

The current visual art (trends) of a city in the Philippines: artists' profile and styles

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Abstract: The study indicates that a majority of the well-established local artists in Cebu City, Philippines have a tendency to practice visual arts in a conservative and traditional manner. Their artistic subjects, methods, and approaches all reflect this. The rich cultural and historical legacy of Cebu City is a major influence on the city's conservative and conventional visual art trends. These artists use classical techniques including realistic painting, sculpture, and weaving, and are frequently inspired by religious themes, local customs, and folklore. The depictions of historical events, religious themes, and images from ordinary life in these artworks highlight the importance of traditional aesthetic standards and precise craftsmanship. There is also a noticeable influence of Spanish colonial art, especially in the use of natural paints and wood as well as religious imagery. The preservation and promotion of Cebu's cultural identity is achieved through this dedication to traditional themes and practices. In this established component of Cebu's art scene, artists are typically those with strong ancestry in traditional crafts and classical training that has been handed down through the centuries. These artists are usually older, and many of them have studied fine arts in formal institutions or have worked as apprentices to masters in their field. A concentration on skill, accuracy, and the utilization of traditional materials and procedures define their work. The participation of traditional Cebuano artists in local festivals, church commissions, and cultural exhibitions is a means of maintaining the work's essential role in the community. Their many artistic forms, which include realistic portraiture, elaborate religious carvings, and finely detailed landscape paintings, all support the celebration and preservation of Cebu's artistic heritage.

Keywords: Cebuano visual arts, Traditional techniques, Cultural heritage, Religious themes, Spanish colonial influence, Artistic preservation

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INTRODUCTION

Every renowned artist in history has demonstrated unique abilities and styles. Few can be compared to others, but there are always a very special few or someone who has achieved extraordinary success in every given era. They were going to set the standard for greatness for the generations that followed. Artists develop their unique styles by adapting elements from established masters and traditions. This process involves learning conventional rules through imitation and study before consciously seeking to develop one's own style (Mito, 2018). There may be a relationship or resemblance between the styles of two artists.

The usually exhibited artworks in Cebu City fall into one of two categories: modern or traditional or conservative. Even though art trends change gradually over time, conservative works of art continue to be more widely displayed. Art plays a part in promoting indigenous culture. First-world cities, which simultaneously support their booming economy and cultivate cultural identity, place a high importance on the progress and preservation of all creative forms. Since the late 1980s, creativity has been recognized as a key driver of urban revitalization, with creative industries contributing to economic growth in post-industrial cities (Oliveira & Paulino, 2017).

The Sinulog dance festival has evolved from a traditional ritual to a contemporary tourist attraction, showcasing the city's ability to adapt while preserving cultural elements (Ortiz et al., 2017). Other artists observe that the work on show in Cebu City should be more

vibrant, diverse, and one-of-a-kind than that of other artists from other parts of the country—given the city's historical, cultural, and tourism contributions—inspired this study.

The study then aims to ascertain whether the demographic profile of artists in Cebu City, Philippines and the prevalent artistic movement relate to one another.

Statement of the problem

This study aims to determine the current profile and styles of artists in Cebu City, Philippines. The findings of this study serves as indicators in the development of visual arts in the city and how the stakeholders able to help in the development of this humanistic field.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study concentrated on the distinctive qualities of local Cebuano artists, as well as visual art trends and initiatives supported by private art collectors, local government organizations, schools, art groups, and agencies. The results of the state of the visual arts in Cebu City were ascertained using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary method of the study was the collecting of qualitative data. However, in order to confirm the study's findings, qualitative data was also gathered.

The following locations were used for the study: (1) Artists Forum; (2) Art Exhibit Areas; (3) Artists' and Private Collectors' Homes; and (5) the Fine Arts Department of the University of the Philippines-Cebu.

Locale of the study and respondents

The study's subject-respondents were working, professional visual artists who had been based in Cebu City for the previous five years or so. The respondents were seen as experienced artists with established approaches to the arts. However, as the study's focus was solely on traditional visual arts, it did not cover photography, fashion design, tattoo art, or architecture.

