

Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art: Polyphony and Mipaliw

Guest Editor: Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu



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POLYPHONY AND MIPALIW | VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1, 2023

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INTRODUCTION Polyphony is a musical term referring to multiple melodies, or voices.

“Eight-part-polyphony” is a unique vocal music sung by the Bunun, one of Taiwan’s indigenous nations. Recognized by the UNESCO as world cultural heritage, the Bununs’ complex harmony celebrates the millet harvest and offers respect to the ancestral spirits. It is sung by several singers facing inwards in a circle, arms interlocked, who separately initiate the different notes with the vowels a, e, i, o and u. The diversity of voices and tones is related to M. M. Bakhtin’s theory of polyphony as a metaphor for a literary work with a plurality of narrative voices. In the Bununs’ song as in Bakhtin’s theory, no single voice is subordinated or submerged. Rather, each individual voice remains distinct and necessary.

Nowadays, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis has made us more aware than ever before of the importance of mutual collaboration among human beings. Yet Taiwanese indigenous culture has long been based upon cooperation in life. For example, the Amis, the largest Taiwanese indigenous nation, uses the word “mipaliw” to describe women’s mutual collaboration in farm labor, and even to cope with sexual harassment on the farm. That same exchange of labor reflects and nourishes works in Taiwanese indigenous art and culture, so that one regional art festival took the word “mipaliw” for its title. The collaboration of labor, the diversity of voices - these are also seen in the work of Taiwanese indigenous contemporary artists. Polyphony and mipaliw are central to cultural diversity in art and life.

For this edition the authors’ essays address issues such as how do the Taiwanese indigenous artists cope with the sociocultural crisis in contemporary art and life through mutual collaboration? How is the metaphor of polyphony demonstrated by the diversity of voices in art and how art reflects the polyphony.

Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu

Guest Editor

THE FEMALE IN THE OTHER: ON TAIWANESE INDIGENOUS FEMALE ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Taiwanese indigenous female artists are the radical 'Other' in art. The mid-aged female artists play the role of 'mothers of communities' and become a stable force for developing indigenous art so that the new generation of female artists dares to be themselves and create diverse styles of artistic creation. Early female artists were not involved in and influenced by the Taiwanese feminist movement in the 1980s but fought with men for the recertification movement of indigenes in the 1980s; they returned to their hometowns to engage in cultural reconstruction and artistic creation to appeal to the 'ethnic self.' Until the new generation of female artists began to reflect on the past cultural content, indigenous female art underwent a new transformation.

This article explores the transformation within two female generations' creative thinking, which observes how it gradually transforms from the collective self to the individual one, expanding the interpretation of indigenous culture.

KEYWORDS

female in indigenous arts, the Other, collective self, individual self

In the Taiwanese indigenous art field, female artists are the radical 'Other' among them. They condense national emotions with the grit of motherhood and break the traditional taboo with the intelligence of femininity. This article does not start from a feminist perspective. Instead, it explores the artistic outlook of two generations of indigenous women in almost 40 years, trying to construct the particularity of Taiwanese indigenous female art and inject a fundamentally new concept into the artistic context.

INDIGENOUS FEMALE ART IN INDIGENOUS ART

Taiwanese indigenous art had a profound influence by Japanese colonial modernity. Due to the severe qualitative change of material and non-material culture based on traditional beliefs, independent creations breaking traditional forms formed gradually. However, the predecessor artists during the Japanese colonial era concentrated on the Paiwan family of artisans, the so-called Pulima, who passed on the carving skills from their grandfathers. The traditional indigenous society has a strict division of labor system, which regulates the distinction between men and women. Great-strength production behaviors such as hunting, carving, and collecting bamboo and rattan are primarily male.

As early as the Japanese occupation era, Puljetji, the Paiwan community of Pingtung County, was the first recorded with a strong artistic sense. At that time, anthropologist Mori Ushinosuke (1877-1926) called it the most art-developed place of the Paiwan communities. The Japanese government built the Puljetji community into a woodcarving village; therefore, it developed clearer carving generations from the Japanese occupation to the post-war II period, including the Paiwan family of artisans Shen Qiuda(沈秋大), Gao Zhizhen(高枝珍), and Lai Fulong(賴福隆), etc., which have influenced the indigenous sculpture after the post-war. This is why early literature is biased towards male-dominated artistic activities.

