# **Chapter Four**

**Junyee’s Woods: Conceptualism in Contemporary Indigenous Art**

During an interview about Shop 6 and their 1974 exhibition at Lahi Gallery, Chabet jokingly boasted of Shop 6’s foresight, remarking, “I think we showed the first manifestation of indigenous art. Joe’s panties, this is what you see in Quaipo [Market].”[[1]](#footnote-1) In that same interview, he also quipped that Laudico’s installation of fishing net with oil slicked sticks occurred “before people were starting to use sticks and stones. You know, that kind of installation—indigenous.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Yet, by jesting that Joe Bautista’s installation of saran-wrapped panties and Laudico’s oily sticks could be considered “indigenous,” Chabet highlighted what he considered to be the widespread and dubious tendency of labeling artworks made from alternative materials in the Philippines as “indigenous” following the 1970s.

In the same year as Shop 6’s first experimental exhibitions, newcomer Luis “Junyee” Yee Jr., an artist who art historian Alice Guillermo later designated as “one of the earliest proponents of the use of indigenous materials in the Philippines,”[[3]](#footnote-3) received attention as the Grand Award recipient at the 1974 Annual Art Exhibition held at the recently inaugurated Ayala Museum.[[4]](#footnote-4) The *Times Journal* announced his victory as “the most exciting thing about the annual AAP (Art Association of the Philippines) contest” and described Junyee as “a complete unknown” and “the year’s art find.”[[5]](#footnote-5) **[fig. 4.1]** As the Grand Award winner, Junyee’s piece, *Our Woods*,defeated the work of more established artists such as Napoleon Abueva, his mentor at UP-Diliman, whose sculpture received an honorable mention that year.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Two years later, in 1976, Junyee held an outdoor sculpture exhibition in Rizal Park.[[7]](#footnote-7) Titled *Malabayabas, and other types of wood in the sculpture of Junyee* (*Malabayabas at iba pang kahoy sa Iskultura ni Junyee*), it was “the first outdoor wood sculpture show in the country.”[[8]](#footnote-8) In 1980, Junyee received the coveted *Thirteen Artists* recognition from the CCP, which he used to mount the first site-specific group installation exhibition at Los Baños, Laguna. He also had his first solo exhibition at the CCP in 1980 that included an installation titled *Wood Things*. Junyee later received a second Grand Award at the Association of Art the Philippines Annual Art Competition in 1986 with a sculpture made entirely of twigs, rattan, fiber, vines, leaves and bamboo, described in the CCP’s curatorial files as “non-traditional and indigenous ‘cheap’ materials…used in contemporary art making.”[[9]](#footnote-9) He formalized his position as an indigenous artist internationally when he co-authored a manifesto for indigenous art with Virgilio “Pandy” Aviado at the 4th Havana Biennial in 1991.

Though Chabet’s mocking remarks that Shop 6’s incorporation of “indigenous” materials, such as Laudico’s banana leaf installations, predated the popularity of contemporary indigenous art seen throughout the Philippines during the 1980s and 90s, Junyee had also gained attention during the 1970s using similarly local materials. I use the term contemporary indigenous art or indigenous installation art in this chapter as it relates to Junyee’s practice to reference art that incorporates “alternative” materials of local persuasion.[[10]](#footnote-10) These materials are often, but not always, made from plant-life indigenous to the Philippines. This differs from indigenous art that would refer to indigenous identification of the artists or people who created it. Junyee himself stated, “Now, indigenous material is a misnomer, because when they say indigenous material, they are thinking it’s like a material only found in the country. It’s not true, because copper, gold, marble, metal [i.e. more conventional materials for art-making] it’s all here.”[[11]](#footnote-11) He further described how, at the ASEAN Conference for Indigenous Materials, which Junyee led with Virgilio Aviado in 1993, he “tried to explain to them that the word indigenous material is a misnomer, that it should be called nontraditional material for contemporary art-making.”

Junyee’s allusion to “nontraditional material for contemporary art-making” and his tendency towards ephemeral installations mirrored the concerns of conceptual artists in the 1970s.[[12]](#footnote-12) While Junyee is associated with indigenous installation in the Philippines by the 1990s, he, like Chabet and other Shop 6 artists, first experimented with local and found materials without necessarily proclaiming them as indigenous references. Instead, I argue that Junyee’s installations and these early realizations of “indigenous” art fall under an umbrella of Philippine conceptualism as they shared similar material concerns and struggles of art making in the Philippines.[[13]](#footnote-13) By including Junyee in my dissertation on Philippine conceptualism, I position that Junyee’s early works were an extension of conceptual impulses.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The CCP was built upon Imelda’s desire to elevate the Philippines within an international circulation of modern performance and art. Much of the first three chapters focus on how artists compromised Imelda’s vision of artistic progress through exhibitions that occupied the spaces in ways that cast doubt on the instrumentalization of their art. On the one hand, the CCP’s developmental agenda—established under the Marcoses’ desire for rapid progress—promoted an experimental art practice that would demonstrate international contemporaneity and equivalence. On the other hand, Imelda, along with others involved in the Philippine art world, also found the development of a local culture and aesthetic important to national interests and pride.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Marcoses supported the implementation of local materials in Philippine music, architecture, and design to connote physical autonomy from the West—a form of cultural nationalism that bordered on self-exotification for foreign approval and export.

In the decades contingent on indigenous materials as a form of cultural power, Junyee’s capricious installations question the stability of these materials as markers of particular place. Part of the chapter traces how contemporary indigenous art in the Philippines was codified through its inclusion of alternative materials. Like the self-proclaimed conceptual artists, Junyee also concerned himself with questions of orientation as a Filipino artist in an increasingly globalized art world through the employment of materials alternative to paint. Through close analysis of a handful of Junyee’s installations from the 1970s and 80s, I examine how he manipulated local materials and references as a form of self-determination in the face of dictatorial control. As the terms of indigenism evolved for Junyee through the twentieth century, his work encourages us to consider the fluidity of artistic and political categories as it relates to position and place.

***Trellis (Balag)* Collaborative Installation as Indigenous?**

During the early 1990s, Junyee described his experiences as a young artist in the Fine Arts department of U.P.-Diliman in the 1960s. He reminisced:

Like other artists of my generation, I grew up at the time when Filipinos, just emerging from the trauma of the Second World War and newly given their ‘independence’ by America, was at the height of admiration for all things American…But for the student activism that opened the floodgates of nationalistic fervor, my generation would have marched blindly along the road of western culture. It was in this atmosphere that I put up my first outdoor installation using indigenous materials and according to traditional Filipino form and custom.[[16]](#footnote-16)

As a student, Junyee had been an “avowed activist” and a member of the politically active Brotherhood of the Plebeians, a progressive, left-wing organization that was temporarily dismantled during martial law.[[17]](#footnote-17) Though Junyee had initially been more of a social realist artist, he claimed he shifted towards installation art in order to more effectively incorporate indigenous materials and elements in his work.[[18]](#footnote-18)

His first one man outdoor installation occurred on a vacant plot on U.P.’s wooded campus in 1970, the same year as First Quarter Storm.[[19]](#footnote-19) Titled *Balag* (Trellis), a structure that Guillermo described as one typically used “to support fruit-bearing vines such as gourds,” the temporary installation included a number of inch-wide bamboo strips bounded by ropes and strings in a grid formation.[[20]](#footnote-20) *Balag* was inexpensive to make as it benefitted from voluntary labor and its primary material, bamboo, “could be had from the fringes of U.P.” [[21]](#footnote-21) The gridded bamboo formed the top of the installation, which was held up by four posts—one at each corner to create a shelter-like structure. Jose “Bogie” Tence Ruiz, an artist who recently published a monograph on Junyee, surmises that “the grids [were] possibly 1 to 1.5 feet square, mimicking the actual trellis one finds in one’s backyard garden.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Like Maceda with *Cassettes 100*, Junyee relied on volunteers from U.P. to help construct *Balag*.

He requested that onlookers hang miscellaneous things as donations on *Balag*’s completed structure. In response, people left a variety of objects, including poems, political slogans, and various food items such as eggplants and dried fish.[[23]](#footnote-23) Ruiz also deduces that *Balag* “must have been taller than six feet but not quite eight feet” in order to “allow the average Filipino student to pass underneath, reach the top grid, to tie…objects, pieces of paper or board on which there were protests, poetry, love notes to their partners, quotations, fruits, candies.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Junyee remarked, “It’s a very strange looking thing, I was very satisfied because the students participated.” At the end of the installation, which took place over a few weeks, a lively group assembled to sing and read aloud the poems left on *Balag* while the edibles were “harvested,” cooked, and shared among the people gathered.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Junyee declared *Balag* as “the first artwork that was not priced to be sold” as well as “the first artwork that has participation [from] the audience,” echoing similar concerns to those expressed by the conceptual artists. He also emphasized that it was “the first artwork that used indigenous or cultural tradition.” Like Chabet and other Shop 6 artists working under similar context, Junyee found himself experimenting with alternative materials such as bamboo—an “indigenous” material—during an era that privileged these materials as methods of expressing “nationalistic fervor.”[[26]](#footnote-26) As discussed earlier, Chabet, for example, also featured bamboo at Shop 6’s first installation in 1974 at Lahi Gallery exhibition. He had tied a single bamboo pole with thick rope and hung it from the ceiling, just below Laudico’s installation of oil slicked sticks. He called the hanging bamboo pole “God.” While Chabet later acknowledged that his installation might be considered “indigenous,” he emphasized that “when we (Shop 6) were doing this, we were not trying to be indigenous. It was just that, there’s this material we saw and it was nice to use. It was this pole and it was hanging.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