Research instruments

Survey questionnaires were employed to ascertain the intended outcomes from the participants. Amateur artists were pre-tested in order to gauge the validity of the test questionnaires. Its reliability was verified and assisted by a qualified statistician. Cronbach Alpha for the pre-testing result was 0.825, which is sufficient to carry out the survey.

The test's validity was attested to by a number of reputable figures in the arts, including three academicians and three professional artists.

It was the researcher who personally administered the surveys. However, a few respondents responded by email since they were unable to meet in person. In order to verify the survey's results, recorded interviews were also conducted. Following the retrieval of the recorded interviews and questionnaires from the respondents, information was collated in preparation for analysis and interpretation.

Data analyses procedure

Statistical treatment of data was used in determining the outcome of the research. Simple frequency and percentage were used in analysing a particular set of data. Chi-square and correlations determined the relationship of the variables tested.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' profile

The respondents of the study consisted of 31 professional visual artists, including 27 males and 4 females, all of whom have resided in Cebu City—a vibrant hub of cultural activity—for at least five years. These artists have developed their skills either through formal education at prestigious universities in Cebu City or through informal channels, such as familial and peer influences. This combination of formal training and community-based learning has resulted in a unique fusion of local and global artistic perspectives. Art education, whether formal, non-formal, or informal, plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage, local wisdom, and traditional values (Triyanto 2017). The diverse experiences and educational backgrounds of the respondents contribute to a rich and dynamic artistic landscape, highlighting the cultural vibrancy of Cebu City.

Artistic styles and expertise

The respondents exhibit a diverse array of art styles and expertise, showcasing the multifaceted nature of their creative pursuits. A study found that cultural background influences aesthetic preferences, with individuals favoring art from their own culture, suggesting a connection between personal identity and artistic traditions (Bao et al., 2016). A significant majority, comprising 80.65% of the group, demonstrates a profound inclination towards traditional painting and drawing techniques, highlighting a deep-rooted appreciation for classical artistic traditions. Within this cohort, 70.97% specialize in realistic and traditional art, demonstrating a mastery of skill in capturing lifelike representations and scenes with meticulous detail and precision. Their works often evoke a sense of realism and narrative depth, inviting viewers into richly textured worlds imbued with emotional resonance and cultural significance.

A smaller yet significant portion of respondents, comprising 12.90%, engages in abstract art, challenging conventional boundaries of form and expression through innovative techniques and conceptual exploration. Studies indicate that viewers often interpret emotions in abstract art based on fundamental visual elements such as edges, colors, and shapes (Paasschen et al., 2014). These artists utilize abstraction to communicate intricate emotions, ideas, and sensory experiences, encouraging viewers to connect with their work on a deeper, more reflective level. Additionally, 16.13% of the respondents explore other unclassified art forms, embracing experimentation and eclectic methods in their creative pursuits. This diversity enriches the artistic landscape of Cebu City, showcasing a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation. Together, the respondents embody a rich tapestry of artistic expression, producing compelling works that resonate with audiences both locally and beyond.

Artistic skills acquisition and exposure

Online platforms like DeviantArt.com facilitate peer-to-peer learning through user-made resources, offering insights into how youth artists acquire art-related skills, concepts, and dispositions using New Literacy practices (Jones, 2015). The skill set and exposure to the art industry acquired by the respondents show a diverse and dynamic journey influenced by formal education, informal influences, and active participation in the artistic community. A sizable majority (51.61% of the group) have studied for a visual arts degree at university, giving them a thorough grounding in artistic theory, technique, and critical discourse. Their formal education gives them the skills necessary to confidently and skilfully navigate the complexity of the art world, enabling them to express their creative vision with depth and clarity.

Apart from official education, a significant percentage of participants—25.81%—have acquired their artistic abilities through informal means such as personal influences and self-directed exploration. Visual Culture Learning Communities, formed around shared interests in visual culture production, serve as powerful platforms for auto-didactic and peer-initiated learning (Freedman et al., 2013). Through a variety of sources, such as peers, mentors, and cultural experiences, these artists develop a unique artistic voice based on self-expression and intuitive discovery. Furthermore, 38.71% of respondents actively participated in shows at least twice a year, demonstrating their dedication to sharing their art with the larger community. In addition to giving them a stage on which to display their abilities, this exposure helps them make relationships with other artists and art lovers, which promotes communication, cooperation, and creative development within Cebu City's thriving artistic community.

