Tina: There are multiple articles written about this in the period and they always call it "In the Woods" or "Into the Woods", so it should be translated to "Our Woods"?

JY: Translated "Our Woods" That was my second professional win. My first time I won a professional competition was in third year of college; I won over my professor who resigned the following semester. He had a stroke. [inaudible]

Rica: He also joined, you both joined and you won.

JY: He helped [inaudible] ; and he had a Master's in sculpting from Paris, and he was the one who encouraged the class 'Oh you guys join this competition'. That was the first competition of the Society of Philippine Sculptors, so I won 3rd prize there, over [inaudible]. After college, this is the biggest competition so far in that time because the prize is $10,000, unheard of during that time. 1974, that's big, actually it's huge. You can buy a lot in a subdivision with that kind of money. Not only that, the 1st prize of painting, sculpture, photography, and prints competed for the grand award, so I won the grand award because I won the 1st prize in sculpture.

R: So anyone will win the 10k of the different competitions?

J: Yeah, so that's the overall...In the history of Philippine competition there are only two grand awards. Now they call 1st prize grand award, but during the time when you say 'Grand Award' it's the overall prize over painting, sculpture, print, and photography. The 2nd one I won the sculpture but then I lost the grand award.

R: But that was AAB

T: In 1986

J: AAB was the only prestigious group during the time. Now AAP is, you know...Because there is a lot of institutional competition...[inaudible]...Before it'd only...[inaudible] I made this here...

02:38

T: So this is made out of malabayabas?

J: The furniture upstairs are called malabayabas

T: So it's the hardest wood -

R: 2nd to the hardest

T: 2nd hardest wood

R: It's a difficult word

R: It means...Bayabas is a soft fruit

J: So it's strange because bayabas is soft food[ or wood], not so hard.

R: It's a plant, not a tree.

J: No it's a tree

R: Ah, it's a tree. But it's a different tree than malabayabas

J: [Affirmative] Oh this one is huge tree. But this one [indicating object] is mahogany not [indigenous?]

T: Oh so this is different, this is a different kind of wood

J: Yeah, this is different. This is darker, this is mahogany. Donated to me by [inaudible]. All that wood was donated to me because it's very expensive, it's not in the market.

T: What about the platform?

J: That's temporary, when it won the grand award we made a very nice platform. It was displayed in the main branch of PNB. During that exhibition, a big van came around with people that looked like military in [inaudible], they ransacked the whole building, 11 floors, and they stole that. Until now nobody knows where is that work now.

T: When did that happen?

J:  During EDSA revolution

R: '86

J: Yeah they took everything, work from masters [inaudible]..etc, including my work. It's in the main lobby of PNB. PNB the original [inaudible discussion about location]. I'm very proud of that because I won over a national artist, Abueva, and [Rica: Saprid], and [Imale], and the one that won first place in painting was Dalena.

R: Ah so 74

T: How high was it?

J: This one was this high. But very long. This is almost 12 ft. These are made out of 20 pieces.

T: What are these?

J: There are like by long four in a row, 1,2,3,4,5. That is 20 pieces. 20 pieces of 4x4. Very Heavy! This one is one piece.

T: So this is 4x5 and there are 4x4...like...sides

J: And it swings like that because it's only being held by very tiny wire.

06:00

J: So I love that work. It was inspired by the branches [inaudible], so I translated it [inaudible]

T: It was inspired by what?

J: The branches of the trees around the temple

T: So what is going on with the big mahogany wood? Because in the book I thought it said they had made it to your specifications, did you carve the wood yourself?

J: No I carved it myself. No [inaudible]. I was very strong then, I was very young. Now I am not allowed to lift more than 1kg.

T: So are these all the same then?

J: Yeah the same size.

T: The exact same size?

J: Yes, cut the same size

T: Then how come this one's so weird?

J: Pardon, weird?

T: It's not the same size as these

J: Just for contrast. Because it looks like *Spolarium*

R: Yeah, the lines

T: And they're all just held with -

J: Wiring, there's some very nice wiring inside.

T: And it goes through all of the pieces of wood?

J: Yeah, there's one going through there and...[trails off]

T: In person, can you see the wire; it's very obvious?

J: Yes. Yes. That photograph is quite large

T: Yeah it's hard to find.

T: And so they're all leaning back, but this -

J: But this one is holding them

T: This one is holding all of them. Okay, why is there a hole here in the platform?

J: This is very insignificant, that is temporary. That's [Rica: Not part of the work] It's not part of the work. I cannot afford to make very expensive pedestal, so I just used plywood, I think it was recycled plywood. But up there it was transferred to PNB, I designed a very different, very nice one. That one was -

T: But you don't have pictures of it?

J: No I have no pictures

08:06

T: In the book you say that it's not installation, what makes it not installation?

J: It's very contemporary sculpture but not an installation. But they called it installation because this is the first time they saw a sculpture made that way, you know, [Rica: [inaudible] different pieces] A lot of art discovered this style, but after making one or two I do other things. [inaudible] My idea, or my curious that I'm wasting my brain if I stick in one design cause there's a lot going on in my brain, so...and I cannot possibly do it in even 100 years because it's just constantly coming, you know. So it's useless to build things in one style over and over again. Even my installation are different, it's just installation but different approaches.

T: So you consider this sculpture and not installation?

J: Yeah

T: What do you consider your first installation work?

J: 1970 is my first one man outdoor installation.

T: Are you talking about *Balag*?

J: *Balag.*There is a play out, Balag! I hope you will be around for the showing. November 7,8,9 here.

T: Ah, I leave, I leave next week.

