

Asian Art Museum At-a-Glance: Native Song by Santiago Bose

Native Song

Artist Santiago Bose addresses themes of colonialism and nationalism in his mixed-media works. In *Native Song*, he surrounds images of Filipino soldiers from the Philippine-American War with covers from popular Filipino musical scores. Then, he layers a hand, knife, cross, and symbols and text on the photograph, recalling Spanish colonization.

“Since the voyage of Magellan, colonizers have imposed their world view and miseducated the Filipinos into believing that foreign cultures were better than their own. An investigation of our history unveils rich cultures within, misunderstood by colonizers and the population at large. Folk religion, mythology, folk theatre, rituals and fiestas were the cultural wealth of the people. These were dismissed as craft, as spiritual mumbo-jumbo, by western taste moulders and bearers of “high art.” The colonizers introduced a new way of looking at their world, and created a marginalised nation that is schizophrenic - both an asset and a hindrance - with a Western education and a traditional Filipino value system. This confusion creates a tension that confronts the Filipino artist.”



Native Song by Santiago Bose, 1999, Filipino. Oil on canvas with mixed media and color process prints on paper. 2007.80

Artist Statement

“Today, Filipino artists are forging a modern mythology. Artists are creating visual statements of Philippine national life with blends of Spanish, American and indigenous artistic influences. “Western modernism” has liberated artists to go back to their roots and incorporate them in a contemporary vocabulary. The use of mixed media, fiber, grass, paper, bamboo and organic materials, and the use of installation, which is also rooted in traditional communities, make this art form easily acceptable to a broad range of audiences.

This debunks cultural imperialism. The training of artists in Western modes propagates the use of materials and tools that are expensive and rare. But the contemporary Filipino artist is liberated from paying the West every time he creates. The idea of art as “property” or commodity is challenged, its prominence questioned. The idea of artist as individual creator is also challenged, and a sense of community opens up new possibilities. The artist is taught to be self reliant, and using available materials and local concepts, he expands his visual vocabulary. This makes his art relevant to a broad spectrum of society, making it clear whose interest it serves. Some artists use violence through protest art.”

-Santiago Bose
from *Memories of Overdevelopment* (ed. Wayne Baerwaldt)

Lesson: Assembling Personal Narrative

Objective: Observe and discuss how artist Santiago Bose uses cultural symbols and artistic methods as post-colonial critique. Create an assemblage using found objects that conveys your personal identity. Interview a family member to uncover a photograph or symbol that recalls your heritage and include this in your assemblage. Then, write a first person narrative telling a story about your assemblage.

Grades: 5-11

Standards

English Language Arts 5.2.1, 10.2.1, 11.2.1 (Writing Applications)

History Social Sciences: 5.2, 10.4, 11.4

Visual and Performing Arts: 5.3.1; Proficient: 1.1.5, 2.2.6, 3.3.3, 4.4.1; Advanced: 2.2.5, 3.3.1, 4.4.2, 5.5.2

Materials:

Asian Art Museum Image: Native Song by Santiago Bose

small box

frame (small wooden frames from IKEA)

personal photographs

personal objects

magazines and newspapers

glue

paper

scissors

Procedure:

1. Discuss Santiago Bose's Native Song:
 - a. Observe and Describe: Look at Native Song for at least one minute. What do you notice?
 - b. Interpret: This artwork combines images of two soldiers from the Phillipine-American War, alongside text in the indigenous language and a cross recalling the colonization of the Philippines by Spain. What do these images mean to you? What do you think they might have meant to the artist? Support your interpretation with evidence.
 - c. Draw a Conclusion: Santiago Bose used inexpensive, local materials and found objects as part of his social criticism. What message do you think he was trying to convey?
 - d. Connect: Santiago Bose used art as a way to criticize the colonization of the Philippines by the Spanish and the United States, and as a statement against traditional western ideals that were defining the global contemporary art movement. Have you ever felt like you were judged based on another culture's criteria or values? Explain.
2. Interview a family member to uncover a photograph, symbol, or memory that reflects your heritage. Then, create an assemblage using found objects that illustrates your cultural identity. Use family photographs, meaningful symbols and objects, text, and at least one found object.
3. Write a narrative in the first person, telling the story conveyed in your assemblage.

Resources

Baerwaldt, Wayne. *Memories of Overdevelopment: Philippine Diaspora in Contemporary Art*. Plug-in Inc, 1997.

Pusod Center for Arts, Culture and Ecology

"A Savage Look at Notes in Transit." from *Memories of Overdevelopment* (ed. Wayne Baerwaldt).

http://members.tripod.com/~in_the_bag/index2.htm

Santiago Bose. "Baguio Graffiti." In *the Bag* (v.1, issue 1). Bagiuo Arts Guild.

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