Artistic progression

The journeys taken by the responders as artists demonstrate a dynamic evolution marked by an on-going search for creativity, self-awareness, and artistic development. Of the group, the majority (70.97%) demonstrate a strong dedication to continuously experimenting with new techniques and styles, viewing experimentation as a way to broaden their creative horizons and push the boundaries of their artistic practice. Their curiosity and vigor are fuelled by this commitment to discovery, which pushes them to change and adapt to new challenges and sources of inspiration. Only 9.68% of people, on the other hand, decide to stick to their tried-and-true artistic genres, finding identity and purpose in the mastery and development of their chosen style. On the other hand, 16.13% of respondents struggle with the elusive challenge of defining their own artistic voice, stumbling through self-doubt and confusion in pursuit of genuine expression. The artist's journey is characterized by a relentless pursuit of creativity and self-discovery, often fraught with challenges and uncertainties (Naylor, 2015). Each respondent's journey is infused with tenacity, passion, and an unwavering quest of artistic brilliance despite the diverse roads they take.

Art perception and the future of art in Cebu City

The responses' impressions of Cebu City's art encompass a wide range of viewpoints, demonstrating both openness to various artistic influences and a sophisticated comprehension of the connection between art and the individual's experience. With a sizable majority of the group (74.19%) actively pursuing other artistic endeavours, there is a tangible sense of adventure and curiosity as artists avidly experiment with new mediums, techniques, and conceptual frameworks. Artists are also exploring the intersection of art and science, using advanced technologies like microbiological techniques in bio-art and physical effects in installations (Pickering, 2016). This acceptance of experimentation not only enhances Cebu City's cultural scene but also cultivates a culture of invention and exchange of ideas, igniting stimulating conversations and innovative synergies among the local artists.

Furthermore, the respondents' beliefs regarding the personal significance of art underscore the deeply subjective and introspective nature of artistic expression. Research suggests that artists and art teachers hold diverse beliefs about creativity and artistic expression, which influence their approach to art education (Stone, 2015). While 16.13% of respondents prefer to stylistically adhere to their established art styles, indicating a commitment to self-expression rooted in personal aesthetic sensibilities, a more nuanced divide emerges regarding the role of personal experience in shaping artistic vision. Nearly half of the respondents, totalling 48.39%, perceive art as transcending individual experiences,

suggesting a belief in art as a universal language that transcends personal narratives. Conversely, 45.16% of respondents' view art as an inherently personal and reflective medium, intimately tied to the tapestry of life's experiences, emotions, and perceptions. This dichotomy highlights the complex interplay between the subjective and the universal in the realm of artistic creation, offering a glimpse into the multifaceted nature of artistic identity and the evolving landscape of art in Cebu City.

Perception of the dominant art trends in Cebu City

The respondents' perceptions regarding the dominant art trends in Cebu City reveal a diverse spectrum of viewpoints, reflecting the complex interplay between tradition, innovation, and individual artistic preferences within the local art scene. This evolution reflects a quest to retrieve authentic, pre-colonial identity and fashion an imagined nationality, while also intersecting with global art movements and diaspora experiences (Capistrano-Baker, 2015). With a notable majority, comprising 58.06% of the group, identifying traditional or realistic art as the prevailing style, there is a discernible reverence for classical techniques and representational aesthetics. This inclination towards traditionalism may reflect a deep-seated appreciation for the timeless beauty and narrative depth inherent in realistic portrayals, resonating with the cultural heritage and artistic legacy of Cebu City.

A sizable minority of respondents (16.13%), however, believe that modern and abstract art dominates the local art scene, indicating a growing desire for experimentation and creative expression that pushes boundaries. This embracing of modern aesthetics could herald a move away from traditional conceptions of representation and toward more avant-garde and conceptually-driven art forms, which would encourage spectators to interact with the work in unconventional manners. In contrast, almost one-third of participants, or 29.03%, think that Cebu City's prevailing art trends are diverse, demonstrating a sophisticated comprehension of the dynamic and multidimensional character of artistic expression within the city's thriving cultural milieu. Several trends have emerged to improve art education quality, including cultural diversity integration, partnerships with museums and educational institutions, and the use of new technologies in teaching (Al-Amri, 2016). The depth and complexity of the local art scene, where traditionalism and innovation coexist in a dynamic interplay that shapes the constantly changing landscape of art in Cebu City, are highlighted by this range of viewpoints.