In the 1980s, the post-modernism trend emerged in Taiwan. In 1987, the Taiwan government lifted martial law, and the society launched a social movement of liberalization, modernization, and diversification, in which indigenous awareness rose. In the late 1980s, with the indigenous movement on the street and the recertification of indigenes, the trend of modern consciousness affected young indigenes. In the liberal and multicultural atmosphere of the 1990s, most young and middle-aged indigenous artists born in the 1950s returned to their hometowns to begin their creations. Most have no art academy experience instead of relying on self-study, peer exchange, and elders' skill transfer. A few of them reflected on the plight of indigenous art or were affected by new art styles. The breakthrough has brought a unique situation in the development of indigenous art and has influenced the development of art today.

For example, Inka Mbing, Ruby Swana, Sumi Donghi, Yuma Taru, Eleng Luluan, etc., belong to a generation with solid national consciousness; they describe the ethnic contemporary situation from a female perspective or preserve, reconstruct, and continue the value of traditional culture with a more positive attitude.

The new generation of indigenous female artists, born after the 1970s, has gradually matured in the art field. For example, Idas Losin, Ljuzem Madiljin, Labay Eyong, etc., have been fond of art since childhood and have varied widely with mid-aged female artists' backgrounds. Nurtured by art education, they have intense creativity and expressiveness and apply more diverse media. With the guidance, communication, and interaction of tribal seniors, they integrate the cross-domain experiences between tribes and worldwide, showing a different national consciousness from the previous generation of women, releasing more poetic concerns of *écriture féminine*.

INDIGENOUS FEMALE ART IN FEMALE ART FIELD

"The Floating Sign Woman: Pre-War Female Images in Taiwanese Art" by Lai Ming-chu pointed out that due to the enlightenment of modern education during the Japanese colonial period, Taiwanese female art began to sprout. Being viewed as 'painters in boudoirs', but they had stepped out of the boudoir to enter the art world and were selected or won awards in the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition of Japanese rule, which was different from the traditional women of the past. With short creation time, the constraints of conventional matrimony, and the compilation of art history lacking female artists' perspectives, they have been marginalized for a long time.

The emergence of the term Taiwanese female art, which is gradually regarded as an independent subject, is related to the open-mindedness and the tide of pluralism after the lifting of martial law in the 1990s. At that time, female artists born in the 1960s returned from studying abroad. Influenced by the thinking of the feminist movement, they reinterpreted social phenomena such as social structure, gender awareness, and economic conditions, and began to criticize patriarchal values, debate and deconstruct family ideology, liberate and pursue the female body image, or explore the issues and directions of creation such as the nature of women and gender differences.

The deliberate emphasis on feminist art is to highlight the existence of problematic phenomena, to arouse women's self-consciousness, and to inspire men's reflection, respect, compromise, and concession. However, the indigenous female artists, also born around 1960, faced with the urgency of the decline of traditional culture and the pressure of constructing a national subject, embarked on different creative propositions.

Despite the rise of feminist art in the 1980s, gradually becoming a prominent school, indigenous female art was still in the category of indigenous art at that time and was not classified as Taiwanese female art. 1988, the "Mind and Spirit: Women's Art in Taiwan" held by the Taipei Fine Arts Museum was the first large-scale exhibition with the theme of women's art in the Taiwan art field. Although the exhibition works spanned a hundred years, indigenous female artists were still absent. Until 2000, the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts held the "Journey of the Spirit: Taiwanese Women Artists and Contemporary Representations" and exhibited artworks of Yuma Taru, Meimei Masow, and Resres Livulivuan. 2012, "The Room of Her Own" presented contemporary female art in Hong Kong and Taiwan cross-culturally, and Ruby Swana and Eleng Luluan were within, which attempts to demonstrate women's mastery, voices, and strategies in diverse art languages. It is worth mentioning that the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts completed the "Chronicles of Taiwan Women's Art" in 2014, focusing on the development of female artists in Taiwan after 1980 from a regional perspective. One of the observation essays on the development of women's art in the Dulan community is an essential case of cross-regional and cross-ethnic development in the indigenous art field, which forms a critical perspective of the modern development of female artists in Taiwan.

