

An Approach to a Methodology in Philippine Design Culture

Guillerma L. Mendoza

*University of Santo Tomas
glmendoza@ust.edu.ph*

ABSTRACT

Design in a specific culture is shaped by the conditions and habits of the local. This article presents the development of a critical path for a pioneer study of a social phenomenon, set in the quotidian, that encompasses aspects of Philippine design. The focus is the establishment of fundamental principle to underpin a provocation. How does the understanding of design culture contribute to Philippine design? How do the examples of the Philippine chair demonstrate the fluid notion of creative patriotism? The article assembles cross-disciplinary concepts: Alfred Geertz's *Art as a Cultural System* (1976), Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), and Andres Bonifacio's *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (1896), to generate a model for theory-building. The juxtaposition sought a congruence to posit a replicable metric. The approach intends to ease the tensions of design identity and representation as consequences of

cultural hybridity. The works of twentieth century craftsmen and design producers can be expansive; the formulation of standards to essay Philippine design culture attempts to model a contemporary monograph from multifarious and variegated sources. The approach to a methodology surfaces the negotiations, interactions, and accommodations between and among the domains of design, production and consumption within a spectrum of cultural encounters in the crafting of Philippine chairs.

Keywords: culture, design, diskarte, methodology

Introduction

The spheres of design activity together with consumption are the domains of design culture. The values, philosophies, and practices in these domains define design culture. Because design communicates values and attitudes, the signs and spirits of the times in everyday objects facilitate the understanding of the culture. In the Philippines, the intersection of the set of values, ideology, habits, mindsets and behavior in the domains of design, production, and consumption galvanizes the multi-disciplinary nature of design in approaching theory and practice.

The framework of excellence, in the field of the crafts and design, focusing on the Philippine chairs, is the space to investigate the concepts that underlie the local design culture. The crafts and design sector are archetypes of the culture, the vanguards of design whose various settings situate the contexts of creation, production, and manufacture of everyday objects. The settings may consist of small organizations, such as the *talleres* or workshops, design houses and studios, or medium to fairly large groupings of people, such as the factories and furniture centers. The organization may be an intimate association catering to specific clientele or a highly segmented enterprise with expansive target market and capitalization. Within the domains of design and production, the observable creative practices are considered the prime representations of the operative design culture. The most compelling domain, however, is outside of these domains. Much of the theoretical and conceptual design culture are lodged in the domain of consumption. In the course of history, design tendencies have been largely directed and influenced by consumption patterns and forms of society.

The Need for the Study on Philippine Design Culture

A number of Philippine chair designs attest to a cosmopolitan taste and global orientation of Filipino crafts and design. From the early twentieth century to the contemporary, the chair pieces of Filipino craftsmen and design exemplars: the *maestro de obra* (master craftsman) of workshops (*talleres*), the lead designers and impresarios of manufacturing organizations, present the material that may be used to probe the constructs buttressing Philippine design culture.

Philippine design is regarded as world-class; the articulation of its history, theories, and practices needs to be fully explored to understand the design culture that delivers the international acclaim. Likely, the utilitarian value of the objects in the domestic sphere has caused them to occupy a minor position in academic design studies. This foremost step, thus, addresses the neglect that is hoped to encourage greater appreciation of the crafts and design sector beyond the economic contribution.

A hypothetical design culture based on the Filipino design exemplars is postulated, framed by an indigenous characteristic, in *diskarte* or creative ingenuity. *Diskarte* combines the local skill and talent of individuals. It is appropriated as a concept to overarch the trajectory of design culture. The theoretical discourse asserts the embeddedness of the ubiquitous *diskarte* in the domains of design culture. It speculates a construction of the social phenomenon within the complexities of societies steeped in the Filipino spirit of *diskarte*. Through the examples of Philippine chairs, the study questions how the concept translates design culture in the domains of the design, production, and consumption. What is *diskarte* or creative ingenuity among craftsmen, designers, and producers? How does it reveal the design culture of consumers? Why is the understanding important?