J: Maybe we can send you a CD if we decide to go.

R: I think they're going to do video documentation

T: Why do you think of *Balag* as being an installation work. I wrote about it before reading about it in the book, and it seemed it was almost more a performance more than just an installation.

J: If you read the book it is not just performance it is the first artwork that was not priced to be sold and it is the first artwork that has participation of the audience, it's the first artwork that used indigenous or cultural tradition, if you read again it's there. It's clearer than I am trying to describe it. So it's very important because it opened the door for this kind of thing. Now it's very ordinary, but during that time I was the only one doing installation. I started late 60s, doing small thing, but my first one man show was surprise for most, because they thought because I keep on winning in sculpture competition, I win over [Mike Propiso?] national artist, that I will have a one man show of sculpture. But what I did was this kind...you know...they don't understand because it's very strange looking thing, this contraption, but I was very satisfied because the student participated. They hung coins, they hung love letters, they hung [inaudible] crosses, they hung political slogans, like '[tagalog] Marcos', '[tagalog Imelda]', things like that. We hung a lot of dried fish, eggplant, at one time we harvested everything and we cooked under the *Balag*. You know what *Balag* is right?

T: Mhm. The trellis that plants go on and stuff.

11:41

J: So after that we invited a student to eat with us, then there was [inaudible] singing, Heber Bartolome, you know him? He was senior than me in our group

R: [Pogue's?] father

J: He was my senior in the organization. The organization is the brotherhood of [inaudible]. Without them I cannot put up this thing because you have to gather all of this bamboo, you need manpower, and I was just a working student. But it was successful, they only didn't know people from the cultural world took notice of that. [inaudible] went there because of these slogans. So I was interviewed. There was somebody who took pictures

T: Do you have pictures? I haven't seen pictures

J: Nothing! I have no cellphone then, I don't have a camera I was a poor boy, I cannot possibly own a camera. But there are people who took pictures. In fact one of them sent me a copy, black and white, very old, but it does just show a part of the balag with the work, one student trying to help put it up

T: How long was *Balag*up?

J: Maybe 2,3 weeks

T: Was it the last night that you took down the food and cooked it?

J: Yeah because our university permit gave us only that timeframe. It was put up in front of San Pegito dorm. During that time in fron of San Pegito dorm it was a vacant plot. There's a building there now. So it was very satisfying for my part because I finally fulfilled this thing in my mind, I am doing this thing. Then it took me several years before I had another , because trying to find sponsors is very hard. In fact, my show in [Lonita?] was sponsored by Heritage Gallery - this is off the record - when they found out that it's not for sale, they sort of withdraw their support because I put it up in front of the [Sal monyamen?]. [chuckling] Can you imagine putting up a show in front of it during the time?

T: Was this in 1974?

J: '76. This is '74. So between doing installation I do sculpture, or competition, to earn money, then I do furniture to earn money, but bulk of my work is installation. So I sustain my installation work with furniture, like what I have there upstairs.

14:39

T: And back when you were doing *Balag* did you think of it as being indigenous?

J: Yes of course. That was my purpose, going back to my roots. In fact, I use myself as my own guinea pig, to experiment. Because my theory, during that time, it's very political time, there are activists, things like that, and the burning question during our time in Dilliman is 'What is Philippine art?' and I usually to tell my contemporaries 'Philippine art is Western art, because that's what we are doing.' So I was trying to look for a way to express my Filipino self, and it's very hard because, my curious..if I had a time machine I could go back to the past, without the intervention of the whites, the Spaniards, I was wondering how our art will [live a lot?], and it was academic kind of. But still I persisted because I was maybe romantic, I was young, I was foolish, but I was also very patriotic. I am a patriot more than a nationalist, so I really love my country, [inaudible]. So what I did is experiment with things that is natural to the Philippines like bamboos, and...then I transferred here in Maklinging so I returned to my old habitat because I am from the province. I grew up with Agusan river, learned to swim there, it's the 2nd biggest river in the country. We have a big farm, we have [boom dock?], the swampland, it's all there, so I am very familiar with handling all of the indigenous materials. Now, indigenous material is a misnomer, because when they say indigenous material they are thinking like it's a material that's only found in the country, it's not true, because copper, gold, marble, metal, it's all here. So when I put up this [Saling Lat?] in [Diamond Hotel?], I tried to explain to them that the word indigenous material is a misnomer, that it should be called nontraditional material for contemporary artmaking. But it's like gold,...they're all indigenous here, they are not important...but it got the momentum already so it's called indigenous material now.

R: And it's short too.

J: Yeah it's short.

T: When did you try to explain this, that you should call it 'nontraditional materials for...'

J: Entering [Saling Lat?], I organized the first ASEAN Conference for Indigenous Materials, it was 19...

T: 93?

J: 93 I think. In [Diamond Hotel?]

R: We have some of the files

T: Really?

J: I think we have a book here somewhere.

T: I didn't know that. It was a side thing...

J: It as COCI [R: Committee On Culture In the Arts] They gave me funds in dollars so we weer able to...the whole Southeast Asia participated

T: This after the Havana Bienniale

J: Yes, after Havana

18:28

T: What happened to the trellis, what happened to *Balag*after you cooked all the materials

J: Well it was turnaway, there were just [inaudible], and the food was eaten already, and there was no recording. but we had a nice time because there was lots of singing, and Heber Bartolome and it was also the time that Filipino rock and roll started to grow, and Heber Bartolome is one of the pioneers in Pinoy rock.

R: Yeah he's a poet, musician, writer

J: So the other side was doing visual art. But music is very easy to undertand, because rock and roll, you know everyone is doing rock and roll. But in visual art it's very hard, nobody understood it then.

