

Filipina Artists and Feminist Art

Author: Jennifer Rose Hasso, Art History Professor, Harold Washington College, Triton College

Time: 80 minutes

Overview:

Feminism is inclusive to people of diverse races, cultures, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and religions. Yet, the lack of visibility of many Filipina feminists who have made significant contributions to activism and are addressing issues of poverty, social injustice, and violence within the Philippines, has caused Filipinas around the world to create their own spaces, organizations, and publications in order for their voices to be heard.

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 and architecture.
- 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:

Feminist art reflects a struggle for equal access to sites that promote and display art. Feminist artists had a radical effect on art making, challenged history books and museums that encouraged the misrepresentation of women, and demanded inclusion in the creative, decision-making, and display processes. First wave feminist artists organized shows and gallery spaces, highlighting the difference between male and female artists, and traditional modes of art production. For example, craftwork had long been treated as a woman-centered, devalued art form, relegated to the realm of utilitarian objects or busywork, whereas male artists were treated as geniuses that created a higher form of fine art. Thus, feminist artists and historians sought to elevate craftwork to the same level of skill and aesthetic recognition. Second wave feminist artists critiqued institutions that documented, canonized, judged, and created art spaces and markets noting how they were specifically exclusionary to women. They questioned historical texts and publications that pushed women out of canon in order to focus primarily on a white, male perspective on creativity and genius. Third wave feminist artists addressed broader issues

of gender, race, class, and violence against women, minorities, transnational, and transgender peoples. Feminist artists are aware that this hierarchy could not be transcended completely because gender is socially constructed therefore discrimination is repeatedly enacted and promoted by society. Feminist artists expanded the definition of art to be more inclusive from subject matter to media. Feminist artists pioneered the use of mixed media and performance techniques to display and interpret the body on their own terms.

Men have dominated the art world in the Philippines, as well. While history has little to say about the Filipinas role, research has proven that they have been crucial since the beginning. A goal of gender conscious historians, scholars, writers, and artists is to put women in the proper historical perspective, and include their stories in Philippine history. One issue for women artists is to recognize these historical and social strictures, and dismantle them through art. Two ways that artists have responded to gender issues is to create protest art that speaks out against oppressive forces in society that keep women from attaining their potential, and to affirm a woman's personhood, power, and strength, in order to fully embrace her humanity. In the 1970s, Filipina feminists or Peminists organized into a political unit called MAKIBAKA (Struggle). They protested brutality against Filipina women like sexual trafficking, domestic violence, and other forms of systemic oppression. They vocalized the rights of local farmers, participated in labor strikes, and encouraged the reproductive health and wellness of impoverished women by setting-up clinics and nurseries. They staged the first demonstration against a beauty pageant, and organized the first International Women's Day celebration, which involved the Women's March Against Poverty. Under martial law, several MAKIBAKA activists became victims of kidnap, rape, and murder due to their politics.

Visual Art Slides:

Julie Lluch, *YUTA, Earthworks*, 2008, Ceramic (Figure 1D)

- Lluch (b. 1946) is a Filipina artist with a degree from the University of Santo Tomas.
- She helped opened the national feminist movement to the arts and co-founded the groups Katipunan ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (KALAYAAN) and KASIBULAN.
- Her work raises concern about women's roles in society, addresses femininity, religious conviction, social mores, and personal relationships.
- Yuta is a Visayan word for clay. She uses indigenous clay, which she believes is sensuous.
- Her life-size figures express the role of women in revolutions of the past and present.

Pacita Abad, *Filipina: A racial identity crisis*, 1991, Lithograph, chine-collé and metallic powder (Figure 2D)

- Abad (b. 1946) traveled to the U.S. to study law, when she switched careers and began painting. She is a Filipina activist, who has traveled to over 50 countries, created over 4,500 artworks, and exhibited in museums and galleries around the world.
- She creates flat and trapunto (stitching and stuffing canvases to give them a three-dimensional effect) paintings. She transforms the surface with materials like traditional cloth, shells, buttons, beads, and mirrors.

- Her works investigate identity formation and tell the stories of women she meets globally: male-dominated cultural experiences, violence against women, exploitation, and the difficulties that many women face when they emigrate to work as domestic workers.

Kitty Taniguchi, *Winged Lover*, Oil on Canvas, 2010 (Figure 3D)

- Taniguchi (b. 1952) is a self-taught Filipina artist influenced by literature, philosophy, rites of passage, iconography, and the complexity of womanhood.
- She explores feminine modes of representations that challenge and reinterpret existing social and cultural conventions, as well as her personal struggle to define artistic identity.
- Much of her work is drawn from personal experience and her portraits display challenges women have faced through centuries of spiritual and physical oppression.
- Symbolism is used to replace traditional representation and create personal meaning.