The crafting and design of the Philippine chairs locate the bedrock of creative ingenuity in the form, materials, and techniques, as well as in the design values and philosophies of Philippine design. To remain competitive and maintain industry position, the crafts and design sector have relied on the creativity and ingenuity of the people. This aspect of design culture is a significant factor for the country to remain as a frequent destination for buyers seeking to source excellently crafted new designs. It suggests that the techniques and strategies employed have served the sector well, enabling it to weather the challenges brought in by internal and external factors. This creative response is part of the bag-of-tricks, a mix of creative talents and trade ingenuity that describe the phenomenon.

Statement of Objectives

Creative ingenuity reifies the paradigm of creative patriotism. The model is a fluid concept, apparent in the selected corpus of works by the

exemplar Filipino craftsmen and design producers of the twentieth century, from Isabelo Tampinco to the unnamed entrepreneur and craftsmen of the San Miguel de Mayumo of the Arts and Trade schools in the early 1900s to the vanguards of Betis wood craft tradition, and the members of Movement 8, in Antonio “Budji” Layug, Kenneth Cobonpue and Ann Tiukinhoy Pamintuan, in the contemporary period. The diverse samplings of iconic and popular Philippine chair in the design survey are the humanistic contributions of the applied arts in the forging of the nation. Commonalities thread the design culture of this set of craftsmen, designers, and manufacturer and consumers; they may be instrumental in coagulating Philippine design identity.

How design culture has emerged and evolved over time as reflected in the Philippine chairs becomes the point at issue. The essay aims to present the development of the methodology to approach the multi-disciplinal inquiry. It seeks to validate a multimethod approach to extract the categories and classifications of design culture as the multimethod design study anticipates the organic shifts and transitions of the thematic approach within the twentieth century timeline.

To aim for objectivity is to make certain that there is no room for arbitrary selection in the design and deployment of research methods. The variegated sources of primary and secondary data in the applied arts are usual. Through the archival, anecdotal, and oral narratives, images and actual representative samples, the constructs, concepts, and indices of Philippine design culture will be purposively derived. The development of the methodology along this trajectory validates the hypothesis of *diskarte* in the theoretical, conceptual, and operational foundations of the phenomenon.

As a guiding principle, defining the variables and correlates of design culture among the designers, producers, and consumers establishes a convergence to advocate a replicable model. One that can be applied to the entire Philippine creative sector. Design studies are essentially qualitative; it benefits from an integration of some aspects of quantitative approaches in the preliminary stages of building the theoretical underpinnings.

The inquiry on design culture expands the focus of scholarship beyond form, materials, and techniques; it aims to probe the construct of

Philippine creative spirit. To articulate design culture and present correspondingly the approach used is to attempt at both depth and span of Philippine design. The development of the approach to methodology anchors the inquiry, taking in the lenses of connoisseurship and scholarship in equal measure, to explore the aspirations for excellence, innovation, and novelty in of the applied arts with the same spirit of creativity and ingenuity.

Analysis of Literature

Design culture is in the everyday objects. Del Coates (2003) in *Watches Tell More Than Time* advances this understanding through the interpretations of social patterns and consumer behavior in a design survey. The everyday products, Coates (2003) posits, are “the daimons, zeitgeist, and icons” of the age. In Philippine history, the forms and types of chairs contain the stimuli of design, production, and use. In a larger sense, revealed in the value assigned to these everyday objects, is the cultural demography of societies.

The materiality, in their signification in the cultural lives of makers and users, presents the home furnishings as sites of scholarship. Clifford Geertz (1976) in “Art as a Cultural System” explores local knowledge as a springboard to posit the universal values of creative production. He argues for the inclusivity of the arts to encompass all that proceeds from “a conscious production or arrangement of elements in a manner that affects a sense of beauty” (p. 1497). This inclusivity is a counterpoint to the categorization of the fine versus the applied arts. It acknowledges the cultural value of a variety of creative production. Geertz (1976) posits: “ideas are made visible, audible, and tactile through art” (p. 1499) to put forward the authentic expressions of a system of ideas in the crafting and designing of everyday objects. This framing situates the works of Filipino exemplars, through the Philippine chairs, in the milestones of design history.