R: How many of you were there in that last night?

J: We are students to we go there [inaudible]

R: But what's the biggest crowd that you had?

J: I think between 20, 30. Not big but for that kind of event that's big, because there's a lot of singing. So...[tagalog]...happy time. I'm glad you got that picture.

T: My copy's not very good. I got this from the CCP, I'm pretty sure, but I don't know where it's from.

J: This is from the book, of Purita Kalaw Ledesma, it's called *The Struggle for Philippine Art.* I was the last entry because before it was published I was the last one who had a major award and I was [inaudible] so I was the last entry I think.

20:22

T: That's funny. I've been looking at that book too. I was so curious about this work because I hadn't heard of it before.

J: It's malabayabas. This is my poster against the Marcos dictatorship.

T: Where's this image from?

J: From a poster. This is [author?].

T: It's so good, it's such a good image.

J: The idea is, there was martial law, I was half listening, half not listening, you know? Half seeing, not talking, one half...all one half.

T: But then what happens here?

J: This one is grow taller than me, this is the restriction imposed by the government. So I started here representing myself because I am a nature lover, so I cannot stand it anymore so I walk away naked so I leave all my things.

T: So it's about...the little pieces of wood that are growing represent restrictions that keep hindering -

J: Everything

R: How did you get out?

J: I did not get out before -

R: I mean metaphorically

T: Was this a performance

J: Before the forces of restriction built up to this point I was out already

R: Were you able to get out because you left your things?

J: That's partly it. This is actually more on a spiritual than political...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. Riches or fame, I can basically walk without regrets because I have done it several times. That's why I am one of the senior artists that doesn't participate in all the social and [inaudible] or publicity, I really don't care, I just do my thing. But there are people who notice them, people like [inaudible], appreciate my effort, my works. So it's there, it's here, because this is a poster made by [Bo Inyegas?] who is now one of the most expensive cinematographers.

T: So where is the image from, it's from a poster that you have?

J: Yes, I'll look for it, it's here.

T: I have notes on that. It's in the back, in the installation part. Was this built over time as you were in it?

J: No this is done for the poster

T: Okay that's just done for the poster. That's what I was wondering because when I saw it in the back it just had -

J: Here see the poster? It's the same. This is down in front of the Rizal monument.

R: Where is the monument?

J: Here in front. This is the platform where you can see the [caramel?} and [camera?] statue. It's an elevated platform. It's huge. I fill it up with my works. This is one of my first big works. *Balag* is very small, *Balag* is total only of this room. This room is bigger than the balag. Very [inaudible] made. This one is real organized, I have car, I have truck to transport -

T: But it's not just this one, there are other ones right?

J: There are many, so many of them. This is just a part. This one I was surprised because I don't have picture also of this work. But [in pipilab?] he'll have pictures, he supplied this. So this is the poster, and I think this is a show that has been seen by millions of people without understanding it [Tina: it's in the park], because there are a continuous flow of people and they have to pass this way and they say "I don't know, what is this"

R: And there were no labels, no caption?

J: There was, I put 'Please touch', 'Please Enter', 'Please Climb'

R: But no title

J: No no title. No individual title. Just other things. So that's the poster.

T: And you consider this installation and not sculpture.

J: This is installation. This is installation made out of sculptures.

R: So the installation is the whole show?

J: Yes the whole show. The whole show is composed of several sculptural works, which is the element of my installation. Because if you do installation, you can approach it that way, this way, the element of installation is there. [tagalog] No problem.

25:24

T: And did you carve those pieces yourself?

J: No I gave it out to people. Every time I have a big show I give out the materials after the show. Including *Wood Things*.

T: And you carved all of these by yourself?

J: Yeah. Without any assistance. And I finished it during a storm. There was a lot of strong wind; it was really stormy. I work outside because I don't have a studio,so I finished it during the storm.

R: Did you make it here?

J: Yeah. [inaudible]

R: Then you brought it....

J: To Ayala Museum, the small one

T: It had just opened. It recently opened then they hosted the AAP Annual. But for the ones in Rizal park works, other people helped carve these right?

J: Yeah. Because it's heavy too carry. Again, my brothers in the brotherhood of [inaudible] helped me out. And then Heritage Gallery lent me a truck, a big truck, so I put he assembly in there.

T: And then afterwards when you deassembled it, people just took pieces?

J: It was stored first in [inaudible], [Dorey balencia?] who has been the head of [Lanita?], then later on I gave it away to people because I don't have the resources to carry it back to [Manito?] Los Banos, and I don't have a studio in Los Banos so where can I put it. There's a lot of wood. The institute called [perfridikong?] gave me several logs of malabayabas then cut it for me under my specification. So it was a donation. It's there, I make [inaudible] I was trying to convince the director [inaudible, trails off]...

27:46

T: I like these guys

J: When I look at these things I go "[ inaudible] go back all those years, how did I manage?" Because my wife [Saler?] was only [saving on rent?] during that time, so I earned sporadically because it's so hard to make also furniture and sell it. That's a very minor work, it's just part of a big work.

T: Oh it's just part of a...So these are little works that were in the Ugat Suri catalogue, and I don't write very much about them but I just wanted to know about your experience exhibiting in Ugat Suri

J: This is...the significance of this work, "Urban Autumn", this is the first installation show in a commercial public gallery. It's [Tina Kamali?]. The first commercial gallery, so that's the significance of this work. [tagalog] [R: None were sold] Never sold anything there. But I was very-

T: When did you make these? Because in the catalog, it had no date. And they called it 'Urban Series', but it's called 'Urban Autumn'

J: It's an Urban Series actually. But the title of my show is *Urban Autumn*.

