

The ‘abaniko’ transformed



Published June 5, 2012 4:17pm

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Little glass fishes. Mother of pearl and keishi pearls. Coco beads spray-painted in gold. Even chopsticks and dim sum steamers. All these and more were spotted on the “*abaniko*”—folding fan—in the hands of design consultant and “floral architect” Rachy Cuna.

Treating the *abaniko* as canvas, Cuna followed his gut feel and put together 18 art installations using found objects he has at home—that explains the range of materials from seashells and pearls, dim sum steamers and chopsticks, Buddha busts and coconut shells.

“*Para hindi boring*,” Cuna explained, as he gave us a tour of his exhibit dubbed “AbaniKo,” (a play with the words “*abaniko ko*” or “my fan”) ongoing until June 12 at the lobby of Hotel Intercontinental Manila. But boring was really the least of Cuna’s concerns, because anything he touches with his hands turns into something beautiful.

Acknowledged as the “Floral Architect of the Philippines,” Cuna has long been imparting his creative touch in styling not just floral arrangements but

whole events as well. For years, he has been styling the awarding ceremonies of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards. Cuna has also designed and styled the interiors of many upscale residences, establishments, and resorts here and abroad. And despite all that, he dabbles in painting and art installation.

His last exhibit, “Paypay Atin Ito,” at Robinsons Place Manila in 2010 featured 100 non-foldable fans made of anahaw, bamboo, and other Filipino materials jazzed up with found objects like shells and beads. That exhibit was the precursor to the current AbaniKo exhibit.

Cuna said he has long been collecting beautiful things which he keeps in stock in his house in Manila. At the time of collecting them, he may not have a vision yet of their use—such as old Chinese coins—but he keeps them at home just in case.

Well, the old Chinese coins were used to adorn the artwork “Buddha’s Blessings” which was mounted on a statue of a smiling Buddha.

Small fish figurines in jade were incorporated in “Fishable,” and the whole artwork placed on top of a fish figurine made of glass.

Coco beads were spray-painted in gold and glued on an *abaniko*, and then the artwork was mounted on a coconut shell, thus the name “Loco Over Coco.”

“Bambusa” has bamboo-looking weeds added to the fan, with a bamboo-like base.

Even an old Buddha bust became part of the show, spray-painted green to provide support to a green *abaniko* delicately decorated with little ceramic flowers, in the installation “Green Nirvana.”

One of the whimsy installations on display is “Musical Chair”—a fan adorned with miniature chair metalwork hanging all over. The artwork is mounted on a “chair” made of wire.

But the cutest and most playful of the lot has got to be “Fishball Pa,” which features the wooden outline of a fan studded with woven “siomai”—it could have been called “Let’s Make Tusok-Tusok the Fishballs” and no one would have minded. The artwork sits on top of a little wok suggesting the method of cooking fishballs.

“It’s fun,” Cuna agreed. “*Wala akong pakialam*. It’s a non-selling show and hopefully will be a traveling show,” he said chuckling.

Visitors couldn’t help but chuckle along. Even little kids point to the fans, and the grown-ups can’t help but look closely at each one. I heard someone say, “*Ang tiyaga*.” Others said, “*Nakakaaliw*.”

Cuna has shown in this exhibit that fans are fun, more fun in the Philippines. They are no longer Maria Clara’s *abaniko*. —**VS, GMA News**

Ref.:

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/260718/lifestyle/artandculture/the-abaniko-transformed>

Look:

Photos courtesy of Rachy Cuna

here:

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