Not only did artists involved with Shop 6 frequently use indigenous materials such as bamboo and banana leaves in their conceptual art practices, sculptors in the late 1960s and 70s also looked towards local resources to make their work. Francisco Verano, for example, was lauded by art historian Rodolfo Paras-Perez as an artist whose “bamboo sculptures definitely indicate more than the material presence of bamboo” after he took part in *Ugat-Suri*, an exhibition that codified indigenous art practices as a nationalistic one in the Philippines in 1984.[[28]](#footnote-28) **[fig. 4.2]** As part of the exhibition, a multi-gallery effort that also included Junyee, Verano exhibited a sculpture entitled *Bamboo Fugue I*. The sculpture comprises numerous bamboo poles of variable lengths attached together in an upright configuration. Two lengths of bamboo carefully rest on *Bamboo Fugue*’s pedestal and support the rest of the hollowed-out pieces. The overall sculpture resembles some kind of abstracted musical instrument or the pipes of an organ. As implied by the title of the work—*Bamboo Fugue I*—not only does Verano’s sculpture resemble a musical instrument, it also produces sound like one. The individual poles have disparate sized holes cut into them that generate a whistle-like noise with the flow of wind through the bamboo shafts.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Verano had first started working with bamboo in the 1970s when he installed a large-scale bamboo sculpture at the CCP in a 1971 exhibition. Similar to Junyee’s *Balag,* Verano arranged bamboo poles in a three-dimensional, trellis-like formation. While *Balag* was mounted outside, Verano’s sculpture, however, was exhibited within the confines an indoor, state-sanctioned art space. **[fig. 4.3]** Simply called *Bamboo*, the sculpture consists of a matrix of interlocked bamboo poles—a material considered so fragile, even esteemed sculptor Abueva had found it too difficult to master.[[30]](#footnote-30) *Bamboo* occupies a large part of the room and resembles an off-kilter, three-dimensional grid. While the space between the bamboo poles allows the viewer to see through and visually enter the sculpture, the arrangement of the bamboo itself reminds one of a prison cell. The brittleness of the bamboo and the precariousness of their placement suggests the potential for movement, as if the bamboo were hanging on distinct planes that could shift around like an oversized mobile. Kalaw-Ledesma described Verano’s sculpture as “one of the more successful local experiments in this medium.” [[31]](#footnote-31) Kalaw-Ledesma noted that *Bamboo* exemplified the “conceptual, environmental and kinetic” art promoted by the CCP as a work of “avant-garde sculpture” during that period.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The practice of using local materials was not necessarily limited to visual art practices during the 1970s. The use of local materials also became important in Philippine music, design, and architecture among other creative pursuits during the 1970s. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Maceda, who had conducted fieldwork for his ethnomusicology degree in various provinces in the Philippines, often incorporated instrumentation made out from local materials into his compositions. **[fig. 4.4 – 4.6]** His scores for *Kubing* (1966), *Pagsamba* (1968), and *Siasid* (1983) include illustrations of instruments made from indigenous materials such as bamboo scrapers and flutes, and gongs designed after the ones he had experienced Maguindanao. Not only did he use local materials to make a range of instruments, but in compositions such as *Cassettes 100*—discussed in the first chapter of the dissertation—everyday objects such as shells or rice were also used to produce sounds like rain, a fragment of environmental noise.

Maceda was not the only one invested in promoting local materials for music. In 1976, the Bamboo Organ Festival began in Las Piñas, a small fishing city located a few miles from Manila, with support from the CCP. Verano had credited the Las Piñas Bamboo Organ for inspiring some of his work in *Ugat-Suri*, as he wanted to make sculpture that “can be made to look massive yet visually light in appearance.”[[33]](#footnote-33) The bamboo organ, housed in a small parish church, was built nearly two centuries ago by a Spanish missionary and had been restored in Bonn.[[34]](#footnote-34) According to an article published in 1977, the bamboo organ was “the only one of its kind in the world.” [[35]](#footnote-35) Though “tiny” and “limited in volume,” the organ “has an incredibly wide range of sounds.” [[36]](#footnote-36) In the late 1970s foreign organists from England, Belgium, Germany, and Argentina joined the festival with the help from their embassies and the Cultural Center.[[37]](#footnote-37) The Festival remains an active musical event in Las Piñas to this day.

The use of local materials also came to prominence in Philippine design. **[fig. 4.7 – 4.8]** In 1973, Imelda Marcos expressed her approval of the Philippine Institute of Interior Designers’ (PIID) “relevant response and use of tropical plants, palms, and the surfacing of natural grains of wood in the furniture” at their annual exhibition at the CCP Main Gallery.[[38]](#footnote-38) She noted that the exhibition, entitled *New Directions*, exemplified an “innovative and imaginative use of local material and design resources” and demonstrated “the richness of our design materials and the creativity of our people.”[[39]](#footnote-39) According to the exhibition files the “new directions” implied by the title of the exhibition was not “the concepts of designs, but the growing awareness for the excellence of Philippine materials,” with the extra emphasis on the use of materials over aesthetics.[[40]](#footnote-40) Not only was Imelda Marcos pleased with the new directions taken by the PIID with their choice and utilization of local materials, but she also exuded pride in more standard, functional fare such as “unglazed pottery, chrome plastics…and baskets” that were “also being made much use of abroad.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

**[fig. 4.9 – 4.10]** Imelda brought her attraction to local materials in design to new heights when she commissioned the Coconut Palace (*Tahanang Filipino*) in 1978 as a government guesthouse. She commissioned it with the support of the Philippine Coconut Authority and the United Coconut Planter’s Bank. While she encouraged the innovation of objects made from indigenous materials for foreign export, the Coconut Palace was an example of local materials leveraged for foreign consumption in the Philippines. During the period, the coconut industry was the Philippines’ third major dollar-earning export and contributed $536 million to the local economy.[[42]](#footnote-42) Architect Francisco Mañosa designed the building using coconut and the by-products of coconut. Located within the CCP Complex, the ostentatious structure was made of 70 percent coconut, with the rest coming from other “indigenous materials” such as local hardwood from Philippine trees such as narra, apitong, and kamagong.[[43]](#footnote-43)

As a government guesthouse, the Coconut Palace was intended to house foreign dignitaries and guests such as Brooke Shields, Sean Connery, Van Cliburn and Christina Ford.[[44]](#footnote-44) In fact, Brooke Shields, who was visiting for the Manila Film festival, cut the ribbon for the inauguration of the Coconut Palace in 1981, shortly after the Marcoses lifted martial law for the official visit of Pope John Paul II. The Pope had initially refused to visit the Philippines while the country remained under martial law. Yet while Pope John Paul II eventually acquiesced to a papal visit, he refused to stay at the Coconut Palace because of its opulence compared to the general poverty experienced in the country.[[45]](#footnote-45)

In a speech at the Coconut Palace’s opening, Imelda declared the building “a repository of native materials to show the Filipinos and the world that the Philippines is truly a rich country.”[[46]](#footnote-46) She further lauded, “Before, people used to idolize everything western or foreign. Now, he…finds beauty in his own land.”[[47]](#footnote-47) Imelda had intended the Coconut Palace to be the physical and material exemplar of Philippine independence and prosperity to foreign guests. Like Imelda, well-known for adorning herself in “terno” style Filipina dress with full butterfly sleeves, the Coconut Palace exemplified Imelda’s shrewd understanding of how to appeal to Euro-American guests’ orientalist desire for difference and exoticism.

Junyee came to prominence in the 1970s when exploration of indigenous materials and motifs in art, music, architecture, and design became important to nationalistic interests that coincided with the consolidation of Marcoses’ power. The promotion of local materials for foreign export and the construction of the Coconut Palace with local resources marked the Philippines’ economic potential as a country with raw potential and rich resources worth an investor’s time. Furthermore, the development of an ostentatious structure that resembled a tropical bungalow more than a government guesthouse was intended to be, much like Imelda herself, a spectacle of beauty and exoticism of a unified Philippines that charmed foreign celebrities and dignitaries alike.

As demonstrated by previous chapters, while inclusion of local materials furthered Imelda’s agenda of a rapidly developing art practice in the Philippines, many artists exploited the freedom given to them to fulfill her developmental program in ways that questioned or compromised the Marcoses’ authority. While Junyee similarly experimented with locally acquired, organic materials, he was more conscientious of their symbolic reference to cultural autonomy than the conceptual artists, who seemed more interested in how organic materials reacted to various forms of stress and duration. Junyee considered *Balag* as his “first attempt to use purely Filipino ingredients as material for visual culture.”[[48]](#footnote-48) He remarked that when he constructed *Balag*, it was “a very political time.…The burning question during our time in Diliman was ‘What is Philippine art?’.…So I was trying to look for a way to express my Filipino self.” Junyee imagined “a time machine…[to] go back to the past, without intervention of the whites, the Spaniards” to conceive of how art would look. As his first attempt at a response, he came up with *Balag*.

Junyee suggested that *Balag*’s indigenous flavor arose not only from his employment of local materials—“things natural to the Philippines like bamboo”—but also from the assistance of a community that made his installation a success by contributing to the trellis structure that was also built through collaboration.[[49]](#footnote-49) Instead of rummaging in garbage bins or gathering banana leaves at the side of the road— actions taken by Modesto and Laudico, respectively— Junyee relied on collaboration as a method of gathering materials since people hung items on the trellis as part of the installation. According to him, it was not only the physical materials that comprised *Balag* which made the work indigenous, but also the act of coming together to form a community that contributed to the sharing of song and food. Junyee explained “*Bayanihan*, a Filipino tradition of helping one’s neighbor, was the indigenous element of the work.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Junyee’s reference to *bayanihan*, which comes from the word *bayan*, meaning town or people, suggested that the indigenous elements in *Balag* came from the coming together of people as good neighbors and citizens to create a community rather than the accumulation of local materials. Junyee stated, “It was academic kind of. But I still persisted maybe because I was…romantic, I was young, I was foolish.”

