

Taiwanese Indigenous Contemporary Art: Polyphony and Mipaliw

Guest Editor: Dr. Ching-yeh Hsu

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TAIWANESE INDIGENOUS CONTEMPORARY ART:
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 EMPOWERS FROM LAND, ROOT, OCEAN: A STUDY OF INDIGENOUS ART EXHIBITION

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BIOGRAPHY

Wang, Yu-Hsin is a professor in the College of Indigenous Studies, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. As a researcher and a ceramicist, lately two solo show in 2020 and 2022 have developed a systematic object worldview and has shown respect for materials and natural order from clay collection and shaping power to environmental exploration, viewing, dialectics, and recall. The 2022 “Drawing through Clay: bimisi” solo exhibition focuses on the emotions and interactions between people, objects and land, especially in the Austronesian community, which can be seen in the ancient commitment between people and land. The theme ‘bimisi’ is in the Cou/Tsou language, which means seeds germination. And, ‘*sunu*’ (spinning top) is a magic vessel to awaken the land, in conjunction with the *Miyapo* ritual of the sowing festival before dawn in early spring. Playing the spinning top is to awaken the land and pray for the millet to sprout.

ABSTRACT

For the first time, the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall took the initiative to use the Taiwan indigenous contemporary art exhibition as the content from November 2019. Strength from the Mountain and Sea Indigenous Art Exhibition adopts the curatorial concept based on the ancient Austronesian terms, “Ceoā” (land), “Pusu” (root) and “Wawa” (ocean), to create a cross-year exhibition at the Central Hallway that aims to initiate a dialogue between ancient wisdom and contemporary society so that the primal life memories can be recalled when facing injustice in history.

The land nourishes the appearance, diversity and traditional wisdom of the indigenous culture, and records the wonderful richness of life. The ancient language of the Tsou language - Ceoa (land) reveals the shift and representation of artistic creation.

The Truku language - Pusu (root) explains the nature and origin of the family. The "true experience" of natural disasters and man-made disasters in the distant ages constructs an interpretation system of self-recognition and attempts to explain the things around us. The creation stemming from it is full of cherishment for and self-contemplation on the earth and life, forming the initiative to seek the path of salvation from the traditional knowledge. The Tao language - Wawa (Ocean) means the broadness, tolerance, deepness and mystery of the ocean. It is the hope of the islander. The ocean is the hope and path that can link with other islands worldwide.

The culture and art of the indigenous people have produced a variety of forms and connotations because of the changes of the environment. This indicates the release of energy and the pursuit of one's deepest urge in life. The passing down and spreading of indigenous oral history/mythology empowers the people, the development of art and the sustainability of the land.

KEYWORDS

Taiwan Indigenous Artists, contemporary art, traditional knowledge, conflict

PREFACE

Creation reflects contemporary social background and context of its time. In the past, people learned about (looked) creators' story-telling artworks by getting to know (seeing) the culture behind the artwork, and one of contemporary art's functions is for people to understand culture through art. In the past two decades, the contemporary indigenous art of Taiwan has been gaining momentum, as seen notably in the frequent cultural exchange with Austronesian-speaking peoples, art performances, and residency exchange. In this light, I attempt to explore how indigenous peoples around the world shift their art from the realm of mythology to the domain of contemporary art. People try to understand creators' approaches in presenting oneself, conjecturing, fathoming, classification, and practice models and learn to see the re-presentation of ethnical sense of beauty/aesthetics, logics, and cosmology.

I. MYTHOLOGY AND STORYTELLING¹

American mythology scholars, David Leeming and Edwin Belda, think that mythology is referenced to illustrate a great number of natural phenomena and the many aspects of human nature and names of the land, while mythology can be translated to serve certain historic functions and significance. They hold the view that mythology is essentially an archive of shared human languages and is the opposite of pure ideologies in the sense that mythology offers us medium of contact that transcends language, spirit, culture, tradition and religion.