R: What year -

J: [Kamali Mal?] is 1985.

T: The exhibition is 1984

J: No, it's 1985. 1984 I was in Jakarta.

T: Did you make it the same year as the exhibition?

J: Yeah. All these pieces I made in just one year, maybe 6 months time? Easy to make because they are soft material. And I know how to handle my work because I've been handling this kind of material; it's instinctive in my part. But there are, you cannot [inaudible] the possibility of this kind of work, there's lots of materials there. And you don't have to cut any living trees, just dig through the refuse or the garbage of the mountain. [tagalog] [R: You just spend getting it, transporting]. Yes, one time I went up to the mountain I had this big sack, then when I went down I think CCP people saw me and I was like a hobo from the mountain, carrying a big sack full of treasures from the mountain. So that's part of the urban series.

T: These were the only two they had in the catalog

J: I had a lot. Including here, this is part of the Urban Series...This is the big one...this is a part

T: That was also displayed at Ugat Suri?

J: Same year. This one is different, this is one piece, this for the Inter-ASEAN gallery exhibition. So, whatever it was...I tried to document it from the way I put up or I formed the installation. This is an indoor installation, and you cannot enter the room, you can peek through it because I put an electric fan and there was a lot of this cotton like from l[kapok?] tree. [R: like pollen?] Yeah so [inaudible] you can just peek through it. I enjoyed doing my works in [inaudible]. It's more enjoyable than doing commission work. Because commission work there's a lot of restriction and sometimes a little compromise here and there. This one you are free to do your thing.

T: Was this a commission work?

J: No, this is an invitation by [Kamali?] Gallery to put up an installation show, because [Kamali?] gallery then was run by [Vita?], and he's that kind of [inaudible] with open mind, so was able to convince the owner 'Let's have a show without income' so I put up this show for them.

32:36

R: [Vita Avintanalay?] [tagalog between R and J]

J: Duroing the time, CCP was very elitist, and that's one of the reasons why I declined to receive the 13 Artists award. But I asked for the money. [Ti: For site works] Only $5000 so, I have a hard time, because artists, including artists from [Bagyo?] visit me and stay at my place, I have to feed them, I don't even have enough pillows for them, very small house.

R: So CCP allowed you to have the money?

J: Yes, I convinced Albano. Why Junyee [inaudible] I want to put up a one man show outside the gallery, I want to put it up here in Los Banos. Then later on, a lot of artists 'Junyee can I join' so I opened it up, it became a group exhibition. That was more satisfying because I introduced it to a lot of people, including Lani Maestro

R: Yeah she told us about it

J: It's there in the article I wrote

34:10

T: In the article you wrote you said there was one non-artist, do you remember who it was?

J: Yeah it's [Paid Gagalac?], he's a student here at the courtyard, he died recently. But he's very close to me so he's aware of what I'm doing so he sort of acquired this knack for my work. So I decided to invite one non-artist; ehhhh...he did quite good; he died recently

T: I remember it was so specific, it was like "and one non-artist" and I was like "I wonder who that was"

J: Paid Gagalac. He is from [Bikol?]...He's a drunkard, he was.

T: Initially I wrote a little about Site Works for my chapter but it was too long, so  I had to cut it out to only focus on works that you made, as opposed to...But a lot of people right now, I was telling Rica, a lot of people right now are interested in it, and this kind of collaborative practice, especially in Southeast Asia, and people are making all kinds of claims. I think it's very interesting.

35:36

T: So you don't think these works are important?

J: I love that work, I really love that work. You know until now I can't remember how I did it, how I conceived of it. Only Ray Albano just told me, 'Junyee I want you to have a one man show' and during the time he was in Tokyo I think, he was not around, so when he arrived he as surprised, he said "What is this?"

R: Is this in main galleries?

T: This is the reinstallation in Metropolitan Museum

R: Ah this is the recreation

J: I borrowed 35 pieces from Manila

T: Oh, so some of the ones here are from the original?

J: No

T: None of them are from the original.

J: No because the original are all gone. And I hid this you know? This is my problem with my installation because every time the janitor came into the room they try to clean it. It was scattered naturally.

T: So before it was spread out?

J: Yeah natural like that. So that's not the way I installed it day one on the floor. In my first one man show I installed in Ming Galleries in 79, same problem, I scattered all those leaves and the janitors...It was funny

T: So it's not supposed to be all squished in the corner

J: Yeah clean, clean looking.

T: When did you do this recreation?

J: The first one?

T: This one. The first one is 1980. When did you do the Metropolitan Museum one?

J: Recent, about 3 years ago. 2014?

T: Really? I saw it in 2014.

J: Yeah, recent. It was the longest art exhibition in Metropolitan Museum. I think it's good for 4 years? Something like that. Because it's sort of like  a history of the art development. I think I was the last entry.

T: I remember walking and being like "Whah, what's that?" In the original one - do you have photographs of this, besides in the book?

J: This one? This is the first one I installed

T: But the photos in the book are the ones from the original; are you the one that has the photos?

J: No. CCP

T: CCP has the photos?

J: I don't know. But it was CCP who took the photos. I don't have a camera, then they gave me the copy. It was colored slids

R: Maybe we have the slides

T: In the original exhibition Ray talks about how you used red lighting?