Indigenous female art in the 1990s, like feminist art, also started from social movements but did not appeal to women's creative rights to highlight the social system of inequality between men and women. In contrast, it emphasizes the expression of the collective self of ethnicity. However, with the changes in time and environment, indigenous female artists gradually express themselves, transforming from collective consciousness to a feminine character, especially with the emergence of a new generation, which makes indigenous female art in this era express ethnic issues from a female perspective.

Interestingly, in recent years, the proposition of female art in Taiwan has also faded from the early development stage of Western female art and no longer emphasizes the second gender repressed by patriarchy. In recent years, the exhibition or research of female art contains indigenous female artists' creative intentions, manifesting a new sense of existence for Taiwanese female art.

THE MID-AGED FEMALE ARTISTS FOR COLLECTIVE SELF-REALIZATION

With the femininity they extend family mothers to community mothers, the mid-aged female artists realize the aesthetic ideal of the "collective self" via arts. They were born in the 1950s. Most were devoted to artmaking in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Their upbringing experienced the Chinese Nationalist Government relocated to Taiwan. The social environment and status in villages had changed as early as Japanese colonialization resulting in these villages losing their function as cultural heritage sites. At the same time, in terms of education, formal school education had no intersection with the cultural tradition of ethnic groups, which made them feel lost and distant from their roots while receiving Chinese or Western education. That is also why they embrace their own culture so hard. They have been trying to break through the predicament of losing indigenous culture and preserve the tradition so that they would rebuild their matrix of culture. Their creative journey, therefore, becomes more complicated as being both artmakers and 'mothers of communities'. They unite village energy and serve the roles of enlightening teachers in communities by teaching and organizing art events. Their influence on young artists or the youth in villages is specific, gradually forming the models of indigenous contemporary arts.

The life wisdom passed down by the Taiwanese indigenous peoples since ancient times revolves around the ecological ethics of the harmonious coexistence of individuals, nature, land, and people. The essence of traditional culture is a knowledge of environmental ethics, which is in line with the deep ecology emphasizing "collective self-realization," which means that all creatures in the ecosystem have equal rights to pursue survival and growth.

In the creations of Inka Mbing, Yuma Taru, Eleng Luluan, and Sumi Dongi, we can see that they are actively breaking through the shackles of tradition to preserve culture. Still, this force of change can maintain the ecological balance of cultural development.

INKA MBING (1954-)

Inka Mbing, Atayal, was one of the mid-aged to take to the streets to participate in the indigenous movement. After that, she returned to her community and wrote songs in the Atayal language to express her ancestors' wisdom in life. 2000, she began to collect and organize ancient Atayal songs in Taoyuan and Hsinchu, Taiwan. At that time, she broke a taboo, publicly performed and taught "Atayal ancient chants" that only male leaders could sing, making ancient chants lost for hundreds of years widely continued. 2009, her first album "Ga-ga" won the 22nd Golden Melody Awards, Best Indigenous Language Vocalist. "Ga-ga" means the customs and norms of the Atayal people, the law of harmonious coexistence with nature. She indicates ancestors lived following the rules of the sun, the moon, and the stars. When the day dawned, the body naturally awakened to start a day's work. After the sun went down, the body also naturally needed a quiet rest. The body and mind follow the natural rhythm of the universe. Living in a balanced and healthy way, she sings the ancestors' songs, trying to retrieve the Atayal spirit and cultural traditions that have been fractured for a long time.