"Myths are not stories about deities, but stories of humans themselves. The essential subject matter expressed in myths by various human ethnic groups is not about order and sentiments in the world of deities, but instead, conveys humans' own predicaments and human perspectives on nature and the existence of universe. Perhaps this is a view comprehended by even fewer people: if interpreted correctly, mythology is no longer some kind of deceased cultural residues, but can travel through time to serve as our cultural spiritual guide in our modern life (Li Yi-Yuan 1996)."

Many religious denominations are derived from a multitude of myths of ancient peoples. Greek and Roman mythologies nurture the growth of European literature and art. The oral storytelling currently still existent in indigenous tribes is not only referenced for the practice of rituals and ceremonies but also drawn on for the creation of sculpture, painting and decoration, and is also the valuable assets of the indigenous peoples. As Taiwan's mainstream society is undergoing extremely fast social changes, the tribal beliefs and political structures have come under the relative influence of such changes. Therefore, in a time when tribal social system is losing its cohesion, class and power implementation are no longer following the traditional practice. Many tribespeople are relinquishing traditional values, but only cultural traditions and ethnic aesthetics continue to live on through the oral storytelling. Existent in the tribes is a plethora of wide-ranging stories and traditional arts, which are resources and assets; indigenous artists can exhibit their diverse creativity and creation through interpretation and refinement of such assets.

To return to the discourse on "Taiwan's primitive art", the early practice of referring to indigenous craft creation as primitive art does have its basis. For instance, to pass on the heritage, traditional ethnic craftsmen continue working with traditional objects in the tribes; women in the clans learn the clan pattern and color coordination by heart; and the ancient tribal melodies continue to be sung and religious rituals performed; oral myths and legends are being recorded in phonetic spelling and Han characters. Tribes that have preserved their own cultural characteristics stand firm amid the deep penetration of mainstream Han culture. Despite the constant interaction between indigenous peoples and mainstream culture in the past few decades, the indigenous people's oral tradition has been passed on from generation to generation. However, it is now high time to re-examine the view that Taiwan's indigenous art equals primitive art and to take Taiwan's indigenous art seriously as it has its own unique context and ways of re-presentation. As expounded by Shih Tsui-Feng, a long-standing scholar of "Primitive Art" on extensive visits to tribes in Taiwan and overseas, he holds the view that the primitive art discourse is inappropriate against the backdrop of contemporary indigenous art creation and states the following:

“Art, in any place or for whatever ethnic groups, is a social expression and contains social functionalities. Art has always been viewed as a public business of the entire community. Seeing art activities as an expression of personal talents (the author calls it “Art of Personalism”) is a phenomenon that didn’t occur until the Middle Ages. Creators’ autographs are never seen on works of primitive art. Specific individuals never stand out as the instructor of folk occasions like harvest festivals, which are marked by no hints of individual consciousness but only seamless collaboration between tribespeople and pervasive happiness in the tribe. Such is (the essence of) primitive art (2005: 17).”

II. UNVEILING CONTEXT OF INDIGENOUS ART

Taiwan’s primitive art study during the Japanese rule can be found in many anthropological studies and catalogues scattered in books on various subjects. Further, the “Research on the Primitive Art of Taiwan’s Indigenous Races”, written by Sato Bunichi and published by the Police Department of the Government-General of Taiwan in 1942, is a precious specialized book on the compilation, writing and depiction of craft characteristics and artistic expressions of all ethnic groups. In the Kuomintang government came to Taiwan, the earliest discourse on the relationship between the indigenous peoples and primitive art dates back to Chen Chi-Lu’s presentation at an academic seminar held in September 1962, where he stated,

“Any talks about Taiwan’s primitive art should begin with a talk on Taiwan’s primitive ethnic groups and their cultures, which can be categorized into five groups based on their cultural similarities: the northern tribes (Atayal and Saisiyat), the central tribes (Bunun, Thou and Cou), the southern tribes (Rukai, Paiwan and Puyuma), the eastern tribe (Amis) and the Lanyu tribe (Yami). From the perspective of artistic achievements, the southern tribes are the most distinguished, while the northern tribes stand out with their excellent weaving techniques. Subsequently Taiwan’s primitive art as discussed today will mainly focus on the northern and southern tribes. Taiwan’s primitive artworks are primarily classified into weaving & embroidery and wood carving. Other art forms, such as basket weaving and pottery, may have some significantly notable works but are essentially not up to par with the aforementioned two categories.”²

