1989.

- Paints a 500-year portrait of Philippine history, focusing on the U.S. imperial experience in the islands. Portrays the U.S.'s attempt to remake the Philippines "in our image" complete with American political, educational, and cultural institutions

Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. Ateneo de Manila University, 2000.

- Cultural and political history of Filipinos and the Philippines examining the period from the onset of U.S. colonialism in 1898 to the emergence of a Filipino diaspora in the 1990s. Adopting the essay form to disrupt epic conceptions of Filipino history, its clusters of historical detail and reflections that do not easily fit into a larger whole.

Articles:

Patrick Flores, *Social Realism: The Turns of a Term in the Philippines*. Afterall, Issue 34, 2013.

- Looking at the legacy of 1970s social realist painting in the Philippines, it reflects on the intersection of postcolonial discourse, historical imagination, and political art practice.

Patrick Flores, *Everyday, Elsewhere: Allegory in Philippine Art*, Contemporary Aesthetics, 2011.

- Traces the contexts of the allegorical impulse in Philippine image making and art, as it marks the self-consciousness to render time, place, and event legible. The allegorical bears the desire to belong to the world, referencing both the critique of colonialism as well as the possibility of transcending it at the very moment of revealing its ethical failure.

Jonathan Beller, *Visual Transformations in Philippine Modernity: Notes toward an Investigation of the World-Media System*, Acquiring Eyes.

- Concerned with the changes in visual art wrought by culture and technology accompanying and enabling economic development. The Philippines given its status as an American colony was subject to U.S. media yet produced its own counter-visions.

Websites:

<http://www.nationalmuseum.gov.ph>

- The National Museum is an educational, scientific and cultural institution that acquires, documents, preserves, exhibits, and fosters scholarly study and public appreciation of works

of art, specimens, and historical artifacts representative of the cultural heritage of the Filipino people and the natural history of the Philippines.

<http://ncca.gov.ph>

- The National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Philippines is the policy making body, coordinating, and grants giving agency for the preservation, development and promotion of Philippine arts and culture. The National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts funds the implementation of culture and arts programs and projects.

<http://www.gov.ph/the-order-of-national-artists/>

- A National Artist is a Filipino citizen who has been given the rank and title of National Artist in recognition of his or her significant contributions to the development of Philippine arts and letters. It recognizes excellence in Music, Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, Literature, Film and Broadcast Arts, and Architecture or Allied Arts.

<http://malacanang.gov.ph/7054-the-andres-bonifacio-monument/>

- The Presidential Museum and Library features a comprehensive essay, videos, and traces the history of the Bonifacio Monument and the legacy it has left.

<http://artradarjournal.com/2014/04/11/manila-filipino-street-art-project-part-1/>

- The Filipino Street Art Project is a trans-media project delving into the Filipino street art scene in and around Metro Manila. Talking to artists, documenting and archiving walls and artworks, the Project explores the broader meaning of street art and its universality.

<http://www.manilastandardtoday.com/mobile/2015/08/07/an-artistic-revolution-on-the-street>

- Newspaper article about the impact of street art in Manila.

<http://www.artic.edu>

- The Art Institute of Chicago collects, preserves, and interprets works of art, representing the world's diverse artistic traditions, for the inspiration and education of the public and in accordance with our profession's highest ethical standards and practices.

<https://mcachicago.org/Home>

- The MCA's mission is to bring artists and audiences together to experience and contemplate contemporary art and culture in ways that can deepen what it means to be a citizen of both Chicago and the world.

<http://www.metmuseum.org>

- The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a museum and library of art, for encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts, for the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, for advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and for furnishing popular instruction.

<http://www.moma.org>

- Founded in 1929 as an educational institution, The Museum of Modern Art is dedicated to being the foremost museum of modern art in the world. Central to MOMA's mission is the encouragement of an ever-deeper understanding and enjoyment of modern and contemporary art by the diverse local, national, and international audiences that it serves.

<http://www.guggenheim.org>

- The Guggenheim Museum is a vital cultural center, an educational institution, and the heart of an international network of museums. Founded on a collection of modern masterpieces, the Guggenheim is a growing institution devoted to the art of the 20th century and beyond.

<http://www.getty.edu/museum/>

- The J. Paul Getty Museum seeks to inspire curiosity about, and enjoyment and understanding of, the visual arts by collecting, conserving, exhibiting and interpreting works of art of outstanding quality and historical importance.

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RD-NDGmdVag>

- René B. Javellana, Associate Professor of the Fine Arts Program at Ateneo de Manila University, discuss the intersection between Philippine art and social change.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq1IDGs6l9k>

- Isang documentary project para sa Art Studies sa University of the Philippines, Diliman.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gw902x3fC3o>

- Salcedo Auctions presents the highlights of its Art Today: Contemporary Philippine Art.

<https://vimeo.com/73505909>

- Sigaw sa Pugadlawin Mural Timelapse by Gerilya

<https://vimeo.com/39254453>

- Pinoy Rangers; Pilipinas Ranger Wheatpaste Timelapse Video by Gerilya

<https://vimeo.com/31360261>

- GangPaint Session #8, Asbestos Nakamamatay by Gerilya

<https://vimeo.com/27014724>

- GangPaint Session # 4, Tungkong Langit is Dead by Gerilya

Human Rights and Exhibit Space Image Sheet (A)

Juan Luna, *Spoliarium*, 1884, Oil on canvas, NAGM, Manila (Figure 1A)



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Dominador Castaneda, *Doomed Family*, 1945, Oil on board, NAGM, Manila (Figure 2A)



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Guillermo Tolentino, *Bonifacio Monument*, 1929 – 1933, Bronze and granite, Metro Manila (Figure 4A)



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Pilipinas Street Plan Mural, Manila (Figure 5A)



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Gerilya Mural, Manila (Figure 6A)



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Technological University of the Philippines mural, 2015, Manila (Figure 7A)



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Felix Gonzalez-Torres, “Untitled” (Portrait of Ross in L.A.), 1991, Multicolored candies, individually wrapped in cellophane, Ideal weight 175 lb., AIC, Chicago (Figure 8A)



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Kiki Smith, *Blood Pool*, 1992, Wax, gauze, and pigment, AIC, Chicago (Figure 9A)



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Bruce Nauman, *Human Nature/Life Death*, 1983, Neon tubing with clear glass tubing suspension frames, AIC, Chicago (Figure 10A)



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Marcos Raya, *Prevent World War III* Mural, Chicago, 1980/2010 (Figure 11A)



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Tatyana Fazlalizadeh and Columbia College student volunteers, *Stop Telling Women to Smile* mural in Chicago at 8th and Wabash, 2015 (Figure 12A)



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