In recent years, she sincerely expressed land justice through her ethnic language songwriting. Due to the development of the SLaq community, Jianshi, Hsinchu County, by many consortiums who farmed ginger fields and dusted pesticides, results in the severe loss of indigenous reservations and pollution. "Does the land movement have to be in the streets? I want to have a voice in my tribal land,"¹ she said. In 2012, she demonstrated her genuine concerns towards the land in the video work "What is wrong with our land?". It emphasized her purpose of attending the indigenous movement again. "Life comes from the land. We have to return to our land and sing, return to our village and sing, go back to where life begins and find the long-forgotten blessings from our ancestors and the land where we got lost.

Even though we have put on the civilization covers, we can't lose our souls. Set out to the furthest of land to feel the vibe and flow of homeland. The calm and obscure power is still growing. All peoples' and Atayal's descendants remain heading towards the other end of the rainbow."²

YUMA TARU (1963-)

Yuma Taru, Atayal, embarked on traditional reconstruction in the 1990s. 1992, she resigned from her job as a civil servant and returned to her community to field study Atayal weaving; in 1994, she was admitted to the College of Fashion and Textiles, Fu Jen Catholic University, and established the Atayal Textile Research Center cultivating the traditional skills of Atayal female weaver which is committed to the remake of traditional Atayal costumes. Until 2010, she remade the traditional costumes of Atayal and Seediq.

After over 20 years of rebuilding Atayal traditional clothes, Yuma Taru deeply appreciates the 'subtle changes' of Atayal ancient woven fabric. 'Subtle' is Atayal's particular aesthetics, a matching combination of texture, colors, patterns, and proportions. Weaving' in Atayal language is 't'minun', which refers to 'hands of God, extraordinary creativity, Yuma Taru says. It describes the outstanding craftsmen, meaning 'the weaver of life'. For a female weaver, her life is like a weaving thread, and she must strive to form a perfect circle from birth to death, Yuma further explains. Jiang Gui-Zhen also pointed out that 't'minun' and ancestral spirit 'utux' is closely related to the life of Atayal women, including three levels survival, life, and life. Weaving satisfies the Atayal people's protection from the cold and survival needs and completes the Atayal social norm 'gaga' practice.

Because of her substantial reconstruction of the Atayal traditional costumes, she can extend the tradition into various creations and expand the infinite possibilities for developing traditional culture. Today, Yuma Taru focuses on preschool education and hopes to plant the seeds of Atayal traditional knowledge in young children's hearts. She said: "Using human being's intuition and exercise to feel the nature, land, and people is a way of passing down the knowledge.

Like the saying that the fallen petals in autumn would transfer into the rich soil and nurture the trees in spring, the accumulation of experiences is culture. Each one of us has been fighting for it would become its nutrient.”³

ELENG LULUAN (1968-)

Rukai artist Eleng Luluan’s work differs from the others’ maternal fortitude and features both masculine and feminine. Her commanding character appears to be a warm and stable force among a group of mid-aged male artists developing indigenous arts. Eleng, born in Kucapungane, is a nobleman succeeding from her mother’s family. However, the class consciousness disintegrated with the changes of time, and her aristocratic identity made her a taunting object by other children in her childhood; at the time, she also was oppressive by the traditional Rukai patriarchal concept. As landslides plagued Kucapungane in her teens, all people were forced to relocate to the new Kucapungane village. She, therefore, was constantly dealing with the great sorrow of the ethnic fading and discrete through art. Her childhood, the good old times in old Kucapungane village, became Eleng’s utopia she could never go back. Nevertheless, the new Kucapungane village was devastated by Typhoon Morakot in 2009, and all the villagers had to move again. After these two migrations, what affects the ethnic fate and the struggles of cultural reconstruction linger in her heart.

In recent years, her work has become more mature. Whether the content or the material choices, it shows her belief in living with nature peacefully and connecting with the land in her works. In 2008, “Fractures in the memories of life, silently await”, a work composed of coconut fiber, hemp rope, and cotton thread, 274 cm long and 518 cm wide, is a metaphor for her transformation and migration process. In 2011, the “Why do you want to ask where does () come from?” concept came from her life observation; one day, she saw a large tract of *Miscanthus* beside the embankment stream gradually disappearing due to planting watermelons. The scene touched the depth of her heart, she braided *Miscanthus* into a quilt, like the childhood experience of many people who often get into the big quilt, and it suddenly becomes a whimsical space.