Brenda Fajardo, *American Occupation (Philip sold Maria to Sam)*, 1989, Mixed media (Figure 4D)

- Fajardo (b. 1940) is a Filipina printmaker, graphic artist, and painter. She obtained her MA in art education at the University of Wisconsin.
- Her work has historical and nationalist themes, and depicts folk and mythological tales.
- The *Tarot Card* series indigenized tarot images to convey socio-political and colonial struggles in the Philippines. She weaves events from the past into current issues of migration, human rights, political corruption, and women's rights, demanding historical recuperation and the value of human dignity.
- Transforming the tarot card (foretelling the future) into a dialogue on myth and history, the viewer sees Philippine history as a continuing saga retold in different ways.

Karen Ocampo Flores, *A Line of History*, 2006, Acrylic on canvas (Figure 5D)

- Flores (b. 1966) is a Filipina artist with a BFA from the University of the Philippines.
- She established the collective SURGE with artists from Singapore and Australia, that runs an Internet forum tackling the five R's – Race, Religion, Region, Rhetoric and Realities.
- She helped to establish Grupong Salingpusa and Sanggawa, two art collectives that have created large bodies of political work.
- *A Line of History* depicts the Philippine flag bisecting two women representing indigenous culture and a religious order. Events from history referring to the colonization of the Philippines surround the women referring to the complexity of local and national identity.

Agnes Arellano, *Three Buddha Mothers: Vesta, Dea, Lola*, 1995, Marble (Figure 6D)

- Arellano (b. 1949) is a Filipina surrealist sculptor. *Three Buddha Mothers* represents a maiden, wife, and crone, or the cycle of birth, life, and death.
- This trinity is derived from mother-goddess paradigms in religion and literature.
- Vesta is the young, pregnant mother in a posture derived from Hariti, an Indonesian goddess of fertility. As a vessel of creation, she is bursting with life.

- Dea is in the posture of the meditating Buddha. The figure has multiple breasts like Mebuyan from the underworld, whose body is full of milk. She is consumed by her nourishing abilities and motherhood.
- Lola is an aged crone who is no longer fertile, her skin is wrinkled and sagging. She seeks divination through introspection, suggested by her closed eyes.
- By casting real mothers, she stressed the need to search for the sacred in everyday life.

Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, *Traces 15: Brave Girl*, 2010, Monoprint (Figure 7D)

- Cajipe-Endaya (b. 1949) is a Filipina printmaker, painter, mixed media, and installation artist. She uses indigenous materials and folk elements to convey local texture and colors.
- She co-founded KASIBULAN, a female art collective in the Philippines, and initiated the PANANAW Philippine Journal of Visual Arts, of which she was first editor.
- Her work addresses identity, gender, race, migration, displacement, and globalization.
- She analyzes Philippine identity through historical narrative and in old prints, drawings, and photographs. Her research into regional folk art and colonial printmaking are drawn upon to create deeply symbolic artworks, collages, and installations.
- *Traces*, captures the female experience during war. Images of peace are interspersed with images of weaponry that reject the permanence of war, alluding to events and social conditions that appear to be contradictory like militarization and feminism.

Cultural Comparison Slides:

Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Cage*, 1981, Burlap, glue, and wood, MCA, Chicago (Figure 8D)

- Abakanowicz (b. 1930) is a Polish artist that witnessed the brutality of WWII firsthand.
- In *Cage* she molded burlap and glue around a plaster cast of a body. The fibers resemble wrinkled, damaged skin, and knotted muscles and tissue.
- The slumping back represents the human condition in times of distress and despair, and the loss of the self and individuality.
- The structure around the figure is constructed of wood crudely joined together that partially blocks our view of the figure, keeping it caged and the viewer at a distance.

Doris Salcedo, *Atrabiliarios*, 1992– 2004, Shoes, drywall, paint, wood, animal fiber, surgical thread 43 niches and 40 boxes, overall dimensions variable, MCA, Chicago (Figure 9D)

- Salcedo (b. 1958) is a Columbian artist who explores the lasting effects of violence through extensive fieldwork in her home country.
- She learned that during violent conflicts women were often treated with particular cruelty and that shoes were used to identify their remains.
- Worn shoes, primarily women's, are encased in niches in the gallery wall, covered by a layer of stretched and preserved animal skin affixed to the wall with medical sutures.
- The semi-translucent surface obscures the shoes, alluding to the relationship between memory and time. Empty boxes, also made of animal skin predict more deaths to come.