Chen's statement shows that though wood carving and weaving may each have its own traditional cultural significance and functionalities, anthropologists would not go as far as overlooking the fact that the differences in each creator's hands-on approach and narrative style have constituted the key elements of art creation. The Lion Art Monthly and the Artist Magazine devoted an entire issue to "Taiwan's primitive art" and "Taiwan's aboriginal art" in 1972 and 1976 (Figure 1), respectively, but somehow did not deviate from the vision of a collector and the stereotypical depictions of foreign cultures as viewed by anthropologists, ethnologists and Han culture.



Figure 1.

The Lion Art Monthly and the Artist Magazine devoted an entire issue to "Taiwan's primitive art" and "Taiwan's aboriginal art" in 1972 and 1976.

During this period, creators crossing over the Japanese colonial period (1895~1945) and the Kuomintang government (from 1945~) dwindled out of focus from the art circle at the time. Many of them lost their traditionally held status due to their expression of sentiments and the transition of political powers.

For instance, Pasulang, the Paiwan Pakedavai tribal chieftain at the Sandiman village in Pingtung, refused to sell his artworks of wood carving but kept them for later generations in order to retain their traditional tribal values. Other examples include Gao Fu-Cun, Shen Qiu-Da of Jia-Xing Village and Lidaku Mabaliu of Rukai Kucapungane whose works could now only be seen in the collection of folk-art collectors. During this period, some skilled tribal craftsmen whose artworks were favored by collectors persisted with their tribal characteristics, while some others opted to accept orders for sculpture reproduction with other tribal characteristics, and this demand contributed to the “Craze for Mountain/Indigenous Cultures”.

Later on, only when the Lion Art Monthly once again issued a special edition in 1991 themed on “Neo Primitive Art” to begin the discussion on the relationship between creators and their tribal cultures was it made clear to everyone that indigenous artists are not confined to the creation of primitive art, but instead, they have been constantly blending their traditional values in their creation and expressing their personal styles since the 1990s.

At this time, many indigenous creators began to express cultural self-awareness, mission of cultural revitalization and cultural uniqueness through songs, words, sculpture, music and dance against the backdrop of social upheavals that resulted from a dissolving political structure. The benchmark figures during this period include the following: the Puyuma artist, Hagu, who presented the tribal myths, hunting, farming, praying rituals, banquets and so on through a realistic yet rustic carving style; the Paiwan artist, Sakuliu, who presented the tribal stories, taboos, and dreams through drawing, sculpture, and molding in a combination of abstract and concrete styles, and whose areas of work cover reproduction of traditional ceramic pots, graphic design, pottery sculpture, wood carving, slab carving, mixed mediums and even architecture, all of which are Sakuliu’s expertise. Notably in the 1980s, Sakuliu led many young people from his tribe to embark on a journey of learning tribal handicraft and traditional knowledge, as a result, impacting a large number of young creators, such as Vatsuku, Sakinu, Kulele, and Oko, who are now all fully-fledged contemporary artists.

Rahic Talif on the east coast brought young people from his tribe on a thorough field trip, where they set out to document oral narratives and learn ancient melodies and mountain forest knowledge from the elders. Rahic commands an in-depth observation of environmental issues, and he often goes as far as the coastline to scavenge for creation materials from marine debris. His driftwood exhibition presents reproduced sculpture, collage, and installation. Yuma Taru traces her ancestral aesthetics through the rejuvenated craft of traditional weaving and brings together tribal women affected or displaced by natural disasters to form cycles of co-creation by way of learning to weave and to restore/experience the previous order. In Taiwan, it is no longer a situation to define and position “indigenous contemporary art”, but to practice and continue cultural traditions and wisdom through contemporary art. Under the influence of these predecessors and previous indigenous art practitioners, the set-up of Pulima Art Award³ in 2012 is a clear indication of generational transfer of creative energy, re-presentation of traditional wisdom and contemporary social issues. Performances at the Pulima Art Award and the biennial art festival have sparked more in-depth discussion on contemporary issues.