“2009.8.8”, also created in 2011, tells that Kucapungane experienced the trauma caused by the wind disasters on Aug 8th, which has transformed into thin wings like petals and spread in the wind. 2016, her “The last sigh before gone” won the first prize in the 3rd Pulima Art Award. In recent years, she has been exhibiting in internationally renowned art villages, museums, and galleries, attracting much attention.

SUMI DONGI (1962-)

The Mipaliw Project in Fengbin Township, Hualien, is the best example of embodying environmental ethics with art applications. Sumi Dongi, Pangcah, is the one who brings life to this project. In the Pangcah language, ‘Mipaliw’ means ‘mutual assistance’. It plays a significant part in Pangcah life. Whether building a house, farming, or harvesting, as long as someone needs it, everyone would work together to help. The aid recipient would give back to the people who offer help. Due to the outflow of the population, the water terraces have been fallow for more than two decades. Farms sell for or invest in Bed and Breakfast. Sumi started seeking water and workforce resources to protect the farmland and the community and convinced elders to resume farming. She said, “I live here; I look at water terraces daily. What would the children think if we didn’t tidy them up? Because we always walk on the terraces, our children wouldn’t care if the weeds are overgrown. If you don’t farm the land, it’s easy for children to sell it, and then we would lose the farmland, Makotaay’s largest lifeline. If you don’t care about how they farm now, they won’t even know how in the future.”⁴

In 2010, Forestry Bureau initiated a Water Terraces Restoration Project and proposed an ecological farming plan to help Sumi fulfilling her dream. After successfully restoring the fields, the “Shitiping Water Terrace Wetland Land Art Exhibition” was held at the time of fallow. The local and foreign artists’ installation works were erected on the paddy fields, integrating agriculture and art as one. Everyone celebrates rice and land; everything seems to be reborn in the splash of sea waves.

THE NEW GENERATION'S INDIVIDUAL SELF-REALIZATION

New generation artists, born after the 1970s, join today's art field. Most have received professional training in art schools, expressing their relations between self and culture with new forms and skills. The spirit of the times they represent integrates into it. Compared with the mid-age strong sense of cultural anxiety, the new generation presents diverse self-identity. They express their realistic experience with more personal, micro, and everyday perspectives. In addition, compared with the mid-age, the new generation has taken a different path from them without village experiences. Most works by mid-age present an eastern or southern regional style because the mentoring system or the relationship between regional groups differs from the new generation's cultivation by art education. Instead, the new generation presents a more diverse artistic style.

Facing the fading of traditional culture, Idas Losin, Labay Eyong, and Ljuzem Madiljin may not carry the role of the community's mother as their predecessors did. They return to themselves, pondering the particular independent creative minds, exploring the profound relationship between the culture matrix and their own life experiences, then writing their life history.

IDAS LOSIN (1976-)

Idas Losin graduated from Taipei National University of the Arts. After graduation, she visited and stayed in Melbourne, Australia, for some time and exposed herself to Australian indigenous arts. During her stay, she constantly questioned: what is Taiwanese indigenous art? And where is it? After her return to Taiwan, as a Truku and Atayal, she decided to start paying visits to Atayal and Truku villages and conveyed the elders' life experiences and the reflection on ethnic groups' history in her paintings. A few years later, she expressed her life philosophy and enthusiasm for her culture, focused on her own life and blood relatives.

She has been eager to express and shape the inner meaning of Ptasan (facial tattoos), Tminun (weaving), Gaga/Gaya (norm), and Tminun Utux (godly weaving) in the Atayal and Truku from the artistic form.

She has no idea how to weave but paints the 'text' conveyed by the weaving pattern on the canvas, which presents her creative vocabulary for exploring her life experience. In her work "Symmetry between Body and Soul", 2012, she used concrete modern things and abstractive weaving lines on fabrics to reflect the coexisting beauty of the tangible and intangible as well as the conflicts between tradition and modernity.