*Balag* was taken down after “two, three weeks” as allotted by the university permit.[[51]](#footnote-51) After all the food was cooked and eaten, a small crowd of twenty to thirty students continued to gather and sing around the trellis. *Balag*’s outdoor structure and singing on a public university campus permitted those unfamiliar with visual art world too access it. Junyee expressed that during that period “Filipino rock and roll started to grow” and that while “nobody understood it [visual art]” people understood music because “everyone is doing rock and roll.”[[52]](#footnote-52) The familiarity of assembling and sharing in song and food allowed access to those typically excluded from the art world. Imelda lauded the use of local or indigenous materials in music, design and architecture as a form of cultural export of Philippine independence to an international audience—both to those who visited Manila and to those abroad. Free from the probing eyes of an international audience, *Balag* made a bid for people to assemble and actively participate in their own culture-making process as one that came from the people rather than a spectacle catered to foreign desire.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**Malabayabas, and other types of wood in Junyee’s Sculptures**

Similar to Imelda’s own cultural agenda, Junyee saw using indigenous materials as a concrete means to construct an artistic identity distinct from Western cultural interference. Whereas the First Lady was interested in exploiting these materials to create a stable identity for export, Junyee focused on the land as a source of materials that permitted freedom from the constraints of governance and internationalism. Junyee’s second outdoor installation, which took place in Rizal Park, would not occur for another six years. In fact, shortly after *Balag*, Junyee set fire to his possessions and moved to Los Baños, where he settled at the foot of Mt. Makiling for three years. During this period, he started to secure all his art materials by using “only discards from nature,” a practice he continued once he returned from his sabbatical in the woods.[[54]](#footnote-54) Junyee later explained that in order to make his small works, he followed “the lead from insects and birds” and “started making simple objects.”[[55]](#footnote-55) While he initially created all of his artwork during this period with his bare hands, he eventually made crude tools that allowed his installations to become more elaborate. As his installations became bigger and more complicated, his growing need for materials continued to be fed by the mountain. Junyee noted that the mountain, “patiently guides me along the path of indigenous art-making.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

Though Junyee had received a Special Award at the First National Sculpture Exhibition in 1968, it was not until the Art Association of the Philippines gave Junyee the 1974 Grand Award, a recognition bestowed upon the best work of painting, sculpture, or print in the entire annual exhibition, that Junyee became a more established name in the Philippine art world. He received the award shortly after he returned from Mt. Makiling with *Our Woods*, a mahogany sculpture of identical, half-leaning rectangular beams linked to a hefty, asymmetrical log through precarious metal connections. The mahogany wood had been donated by U.P.-Los Baños Forest Products Research and Industries Development Commission (FORPRIDECOM), an organization founded in Los Baños in 1957 charged with “pioneer[ing] improved techniques to use forest products, including resins and…lumberyard sawdust.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Junyee noted that since the sculpture is “only held together by a tiny wire” it “swings like branches” from nature. The title of *Our Woods* also seems to have touch of biographical reference, as Junyee himself had just returned from a long exploration of natural detritus in the woods of Los Baños.

**[fig. 4.1]** Unlike his later work, such as *Urban Series I* or *Wood Things*, the organic components of *Our Woods* have smooth, finished surfaces, indicating Junyee’s mastery over his crude tools.[[58]](#footnote-58) The beams appear similar in size and shape and uniformly angle away from the contorted log, as if they are in the midst of pulling that cumbersome piece of timber into their throng. The modernist grid also returns; the beams are streamlined into a gridded footprint of five by four that creates an impression of discipline and order. Tension plays an important role in the sculpture as the taut, string-like connection further emphasizes the struggle of the lone log against the pull of the regimented group of identical beams. According the Junyee, the sculpture was held together by a single piece of wire woven through the twenty beams to connect them to the dilapidated log.

Both the gridded configuration of beams and the lone log are slightly elevated onto a thin platform made from a piece of board.[[59]](#footnote-59) Cut out from the board is a rectangle that leaves a shallow indentation between the group and the log, suggesting that if the log succumbed to the tension of the string, it might fall and remain stuck in the rectangle-shaped imprint. While the beams seem to be actively pulling the unwieldy log as they all slant decidedly away from it, the log itself is horizontally oriented and seems to passively drag across the surface of the baseboard. Though the misshapen log lacks the uniformity of the finished beams, the smooth exterior of it indicates that, like its vertical counterparts, the large chunk of wood set on the floor has also been manipulated by the artists’ intentions.

While the beams in *Our Woods* are just taller than a chair—too small to necessarily be human sized—the impulse to anthropomorphize them occurs as the viewer associates the uprightness of the beams and their arrangement as an organized formation of people, or maybe even a group of uniformed military, dragging something that has fallen on the ground. The homogeneity of the slanted vertical beams makes the group appear cold and calculated; as a group they seem to exemplify doggedness at the hard work of pulling the reclined wooden thing. The thin wire connection strains against the weight of the struggle, as the string appears to just lift the very end of the strangely carved log up from the baseboard. *Our Woods* seems to abstractly demonstrate the effectiveness of unity to accomplish a task—a visual embodiment of how working together operates.

Junyee has given the log an unwieldy and unusual shape, which further highlights the great lengths the beams must go to move the object. Yet, the eccentricity of its shape causes the viewer to perhaps feel more empathetic with the charmingly funny-shaped horizontal figure. Compared to the ordinary looking beams that lack distinct characteristics, the log’s flared end and indented center is individualized, its imperfect shape more easily relatable to people than the mechanical coolness of the uniform beams. The log might not be an object exemplifying the labor of the people, but rather the abstraction of another person being dragged into submission. While the struggle is apparent, the message oscillates between one of the virtues of working together and the danger of succumbing to the sinister expectations of a group.

When asked why he contrasted the uniform grid of beams with the misshapen log, Junyee offhandedly remarked, “Just for contrast. Because it looks like *Spoliarium*.” **[fig. 4.11]** Painted by Filipino artist Juan Luna, *Spoliarium* (1884)is one of the most famous oil paintings by a Filipino painter. The massive painting, which measures approximately 14 feet x 25 feet, is currently displayed at the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila as their pièce de résistance. Luna submitted *Spoliarium* to the *Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Madrid in 1884, where it received the first gold medal; *Spoliarium* holds pride of place in Philippine art history because it was the first time an artwork by a Filipino had not only won an international competition, but had won one over their Spanish colonizers.

*Spoliarium* depicts a scene in the Roman Coliseum in which the bloodied bodies of fallen gladiators, who had been enslaved to “entertain their Roman oppressors with their lives,” are being dragged away from the arena.[[60]](#footnote-60) One of the slaves is held by his arm, his back bent into an uncomfortably arched position while his legs scrap along the ground. The other is bound multiple times with brown rope that his oppressor pulls as he drags his lifeless body across the floor. National hero and Filipino nationalist José Rizal, who lead political reforms for the Philippines under Spain, interpreted the painting as an allegorical reference to the struggle of the Filipino nation under the Spaniards.[[61]](#footnote-61) Like *Spoliarium*, *Our Woods* also embodied an element of struggle as the dilapidated log pulled against the ordered masses. *Our Woods* might also be an allegory of struggle between Junyee and larger society or between the Artist, an out of sync, misshapen character, and the order of government. Yet, on the other hand, *Our Woods* and the communal connotation of its title also appears to demonstrate the pressure of a group of beams working together to successfully move an object.

Both abstract and referential *Our Woods* is an early example of how narrative operates as a constant flux of multiple meanings and no meaning at all within Junyee’s installations. Junyee’s 1974 AAP victory took place in a moment when those in the art world and beyond took an interest in using local materials to produce cultural artifacts. *Our Woods* reflects that interest in using local materials in a manner that aligned with more abstracted and conceptual interests of artists during that period, all while maintaining a certain level of legibility and narrative. Those judging the AAP competition in 1974 found allure in *Our Woods* as it occupied a place between the figural and the abstract, the conceptual and the visual, and embodied the potential ambiguity of narrative and purpose.

His victory earned him P10,000 (which Junyee stated was “unheard of during this time”) and national attention towards his art and his donors at U.P.-Los Baños, who wanted to continue to donate materials for his next projects as part of a “wood promotion mandate”.[[62]](#footnote-62) Titled *Malabayabas, and other types of wood in the sculpture of Junyee* (*Malabayabas at iba pang Kahoy sa Iskultura ni Junyee*), the exhibition took place in a heavily trafficked part of Rizal Park down the street from the CCP on Roxas Boulevard. For the work, Junyee used hardwood to construct several modular towers, each standing about ten to twelve feet high, on site at Rizal Park. Junyee described *Malabayabas* as an “installation made out of sculptures.” All the planks were supplied by pre-carved to Junyee’s specifications by FORPRIDECOM. Most of the hardwood was malabayabas, a material Junyee was quick to point out is the second hardest wood in the world.

**[fig. 4.12]** The only visual documentation available of *Malabayabas* comes from a rare photograph taken by sculptor/art columnist Imelda Pilapil. The photograph shows Rizal Park bustling with people who throw curious looks at the out-of-place structures. The tower in the foreground includes identical beams of wood overlaid on top of each other to create a crude structure with a hollow center. To the right of the stacked tower, toward the background of the photograph, is another structure with a dome-shaped top constructed by slender wooden beams, which according to Ruiz, “harks somewhat to a Thai Spirit House.”[[63]](#footnote-63) The crude wooden dome is held up by four posts, recalling the familiar shelter structure of *Balag* at U.P.

Ruiz writes that *Malabayabas* was “an abstract showcase of forest product” that took place during a “spike in activity for local artists.” Ruiz suggests that the IMF-World Bank conference hosted by the Marcoses in October 1976 in the “freshly constructed Philippine International Convention Center (PICC)” coincided with the spike in artistic activity—including the opening of two major museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Manila and the Museum of Philippine Art (MOPA) and the “blow-ups” of works by Filipino artists, young and old, in acrylic latex on the side of large buildings. Ruiz further argues that the Marcos administration had “mobilized the state apparatuses to festoon Metro Manila in art” with the goal “to impress their IMF-World Bank delegates/patrons that progress indeed [had] come from the massive loans they had advanced the autocracy.”[[64]](#footnote-64) *Malabayabas* took place “a few months ahead of this political/economic/cultural extravaganza” and stayed in Rizal Park for “several months, possibly even until October.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

Ruiz, himself a long-time artist and friend of Junyee’s, connects *Malabayabas* with other major artistic efforts championed by the Marcos administration in 1976, suggesting the outdoor installation might have been part of the regime’s agenda to impress foreigners. Like Imelda’s Coconut Palace, *Malabayabas*, which was supported through an organization formed to promote Philippine forest products, was a display of indigenous materials to prove that the Philippines was a place worthy of international investment. Yet, Ruiz never directly claims that *Malabayabas* might have served this purpose. He only implies that it was “possibly” still up during the IMF-World Bank conference as Junyee had mounted it “a few months ahead,” which suggests that *Malabayabas* would have only coincidentally overlapped with the IMF-World Bank conference.[[66]](#footnote-66)

On the one hand, Ruiz’s need to place *Malabayabas* in the burgeoning artistic milieu as one instrumentalized for an upcoming international conference and his evasion of directly associating the exhibition with its goals might be the result of lacking documentation or memory. He is unsure, despite extensive interviews with Junyee, whether *Malabayabas* was actually up during the IMF-World Bank Conference, and therefore cannot make that claim. On the other, Ruiz understands the danger or fear of too closely aligning an artist to the Marcoses in the Philippines, lest he be accused of being a Marcos sympathizer, and may choose this tactic to avoid questions of direct compliance. Yet, if that were the case, he could have omitted that discussion altogether.