The study of everyday objects – of the past and of present – is an opportunity to posture various lenses and vantage points. The micro and macro views offer the deductive and inductive processes to a comprehensive appreciation. A micro perspective is an outgrowth of ethnography, an insider

view to critically survey the objects. This is the approach to design culture through the items put on sale by an established home furnishings retailer in *Culture Materialized: IKEA Furniture and Other Evangelical Artefacts* (Garvey, 2009). Burdĕk (1983) in his *Design: History, theory, and practice of product design* on the other hand, provides an example of a panoramic exposition. Against the sea of product designs produced and used in history, thematic presentations can organize multifarious and eclectic topics into a grand opus. The key is to seek the balance between elaboration and restraint in the discussion. How to navigate the routes of scholarship amid the embrace of flexibility and immutable posturing?

In the scrutiny of design culture, the configuration of the methodology is crucial. Because the creative process *per se* is constructivist, any attempt to dissect it ought to confront the challenges and routes of the exercise as well. Devising a structure needs to dovetail the complexity of the discipline; protuberances are organic and integral which can develop and manifest during the course. The tendency to incorporate immense topics, for instance, is not just a matter of choosing between breadth versus depth but a commitment to be inclusive. The aims of focus and framing in selecting the methodology, thus, problematizes the design of the structure.

Multi-disciplinary essays dwell simultaneously on diverse topics but may tend to dilute the potency of an argument. The approach, however, is useful in foregrounding incursions to, for example, emerging topics. In *Twentieth-Century Design* (Woodham, 1997), current and global issues are interjected within the history, theory, and practice of design. The treatise positions the topics by the individual framing of the essays. The model illustrates the use of both wide and narrow lenses that is deemed suitable in exploring the general concepts and particularity of design culture. It resonates the “learned and imbibed ways and habits through formal and informal routes that fosters and creates its own language” (Florendo. 2019). Design, as a language used in the field, is a blanket idea given to objects created and manufactured for sale, subsuming the various practical and symbolic meanings that accompanied their production.

Product design “as medium of inquiry” (Malpass, 2017) examines meanings. In *Critical Design in Context: History, Theory, and Practice*, Malpass

(2017) demonstrates how the functions of industrial design, within the capitalist economy it has served, can be extracted from the technical and semantic descriptions of the objects. The narratives contain the attitudes and mindsets of the age and the positionality of the author. Fajardo (1990) in "Decolonization through people's art," in *Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* manifests a respective posturing in putting forward creative outputs as "a result of continuous repetition and constant adaptation" (p. 96). The viewpoint brings focus to the understanding of culture demography not only through the creative output but through the status of local technology and the "skills and talents of the members of society as culture competence, collective to society" (pp. 93-94). The emphasis is a specific framing that advances the authenticity of folk and vernacular arts as genuine art and cultural expressions. It aligns with the inclusive stance advocated by Geertz (1976) in arguing "the cultural significance of local knowledge and of a variety of art".

Chairs in Philippine societies occupies a conspicuous cultural space; the eminent display of many seating provisions in lifestyle museums resonates this perception. It promotes a particular aesthetic that underscores the immense role of museums and exhibitions in the transference of design culture. Woodham (1997) in *Twentieth-Century Design*, specifically notes the tendency of exhibits "to endorse a policy which is centered on celebrated-products or the output of specific designers whose work is seen to embrace high standards of aesthetic distinction or cultural status" (p. 154).

The curated Philippine design representations, that one would customarily find inside the grand residences and lifestyle museums, usually dwell on the known periods of colonial forms and its revival. Many of the exquisitely designed chair types and forms manifest the extravagance and indulgence of the local elite. The heirloom chairs and appurtenances of the wealthy and influential on public display inside the lifestyle museums typically include the *butaka* or the planter's armchair, the *Carlos Tercero* or the ceremonial prestige chair, the *mariposa* or the settee in butterfly silhouette, and the *frailero* or the box-construction wide armchair. Collections may also include some proto-modern examples: Art Nouveau and Art Deco pieces of the early 1900s to 1930s, the iron terrace chairs, the *Batibot* and the *Ambassador* chairs of the 1940s to 1950s, that are again associated with the lifestyle of the

ruling social class. In the modern settings, the celebrated chair designs of known design personalities such the bamboo chairs of Budji Layug, the *Cocoon* chair of Ann Tiukinhoy Pamintuan or the *Croissant* chair of Kenneth Cobonpue, extend the penchant for acquiring the symbolic objects that associate with a particular social class and distinctions (Bourdieu, 1983). The symbolic value emanates from the socio-cultural meanings given to the chairs (Covarrubias-Jamir, 1977; Sta. Maria, 1983; Francisco and Arriola, 1987).