J: Yeah he doesn't like the red lighting. I was trying to tell him, 'You're not from the woods', because if you're familiar with the wood, time, especially late afternoon, the color of the wood will change. He was thinking that maybe I was trying to put it theatrically, or something like that, but it's not that, I am very familiar with the wood. I sleep at the top of the mountain in [Breyere?] before, but now I cannot climb there anymore, I have weak knees, I need a carrier. So I cannot remember how I did it, Ray Albano just asked for a one man show so I did that. Until now I cannot remember how I conceived it. A lot of my works I cannot remember how it comes to my mind.

39:32

T: Can you describe a little bit more how you make the bugs? I was reading that it's folded a lot

J: It's made out of banana stalk. Banana stalk is the dried side of the banana skin, it can be peeled off. Inside is banana leaves, dried banana leaves. So the one that tied it is also just banana stalk, you can just strip these when you cut it. Then the spine, or spikes, are made out of kapok pods. That's all. It's very simple. It's mostly just banana, banana, and kapok.

T: Did you arrange this yourself?

J: Yes I arranged that myself. Except for the floor. [laughter]

T: So what do you make of the ones that are all squished in the corner? Why did you choose to kind of stuff them in the edges and also on the roof?

J: I was trying to approximate how ants and termites wander around their habitat. There's always somebody that's like a maverick doing different things. I am called a maverick in my time.

T: So is that you?

J: Yeah that's me actually

R: Where, this one?

J: Because I don't follow the line.

T: I know in some of the original photographs there's this big thing and I don't know what it is...

J: Maybe the pods of the acacia tree, the black one?

T: Mm...this guy! What is that?

J: Ah, I exhibited that in Tokyo.

T: Oh so this wasn't in the original

J: No, this one is exhibited in Allianz Francais when I was the curator there. The director asked me to recreate the uh...it's so different, look, even the bug bends more

T: Ugh I feel like they look scarier. Don't you think so? They don't look as cute.

J: They have, these ones have different personalities.

R: More legs

J: More legs

T: Cause these look fuzzy and nice and these just look...

J: This one is maybe....starving?

T: So what is this, the little belly thing?

J: It was used by [Jani Manahan]  for a play at CCP, he borrowed it and he never returned it. He's a good friend of mine.

R: What play?

J: I forgot it. [tagalog] He said 'Junyee can I borrow it' I said of course, and he borrowed it, never returned it, so...

R: Maybe it's still there somewhere

J: I think it's gone. I think even Jani Manahan doesn't even know what happened to that piece.

T: But what is it?

J: I helped [inaudible]. This one, that's the one.

T: Is it a part of this work or is it separate

J: No it's separate.

R: What's it made of? Twigs?

J: Twigs...uhm... all above

R: What's the white thing

J: Ah that's the one, I was very angry, when they took this photograph one of the staff in the gallery put 'Don't Touch'

R: On the artwork? In Japan?

J: Here! In Allianz Francais. But in Japan I had another problem because when Ray Albano sent my piece, they fumigate it, it's required by law, and when it reaches Japan they fumigate it again. The Japanese curator in the museum doesn't have the facility to hang it, my instruction is to hang it form the ceiling, and they put it on the floor. And while people were looking at it a spider came out! And they panicked because the government might get angry because it's from the Philippines, a spider from the Philippines. The spider survived two fumigation processes.yeah and they panicked, because Ray was there with several CCP guests, I think [Jamie dendra?], [inaudible] [tagalog] They make me go into...they panicked when the spider came out...I think there's a picture of that in your, in Philippine Art Supplement, it's on the floor. It's funny now.

R: So that spider changed the whole natural habitat of spiders in Japan [J: Yeah maybe now they are millions of grandchildren] maybe now they have mutant spiders.[tagalog] Godzilla.

45:02

T: Since this was a reinstallation, or a remaking, do you consider this a new work, especially since it's in a different place?

J: A new composition. But the element is the same. It's a new work in the sense that the material is new, the venue is new, the demand is new, but otherwise the concept of the whole thing is the same.

T: But do you think the concept changes because of where it's put? Like it's no longer in the CCP?

J: It changes during the Allianz Francais because the spike is so austere, very few, they look like starving bugs, so it changes. Also, [John Rum?] ordered big one from me, this big. [tagalog] So he asked me to do, I think 30 pieces of this build. I did not enjoy doing that because beneath here, this is small. Anyway I cannot say no to [John]. "What are you going to do with it?" "I will put it in my garden." "That's not good for outdoor piece" So I really don't know if [sealing it something?], or selling it in Singapore. A lot of people buy this thing, I sold it for 5 pesos.

T: What? Where did you sell it for 5 pesos?

J: Before, after the show. Very cheap, you know.

T: But do you think the meaning changes when you put it in the Metropolitan Museum as opposed to the CCP

J: Yes I think so.The main change is what's inside, it's very different. I don't have the same passion or excitement, or wondrous in my head. When I opened the show in the CCP I closed the door before the opening, before the show, I stood there alone, and after a while I feel itchy. That one at the CCP was really very successful as far as I'm concerned because if you're inside that show you forget the whole outside world, because it is a complete environment by itself. This one is not a complete environment because it is not enclosed, it is surrounded by other artworks. So it's very different. Then one of my guests was so angry with me because he [sic] was pregnant, and when he saw my work "What's going on? You know that I am pregnant but you invited me to this kind of show!" You know, things like that. But for me it was very successful. Very different to this one. The image is the same, the composition a little different, except for the general flow, but the passion is not the same. I am not there really 100%, it's just a requirement from [Patrick Flores?]. That's it. It's different really. Just like a first kiss and then you are older and you have lots of girlfriends or boyfriends, different.