I propose instead that Ruiz juxtaposes *Malabayabas* with the artistic activities surrounding the IMF-World Bank conference to demonstrate that while *Malabayabas* could have fulfilled the regime’s vision of a progressive country for foreign approval, the ephemeral installation also gently pushed back, or rubbed against, these intentions. Ruiz’s discussion contrasts *Malabayabas*, Junyee’s “largest transient work thus far” and its lack of documentation with “two grand art venues” that exist today, and paintings blown up to be displayed on the surface of large buildings in Manila.[[67]](#footnote-67) Against the backdrop of these permanent buildings, some adorned with the best of contemporary Philippine art, *Malabayabas* appeared to be collection of flimsy, transitory, and inhabitable structures with no solid surfaces. Their transience permits them to only “possibly” be displayed during the conference, and therefore only “possibly” used as a tool of cultural excellence and economic potential by the Marcoses’ regime.

Junyee also found a method of escape in embracing the transience. Looking back at the one extant photograph, one might feel that Junyee’s towers were ancillary to people who would have come for a stroll in the park regardless of their existence. The man with a child in the foreground of the photograph throws a quick glance towards a stacked tower to his left, but his sightline remains uncertain. No crowd seems to surround the towers, and the people nearby face away from the structures. In the background, however, a small group gathers to examine some signage or a poster in front of a flag pole. The poster, made by Boy Yñiguez, was actually a promotional poster for *Malabayabas*.[[68]](#footnote-68) **[fig. 4.13]** A large part of the poster includes Junyee as he is enclosed within a stacked wooden tower. As the tower increases in height, Junyee is first shown listening to headphones with one ear covered, then with half his mouth taped close, then with one eye concealed in dark sunglasses. He stands inside the tower until it grows so overwhelmingly high that he hangs all his belongings, including his pants, and walks away from the structure, naked and without possessions.

Ruiz writes that the poster “was a commentary on…Martial Law that suppressed political expression.”[[69]](#footnote-69) Ruiz further explains that in the poster, Junyee “parodies hear no evil, speak no evil, and see no evil by going ‘half-way.’” The performance of only “half-way” hearing no evil, speaking no evil and seeing no evil reflects Junyee’s real life participation in the art world. While *Malabayabas* might have been “in line with the administration’s policy to bring art closer to the common *tao* [people],” as one newspaper review claimed, its promotional poster suggested that his compliance was also only “halfway.” Junyee affirmed, “This is my poster against the Marcos dictatorship…The idea is, there was martial law [and] I was half listening, half not listening, half seeing, half talking.…all one half.” Once the tower became too high Junyee stated that “before the forces of restriction built up…I was out already.” Junyee noted that *Malabayabas* was after his time in Mt. Makiling, stating, “Because during that time I already burned all my things. Until now, I still have that element of power. I can walk away from anything…I can basically walk without regrets because I have done it several times.” Junyee’s ephemeral installations and their connection to the land appears to free him from the constraints of governance. As the poster advertises, one could always walk away.

**Wood Things Infiltrate the CCP**

**[fig. 4.14]** Pooled in the corner of the room at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila are hordes of brown acacia pods that appear to wiggle and squirm like swarms of wet worms. On top of the brambly pods sit a few rectangular shaped forms with bristly exteriors made of the same natural detritus found underneath them. The forms, which the artist affectionately referred to as “pets,” crawl on the walls in two demi-arc formations as they creep into the corners and the cracks of the pristine white gallery.[[70]](#footnote-70) A handful of more ambitious ones even make it to the light fixtures on the ceiling.[[71]](#footnote-71) Others nest deep into the crevices between the walls and the ceiling, prickling their way into the unseen spaces behind the gallery walls and into human imagination. Their uniform size and rectangle bodies call attention to their intentional construction, like things that have broken out of the modernist grid. Despite their appearance of made-ness, the creatures seem to emerge, proliferate and disintegrate as natural phenomena from the clusters of brown pods. Simultaneously disgusting and slightly cute, the pets oscillate between creepy natural vermin that invade the pristine gallery and man-made, overstuffed, and oversized creatures that elicit vague affection or curiosity. With its incorporation of indigenous materials that refuse fixed narrative, *Wood Things* generates worlds that are alternative to the one it inhabits, demonstrating how Junyee’s installation privileges the spaces unseen as much as those seen. More than mere shorthand form of local specificity, indigenous materials permitted Junyee to explore a place or space beyond the confines of what was present.

Junyee reconstructed *Wood Things* for the Metropolitan Museum in 2014. **[fig. 4.15]** He had first exhibited *Wood Things* towards the end of martial lawin 1980 as his first solo exhibition in the CCP.[[72]](#footnote-72) Whereas the remake at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila is a remake that has been swept into the corner of the room, the original installation occupied the entire space Small Gallery.[[73]](#footnote-73) In a decade heavily predicated on the indigenous as a mobile and legible form of cultural power, Junyee’s so-called indigenous things invade (or escape from) the sterile, air-conditioned gallery space. Made from dried banana stalk stuffed with banana leaves and pricked with acacia pods to resemble vermin, *Wood Things* carries a double connotation of indigeneity. Junyee not only made them out of indigenous materials, but also made them to recall the vermin—such as roaches, ants, and termites—that scurry throughout Manila (and not just the woods), their prickly feet tickling the city’s many surfaces. Exhibited within the CCP, a modern, clean environment meant to elevate the Philippines into “the sunlit circle of the human family,” *Wood Things* demonstrated that the perimeters of art, like roaches, could not be contained or controlled.[[74]](#footnote-74)

*Wood Things* was also not the first time an artist brought natural ephemera into the CCP Small Gallery. Another notable solo exhibition presented in the gallery was Laudico’s *An Exhibition of Three Works*, which consisted of three weeklong installations from February 18 to March 17, 1975. Laudico received *Thirteen Artists* recognition in 1974, but instead of participating in the 1974 group exhibition, she chose to mount three successive installations in the Small Gallery**. [fig. 4.16]** Laudico had initially questioned the privileging of painting with her play on the word “oil” in oil painting by using crude oil in two-dimensional work, and her installation at the Small Gallery continued to push the boundaries of painting in the Philippines. The horizontal strands of banana leaves purposefully come away from the wall, just far enough to cast broad shadows that resemble broad, truncated brushstrokes. The shadows were impermanent, “found” painterly marks, alluding to the ephemerality of painting itself in favor of more indigenous materials. The migration of the work away from the wall further emphasizes the movement of Philippine art from painting. Throughout the course of the week, crude oil slowly oozed from the soaked banana leaves onto the ground, staining the interior of the CCP. The residual drip marks are simultaneously painterly and filthy, straddling the line of what constituted art and trash.

Despite his initial reluctance to exhibit in the CCP, Junyee decided to use his solo exhibition to bring the grimy world outside into the cool, air-conditioned gallery environment. Ruiz describes the viewer’s experience as “entering a small air-conditioned art gallery and stumbling into a den of fat, foot-long mutant crawlies.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Like *Our Woods*,Junyee’s pets also retain this tension between raw materiality and narrative reference. The title—*Wood Things*—is similarly ambiguous.[[76]](#footnote-76) For the original exhibition, Junyee insisted on red lamps to create a glow in the gallery that resembled the soft pink light of dusk during the very end of a sunset. Wood as a modifier in this case could refer to its materiality, as in a thing made of wood (which Junyee’s *Wood Things* are not) or to place, suggesting that these things belong or emerge from the woods.

While Junyee may refer to the rectangular units colloquially as “pets,” in the title he labels them as things—a designation that seems to counter the utilitarian value of objects such as pottery and baskets displayed at the aforementioned design fair. Unlike the Imelda’s coconut palace or the objects displayed at *New Directions*, which functioned as indigenous symbols of Philippine economic prosperity and independence, Junyee’s *Wood Things* elicit visceral responses as we encounter its prickly surfaces. These *things* constantly shift and are at flux. While they might vaguely resemble the roaches, they are too big and too rectangular to be naturalistic representation of vermin. Instead, the viewer encounters the thingness of these units—their prickly surfaces and crowded arrangements—as a sensation of bugs rather than visual representations as such. Junyee expressed, “Before the opening, before the show, I stood there alone [in the Small Gallery] and after a while I feel itchy....It’s so powerful that you itch.”

Albano reviews *Wood Things* in the *Philippine Art Supplement*, a short-lived CCP publication from the 1980s. He notes, “Children, romantics and cynics of contemporary art will find Junyee’s exhibition at the CCP Small Gallery a delight…His reference to the work as ‘pets’ connotes intimacy and cuteness.”[[77]](#footnote-77) Taken as a single unit, the pets might be considered cute, like the “chubby caterpillars.”[[78]](#footnote-78) The pressing component of *Wood Things* does not come from the form of the puffy bug bodies, which on their own, might be considered “decorative” rectangular adornments on a wall.[[79]](#footnote-79) Instead, the dense grouping of the pets together—particularly within the cramped corners of the room—constitutes the installation’s most terrifying aspect. For the original installation, the bugs were not only cramped in the corners, but also throughout the whole gallery, since Junyee constructed five hundred of them and “spread them all over the floor, densely, with just enough gaps so that a viewer might walk gingerly into the space.”[[80]](#footnote-80) On the walls and ceilings, they crawled in a loose spiral formation. Clumped in the bottom corner of the gallery, the rectangular forms appear to simultaneously emerge *from* and dissolve *into* the pool of pods. The symmetrical prickly construction of the pets refuses orientation—we are unsure whether the pets are coming or going, forming or disintegrating.

Since the viewer cannot surmise the direction of the bugs without a distinction between head and body, the pets could either be falling into the detritus or surfacing from it. The ambiguity denies a fixed narrative of causation, permitting one to consider the pool of natural ephemera as both generative and destructive. A few pets seem to float casually atop the accumulation of the pods. Although the presence of raw materials imply that the pet might be coming into being or dematerializing, Junyee only exhibits the pets as fully formed, never in the process of forming or disintegrating. The contents inside the bug bodies are left up to the viewer’s imagination—a physical manifestation of the unseen or unknown.

At the Metropolitan Museum, the pets found at the top corner of the gallery further reinforce the importance of the unseen in Junyee’s installation. Nestled deep into the gaps between the ceiling and the wall, the ambiguity of orientation applies to the ceiling corner in similar fashion to the bottom one. The pets appear to simultaneously emerge and disappear into the recesses of the wall, infiltrating the spaces of the gallery that are not seen. Regardless of which direction the bugs are going—into or out of the gallery, the viewer remains certain that behind the walls and the visible space of the gallery, there must be more of them. The fear or disgust that *Wood Things* elicits comes not from the neatly packaged bug bodies, but from the way they fade into unknown realms and unseen places. The use of natural materials further emphasizes the capacity for these creatures to proliferate without the human intervention in the way that only natural things could.