The acquisition of the material object mirrors the aspirations and design culture of consumption: “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (Bourdieu, 1983:6). The notions of distinction and cultural capital advanced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1983) resonate in Philippine societies and in the design culture of consumers. The “use of international standards as the yardstick for acceptable cultural fare” in *The History of the Burgis* (Francisco & Arriola, 1987: 105) underscore the aspiration for a social classification. The distinction galvanizes the dichotomy: *pang-alta sociedad* or high society and *pang-masa* or folk.

The reference to the lifestyle of the Philippine bourgeoisie (Francisco & Arriola, 1987) illustrates a specific design culture within the domain of consumption. The cultural distinction in *uring burgesya*, an allusion to living standards of the elite, the *ilustrados* in the 1900s or the *caciques* in the 1930s, explains object fetishism that indicates the design culture of consumption. The category is also a parody, a reaction to the hegemony and ethno-centric tendency, as barometers of art production. It encourages the art of the masses as a cultural subset in the Martial Law era of the 1970s (Francisco & Arriola, 1987). The design culture in the domain of consumption is embedded in the buying patterns and consumer behavior. The prevailing styles and aesthetic sense, deducible from the pragmatic and symbolic functions of Philippine chairs define the design culture of society at large.

The construction of design culture in the hypothetical concept of *diskarte* as a ground is a key concept that resonates in history. The creativity and ingenuity, which have characterized exemplary Filipino designers and producers, are the collective *diskarte* in the domains of design and production. The indices of the formal, technical, and aesthetic innovations of the chair are in *diskarte* that reveals the contexts of society and design tendencies.

The stories of the makers of the iconic and popular chair designs are not well documented to deepen the appreciation of their contribution to Philippine design history. Benito Legarda (2001) puts forward a relevant reminder in *Cultural Landmarks and Their Interactions with Economic Factors in the Second Millennium in the Philippines* in probing cultural history. A holistic imperative, Legarda (2001) prompts, emphasizes the mindfulness of scholarship to include ‘the insights of all who participated in rendering the cultural landmarks’ that stems from an awareness of the “glossing over of the neglected segment of cultural producers such as the master carpenters, masons, etc.”, who are rarely written about.

Design as a Filipino way of life is culture itself. Many Filipino design exemplars have brought pride to the nation; those, among the living, continue to pursue the ideals that champion the nation and their cultural roots. Isabelo Tampinco (b. 1850, d. 1933) and the chairs made in his *talleres*, the *Atelier Tampinco*, circa 1900 – 1930, evinces a paradigm of design culture in the artisanal tradition. The *estilo Tampinco*, or Tampinco style is synonymous with the artistry of woodworks of the early 20th century, a style that embodies the transcendence of the excellent craftsmanship. To an extent, the artistry encapsulates the object fetishism for a Tampinco piece, manifested in the sizable number of collections, in the national cultural repositories and stately homes of the affluent families. Chairs as symbols of gentility during the time of Tampinco, to include the prestige chair in the Malacañan palace, rendered the art of the woodcraft in the ‘formulaic work’ (Mojares, 2003). The chair types that institutionalize the Betis craft tradition. The exuberant cultural appropriation in a prosperous wood-working center of Pampanga expresses design culture in the aesthetic of abundance: the prolific details, sumptuous material and rich surface treatments. Tampinco had imparted his sensibilities in a formulaic ideal that demonstrated the value of the light, transparent, and delicate aesthetics, “the seed of a Filipino style” according to Santiago Pilar (2014, pp. 241- 324), who wrote about the life and art of the master. Tampinco’s chair designs purposely show his developed decorative elements that echoed the Filipino sense and sensibility. Such is perceived in his frequent use of *anahaw*, a Philippine symbol, as motif. The local variants of Art Nouveau and Art Deco in chair designs, also attest his creative patriotism and pride of nation.