The series of "I see" in 2014 showed women's poetic judgment on land justice. The subjects in that painting are her friends and children. They all wear sunglasses and show no emotion. However, the viewers can see the environment and tourism issues in the reflections on sunglasses surrounding these subjects, such as the BOT of Miramar Resort and the over-tourism of Mukumugi, known as Taiwan's tourist attractions currently affecting the villages. In the journey of cognitive herself, she gets a deeper cultural understanding of her ethnic groups. Also, she explores her people's different meanings and sources, allowing her to cast off the rigid interpretations of indigenous arts and show her feminine aesthetic trait.

LJUZEM MADILJIN (1978-)

Ljuzem Madiljin is a member of Paiwan. Upon graduating from the Dance Department at Tainan University of Technology, she returned to her hometown, Tjimur Village, Pingtung County. In 2006, Ljuzem established the Tjimur Dance Theatre, dedicated to presenting and promoting the aesthetics and philosophy of ancient Paiwan culture, along with some conflicts between tradition and modern society. For the troupe's earlier work "Mananigai" 2010, Ljuzem set out to learn the traditional Paiwan warrior dance. During the production, she found only two elders could dance the warrior dance; one stayed in the hospital, and the other had an illness at home and could not speak. Even though the traditional customs of the Paiwan strictly forbid girls to sing and dance the warrior dance, Ljuzem broke the taboo and persuaded the elders to teach her how to sing and dance. The dance ultimately formed the core of Tjimur's 2010 show "Mananigai," or warrior. All the young men and women in other villages were invited to the harvest festival in August of that year to perform this piece.

Recently, Ljuzem's 'Qai~i', created with female thinking, reflects the unique sentiments of Paiwan women, which is a 'pure dance' with only music and singing accompanied by body movement. The 60-minute performance was by two men and two women presenting on the minimal stage, which shows a penetrating ethereal spirit in the old Paiwan tune and a hint of mournfulness within the 'de-body' and 'sound' limbs. In the quiet theater space, the audience can feel the breath close to the performers in which ancient rhymes seem to be a signal, and the limbs convey beautiful sorrow and sorrow. The choreographer insists on the possibility within constraints, and performers, like the trajectory depicted by time, take the audience through the memory space.

LABAY EYONG (1982-)

Labay Eyong graduated from the department of Applied Arts at Fu Jen Catholic University and was excellent in metalworking. She continued her academic pursuit in Temporary Space Design at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. She is skillfully capable of all materials but can't resist the calling of collective female memories from her hometown; then, she returns home and transforms into a real woman in Truku's definition through weaving.

Labay aims to be a female 'Tminun', the 'weaver of life' in the Truku language, and also the name for the outstanding weaving craftsman. She mentioned in her poetry collection, "Weaving is as our words, and our poems, every woman who weaves is creating beautiful poems for her own life."⁵ She learned to weave in 2014 and became the indeed women of Taruku. Her delicate state of mind is projected in the word "Women", genuinely presenting a real Truku woman's feelings, "I strongly sense that after the age of 30, I am a woman... One of me belongs to my community; the other one belongs to myself, personally."⁶ That year the work "woman" won the grand prize in the 2nd Pulima Art Award.

In 2020-2021, Labay curated the "Dungku Asang", an unprecedented soft outdoor installation curatorial project. From planning to execution, everything took place inside Dahdah Village, an experiment of art intervention in the community.

To revive cultural development in the community and bring the audience into the mountains, soft art as the medium allows outsiders to get to know the history and environment of the community and to take an objective perspective in the exploration of the relationship between mining and indigenous communities. With Ruixin Mine as a venue in the mountains of Dahdah Village in Wanrong Township, Labay exhibited 'gabangs', meaning blankets in Turku, one after another spread out on the exposed serpentine dike as a metaphor for dressing the wounds of mother nature with large quantities of woven fabric. A soft expression applied to a highly masculine place, collectively building and conveying the contemporary artistic language of indigenous weaving.