*Wood Things* alluded to the real world outside the walls of the Cultural Center—one of poverty overrun with various forms of vermin. By bringing critters constructed of local, organic Philippine materials, such as banana leaves and acacia pods, Junyee implies that the demand for indigeneity is not so easily packaged and necessarily includes the dirty bits—the roaches and other vermin that dwell in the cracks of the city. The call to bring the indigenous into the gallery, to tame or domesticate the indigenous brings certain levels of risk—also questions the ability to conceal the actual state in Manila through this performance of pristine buildings. Despite the Marcos regime’s careful surveillance, tight authoritarian control, and attempt to create a clean, modern space for art, they could not control the unseen. While Junyee’s pets may be “cute” or “domesticated” in their neat rectangular forms, their formation suggests that underneath the walls was an infiltration of bristly critters that could and would continue to multiply.

And *Wood Things* did multiply and infiltrate into the world. Although Junyee often describes his installations as ephemeral, the materials that compose the work, though subject to deterioration, were often given away or distributed to people after an installation was taken down. For example, since Junyee refused to sell the works in *Malabayabas*, the valuable pieces of wood were given away in Manila because Junyee did not have the resources to transport the materials back to Los Baños. Concerning *Wood Things,* as a “tribute to the popular aura of the piece, many of the staffers and assistants at the CCP asked for several things as souvenirs or keepsakes.”[[81]](#footnote-81) Junyee only kept a handful of the chubby caterpillars for himself. Thus, when art historian Patrick Flores requested that Junyee reconstruct *Wood Things* for the Metropolitan Museum, the bugs multiplied to fill another space.

**Contemporary Indigenous Art Infects the Galleries**

Though Junyee has been using materials drawn from the local environment since the 1970s, contemporary indigenous art as a practice that centered on local materials was not codified in the Philippines until the mid-1980s. In 1984, Junyee was among a number of artists who took part of an ambitious multi-gallery exhibition that featured indigenous materials entitled *Ugat Suri* (roughly translated as *A Search for Roots*). Curated by Eva Toledo and Rodolfo Paras-Perez, the latter the founder and chancellor of the ASEAN Institute of Art (AIA), the exhibition took place in eight of the most prominent galleries in Manila, including Luz Gallery, City Gallery, the Rear Room, and Sining Kamilig.[[82]](#footnote-82)

Held from late February to March in 1984, *Ugat Suri* was intended to coincide and complement the 3rd ASEAN Travelling Exhibition of Paintings and Photographs at the CCP Main and Small Galleries. While the exhibition at the CCP would showcase works from the five ASEAN countries of the period (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), both exhibitions were part of the month-long, 3rd annual ASEAN Art Festival hosted by the Philippines. The First and 2nd ASEAN Art Festival had previously taken place in Singapore and Jakarta respectively.[[83]](#footnote-83) Artists who participated in *Ugat Suri* included more established artists who usually employed a range of material and media such as Arturo Luz, Napoleon Abueva, Manuel Rodriguez Jr., and Jaime De Guzman as well as artists known for drawing on specifically indigenous influences such as Paz Abad Santos and co-founder of the Baguio Arts Guild, Santiago Bose.[[84]](#footnote-84)

The ASEAN exhibition at the CCP included over 100 paintings and photographs chosen by curators from the original five ASEAN countries. According to Albano, who was serving as the director of the museum division of the CCP at that time, the ASEAN show “aim[ed] to promote regional consciousness and cooperation among the artists from the ASEAN nations and the public…through the visual arts.”[[85]](#footnote-85) The theme that year was “ASEAN art in a changing world” and included “collages, constructions and prints from Bangkok watercolors and hand-made paper constructions from Kuala Lumpur, scrolls and oil-on paper from Singapore, relief and folk drawings from Indonesia; and a few works on paper from Manila.”[[86]](#footnote-86) Critic Angel G. De Jesus reflected in his“Vignettes” column that “The ASEAN countries have expanded the terms of their regional cooperation of economics to politics to include art and music. This is as it should be since knowledge of their individual cultures is necessary for understanding cooperation by the ASEAN countries.”[[87]](#footnote-87)

Art critic Leonidas Benesa observed that while the CCP ASEAN exhibition was billed as an exhibition of painting and photography, the primary theme of the exhibition was ultimately works on paper. While he noted that “one way of approaching the works in this exhibition by artists from the original five countries of ASEAN is to examine how paper is used as an art medium,” he ultimately laments that “Indeed, although the paper medium was the rationale of the show in the first place, most of the artists taking part appeared to have used the material incidentally…Thus many watercolors and graphic works were included in the selection simply because the artists working in these media usually use paper.”[[88]](#footnote-88) Benesa suggested that the inclusion of paper in many of the works was incidental to its medium; the works displayed were not necessarily the most innovative practices, but rather ones that have always been done on paper. While Benesa felt that some of the ASEAN artists participating in the exhibition did not present new or original ideas, he eventually lauds the exhibition’s efforts, writing:

The current ASEAN art exhibition is an answer to a felt need among the peoples in the region to discover—or if necessary to generate— their collective identity through culture. Any effort or excuse including the use of paper or any other material, to bring about his epiphany of the spirit, and must be exploited in full.[[89]](#footnote-89)

Benesa’s statement reflected the desire for regional cultural collaboration in Southeast Asia at all costs and opportunities.

As regionalism became an increasingly pertinent topic in Southeast Asia, the 3rd annual ASEAN Art Festival in Manila presented an opportunity and an audience for Filipino artists to place themselves as leaders in the region. Organizers of *Ugat Suri* wanted to unite the ASEAN countries through a new methods and materials for art-making that were currently used in the Philippines. Whereas the travelling exhibition at the CCP included works by artists from the five ASEAN countries, *Ugat Suri* included works exclusively by Filipino artists. De Jesus described *Ugat Suri* “a presentation of the Philippine ‘country’ art image.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Both Filipino and other ASEAN delegates attended the opening of *Ugat Suri*, which included a speech by former Foreign Minister Carlos P. Romulo, who, during his time as the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, cut the ribbon for the *First ASEAN Art and Photographic Exhibition of Life and Landscape* a decade prior. The ASEAN delegates were also given copies of *Ugat Suri*, a book featuring the Philippine artists in the exhibition.

The organizers of *Ugat Suri* published an accompanying catalogue a month before the exhibition.[[91]](#footnote-91) *Ugat Suri*’s short preface includes the exhibitions mission signed by Paras-Perez and Toledo. In their preface, Paras-Perez and Toledo contrast *Ugat Suri*, which featured works made from “indigenous art materials” to the Philippines, with the ASEAN exhibition at the CCP, “whose main focus is—paper.”[[92]](#footnote-92) While they claim that *Ugat Suri* simply complemented the CCP exhibition by emphasizing indigenous materials largely omitted from the exhibition, they call out paper as a material indigenous to “China and Japan” rather than Southeast Asia. The organizers also express in the preface that “paper as an art medium…has gained currency abroad, particularly in the United States.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

*Ugat Suri*’s preface positions paper, the central medium at the CCP ASEAN exhibition, as one associated with East Asia and the West. While the organizers of *Ugat Suri* wanted to establish a distinct Southeast Asian identity, they do so with East Asia and the West as their conscious counterparts. In place of paper, Paras-Perez and Toledo propose raw materials indigenous to Southeast Asia as a way asserting national and regional cultural independence. They suggest, “Wood, fiber and fabrics, bamboo, barks and brass, adobe and clay, are as indigenous in terms of art material to the Philippines, perhaps also within the ASEAN region.” Indigenous materials were highlighted not only as a means to establish national specificity, but also a potential tool for regional affiliation.

Short essays discussing individual artists and participating galleries were split among the catalog writers, which included the organizers Paras-Perez and Toledo as well as Alice Guillermo, Benesa, Alfredo Navarro Salanga, and Anna Fer. Toledo wrote the brief entry about Junyee in *Ugat Suri*. In it, she compares sculpture “as an antecedent to the functionalist nature of architecture” to Junyee’s “non-utilitarian, ephemeral works.”[[94]](#footnote-94) Her comparison elicits images of Junyee’s hollowed *Malabayabas* towers in Rizal Park. By comparing Junyee’s work to antecedents of architecture—the building of particular place onto an unspecified space—Toledo implies that despite the specificity of their “indigenous” materials, they remain undefined and transient in ways that fail to demarcate place.

Toledo describes the materials generally used for Junyee’s installations as, “textured *kapok* pods, coconut shell, dried banana stalk, and acacia bark [that] interlock with one another—grasping, twisting, clinging like biomorphic objects or zoological creatures,” emphasizing that his creations appear “devoid of the hard polish and sophisticated sheen of metal or stone.”[[95]](#footnote-95) She further elaborates that Junyee’s creatures “deliberately stripped of the glory of pedestals and plinths” seem to “meander, crouch and climb walls, ceilings and floors.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Her description of Junyee’s work contrasts them to the standard expectations for sculpture—Junyee’s works are prickly, they seem move in uncomfortable ways, they fail to be controlled by the conventions that usually contain or elevate sculpture. Although they are still, they always appear on the precipice of movement. His works play true to the curators’ intentions—they “indicate the flexibility and openness” of sculpture.

**[fig. 4.17]** Junyee’s contribution to *Ugat Suri* included a wall sculpture called *Urban Series I*. In a black and white photograph of *Urban Series I* in *Ugat Suri*, the sculpture initially appears like a diminutive, fuzzy critter crawling along the gallery wall, yet its large size belies its harmless appearance. *Urban Series I* measures a little over a foot high and six and a half feet in length, spanning a length longer than the height of a very tall human. While Toledo, as many others who write about Junyee’s work, describes the artist’s contribution to *Ugat Suri* as “ephemeral,” *Urban Series I*’s decidedly solid wooden core and ever multiplying prickly exterior appears anything but on the verge of extinction or decay. Its large size proposes its capacity for infinite growth and perhaps infinite reproduction. What appears fleeting about *Urban Series I*, however, is the movement implied by the dozens of pods sticking out of the creature’s main body as light shifts through the gallery space, leaving an impression of the scurried movement of insect legs.

Made from dried pods and twisted roots, *Urban Series I* fit the guidelines set by *Ugat Suri* and subsequent definitions of indigenous art as explorations of alternative, local, and indigenous materials used in high art. At one of its ends are two pieces of wood that diverge from one another like the antennae of a caterpillar or similar kind of insect. From that end, the twisted root appears like two thick braided ropes that taper to a slender finish. Prickly spikes made from the aforementioned *kapok* pods poke out of the roots from all sides. The bristly pods shift from signifying the endless, squirmy legs of a millipede or the topical fuzz of a caterpillar. Its spikes push right up along the wall as *Urban Series I* hangs like a large scar or stitched up wound flushed against the gallery’s smooth surface.