Art affiliations to the dominant art style in Cebu City

Artists navigate between local contexts and global influences, constantly negotiating their identities and roles (Luger, 2017). The respondents' affiliations with the dominant art style in Cebu City reflect a nuanced interplay between artistic identity and the broader cultural currents shaping the local art scene. A significant portion, totalling 38.71%, perceive their own art styles as somehow aligned with the dominant aesthetic, indicating a sense of resonance with the prevailing artistic trends and conventions. This alignment may stem from shared stylistic elements, thematic concerns, or cultural influences, suggesting a degree of cohesion and continuity within the artistic community as artists draw inspiration from and contribute to the evolving tapestry of local artistic expression.

On the other hand, a similar percentage of respondents, or 38.71% of the group, agree that their own and their peers' styles are similar, although they do not necessarily believe that their work embodies the prevailing artistic movement. Research shows that engaging in artistic interventions can help address these tensions in organizational contexts, enabling new collaborations and ideas (Antal et al., 2018). Given that artists must balance the conflicting

forces of tradition and innovation, conformity and uniqueness, this divergence points to a complex concept of artistic identity and diversity within the local art scene. These artists add to a dynamic ecosystem of artistic interchange and dialogue by recognizing both diverse voices and mutual affinities within the community. This enriches Cebu City's cultural fabric with a kaleidoscope of creative viewpoints and techniques.

General observations on the art styles being exhibited publicly in Cebu City

The respondents' general observations on the art styles being exhibited publicly in Cebu City offer valuable insights into the dynamic landscape of the local art scene. A significant portion, comprising 38.71% of the group, note the emergence of several Cebu-based artists who excel in cultivating distinct styles and approaches to their art, highlighting a culture of innovation and individuality within the community. The natural environment provides both personal benefits and artistic inspiration, with ecological values potentially transmitted to viewers through artwork (Rubio Vega & Manzanera, 2014). This recognition of artistic diversity and originality speaks to the vibrant creative energy that permeates Cebu City, as artists draw inspiration from their surroundings and personal experiences to craft compelling and unique expressions of their artistic vision.

Still, a sizable portion of participants (32.26%) note that most artists headquartered in Cebu have a tendency to share themes and styles, though with minor variances. This observation highlights the shared narratives, aesthetic traditions, and social issues that artists in the local art community interact with, as well as the similar threads and influence that exist between them. Although there are some similarities, there are also a few distinctions that point to some degree of uniqueness and artistic interpretation among the artists, making for a rich tapestry of artistic expression that captures the variety of viewpoints and experiences of the Cebuano artistic community. Art can transcend its place of origin thanks to this cultural fluidity, which also helps to create a global culture that can be appreciated by people from different backgrounds (Carter, 2017). On the other hand, 29.03% of respondents believe that the majority of artwork produced by Cebu City artists has unique styles that distinguish them from artists in other parts of the country, highlighting the unique regional identity and cultural heritage that influence the city's artistic landscape. This realization demonstrates the richness and depth of Cebuano art, which draws from a diverse range of cultural traditions, histories, and viewpoints to produce dynamic and moving pieces that appeal to audiences both domestically and beyond. The identity of art is not set in stone; rather, it changes as it travels through cultures, taking on new characteristics and meanings (Carter, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

The study found a significant relationship between the respondents' artistic profiles and demographic characteristics. Specifically, the art style produced by an individual is influenced by age, with older artists favoring styles they perceive as age-appropriate, while younger artists tend to prefer contemporary art forms. Artists' perceptions of their own art styles are also significantly linked to their artistic experience. Additionally, a significant relationship was observed between an artist's age and their participation in exhibitions, as artists refine their craft over time and align their work with their evolving artistic perceptions. The study further concludes that gender plays a role in shaping artistic expression, particularly in determining whether an artwork reflects themes such as feminism. This highlights that an artist's gender significantly influences their perception of and approach to art style.

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