CIWAS TAHOS (1989-)

Ciwas Tahos graduated from the School for Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her artistic practice on issues such as female consciousness, identity, and gender sovereignty. 2018, she decided to return to Taiwan from Canada. After that, and started the search for the Atayal family genealogy and is currently studying for a master's degree in New Media Art at the National Taipei University of the Arts.

"The Mask (The Tattoo on Faces)" by Ciwas selected for the 2014 Puliam Art Award, the first time the indigenous art field knew her, and at that time, she was known for new media and performance art. The work "Perhaps She Comes from/to __Alang" connects with bees and the land in the women's society (Temahahoi). The video installation combines three contexts by exploring identity, gender, ethnicity, oral tales, land loss, and diaspora, and was exhibited for the first time at the 2020-2021 Pulima Art Festival, extended in the joint creation project of Jatiwangi Art Factory and Suavart at the 15th Documenta in Kassel, Germany in 2022.

Ciwas is an extraordinary existence in indigenous contemporary art. Her works involve diverse subject consciousnesses, such as women, genders, and ethnic groups, and use current social issues and modern media. Therefore, her creative figure can quickly become known through indigenous art, new media, international exhibitions, and other fields.

RNGRANG HUNGUL (1987-)

Rngrang Hungul, Taroko, 2009, the year of graduating from university, had a typhoon disaster, so she picked up her camera and went to Pingtung to film the typhoon disaster. Works document women primarily and explore the importance of ethnicity and land. Long-term focus on ethnic and gender issues. In 2021, her work “Mgaluk Dowmung, connecting with Dowmung—the stories of Dowmung families” won the 5th Pulima Art Award and filmed the female hunter. 2022, her documentary “Woman the Hunter” with her mother as the subject, won the grand award in the 1st New Horizons Awards, opening up the new indigenous female consciousness from the male-dominated hunting culture, which declares the next female generation’s creative thinking.

THE OTHER IN THE OTHER

Indigenous modern art began to be written in the Japanese Occupation era, but male-dominated sculpture art was described in the literature. It was not until the late 1980s that indigenous female artist appeared. At that time, indigenous women fought with men for indigenous name rectification and returned home for culture reconstruction and art making. They were not directly influenced by feminism in the 1980s, not actively pursuing their recognition in the arts. Instead, they were worried about the culture-fading predicament. Together with indigenous male artists, they protected and preserved the cultural matrix, appealing to the collective presence of ethnic groups and becoming the positive ‘Other’.

It is worth noting that although mid-aged female artists work together with men to continue the traditional culture while playing the role of ‘mothers of communities’, they have broken the division of labor system strictly adhered to by women of the conventional generation. For example, Inka Mbing taught the ancient Atayal principle, and Yuma Taru reset the cloth weaving and its skills passed down by many families. Sumi Dongi repaired sea rice fields. Their gentle persistence keeps influencing the new generation of women after the 1970s, making them more courageous to be themselves, explore the profound relationship between the cultural matrix and their life experiences, and write out their life histories.

This radical force has undergone a new transformation with the emergence of a new generation. Ljuzem Madiljin breaks the taboo and makes possible the soon-to-be-lost warrior dance, performed only by men. Idas Losin, not familiar with weaving, translates the weaving patterns that are only learned and passed on within the family into her painting language and expresses the current social issues suffered by the indigenous people through her delicate observations. Ciwas Tahos is known for her in-depth performance art and composite installations, which strongly express diverse subject consciousnesses such as women, gender, and ethnic groups. Rngrang Hungul's documentary on a female hunter opens up the new indigenous female consciousness from the male-dominated hunting culture.

Indigenous female art is 'the Other in the Other'. The femininity of these two generations of female artists is like the 'Weavers of Life' (t'minun) emphasized by Yuma Taru, thinking of themselves as a thread, connecting their mother culture and striving to develop their own creative life. These threads are also twisted into a rope, like a warm and stable force supporting the development of indigenous art and leading indigenous female artists to differ from the art field, which achieves new or more radical Other. In addition, after generations of changes, their accumulated female perspectives and experiences have become essential for developing Taiwanese female art in the past ten years, finding a new sense of existence for Taiwanese female art.