Once we steer clear of the discourse structure of primitive art, the contour for an indigenous art narrative has clearly surfaced. Each of the officially defined 16 ethnic tribes has its own idea of beauty and belief & philosophy. It’s difficult to find the corresponding word, “Art”, in traditional indigenous vocabularies, but the closest word in the Paiwan language would be “Pulima” as the Paiwan people call those exquisitely skilled in handicraft “People with many hands (Pulima)”. A close look at the origin of all tribal aesthetics and creations reveals a shared composition in the context of cosmic views, beliefs of ancestral spirits, ethnic aesthetics and social history.

Likewise in the Oceania art history, the traditional versus contemporary creations are illustrated as such:

“These traditions, still vital in communal contexts, are now also entering contemporary art galleries with the support of innovative curators, or becoming involved in collaborative projects with contemporary artists trained in art schools. Indeed, some are forming art schools of their own.

Similarly, art history's traditional concentration on the 'high' and 'fine' as opposed to the 'low' and 'popular' has been scrambled by the popularization of the global art world and the extraordinary currency of cultural difference within it. In addition, artists coming out of postcolonial contexts have complex and creatively productive relationships with the popular, which cannot be explained by the opposition between the critical autonomy of high art and the depredations of mass culture.”⁴

Lee Tai-Hsiang, an Amis from the Malan Tribe in Taitung, was the first indigenous composer to win the 12th National Award for Arts in 2008.⁵ Lee who left his hometown at a very young age confessed a slight detachment from his native culture. And yet highly talented with native creative elements and able to square the circle of art and business, Lee was one rare composer that had transcended diverse cultural fences. Sakuliu as a recipient of the 20th National Award for Arts in 2018 was described in the award recipient profile as such: “Sakuliu·Pavavaljung is a benchmark artist encompassing both creation and indigenous movement who transcends the vision of a modern nation, devotes his artistic life to the pursuit, conservation and re-creation of traditional culture. With all-round social practice through art, Sakuliu is not confined to any artistic discipline, sets up schools in the tribe, and embodies cultural self-awareness. His works reflect and stream between traditional and contemporary aesthetics.” Puljaljuyan Pakaleva as a Paiwan choreographer and a recipient of the 22nd National Award for Arts thinks that no one should be hurt by for being unique.⁶ He explored the source of indigenous culture, and redefined the form and content of the works, showing amazing originality. From being a dancer to a choreographer of Cloud Gate Dance Theater, he constructed his personal storytelling system in the process of finding his way, to create and interpret the possibility and contemporaneity of indigenous performance art. From the three outstanding indigenous creators recognized by the National Award for Arts, it can be seen that their continuous creation has accumulated rich energy and eye-catching, created a connection with contemporary society from their abundant mother culture, and showed that the artists deep reflection on human nature, as well as keen observation and reflection on society.

III. VOCABULARIES CONVEYED THROUGH PERFORMANCES

In Taiwan's indigenous languages, words related to creations such as "Art" and "Performance" are non-existent. Concept like art and performance is understood as cultural performances. Looking into the social development in the past and present will reveal that art creation and performing arts are an important part of the culture and the daily life for Taiwan's indigenous peoples. For instance, the essential items in life and the objects needed for rituals are all materials gleaned from nature for production and application. Likewise, the performing arts by Taiwan's indigenous peoples are birthed and developed by following the social context, and different histories and social organizations give rise to different development of performing arts. Through chanting ancient melodies, physical movements, circle dance, and playing instruments, the indigenous peoples in Taiwan exhibit their unique value in performing arts. Taiwan's indigenous peoples continue to draw nutrients from their past to innovate their art creations, for instance, by integrating myths, legends and patterns into visual art. Further, many of the tunes and melodies in their performing arts allow for improvised lyrics and chanting depending on the occasion, which makes it possible for praying rituals to uphold tradition while making room for innovation. Therefore, the passing-on of indigenous traditional arts play a crucial role in the process of cultural revitalization for Taiwan's indigenous peoples, and such traditional arts presented as contemporary art creations is a key route for Taiwan and the international society to learn about Taiwan's indigenous cultures.