48:29

T: Do you think your first work in 1980 was political? Because I know in the book it says that first you didn't really want to do it, but then you thought "Oh but then I can bring the outside into..." and it was so interesting, it kept being repeated in the book, "the air conditioned space", that you were bringing the outdoors into...it was repeated like three times "air conditioned space", and that answers my question, there was air conditioning in the CCP at the time. So I was wondering if you thought of your work at that time in 1980 as being political.

J: Yeah, definitely, because when I started installation work I started also environmental work. I was the first one who made environmental work. So, maybe because during that time it was very political, at the same time during the time I am first from the province, I know nature I am very familiar with it, and so I made this thing as my commentary of the situation of nature in general. So it was very political. Even now, my works are always political in a sense, because I want to...even the [] was pretty political, that one was really political, but nobody really noticed yet, you know, stupid people out there, you cannot help that. But it was very political, I was trying to tell them "Look, they are cutting trees" you know? In just four months I gathered more than 10,000 of this thing so how much more all those years and after my show? So there was no reaction...the only reaction from Secretary [Reyes?], the one who killed himself, matricide, was to borrow the whole show and transferred it to Park and Wildlife. But there was no commitment [inaudible] "Why is this thing happen?" [R: No changes] Yeah no changes. So it was very political.

50:31

J: Ah this is 1986 right after EDSA. This one is historic, you know why? Because all through the years that I joined competition, artists join competition, all competition pieces, including mine, before this are all the traditional [bakal?], [reesen?], good, the traditional things. This is the first time they saw an entry with this kind of material, it's all indigenous. The bamboo, rattan strap -

T: What are these thread things?

R: This is rattan strap [inaudible] And this is, the dark one is a fiber from caba negro palm, the one they use to make [tagalog] [R: brooms?] Brooms. Then this one inside are just twigs, and there is a big hole there, a slot there, and you can see there are things inside all from nature.

T: Oh, so there's a hole at the top?

J: Yeah, at the top, there's a slit there. They are all from just my surroundings. And I found this beautiful piece of bamboo, this are natural form. And one surprising thing about this piece: I have 200 of this, rattan strip hold this thing, because it's very heavy, but if you touch one of these rattan, it's not taut, it's very limp, but it holds the whole thing. So I am surprised, "What happened?" because every one of them are very loose. I was expecting very taut. Nothing, no. So until now my curious that the totality of the pieces [inaudible] the capacity to hold the whole thing. But what is historic is that after I won the Grand Award in this competition, the following years until now, there are artists using indigenous material for their entry. So it changes the whole process, you know? So it changed the mind of the artist now [inaudible]. Still, Art Critic doesn't see it that way. [T: Really?] Yeah, they just see how Junyee won the Grand Award etc. but they don't see the significance that I changed the artists mind, how they think, how they build their work.

T: And you consider this installation?

J: Yeah this is installation.

T: The bamboo pole, does it extend across the room, how long is it?

J: It's 14 feet. And it was hanging from the ceiling, so it was not the usual sculpture on a pedestal.

R: Where was this?

J: [tagalog][R: MOPA] It was MOPA before it was AAP and their [inaudible]

T: And you said this was right after EDSA?

J: Right after EDSA. So I called it "New Seed"

T: Why did you call it New Seed?

J: Because I entered a new way of joining the competition, I entered this new way of thinking and doing art sculpture or art pieces

R: Not related to EDSA

J: No, not related to EDSA. Maybe there was at the back of my mind because we are entering a new, so-called, recapturing of freedom, a new phase of our political development, but the whole thing is more on the artistic... [R: Material] Yeah. But as I have said before, all of my work are political connotation, or elements of it. Maybe because we are [inaudible] rally, rally, noise... Even the professor and instructor , "No class today, let's go, rally! Boycott classes!"

55:31

T: [Is there anything you want to say about the Havana Bienniale?]

J: The first time was very important for me because that was the time I put up the manifesto with [Mandiavi?] and all the people who participated in the workshop - there was a workshop actually, workshop for [ephemeral?] sculpture [T: And that's why the CCP sent you, right?] Yeah, and then, surprisingly, including artists from Europe, they don't know what is 'ephemeral', they use [bakala?], metal; that's not ephemeral! Anyway, I was trying to, I was able to convince the whole workshop of my idea of putting up a movement of indigenous contemporary. Not craft, but indigenous contemporary. You have read the manifesto, yeah? [T: Yeah yeah] So it's there. That's my feeling. So one night I wrote it inside our hotel room. Even now that's my feeling. But it's so hard to lead a movement if you have no committed lieutenants, so after a while it dissipate. But I continue it, I am continuing it, and some people are still doing the same thing but different material. But they can say maybe it's that it's just natural for 1st world [concrete?] to dominate because they have the resources. It's only natural that you will put that as [color c?], [president c?], publication, etc. And because of that, it will spread all over the world. And because 3rd world countries, it's natural for artists in 3rd world countries to be influenced by all this bombardment of Western or American kind of works. My idea is that we can use our own tradition, our own culture, by using it in contemporary work, not necessarily copying. But they don't see it that way because, especially now, you have internet, it's easy to be...that's why I don't read art book, because sometimes it influence your mind. So my curious is look at your backyard - I use the word there backyard - because it's all there. My first one man show is from our backyard [inaudible], working together, helping each other, so until now that's the way I approach my work. Your [Western] work is good, if I am a millionaire I'll buy a lot of Western work, because they're really good! But it doesn't mean that I have to follow them, we have different experiences, we grew up in different milieu, or surroundings; I am from this country, you know? Why do I have to close my eyes and follow all these things that are happening in Europe or America? Because I think we have talent enough, and we have enough materials and resources and history, cultural history, to use it for our contemporary artmaking. But they are not doing it. It's quite hard to believe, because an artist should be sensitive, we are the kind of people who are sensitive to the surroundings, but we are reacting from the books we read, all artists in this country long to go have residency in that place, have a fellowship, and they forgot that now Southeast Asia has a lot. That's why I organized the [Saling Lahat] in the Diamond Hotel. So until now that's my curious-I am an individual, you know? All persons are unique, how much more an artists who do works to present to the world [with us?] a manifestation or a sign of their own emotion, or own story, or own experiences, but they base the work on what they saw on the internet or influence from the 1st world country. And I think it's wrong, because it eliminates your personality, it eliminates your nationality. You are Asian, first of all you are Asian, you are Southeast Asian, you are Philippines or Vietnamese, but what happened? We are all under the shadow of the Western World. And it's only natural because they have the power. If the Philippines is a 1st world country or #1 economy like America, we will do the same. We will propagate all our [inaudible] presidency. But we should not be blind, I mean you are an artist, you should be more sensitive, you know? I'm not saying that what they produce are bad art; it's good art, because they are very good students of the Western art, we have quite sensitive, very creative artists in Southeast Asia. So they are producing good work, but I think they can produce more work, better work, if they use their own spirit, they use their own cultural soul, or whatever. It's all in the backyard, you know? It's all surrounding you. So it's wrong. It's wrong in the sense that we could have done better, use your own personality. I am Junyee, you know? I am not somebody else.

