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# Art: searching for new social solutions



In 2003, [The Bagasbas Beach International Eco Arts Festival \(BBIEAF\)](#), was created to answer the need for active participation **to alleviate poverty and spur sustainable development** with care for the preservation of the environment. BBIEAF had decided to embark on this journey of transformation and its potential for self-initiated and self-managed action towards the solution of chronic social problems.

Historically, rare, major governmental as well as private programs have been implemented in these communities to naught. Through reverse social engineering, the BBIEAF has come to the conclusion that that the only pathway with sustainable results would be that which empowers the community itself to realize its problems, formulate solutions and manage this transformation. By empowering the people of the poor coastal communities of the province of Camarines Norte (which is 8 hours away from Manila), the BBIEAF lays the challenge for developmental transformation to all members of society, using a novel tool that has given breath to this dream – **Art as a tool for human and community development**.

The BBIEAF believes that people reflexively try to make their life situations better, but that decades of misdirected philosophies on development and the frustration of repeated failures have blinded people and/or have made them skeptical to the desired metamorphoses. It is far easier to just pull up roots and emigrate to better pastures, which is the present solution employed by the majority of the population. **Artists can open new windows** – through which both problems as well as solutions can be viewed, planned and actualized – via a transformational process wherein they could, in the natural and

unencumbered practice of their craft, somehow present both new trans-cultural perspectives as well as embed the creativity and innovativeness that are the hallmarks of his practice.

[caption id="attachment\_13472" align="aligncenter" width="576" caption="2nd BBIEAF 2003 - Fish Catcher, by artist Sara Tse-HK, China"][/caption]

This festival aims **to change mental precepts**, instill vigor and the will to operationalize solutions through the showcasing and the transfer of new views, so that fresh approaches for potential solutions are generated within the community itself. **Artists act as catalysts** in this transformational interaction, presenting hope, operability and the possibility of change, but at the same time receive a wealth of traditional perspectives with which to enrich their own Art. This interaction and learning of life ways provides a pool of creativity and innovations that can help communities tackle socio-economic problems that not only hamper personal and community development but that adversely affects the environment as well. In this activity, Art leads the change towards what is possible, attainable and viable.

All these concepts seem to be far-flung for most traditional cultural workers and to the society-at-large, traditionally dependent on Technology to effect change. **What the BBIEAF aims to transform is the mind**, so that all resources and actions can be planned in a more thoughtful, innovative way to ensure a higher rate of effectiveness. The dialogue and immersion brought to the fore by public art installations using bamboo, video and other materials are but the physical manifestations of changes that have occurred in the mental frameworks and perspectives of the participants.

The process of building and crafting are but the visible actions of trans-cultural learning that occurs during the festival. Thus, **the art-making becomes a process** through which individuals learn new ways to view and use their resources to make their lives closer to what they deem as better and more fulfilling.

The effects of these changes are not apparent, for sure, and in most instances, very difficult to measure. But simply, the festival gives the communities a new set of perspectives through which the community can create, with their own initiative, solutions to problems that have withstood previous traditional onslaughts. **The BBIEAF retools minds, not processes**; it transforms innovation, creativity and the boundaries of what is possible. It broadens frameworks and seeks to attack problems from new sides, with both traditional as well as retooled instruments. We believe that unlimited resources bearing upon chronic problems will be wasted. What is needed is a new eye and a conscious will to innovate approaches, and solve problems with the minimum of precious resources.

Re-tooling minds and hearts of stakeholders by using Art opens new doors not only in the solution of problems but in the furtherance of successful forays into human and community development. In this way poverty, inequity and environment degradation is addressed in one sweep using Art as a tool.

We invite international artists to immerse themselves within these communities and be catalysts in re-learning and reconsidering the life-ways of all parties involved, and concretizing this process using the tangible tools of Art-making.

The BBIEAF expands the definitions of Art and Artists while it forges new pathways in the way human beings better their situations. It brings Art in a direct and fruitful collusion with Function and a new sense of relevance to the lives of men and the further development of their societies. It empowers Art and the process of Art-making, as it catalyzes socio-cultural processes previously thought exempt or irrelevant to its significance, and in the process gives Art a new burnish, a new significance in the daily lives of communities.

***Edward James Carlos Pangilinan** is the Festival Director II and Co-Founder of BBIEAF, he is now finishing his MA in Development Communication at the University of the Philippines at the same time preparing for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of BBIEAF in February 2012.*

Related links:

Bagasbas Beach International Eco Arts Festival (BBIEAF): <http://www.bbieaf.org/>

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