Placing *Urban Series I* on the wall instead of the ground underscores its ability to infect all surfaces of the gallery. An insect on the ground is less threatening because as upright beings, humans can step on them. Our orientation and our size allow us to have particular control over that encounter—the simple pressure applied by the sole of a shoe is generally enough to end the critter’s life. Yet, move that same bug to the wall or high on a ceiling and we are reminded of the natural world’s command over us—the insect’s capacity to defy gravity in a way incapable of humankind. While on the ground it might have appeared as an unthreatening bramble of natural detritus, on the wall, confronting the human gaze, *Urban Series I* reminds us of the natural world’s capacity to outdo and outrun us. Yet, unlike *Our Woods* or *Wood Things*, the title *Urban Series I* situates these works within the city and urban landscape rather than within nature. While *Wood Things* might appear to emerge from the woods, *Urban Series I* indicates a tension between the natural world and the manmade one. Though *Wood Things* appear to proliferate freely, *Urban Series I* remains alone, tame and hung on the wall.

**[fig. 4.18]** Along with *Urban Series I*, Junyee also exhibits *Urban Series II. Urban Series II*, like *Urban Series I* is also made out of organic materials including banana pulp, coconut shell, dried pods, and dried coconut twigs and hung against a wall. *Urban Series II* measures slightly less than four and a half feet high and forty inches long. Yet, unlike *Urban Series I*, which, though abstracted, resembles a magnified insect of some sort, *Urban Series II* is more ambiguous in its visual reference. Seven banana-leaf wrapped packages, roughly similar in size and shape, are tied together, balanced on a single, small boat-shaped banana leaf. Poking out from the edges of the packages are the same dried prickly pods used in *Urban Series I*, creating antennae-like filaments that emerge from the rectangular forms. The *kapok* pods also make the rectangular packages slightly threatening, as if prickly critters are about to break out of its cocoons, hatching throughout the duration of the exhibition. Once again, Junyee’s work seems anything but ephemeral or fleeting; in fact, *Urban Series II* seems on the precipice of multiplication.

At the bottom of the configuration is a small coconut shell that dangles underneath the single column of wrapped packages. The coconut shell is tied to the line of packages and a slender branch that curves due to the tension caused by the string that ties the pieces of *Urban Series II* together. Together the coconut and the slender branch seem precariously placed, as if they were parts of a trap to protect the stuffed packages from interference; in order to take a package, one would have to cut the string, causing the coconut to drop or the branch to swing upwards into the face of a potential assailant.

*Urban Series II*, like *Urban Series I*, adheres to *Ugat Suri*’s exhibition guidelines as it also incorporates materials indigenous to the Philippines. The banana leaf wrapped packages, however, also seem to be a visual allusion to traditional Filipino *suman*, a sweet, glutinous rice cake wrapped in banana leaves used for celebrations and fiestas throughout the Philippines. Sculptor Virginia Ty-Navarro has called the act of wrapping suman “a fading folk art,” as the practice varies by region and is usually passed generation to generation.[[97]](#footnote-97) According to Ty-Navarro, suman, which originated as a method for preserving and transporting rice over long journeys, was considered a symbol of good tidings and good luck.[[98]](#footnote-98) While the rectangular packages in *Urban Series II* are more simply wrapped than some of the more elaborately executed *suman*, their shape and construction bear resemblance some simpler forms of these Filipino treats. The banana leaf packages in *Urban Series II* oscillate between being on the verge of multiplying and a visual reference to a “fading folk art.” [[99]](#footnote-99)

Despite his participation in *Ugat Suri*, the exhibition that solidified indigenous art practices as a nationalistic one in the Philippines, he was not one of the more featured artists of the exhibition. While artists such as Francisco Verano or Paz Abad Santos were praised for their use of bamboo and burlap, Junyee received minimal mention in articles circulating about *Ugat Suri* in 1984. Following the exhibition and the release of its accompanying book, contributors to the catalog, including Benesa, Guillermo, Paras-Perez and other art critics who took no role in the publication, such as Angel de Jesus of *Business Day*’s frequent art column, *Vignettes*, wrote columns and articles of varied lengths about the exhibition and indigenous art in general. As collaborators of the *Ugat Suri* efforts, Benesa, Guillermo and Paras-Perez of course had mostly positive notes about the exhibition and on indigenous art. Benesa suggested that the exhibition, which featured works from exclusively Filipino artists, could be extrapolated to broader Southeast Asia. He argues, “In other words, one has to look for other materials aside from paper in any attempt to present Southeast Asian art in terms of materials that are truly indigenous and therefore for a more native or ethnic flavor, without limiting the meaning of the word ‘ethnic’ to scientific jargon of the social anthropologist.”[[100]](#footnote-100)

Of those writing favorably about the use of indigenous materials, Guillermo writes the most extensive article articulating their role in art in an article titled “The ‘In’ of Indigenous.”[[101]](#footnote-101) In it, she argues that the choice of employing indigenous materials in art “constitutes…a political assertion of our cultural identity, vis-à-vis Western influence.” She further asserts:

From another angle, the auspicious move towards using indigenous materials will contribute to our efforts to create a distinctive art reflecting our culture within the setting of our natural environment, ecology, and tropical resources. Moreover, their successful use in art will go beyond the superficial plane of technique and manipulation of medium, to an art that suggests the intimate relationship between identity, temperament, or the Filipino psyche, if you will, and the factors of ecology and geography that play a part in the distinctive economic structure…[[102]](#footnote-102)

Guillermo suggests that using indigenous materials reflect the surroundings and therefore creates distinctive art that reflects the specificity of place. She further implies that the implementation of indigenous materials allows for a greater democratization of art, as academic art had always privileged (and continues to privilege) painting. These hierarchies, Guillermo explains, are established by the academies, which “set down the norms of High Art that was the exclusive province of the elite.”[[103]](#footnote-103) Guillermo ultimately concludes her essay praising the exhibition and stating, “One must say that the Intergallery Exhibition was an unprecedented pooling together of artistic talents, and managerial expertise; a successful and happy occasion.”[[104]](#footnote-104)

Not everyone reacted so positively to the exhibition, however. While *Ugat Suri* established the importance of using indigenous materials for high art in the Philippines, De Jesus expressed in his column on the exhibition that despite the inclusion of indigenous materials, the majority of the works exhibited were “stylistically Western.” [[105]](#footnote-105) De Jesus reprimanded the organizers of *Ugat Suri* for focusing too much on a materially based definition of indigenous art without considering “already established” artists who were demonstrating the local conditions and “present social realities” of the Filipino people like Social Realists Pablo Baens-Santos or Renato Habulan. [[106]](#footnote-106) According to De Jesus, while the works in *Ugat Suri* may have showcased indigenous materials, they failed to represent the genuine concerns of the Filipino people.

Though works by social realist artists such as Baens-Santos or Habulan might not fit the guidelines set out by the exhibition, such as works that incorporate local materials, De Jesus argued that these works were more genuine expressions of local realities that the exhibition organizers should have taken into consideration. To critics like De Jesus, this was especially true considering since social realist artists could not exhibit at the CCP, while installations made of similarly indigenous materials, such as Junyee’s *Wood Things* or Laudico’s *Untitled* banana leaf installation, had been exhibited in the CCP through the Marcos administration. De Jesus criticized the multi-gallery exhibition for not being a true antithesis to the CCP’s cultural agenda by continuing to ignore artists omitted from the institution.

De Jesus seemed to point out a cleavage in the organizers’ insistence that *Ugat Suri* was some sort of alternative response to the CCP’s exhibition. True, the former was more inclusionary, not only because of the materials displayed, but due to the multi-gallery model that led to an exhibition spread through the city, which ideologically contrasted with centralized display at the CCP.Yet, indigenous materials, as exemplified by Chabet, Laudico, and Junyee, had often been used for objects exhibited at the CCP. Moreover, *Ugat Suri*’s inclusion of established artists such as Luz and Abueva demonstrated the boundaries between the private galleries, alternative spaces, and the CCP to be more fluid than implied by some of the rhetoric around the exhibition.

Junyee considers *Ugat Suri* significant because it was the first time that commercial galleries and influential taste-makers in Manila recognized the importance of exhibiting works made from local materials and codified it as a symbol of Philippine nationalism. Despite the popularity of local materials prior to 1984, participation in *Ugat Suri* from a range of artists and writers gave critical attention and terminology to contemporary indigenous art. The multi-gallery exhibition put forth local materials as not just signifiers of place, but symbols of self-sufficiency in the face of dominant cultures such as the China, Japan, or the U.S that could be expanded to include the rest of the ASEAN countries.

**A *New Seed* for the Philippines**

In late February 1986, following an outpour of support for Corazon “Cory” Aquino to be the rightful elected leader of the Philippines during the Peoples Power Revolution, Marcos stepped down from power and fled from Malacañang Palace to Hawaii.[[107]](#footnote-107) Aquino then took over as the eleventh President of the Philippines, ending the Marcoses’ twenty-year rule over the Philippines. That same year, Junyee received his second Grand Award from the AAP Annual Art Exhibition at the Museum of Philippine Art (MOPA). Among a number of more political artworks chronicling the events of the People’s Power Movement, he had submitted a large hanging sculpture sourced from his usual indigenous materials called *Bagong Binhi*, or *New Seed* for the annual exhibition that year.