1:01:33

T: There was this one interview I read with you and Alice Guillermo where you talk about the difference between indigenous art and ethnic art, [J: Yeah it's very different] can you speak a little bit more about that?

J: When I say indigenous, I mean indigenous contemporary. Ethnic is very traditional, it doesn't change.

T: And you don't think indigenous is aligned with craft at all?

J: Yeah, mostly [ascribed?] of craft. But indigenous can be an inspiration by an artist, by a contemporary artist. This is part of my backyard, all of those indigenous, ethnic, traditional work from [Ladel?] to whatever, including that thing, they're all from our cultural indigenous people. They are survivors of the time. They are part of the backyard, so you can use that as your inspiration and even your material for contemporary artmaking. You retain your own spirit as a Filipino or as a Vietnamese. But very contemporary because when you see contemporary it means you are in tune with the development of the whole world. You are there. You have reached the moon. America went to the moon, the first one, before the Russians, but when they reached the moon it's the whole humanity that reached the moon, include us. We are the human species. So that's what I'm fighting for until now. But I really don't go out and [inaudible], I just do my thing, I do not have time to convince people.

T: Do you consider yourself an indigenous contemporary artist?

J: Yeah. Very much.

T: There were some articles that refer to you  as an indigenous installation artist [J: Yeah], especially in the 90's when you were exhibiting at ATP and Havana Bienniale, and there were so many articles coming out about you during that period. And I remember my adviser wrote a question mark in my dissertation,  "Does Junyee consider himself an installation artist?" or an indigenous installation artist, "Is that a term that Junyee uses?" And I thought, hm, based on everything I've read it seemed that that's what he believes he is, but I'm going to bring that back and be like "Look, I have a recording that Junyee says he is"

J: When you say indigenous artist, it's much better to say "indigenous contemporary", but to say "indigenous installation artist" maybe is not very accurate, because I am a contemporary man.

1:04:13

T: So "indigenous contemporary artist". I guess I'm going back to this question between sculpture and installation, because it's a really important distinction that really comes out in the Philippines during the 1970s, the difference between sculpture and installation, and environmental sculpture, and situational works. So I was wondering if you can elaborate or discuss a little bit more how you decide that something is sculpture or decide something is installation.

J: I majored in sculpture in college, and I've done a lot of sculpture in my life, including competition. The main difference between sculpture and installation is that the main reason for installation is to create an environment. A sculpture is one piece or many pieces, but it exists by itself, it's complete by itself. One statue, one modern sculpture. But an installation, you're trying to build an environment. That's why I love installation, because it has no limit. You can use movement, you can use painting, you can use scent [R: Light, smell] Everything. You can use food. Everything. So it's just like walking inside a mountain, it's there you know? That's why my *Wood Things* installation, creating an environment. It was really a complete environment by itself. You can be transported and you forget what is outside because you are there, you are fixed there. It's so powerful that you itch. Looking at it I feel itchy. That's the difference. So my work now, this marker, when I finish this marker in four years I think it will be the biggest and the longest installation in Southeast Asia. And it's permanent.

R: He's doing the markers all over the Philippines.

T: That's really cool. What makes this an installation.

J: This is an installation because I put it up there [T: It commands the space]. Yeah it commands the space. [T: This is New Seed] You sit there, it's so different, it's alien from the pedestal, the sculpture, so [Evan Bogey?] always considered it an installation. I am not very particular with that, I can compromise, because that was a sculpture competition! But because I am a maverick I do not announce my intention, I just do my thing and let the people decide what this project is.

T: And this was very big, right?

J: That's very heavy, this is 14 ft! This big.

T: New Seed was 14 feet.

J: Very heavy too. I had a hard time fixing it from the ceiling.

T: But the strings on New Seed they weren't taut

J: No when I carried this into the hall it's already complete, with the string.

T: Was it spiky?

J: No it was soft. This one is from the caba negro fiber, this is fiber used for making rope.

T: What color was it? Is it the same color that it was in the book?