From the angle of traditional art, Taiwan's indigenous peoples have exquisite musical instruments, including nose flutes, harmonicas, musical bows, jaw harps, percussion, pestles, hip bells and so on. Though the indigenous musical instruments are on a slow decline due to the impact of external advancing cultures, musical instruments reproduction is now becoming prevalent in many tribes to combine with modern forms of performance and re-explore the possibilities of indigenous musical instruments. Taiwan's indigenous peoples are endowed with rich assets in performing art and culture, and the forms of their traditional performances are highly recognizable, consisting of dance & music and musical instruments covering ancient melodies, tunes, dance, and ritual music & dance.

In terms of singing, Taiwan's indigenous songs mainly comprise ritual songs, praying songs, labor songs, love songs, banquet songs, and narrative songs, among others. Most notably, it is the Bunun's "Basibubu, Song for Abundant Harvest of Millet" that best represent Taiwan's indigenous music as it employs the singing techniques of natural harmonics. Other indigenous tribes known for their songs and music performed in harvest rituals include the Amis and Tao peoples. Important rituals and ceremonies are Cou's Mayasvi, Saisyat's Pas-ta'ai, Saaroa's Miatungusu, and Sakizaya's Palamal. Nowadays, performing arts by Taiwan's indigenous peoples come in wide-ranging forms, e.g., performance art, theatre, native-language music, musicals, repertory theatre, choirs, and popular music.

Worth mentioning is the drama competition in indigenous languages, a very special performing arts event for Taiwan's indigenous peoples.

This expression of performing arts is a proactive approach to promote indigenous language and cultural renaissance. Such scenario-based performance deepens the speakers' experience of languages and cultures while expanding the speaking environment of the native languages from the household, tribes to the communities. Drama competitions are therefore a successful rejuvenation campaign fusing native languages and performing arts. Indigenous performing arts, in which one can see a construct and narrative centering on the subjectivity of the indigenous peoples, is a pathway that enables the indigenous peoples to extend their culture in the face of social changes and transitions.

Besides learning from tradition, contemporary indigenous peoples in their practice of performing arts are faced with cultural drain and discontinuity. As seen in the creation process of indigenous art performers, the integration and coexistence of tradition and innovation is the important key to dealing with the depletion of traditional culture. Performance groups formed by Taiwan's indigenous peoples apply stringent field investigation methods to conduct field surveys deep in the indigenous tribes and uncover indigenous music and dance in praying rituals.

For instance, the Formosa Indigenous Dance Foundation of Culture and Arts (the FIDFCA), founded in 1991 and composed of members from various indigenous peoples across Taiwan, has been for years orally learning from the tribal elders the traditional indigenous music and dance and then re-produce the gathered materials into performances for external audiences with a view to disseminate traditional indigenous culture. Such creation methods have been encouraging and sets an example for Taiwan's indigenous performers and performing groups to begin with the tribes, adhere to the spirit of learning with humility, and impact the next-generation creators. With over 30 years' experience since its inception and 23 dance performances in its repertoire, the FIDFCA has been focusing on celebrating and passing on ancient melodies and rituals of the indigenous peoples, according to its artistic director, Faidaw Fagod, who stated that chanting brings one closer to land and the ancestral spirits. The FIDFCA has become the bellwether of Taiwan's indigenous performing arts. Langasan Theatre founded by Adaw Palaf Langasan, a previous member of the FIDFCA, began by exploring the Tafalong genesis myths and has in recent years delved into the inquiry of performance art. Terudj Tjucenglav, inspired by ancient melodies and mythologies, turned his indigenous cultural roots into performing arts and dance choreography. The new-generation dancer, Chiu Wei-Yao, targeted current environmental issues as his creation focus to illustrate the response measures for the indigenous peoples.