In one article chronicling the AAP Annual exhibition that year, Isagani R. Cruz praised the political content that artists included in the exhibition that year. Cruz wrote, “If you think artists either stayed home and watched the liberated Channel 4 or went out to EDSA and acted as mere bodies to block tanks with, you couldn’t be more wrong. During the February unseating of the dictator, artists did what they do best. They stayed home (or at their studios) and painted, sculpted, or wrote.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Cruz further observed that many of the works exhibited at the AAP show directly related to the People’s Power Revolution, stating “No better proof of this can be cited than the current exhibit at the Museum of Philippine Art (MOPA). A collection of around 350 art pieces (oils, mixed media, graphic arts, sculpture), the exhibit is dominated by works explicitly on the February event.” While Cruz lauded the majority of the content in the exhibition, he concludes his review with negative sentiments regarding the actual prize winners of the exhibition (though he never calls out Junyee in particular). He lamented, “I also feel sad that, despite the enormous artistic potential of the February event, there are still art pieces as irrelevant and unreal as some of the other prize-winners and finalists (Were the judges turned off by direct political art?).”[[109]](#footnote-109)

While Cruz expressed disappointment in the judges’ decisions to avoid awarding more politically explicit artworks, another review in the *Manila Times* was more critical of the political content at the AAP Annual. In a brief review of the exhibition, Menchu Aquino Sarmiento wrote,“Many regard the events of last February 22 to 25 as miraculous. The uniformity of over half of the 350 works submitted to this year’s AAP competition also seem miraculous. AAP might stand for Artists Are Politicized instead of Art Association of the Philippines. Philippine history since the death of Benigno ‘Ninoy’ Aquino has spawned a genre of art that one may tentatively label ‘Neo-Nationalist’ for lack of a better term.”[[110]](#footnote-110)

According to Sarmiento’s suggestive language, the People’s Power Movement had the unfortunate consequence of curbing creativity and artistic production to “spawn” excessively political art. Sarmiento does, however, appear to admire Junyee’s strange submission of indigenous materials that year. He wrote, “Easily the most popular work was Junyee’s sculptured cocoon *Bagong Binhi*. For a month, Junyee, who is artist-in-residence at the U.P. scrounged for bamboo and rattan twigs and vines in the wilds of Makiling.”[[111]](#footnote-111) The final installation was so large, “It took a six-by-six trunk to transport his baby.”[[112]](#footnote-112) Junyee described *New Seed* as “historic” not necessarily because it was after the People’s Power Revolution, but because it was the first time that an entry with “all indigenous” materials won an AAP award. Junyee stated that he called the installation *New Seed* because it exemplified a “new way of thinking and doing art sculpture or art pieces.”[[113]](#footnote-113) For his award-winning work, Junyee used his earlier developed method of scrounging in the “wilds of Makiling.” [[114]](#footnote-114)

**[fig. 4.19]** Made from twigs, rattan, fiber, vines, leaves and bamboo, *New Seed* consists of a bulbous oblong shape—the seed—that hangs precariously along the length of a gnarled, fourteen-foot bamboo pole hung from the ceiling of the gallery. The giant seed appears on the precipice of falling away from the pole as it strains against the fine tendrils, made from rattan strap, that connect it, one of its ends pushing closer to the ground than the other. The seed’s plenitude, its full oval body, contrasts with the delicate vines that futilely attempt to keep it attached to the pole. Similar to *Our Woods*, tension in the connections seems to create the precariousness between elements in the work. The tendrils continue to envelope the oblong, creating an illusion of a gummy surface, like bits of spider web or the remains of sticky pulp that clings onto a seed.

Its large size, as indicated by the small the pedestals in the background, and placement towards the center of the room overwhelms the space and is completely out of scale with the gallery. The seed’s surface is covered in spikes or spindles that appear to poke and prod out of the oblong. On second glance, the oblong also resembles a hive of some kind, with the suggestion of harmful creatures such as wasps swarming inside. With its commanding size and the ambiguity of its construction, the seed generates a sense of urgency and fear—if it were to drop, as it seems on the verge of doing, what alien creatures or things might emerge? Like *Wood Things, New Seed* seems to focus more on what is immediately present. Whereas the clusters of pets in *Wood Things* seems to indicate presence behind the walls and beyond the immediately visible, *New Seed*’s size and oval composition from organic materials appeals to presence as one not contingent on visibility, but on time. Within *New Seed*, or even *New Seed* itself, is something that grows and continues to expand over time.

One of the reasons why the judges might have awarded *New Seed* during a year that so seeped in politics is that Junyee’s hanging installation seemed on the verge of becoming rather than something that already was, revealing the potential to sprout and develop like the new Philippine nation itself. Instead of choosing a work that was too visibly political, the judges instead exercised their desire that was at the precipice of becoming rather that something that reflected the past—like a simple depiction of an event that had already happen like the People’s Power Revolution. While Junyee remarked that *New Seed* was “not related to EDSA,” he affirmed, “Maybe it was at the back of my mind because we [were] entering a new…recapturing of freedom, a new phase of our political development…But as I have said before, all of my work are political…Maybe because we were all rally, rally! Even the professors and instructors [would say] ‘No class today! Let’s go, rally! Boycott classes!’”[[115]](#footnote-115)

The emphasis of indigenous materials as markers of national autonomy and power in the Philippines dominated visual culture for much of the latter half of the twentieth century. Artists, designers, architects, musicians and others all took part in varied experimentations with these materials. In art, the use of alternative materials was considered, to some extent, a response to painting and its association with the West. These materials were often found in the natural world and meant to mark pride in the place they came from. Yet, Junyee complicated the indigenous as a marker of place. Close visual analysis of *Wood Things* and his other sculptures and installations from the period demonstrate how employment of indigenous materials in the Philippines permitted artists to explore the world as something more than what is immediately present, evading the question of place altogether.

