

Hope on Canvas



"Fish of Unity" demonstrates harmony in the community of General Santos, where the kids hail from. "Birds of Freedom" (right) suspended on air, portrays the kids moving forward and flying to their goals and dreams.

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If the word "artistry" is a word-play on "art is try" (trying), then the 500 children and young adults from different parts of the country who are victims of abuse, exploitation, and neglect may very well define and depict the every sense of the word.

The artworks of the beneficiaries of the Consuelo Foundation, which desires to serve the hopeless and the poorest of the poor; represent and encapsulate the children's current state of mind: hopeful and trying.

A tapestry of colorful and artistic myriad of art creations highlighted the Ayala Museum exhibit that is aptly titled "Giving Hope." The art show exhibits its *papier-mache* creations, a collage of drawings pasted on a native *banig*, and life-sized sketches of fishes and vegetables. These works were on exhibit until April 18.

There were no signs of despair reflected in each artwork, but rather a renewed sense of

hope and a celebration of life. The art composition done by either survivors or at risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation created their own interpretations of themes that illustrate the traditions of the regions where the children and young adults (aged 4-21 years old) came from.

Hope in art

"Ilaw ng Pagdiriwang" (Celebratory Lights) shows inspiration from Cebu's Simulog Festival, especially its dance routine of taking two steps forward and one step backward. The Cebuano word "sinulog" means "like the water current." The magnified lampshades symbolize the bright future of the artisans.

The entire theme of the exhibit does not only show moving forward but also flying toward one's dreams and aspirations. And "Ibon ng Pagaya" (Birds of Freedom) very well translates and signifies the flight



of the children toward their independence and ambitions. Several *papier-mache* birds of different colors and designs dangle freely in the museum. The work of art signifies the urban landscape in Manila.

The children from Baguio, meanwhile, got their inspiration from the Panagbenga Festival, which represents renewed hope from the tragic earthquake that devastated the city. Their masterpiece, "Bulaklak ng Pagasa" (Flowers of Hope) is a collage of large-scale flowers on canvas using acrylic paints. "Panagbenga" means seasons of blooming, a metaphorical allusion to the children's sense of hope and better life.

The exhibit does

not only focus on individual aspirations but also takes a holistic approach. The collage of the life-sized tuna fishes in oil pastels and felt cloth ("Isda ng Pagkakaisa" or Fish of Unity) may seem simple but the school of fishes represents the unity and community spirit, health, and development in General Santos City. The nipa-hut-and-vegetable collage that highlights Bicol's *siti* (chili) also shows optimism for the community.

A tribute to Mother

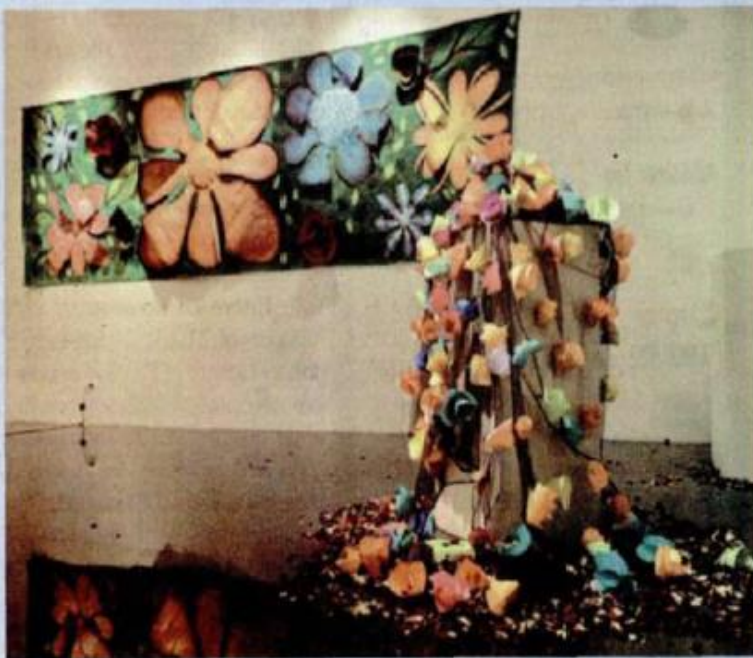
The child artisans are beneficiaries of the Consuelo Foundation initiated by the late Consuelo Zobel Alger, a philanthropist and a member of the prominent Zobel del Ayala family. The foundation has helped more than 400,000 children and women in the Philippines and 5,000 thousand kids from Hawaii since it started in 1988.

The Consuelo Foundation also supports programs such as early childhood care and development, youth and women empowerment, protection and recovery of survivors, and child abuse prevention and advocacy.

The child-less Consuelo lived an af-

fluent life and decided to offer all her inheritance to the foundation that is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary. As a token of gratitude, the scholar-artisans composed letters that expressed joy and memories shared together with their mother, dubbed by many as their "Earth Angel". The letters were arranged as a bouquet of flowers that alluded to Consuelo's devotion to St. Therese, or "the Little Flower of Jesus."

"Hope is so important to each of us—I would like to renew hope for those who have lost it and to give hope to those who never had it," Consuelo Zobel Alger was often quoted saying.



Flower Letters: Kids from the Consuelo Foundation wrote "thank you" letters to the Mother of the charity.

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