VI. DISCOURSE ON CONTEMPORARY ART CURATING

Strength from the Mountain and the Sea Indigenous Art Exhibition in 2019/2020 adopts the curatorial concept based on the ancient Austronesian terms, "Ceoa" (land), "Pusu" (root) and "Wawa" (ocean), to create a cross-year exhibition at the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall that aims to initiate a dialogue between ancient wisdom and contemporary society so as to evoke the primal life memories in the face of historical injustice against a backdrop of seeking ethnic historical justice and transitional justice.⁷

Besides carrying out tasks of labor, i.e., all kinds of production pertaining to the sustention and protection of life, humans are also capable of engaging in thinking and concrete creative activities, and that capability marks the biggest distinction between humans and other biological species.

The assorted artistic and literary creations are not an act of whims but are born out of conscious, motivated and long-standing observation. It requires the use of natural resources and expression techniques that shall mature over time with endless practice, communicating with precision the originally intended creativity and conception. As such, earth has nurtured the landscape, diversity and traditional wisdom of human culture and records the life splendor and abundance. The word, “Ceoa”, in the ancient Tsou language uncovers the directional shift and re-presentation of artistic creation and production. Bauki Angaw who has been documenting the life of the Kavalan people uses video to record his people’s love for the earth and traditional wisdom. Like many other creators and tribal workshops that draw on the heritage of traditional craft, Lala Ban of the Kavalan people, is the only ethnicity that uses banana fibers for weaving, and the craft of banana fiber weaving is also a famous cultural feature to be restored. Lala Ban applies collective gathering to sort, dye and weave the fibers of banana stems. Its collective creative work by women extends the warmth of handicraft. Temu Basaw gathers, sorts and molds the shapes of the mountain rattan, which is a physically laborious undertaking and resembles a ritual of exchange in a conversation with land. Halomei from Xiaoma Tribe learns from her tribal elders how to make clothes out of paper mulberry (bark) and extends it to industrial design and creation. She takes the sculpting of paper mulberry fiber (bark) and traces the context of a self-identity search by the younger generation of her tribe. Hana Keliw turns driftwood scavenged after typhoons into reassembled artworks joined with steel to tap into the revitalization of land much like the healing for trauma. With reassembled driftwood, Iyo Kacaw, gives renewed interpretation of the land predicament from his perspectives. Labay Eyong, by way of scavenged objects and weaving of recycled wires, narrates the close connection between women and land. Dondon Houmwm brings into physical manifestation the ancient contract with nature as part of the tribal ancestral beliefs and nudges people towards re-thinking and returning to sustainable practice. These art and craft/memories are precisely the implementation of age-old wisdom from various ethnicities. The forerunners have thus walked out a path to guide the younger generation.

Taiwan's indigenous peoples that inhabit the plains, valleys, mountains, seashores and offshore islands across Taiwan have encountered historical, psychological or spiritual "authentic experiences" such as earth-shaking mountain ruptures, severe droughts, savaging floods, other debilitating natural disasters, rampant pandemics, invasions of ferocious enemies, displacement/migration of tribespeople, harvests, expeditions, successful combats, increasing populations and territory expansion. Since time immemorial, they have constructed their own sense of identity and interpretative systems that attempt at explaining all things around them, and these systems have come to be known as myths, legends, stories and chanting of all forms and functions. The Truku word, "Pusu (Root)," proposes the idea that contextual conceptualization rooted in family is an area awaiting exploration by indigenous creators. Creation that is derived from and informed by (natural) disasters also brims with compassion for earth and life and invites a reflection upon the two. "Root" proposes a path to redemption through ancient eco-philosophy. Thalaelethe Titibu and Rngrang Hungul video-document the narratives of the traditional indigenous territories and of how indigenous peoples fared through natural disasters. Pahawlan Cilan tells the life stories of shamans through the medium of sculpture and creates the boar-draped patterns to extend his exploration of and care for the spiritual world. Colin Offord shows much love and contemplation towards earth. Lahok Oding applies image layering and coloring of organic objects to explore a connection with life. Anguc Makaunamun's re-creation of photographs contains a subtle hint of mythological vibe. All these artists attempt to have a dialogue with the contemporary society through their artistic creations, as well as disseminating the impact before re-exploring their roots.