Ana Mendieta *Untitled from the Silueta series, 1973-77 Silver dye-bleach print, MCA, Chicago (Figure 10D)*

- Mendieta (b. 1948) is a Cuban American artist that created silhouettes of her body on the landscape; over time they morph away from her shape into a more universal figure.
- Rarely stable, they were constructed from natural materials that were always changing or in modulation. This celebrates the notion that women have a deep connection with nature.
- In this photograph the impression of her body in the sand is filled with red dye, which was gradually washed away by the rising tide.
- The site of her performance was dramatic and she used her body in a ritualistic manner; her energy was joined with the earth, which she believed was omnipotent and female.

Kara Walker, *Presenting Negro Scenes Drawn Upon My Passage through the South and Reconfigured for the Benefit of Enlightened Audiences Wherever Such May Be Found, By Myself, Missus K.E.B. Walker, Colored, 1997, Mounted paper, MCA, Chicago (Figure 11D)*

- Walker (b. 1969) is an African American artist who creates silhouettes based on racist imagery from history. Her caricatured figures drawn from minstrel shows, memorabilia, and novels blending fact and fiction to evoke a history of oppression and violence.
- Viewers are required to identify the silhouettes by visual markers, drawing on the entire history of ugly stereotyping and trapping us in the act of being racist.
- The silhouettes are enhanced by lights projected onto the gallery walls, casting the viewer's shadow next to the silhouettes, dissolving the space between the two worlds.
- She has received letters of protest stating that she should refrain from presenting negative images of race. She says that racism is still part of daily life and should be discussed.

Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (We construct the chorus of missing persons), 1983 Gelatin silver mural prints with painted artist's frame, MCA, Chicago (Figure 12D)*

- Kruger (b. 1945) is an American artist whose photographs are layered with verbal statements referring to the nature/culture split and male/female archetypes.
- She questions how images actively participate and represent identity formation that is social, cultural, and gendered. She also raises questions about the female body and consumerism.
- Her images are taken from advertising, a model she is critiquing and challenging. Her work appears in museums and public spaces mimicking how the mass media functions.
- Challenging the male gaze, she uses words to turn attention back onto the viewer. The female face deflects our gaze by displaying awareness, returning, and deflecting this action.

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 the 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?

- 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:

Jo Ann Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*, Routledge, 1996.

- Looks at the work of a diverse range of artists and explores the effect of feminist theory on art practice. Provides a provocative and valuable account of the diversity and revolutionary potential of women's art practice.

Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, Routledge, 1999.

- Intervention into the debate on whether the traditional canon of the Old Masters be rejected, replaced or reformed. Unpacks the representation of culturally resonant female figures in a range of texts and artists representations. States that we must also acknowledge the differences between women shaped by racist and colonial hierarchies.

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 art-works present the female body using different media.

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 in 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.

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.

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://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://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA_izKQXLjM

- What's feminism? Jean Enriquez, World March of Women, Philippines answers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVxy9oEShPQ>

- One Billion Rising is a mass action to end violence against women. The campaign is based on the statistic that 1 in 3 women globally are be beaten or raped during their lifetime. People across the world strike, dance, and rise in defiance, demanding an end to violence.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrUgEaybV9M>

- In 2006, JASS launched its Movement-Building Initiative. Learning, action, knowledge and communications activities are centered on the movement-building efforts to strengthen the voice, leadership and collective power of women to advance justice for all.

Filipina Artists and Feminist Art Image Sheet (D)

Julie Lluch, *YUTA, Earthworks*, 2008, Ceramic (Figure 1D)



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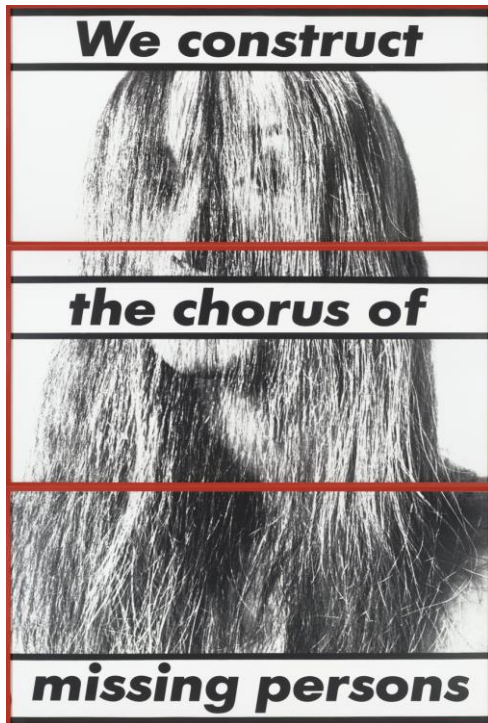
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