1. Roberto Chabet interview with Francesca Enriquez in 1990s, accessed via Shop 6 Folder, AsiaArtArchive, Hong Kong. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Roberto Chabet interview with Francesca Enriquez. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Alice Guillermo, “Celebrating Nature, Intimating Spirit: Junyee,” *World Sculpture News*, Winter 2001, 23. In Alice Guillermo’s *World Sculpture News* profile of Junyee, she notes how Junyee “stresses that the ‘indigenous’ which he upholds in his art is conceptually different than from the ‘ethnic’ which may be easily, although not necessarily, construed as limited and self-contained pockets of culture.” According to Guillermo, though Junyee believes that “the indigenous is constituted by contributions from the different ethnic groups which…enter into a fluid condition of communication and exchange,” he ultimately affirms that “the environment shapes culture, and this is best shown in art through installation and making use of indigenous materials from the natural surroundings and found objects.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The exhibition opened to the public in July 5, 1974 and the award ceremony took place on July 15, 2015 at Ayala Museum. The Ayala Museum had just opened to the public that year on June 22 and was popular for its dioramas—“scenic representation in miniature of historical events in the Philippines.” From ‘Thousands Have So Far Visited Ayala Museum on Makati Ave,” *Bulletin Today*, July 11, 1974, 25, in #Article 31 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc. For more information about Ayala Museum that year, see Juanita Galang-Trinidad*, “*More Than A Museum,” *Expressweek*, August 22, 1974, 5 – 16, in #Article 31 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “This Year’s Art Find,” *Times Journal*, June 29, 1974, p.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Amadis Ma. Guerrero, “The AAP Chalks Up Another Milestone,” *Expressweek*, August 15, 1974, 43, in #Article 31 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc. See more on Abueva’s mentorship of Junyee in Jose “Bogie” Tence Ruiz, *Wood Things Installation Junyee*, (Manila: Yonzon Associates, Inc., 2016), 34 – 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Sculpture Show Going on at Park,” *Bulletin Today*, March 2, 1976, in #Article 33 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “Sculpture Show Going on at Park.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Description of work found at Cultural Center of the Philippines, Fine Art and Museum Division, Curatorial File, Luis “Junyee” Yee. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The idea that the term “indigenous” in contemporary indigenous art refers to materials rather than people is widespread in the Philippines by the 1990s after Junyee and Aviado co-wrote the Manifesto for Indigenous Art at the Havana Biennial in 1991 and held the ASEAN Conference for Indigenous Materials, an international conference held in the Philippines in 1993. Those events will be further discussed in the coda of this chapter. Art critic Jennie Javelosa, for example, begins an article on Junyee’s participation in the Havana Biennial by reviewing that “in the early ‘80s, the beginnings of a unique trend in the visual arts began to make themselves felt. With leaves, twigs and found objects, artists expressed themselves by using indigenous materials. This became one preoccupation of mainstream art. Such a move proved economical because materials did not have to be imported.” (Jeannie E. Javelosa, “Junyee makes waves in Havana,” *Manila Chronicle,* January 11-17, 1992, in Article #60 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc.) This chapter will further discuss one of the major exhibitions, *Ugat Suri* that codified indigenous art based on its materials. Another art critic, Paul B. Zafaralla, also notes that “indigenous art” is first and foremost medium oriented, with “bamboo, pods, twigs, vines, wood stumps and other found objects that are both brittle and ephemeral.” He also argues that “there is a hazy distinction between indigenous and ethnic art” and poses the problem of “indigenous art relying heavily…on western principles of art and design.” (Paul Zafaralla, “Indigenous Art,” *Manila* *Times*, May 6, 1992, in Article #60 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc.) Finally, Rachel Mayo writes in “Indigenous Art: A Bonding with Nature?” that indigenous art often involved “being true to the nature of one’s surroundings, one’s culture, one’s history, one’s environment is not necessarily the same experience shared by all.” Of the works she sees at *Folk Art* (*Katutbong Sining*)the *Alliance Francaise* in Manila, she observes that what they have in common are “materials. The use of alternative, natural materials into making art: bamboo, leaves, twigs, pebbles—back to the earth.” (Rachel Mayo, *“*Indigenous Art: Bonding with Nature?,” in AAP LIHAM, reprinted from Malaya, June 11, 1992, in Article #62 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc.)These are just a handful of articles among many in the Philippines that define contemporary indigenous art based on natural materials or found objects. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Junyee, interview with author in his home at Los Baños, Philippines, October 22, 2017. All unattributed direct quotations from Junyee in the chapter are from this interview unless otherwise stated. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Junyee, interview with author. In Junyee’s remarks at his book signing for *Wood Things Installation Junyee*, a monograph written by his long-time friend and fellow artist Jose “Bogie” Tence Ruiz, he joked about how in the 1970s, everyone, including himself, wanted to make ephemeral artworks. Now, in their old age, everyone is trying to find photographs to prove that these artworks existed. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. As Chabet had highlighted in his abovementioned quotation, artists during the period made use of the various local materials available to them, in part because paint was expensive, but also as a way to avoid criticism that their work was derivative or driven purely by economic gain. Laudico, for example, had played with the concept of oil paint required by her teacher by using crude oil for her project. While she had joked that she had done so because of the probative costs of paint, the word play of crude oil and oil paint pointed towards arbitrariness of value and the fungibility of language so characteristic of conceptual art. Fellow *Shop 6* artist Modesto similarly chose to use cheap, everyday materials in his installations, noting “If it was oil and canvas, you have to paint…that’s expensive, you need to buy it, then you’d do it seriously, right?” Employment of local or cheap materials allowed artists a level of freedom to experiment outside of expectations with little financial risk. (Fernando Modesto interview with Francesca Enriquez in 1990s, Shop 6 File, AsiaArtArchive Hong Kong.) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Leonidas V. Benesa specifically contrasts Junyee with “the dustbin of conceptual artists,” in “Paper as Art Medium in Touring ASEAN Exhibition,” *Daily Express*, March 8, 1984, in Article #45 from Kalaw-Ledesma Foundation, Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Purita Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Alice Guillermo, “Celebrating Nature, Intimating Spirit,” 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Alice Guillermo, “Celebrating Nature, Intimating Spirit,” 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ruiz writes, “Junyee places his execution of Balag in 1970…it may have been during a lull after the First Quarter Storm, which took place in January of that year. From his accounts, the work stayed a few weeks on site…so it may have been done during the early summer of 1970, with the dry weather allowing some of its processes to take place and linger.” From Jose “Bogie” Tence Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Alice Guillermo, “Celebrating Nature, Intimating Spirit,” 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Guillermo, “Celebrating Nature, Intimating Spirit,” 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Chabet, interview with Francesca Enriquez. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Rod Paras-Perez, “Art Galleries Band Together,” *Times Journal*, March 6, 1984. *Ugat-Suri* will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Alice Guillermo, “Francisco Verano,” *Ugat-Suri* (Manila: ASEAN Institute of Art, 1984), 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. “The Art of Abueva, sculptor,” *Bulletin Today*, September 17, 1973, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Kalaw-Ledesma and Amadis Ma. Guerrero, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Alice Guillermo, “Francisco Verano,” *Ugat-Suri*, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Rosalinda L. Orosa, “The Bamboo Organ Festival: A Unique Tradition Begins,” *Philippines Daily Express*, February 27, 1977, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Orosa, “The Bamboo Organ Festival: A Unique Tradition Begins,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Orosa, “The Bamboo Organ Festival: A Unique Tradition Begins,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Foreigners Participate in Bamboo Organ Fest,” *Philippine Daily Express*, January 15, 1978, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “First Lady is Impressed by the PIID (Philippine Institute of Interior Designers) Exhibit at CCP,” *Bulletin Today*, October 5, 1973, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. “First Lady is Impressed by the PIID,” 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Exhibition Notes For *New Directions*, Documentation of Exhibitions, Main Gallery (1973), Cultural Center of the Philippines Library and Archives. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. “First Lady is Impressed by the PIID (Philippine Institute of Interior Designers) Exhibit at CCP,” *Bulletin Today*, 25, October 5, 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2003), 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 118. According to Lico, scientists from the Philippine Coconut Authority and the United Nations Coconut Wood Utilization Project bred a coconut lumber that they called *Imelda madera* after the First Lady. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 117. On page 117, Lico noted that it was “so that Imelda could us it to entertain personal friends such as Brooke Shields, Sean Connery, Van Cliburn and Christina Ford.” Despite rumors that the building was designed for the Pope’s visit, Manosa explains that this is not true on page 117. He states, “This was not true. Mrs. Marcos approached me well before we were even aware that the pope would be coming.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Serves as interesting pre-history to Shop 6 and the function of exhibitions (particularly exhibition openings) as social gathering spaces. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment,” From where??? (Originally found in Junyee CCP Curatorial files) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Junyee, “The Artist and His Environment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. In interview with author, Junyee remarked, “I carved it myself. I was very strong then, I was very young.” [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Junyee stated that the platform was “very insignificant” and “temporary” because he “could not afford to make a very expensive pedestal.” [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Leon Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of José Rizal* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1974), 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Leon Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of José Rizal* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1974), 114-115. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 49. The prize for Thirteen Artists at the CCP was around P1,500, or enough “to ‘stretch canvas’ or for ‘a few drinks,’” when it first started in 1970. See R.C. Ladrido, “The Thirteen Artists –Then and Now,” *Kultura* Vol. 1, No. 1 1988, 47. Also see Kalaw-Ledesma, *The Struggle for Philippine Art*, 125 for more information about the cash allotted to *Thirteen Artists* recipients.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Along with the poster, Junyee noted that the outdoor installation had no individual titles, just labels that stated “Please Touch,” “Please Climb,” and “Please Enter.” [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Raymundo R. Albano, “Junyee’s Woodland Fantasy,” *Philippine Art Supplement*, Vol. 2, no. 3, May/June 1981, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Junyee has suggested that these “maverick” wanderers resemble himself, someone who “is called a maverick” in his time. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Albano had invited him after his first installation at the CCP, which was a “large ovoid nest” made from langka and sampaloc samplings bounded together by a jumble of vines exhibited in a group exhibition at the CCP Main Gallery. Junyee called the work *Abortion* and gathered the natural debris (Junyee never cut living plant-life for materials) used for its construction. Ruiz argues that the work might have “carried parallels with human abortion” but that the title was “pointed at nature itself, as an ecosphere that was being taken for grants, abused, overexploited and thus being ‘aborted,’ whether by design or neglect.” In Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. In the interview with the author, Junyee laments the fact that the janitors at the Metropolitan Museum constantly sweep *Wood Things* into the corners, trying to contain its perimeters. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Imelda Marcos as quoted in Pedro R Nervasa, “The Cultural Center of the Philippines – Asia’s Mecca of the Arts.” *Business Chronicle*, May 31, 1970, 8- 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Ruiz suggests that the pets were “appropriately named because they resembled nothing specifically, but suggested so much about the organic environment.” Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Albano, “Junyee’s Woodland Fantasy,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Ruiz describes the pets as “chubby caterpillars” in *Wood Things*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Albano, “Junyee’s Woodland Fantasy,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 142 – 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ruiz, *Wood Things*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. It was noted in various publications from the period, including Angel G. De Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri,’” *Business Day,* March 1, 1984 that The Luz Gallery exhibition actually took place at Museum of Philippine Art (MOPA). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Angel G. De Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri,’ *Business Day,* March 1, 1984; Susan Castro, “ASEAN Artists in One Exhibit,” *Times Journal*, March 1, 1984. Since the Philippines was hosting this year’s ASEAN Art Festival, Manila was the first city to exhibit the work. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. In “A Savage Look at Indigenous Art,” Santiago Bose writes that “the term ‘Philippine indigenous art’ was used by art critics as a convenient name to describe contemporary art practice that is made outside Manila, where artists use local materials and merge contemporary forms with traditional ones.” Bose, the leader of the Baguio Arts Guild, served as somewhat of a poster child for contemporary indigenous art as one made outside of Manila. What I hope *Ugat Suri* demonstrates, however, is as contemporary indigenous art became codified as a practice in the Philippines in the 1980s, the focus seemed to be around local materials and less about place. Santiago Bose, “A Savage Look at Indigenous Art,” in *Memories of Overdevelopment: Philippine Diaspora in Contemporary Art*, ed. by Wayne Baerwaldt (Irvine, California: University of California, Irvine, Art Gallery, 1997), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. “ASEAN Artists in One Exhibit,” *Times Journal*, March 1, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. “ASEAN Artists in One Exhibit.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. De Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri,’ *Business Day,* March 1, 1984. ASEAN had had vested cultural interests at least since 1974. That year, the ASEAN Mobile Exhibition passed through Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok. According to the *Times Journal* on August 17, 1974, it was the first exhibition of its kind and intended to “promote regional consciousness among artists and the public through art.” Imelda Marcos “expressed hope that through the traveling art show mutual understanding among the ASEAN countries will be further enhanced.” According to Carlos Romulo, the foreign secretary of the period noted that “The success of an organization like the ASEAN…depends on the…development of a hierarchy of shared values, for only shared values impel people to act together.” [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Leonidas V. Benesa, “Paper as Art Medium in Touring ASEAN Exhibition,” *Daily Express*, March 8, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Benesa, “Paper as Art Medium in Touring ASEAN Exhibition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. De Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri,’ *Business Day,* March 1, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. In Leonidas V. Benesa, “Ugat-Suri: Search for Roots in ASEAN Context,” *Daily Express*, February 23, 1984, Benesa called the text, “a most welcome development” and “the encouragement of new critical thinking in this country and in the region.”The publication includes brief essays on the exhibiting artists and participating galleries alongside black and white images of the artists’ works. Kalaw-Ledesma conducted the research for the catalogue and the most prominent Filipino writers and critics of the period, including Benesa himself, contributed to it. Among the other writers included Alice Guillermo and the curators of *Ugat Suri*, Paras-Perez and Toledo. The contributors committed to creating an influential exhibition and text; Paras-Perez had received his PhD in art history from Harvard in the 1970s and Toledo had recently returned from studying museology in Europe for two years. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Rod Paras-Perez and Eva Toledo, “Preface,” *Ugat-Suri* (Manila: ASEAN Institute of Art, 1984), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Perez and Toledo, “Preface,” 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Eva Toledo, “Junyee,” *Ugat-Suri* (Manila: ASEAN Institute of Art, 1984), 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Toledo, “Junyee,” 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Toledo, “Junyee,” 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Virginia Ty-Navarro, “The art of wrapping ‘suman,’” *Times Journal*, April 8, 1976. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ty-Navarro, “The art of wrapping ‘suman.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ty-Navarro, “The art of wrapping ‘suman.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Leonidas V. Benesa, “Ugat-Suri: Search for Roots in ASEAN Context,” *Daily Express*, February 23, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Alice G. Guillermo, “The ‘In’ of Indigenous,” *WHO*, March 21, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Guillermo, “The ‘In’ of Indigenous.” [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Guillermo, “The ‘In’ of Indigenous.” [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Guillermo, “The ‘In’ of Indigenous.” [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Angel G. De Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri,’” *Business Day,* March 1, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Jesus, “Reflections on ‘Ugat Suri.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. More information on the People’s Power Revolution, a nonviolent revolution which occurred primarily on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA)—a major highway that runs through Metro Manila—after the 1986 election that once again resulted in Ferdinand Marcos’ dubious victory can be found in Mark Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) and Vince Boudreau, “Chapter 8: People power and insurgency” *Resisting Dictatorship: Repression and Protest in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176-189. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Isagani R. Cruz, “Artists Did Not Stand and Wait in February,” *Manila Times*, April 24, 1986, 10. Interesting to note that the *Manila Times*, which had been discontinued under Martial law, had only started again in March after the Marcoses had fled Manila. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Cruz, “Artists Did Not Stand and Wait in February,” 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Menchu Aquino Sarmiento, “The Politicization of Artists,” *Manila Times*, April 23, 1986, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Sarmiento, “The Politicization of Artists,”, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Sarmiento, “The Politicization of Artists,” 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Junyee interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Sarmiento, “The Politicization of Artists,” 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Junyee, interview with author. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)