Syaman Rapongan has been living the life of the oceanic people through physical action for some time, conversing with the ocean, learning and embodying the cosmic views of the Tao people. He writes in Chinese to document the life stories of the Tao people and orally narrates them in his mother tongue with re-presentation of rhythms of the ocean waves. Much like her contemporary peers who have gradually forgotten how to locate one's original self, Wang Chi-Sui who was born and raised in the coastal region somehow could only trace the oceanic vibes through the memories.

Elong Luluan from a mountain indigenous tribe illustrates the migration and quest of the contemporary indigenous peoples through the shapes of boats and probes the possibilities of how we (the contemporary indigenous peoples) can move forward. The expansive, accommodating, all-encompassing and mysterious ocean carries the hopes of the island people; the ocean spells hopes and paths that can link us to other islands towards a wider world.

The cultures and arts of the indigenous peoples have evolved in form and content along with the changing environment, and that reflects a certain energy release and hungry chase by an organic lifeform seeking survival. To date, the indigenous oral stories and mythologies are still expanding and covering new grounds, following the conditions of the indigenous peoples and the development of their arts.

Today, Taiwan's indigenous cultural performance is an important medium in Taiwan's international diplomacy. Such artistic creations exhibit a crucial connection with the world's Austronesia peoples through indigenous languages, cultures, music and dance, rituals and other content. They are part of Taiwan's pluralistic cultures and Austronesian characteristics, as well as reflecting and voicing the contemporary issues of globalization.

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NOTES

¹ This paragraph quotes and rewrites part of the article published in the seminar “From Myth to Creation and Reproduction: Taking Taiwan Indigenous Art as an Example” in 2013.

² Lecture by Chen Chi-Lu, Taiwan’s Primitive Art, the Sixth Academic Symposium of the Taiwan Provincial Documentation Committee in 1962, Taiwan Documentation 13(3) 191-196.

³ The Pulima Art Award is the first art award in the country with aboriginal people as the main body. It aims to encourage indigenous people to break through limitations, develop contemporary indigenous artistic styles, encourage and support indigenous creations, and demonstrate the main body spirit of indigenous people in Taiwan. to promote the development of Indigenous art.

⁴ Peter Brunt, “Art in Oceania: A New History”, p.499

⁵ <https://www.ncafroc.org.tw/artsaward/about>, Quoting the description of “About the National Award for Arts” on the website: “ National Award for Arts” (formerly known as “National Culture and Art Foundation Literature and Art Award”) was established in 1997 in accordance with Article 20 of the Regulations on Cultural and Art Awards “The National Culture and Art Foundation shall establish All kinds of national literature and art awards are regularly reviewed and awarded to outstanding artists.” The “ National Award for Arts Establishment Measures” are formulated, and the National Cultural and Art Foundation (hereinafter referred to as the National Arts Association) is responsible for handling. In response to the current situation of the ecology, the setting method is regularly reviewed and revised, so as to truly meet the special status of the country’s highest honor award. The revised method in 2015 is held every two years.

⁶ Quoted from the website of the National Arts Award: Liao Yunjing “Warrior, from a high place, dance home: Brarayan Paglelaw”

⁷ The organizer is the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall Management Office, and the exhibition has been held from November 21, 2019 to March 22, 2020. Link to download the electronic guidebook: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-AhPnU-m3QbzXDzOYk7VPkyv05Zrlal6/view>