J: Yeah it's more on the brown side, because it's dried twigs, dried whatever, including the bamboo, it's more on the brown side. It's an old bamboo that nobody used because it's so crooked, they cannot use it for whatever, post or whatever. I'm satisfied with that because it tricks a lot of people. Maybe now they're still doing thing like that for competition. And this young people and old people was there doing the whole plans

R: A lot of artists really see you as starting something that they did not know about before

J: I accepted that without bragging. I am more of a close guy, that's why I transfer in this place, because I don't like the social activities in Manila. Here I am very [cool?]

1:09:02

T: These little lights up here, were the lights for the work? What was the effect of having the lights?

J: It's really different, because this is a huge thing, you cannot see at the top. So there's a light trying to embrace the whole thing, it's very different. I borrowed that lighting, actually, it's not for me, because it's a big gallery and museum, so I borrowed some of them and put it on my piece. Because if you leave the curator there they might....it was [Vinites...or Peti?] [Peti?] I don't think that he understood my work, so I think it will be treated as an ordinary object, so I said can I place it myself.

T: So you placed the lights for New Seed by yourself?

J: Yeah

T: Because I noticed these, and also, I don't know if it's just the photograph, but is it slanted?

J: This one? Yeah it slants. This one is much bigger space than this one. This one is almost touching the bamboo. I followed this contour of the bamboo for the curve of the piece, so it's like that, slanted. So it has movement, it's not fixed, it's not rigid. And you can [inaudible] that string.

T: So it's to show movement?

J: Yeah. It suggests flexibility, and likeness [inaudible]

T: And there's this other term that's used a lot in the 70's and 80's: environmental sculpture?

J: No, I never heard of that.

T: Okay so you've never thought of your work as environmental sculpture?

J: No. I have very separate, distinct sculptural work and installation. My sculptural work is for financial means, because I can sell it or win sculpture competition. I grew up winning sculpture competition because I was a working student.

1:11:12

T: My last question I kind of alluded to before: I'm thinking about Philippine Conceptualism as a concept that is happening or coming to be around the 1970s and 1980s, and I end it with New Seed because it seemed like an appropriate conclusion, an I talk a little bit about the Havana Bienniale, and I'm not really sure what is going to happen to my dissertation [...blah blah blah...] What do you think your relationship is with this idea of conceptual art, especially in the Philippines compared to any other place I've seen, materials were so important, a lot of places "Oh dematerialization, conceptual art being about the concept, but materials make up most of the conversation around conceptual art and conceptualism during the period. And I also put Maceda in there, who also wasn't identified as a conceptual artist in my dissertation either. So I was just wondering what you thought about your work's relationship to conceptual art or conceptualism.

J: I have done a lot of conceptual work in my installation work, but the main proponent of conceptual work is Robert Chabet. But conceptual work is observed in the installation work, but installation work is hard to absorb in the conceptual art. So for example, during the change of the entry of the new millenium, the 2000s, the whole world celebrated it in 2000 when it should be 2001, since 2000 is the ending of the century, I have a big installation conceptual work. I used bamboo as a telescope, and at the break of dawn I took picture. Nothing but just took picture. That's very conceptual. It was all black and Chabet was so impressed with this work, because I took picture of the first entry of the light [R: the sun] the sun, and actually it's very dark [R: First daybreak] Yeah, first daybreak. So it was part of my installation of big bamboo, pointing to the stars. So conceptual work is absorbed in installation work. A lot of Chabet work conceptual is true installation, it's not a pure conceptual artwork, like hanging a chair upside down, that's conceptual, the purely conceptual is that the message is more important than the object.

T: But I don't think that's true in Philippine conceptual art, and that's one of the arguments that I'm making.

J: Yeah that is the definition of the West, [inaudible] that the more important is the message than the object. I agree with that, I have no problem with that, because it can be done, because there are times that the message is more important than the work itself. But that's the conceptual [as is fair?]. So it's very hard for installation to be absorbed by the conceptual concept of making artwork, but it's very easy for installation to absorb conceptual concept or process), and this country didn't have that distinction, because in this country, the proponent of conceptual work is in the image of Chabet, and Chabet is in the image of American Boy - we call him AmBoy - because - don't mention that - because he is my counterpart, he is the guy who believed that the true art is from the West. And that's crazy, you make good art, that's true, but don't say that you are the only one. So that's the difference between Chabet and me. And also I don't have disciples, I don't value [inaudible]. I influence them, but I never, because I am not a teacher, I am a lousy teacher, I reject being a teacher. So installation is the mother of thing, because installation is a counterpart with what is out there, nature itself, the universe itself, so everything, every  idea that you have [time?] to absorb in that concept, is it absorbed? Because this is the motherlode, you know? This is the whole thing. But conceptual is a small part of a human concept of how to do art in a different way. So I don't know if I answered the question...

T: So would you be offended to be in a dissertation about Philippine Conceptualism?

J: No, I am honored because every time my work or part of my work is used for dissertation or by other people, I think I am honored because they took notice of me, of my work, of the importance of my work, the influence of my work outside installation art. This young one doesn't even know where this installation work started because they are using computer everything, but the concept is the same, installation. The only reason why I use this, because I am nature boy and I don't have money to buy this expensive thing to do my installation in different way, so that's the difference. Otherwise it's the same.

T: That's something that you and the so-called conceptual artists talk a lot about, is using materials that don't cost money, or using debris or detritus materials, and that's something that's recurring both in conversations about indigenous art or indigenous materials in art, and what conceptual artists are discussing as well, so I try to make that more apparent in my dissertation, and how materials were a very important aspect of conceptual art in the Philippines. Thank you so much for your time.

J: Good luck!