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NOTES

¹ It is extracted from the interview between the author and Inka Mbing in 2013.

² 2012 *Pulima Art Award*, p.141.

³ *Farming Ritual of Atayal over G'saya Area*, p.2.

⁴ Lekal Sumi's documentary film *Wish of the Ocean Rice* in 2010.

⁵ Labay Eyong's handmade book *Our Poems* in 2015.

⁶ 2014 *Pulima Art Award*, p.60.



Figure 1.
"Source of life" by Yuma Taru (2010).



Figure 2.

“The Last Sigh Before Gone” by Eleng Luluan (2016), the grand prize of the 3rd Pulima Art Award (2016).



Figure 3.
“Symmetry between Body and Soul” by Idas Losin (2012), the grand prize of the 1st Pulima Art Award (2012).

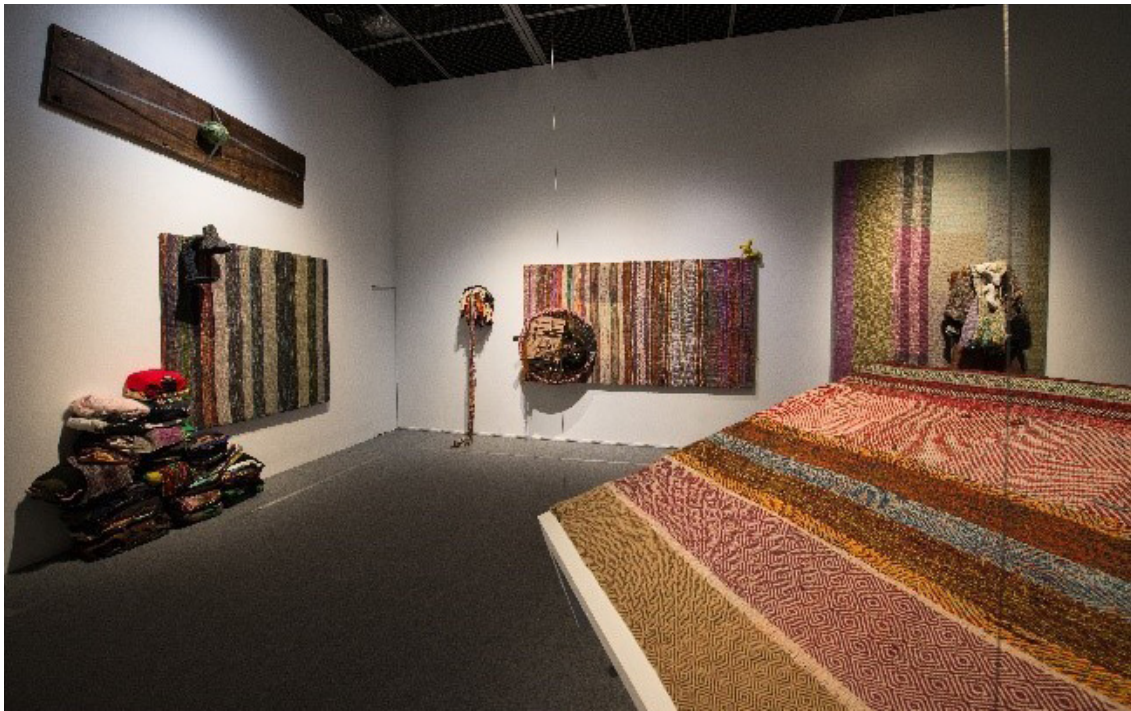


Figure 4.
“Women” by Labay Eyong (2014), the grand prize of the 2nd Pulima Art Award (2014).



Figure 5.
“Dungku Asang” curated by Labay Eyong, 2020-2021 Pulima Art Festival.



Figure 6.
“Perhaps She Comes From/To ____ Alang” by Civas Tahos (2021), 2020-2021 Pulima Art Festival.



Figure 7.
“Woman the Hunter” by Rngrang Hungul (2022), the grand award of the 1st New Horizons Awards (2022).