



'MANGO VENDOR,' acrylic on canvas, by Norlie Meimban.

Pinoy expressions

The Filipino Cultural Heritage Society of Washington, in cooperation with the Seattle Center, presents "5 Strokes: Pinoy Expressions."

In celebration of the 109th anniversary of Philippine Independence, five artists will represent the country in the upcoming Pagdiriwang Philippine Festival 2007 at the Seattle Center, Seattle, Washington, USA.

Opening on June 8, paintings by Grandier Bella, Jane dela Paz, Jes Evangelista, Norito Meimban and Raul Roco, Jr. will be on display until June 10 as guest artists in the festival's art show.

The seven-man exhibit is organized by the Filipino Cultural Heritage Society of Washington and encourages cultural exchange with the participation of artists from Seattle.

Featuring metal relief sculptures and paintings, the exhibit promises a unique blend of creative talent highlighting the uniqueness and diversity of each artist's styles and persuasions.

On its 20th year, the FCHSW has served the community through this annual event, in cooperation with the Seattle Center, the Filipino ethnic community in Washington, dozens of Filipino organizations with sponsorship from Seattle Times, Boeing Company and Microsoft.

The Pagdiriwang Festival serves as the beacon of the Philippines, educating people everywhere about the country's history, traditions, and artistic creativity through a variety of cultural shows and activities.

The Filipino as an Artist

by JP Paredes

The just-concluded Pagdiriwang 2007 held at the Seattle Center, June 9-10, was a very significant event for several reasons. First, it commemorated 109 years of Philippine independence. Second, it honored the dwindling population of Filipino World War II veterans who continue to fight for reunification with their families and for equity with their American peers. Third, it featured new talents in

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Visiting painters from the Philippines whose works were exhibited during Pagdiriwang 2007 pose for the FAB's lensman. They are (l-r) Jes Evangelista, Norlie Meimban, and Raul "Ponj" Roco, Jr., son of the late Philippine Senator. (PM photo)

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the Fil-Am jam as well as new faces in the organizing committee. Fourth, it is the Pagdiriwang's 20th anniversary under Seattle Center's Festal program. Fifth, it featured visiting visual artists from the Philippines as well as two local artists to grace the occasion by exhibiting their works.

I found the art exhibit truly significant because of the sheer talent of the exhibitors as well as the large number of their pieces, bringing pure joy to the spirit that basked in rich cultural awareness. I can only say that it brought Pagdiriwang's 20th year to a whole new level of sophistication. It is true that there were art exhibits in the past by major Philippine painters but the presence this year of three artists brought to bear a diversity of styles and media that established Pagdiriwang as a definitive event for patrons of the arts. Proof of the quality of the exquisite works of the artists was that the event caught the attention and interest of the Seattle Art Museum. Now that, in a capsule, says it all!

Featured during the event organized by the Filipino Cultural Heritage Society of Washington (FCHSW) were visiting artists collectively called "5 Strokes" composed of Grandier Gil C. Bella (photo realism), Mary Jane V. Dela

Paz (impressionism), Jose C. Evangelista (abstractionism), Norlito P. Meimban (figurative impressionism and expressionism) and Raul M. Roco, Jr. (abstractionism).

One viewer remarked with tears in her eyes, she "did not realize that the array of art hung in the Harrison Gallery of the Center House would satisfy the yearning in her heart that can only be filled by the beauty of high culture."

The 20th anniversary of Pagdiriwang was a milestone in FCHSW's support of the fine arts because the event highlighted something that sorely needs to be nurtured in the Philippines. We all know that arts and culture are often one of the first casualties in a country that is busy with the business of economic survival. Those who take art as a profession are often described as starving artists; it is all they could do to keep body and soul together. Yet they offer us, in all generosity, a part of their spirit through their art. More often than not, they have no opportunities to provide health care for themselves and their families. It is therefore doubly heroic for Philippine artists to display such uplifting expressions of their indomitable spirit expressed through the work that their hands, guided by their hearts, produce. They deserve all the sup-