Diskarte is an operative design culture. The creative ingenuity is strategy and approach to a decidedly Philippine design identity against the perennial challenges such as for instance those that relate to materials and technology and market competition. In the presence of predicaments, *diskarte* expands the “bags of tricks.” The never-say-die spirit is an ideological construct of design culture that tests the resourcefulness and ingenuity of everyone in the crafting and design of Philippine chairs. An outstanding example is the *San Miguel de Mayumo* chair, a vernacular chair type that used rattan, a local vine to create a version of the popular Michael Thonet bentwood chair, also called the Vienna café chair. The *San Miguel de Mayumo* chair was a popular chair type that demonstrated an egalitarian spirit in design; the lighter and cheaper seating provision was made affordable to the masses. The vernacular type was preferred by the American soldiers stationed in the archipelago during the American rule. In the journal, *The Craftsman*, accounts narrate the *diskarte* of the unnamed Bulacan craftsman-entrepreneur in the technical report. The anonymous person behind the highly successful chair type is encouraged by the attractive financial returns from his first set of orders. The deployment of material and technical ingenuity is the technical *diskarte*, as the venture sought to “develop...machinery suited for working the rattan...anticipating the adjustments needed in quantity production and assimilating the models and designs ... secured from different sources” (Cocannouer & Sawyer, 1913, p. 34).

The intuitiveness in experimenting and combining materials often produced the novelty and uniqueness that many foreign buyers find exotic and refreshing. The ability to increase the value of many lowly, indigenous materials, abundant to the locality: vines, grasses, leaves, wood by-products, and other materials endemic to the archipelago, is a strategy to exploit new materials. This is demonstrated by several modern designs by the “Movement 8,” a group of contemporary designers led by Antonio “Budji” Layug, that included Kenneth Cobonpue, and Ann Tiukinhoy Pamintuan.

Budji Layug’s creative ingenuity is the re-imagining of the bamboo, the Asian material that has come to be associated with the Philippine modern classic. His highly successful bamboo chair in the late 1970s redefined the outlook of Filipino crafts and design. The clean, uncluttered, and contemporary chair form display the local and global aesthetic. Budji Layug’s

mantra to “bring nature indoors” expresses the indigenous materials in modern chair silhouettes. It is a characteristic *diskarte* and mindset similarly embraced by many contemporary Filipino designer-entrepreneurs. The avant-garde chair designs of Kenneth Cobonpue, marketed under his brand name, are evocative chairs that project the ultra-expressive forms for the Philippine modern. In the *Croissant* for example, one of the chairs that caught international attention, Cobonpue interprets the rattan vine into a sculptural volume for a chair form.

Modern Philippine chairs are produced by manual labor; the sleek and avant-garde appearance often belies the handwork that went into their production. The harmonious mix of man-made materials and natural fibers: metal and rattan derivative products, to machine and manual production processes is part of the designer-entrepreneur’s creative and ingenious approach. It is a *diskarte* born out of an awareness of the need to temper design sensibilities with competent business sense. This strategy is evident in the creative approach of many of his contemporaries. In Ann Tiukinhoy Pamintuan’s mesh iron chair forms, the *Cocoon* series, the similarly sculptural chair design derives inspiration from the organic form of nature emboldened by an intimate know-how of wielding the material. The woven iron wires, rendered into lattices, are manually welded over a mold, with each strand meticulously shaped and fastidiously joined to replicate the cocoon shape.

The design study of the Philippine chair of the twentieth century, from Isabelo Tampinco to Ann Tiukinhoy Pamintuan, highlights the variables and correlates of design culture. It locates the artisanal chair pieces, the egalitarian and vernacular chair types, and the avant-garde and modern forms into specific categories and classifications to contextualize the syncretic and the organic traditions that give form to the chairs. The variables and correlates identify the commonalities and variances in the historical timeline.

The Concept of *Diskarte* and Design Culture

There is authenticity in the syncretic Philippine modern designs. Antonio “Budji” Layug together with architect Royal Pineda, in “Understanding Design Culture: Design + Architecture” (2019) advance this belief. Against

the aspiration for the global arena as showcase of design talents, the revival of the indigenous and ethnic aesthetics and tradition, in a holistic approach to architecture is a projection of creative patriotism. The Philippine modern espouses the pride of cultural origins in its attempts to re-create the past in the modern interpretations. The intent is to push back the cultural history, to assert a long tradition of design culture for the nation.

The pushing back resonates the liminality of the pre-colonial culture in excavated artifacts of the period. The enduring practice of the crafts, despite the dwindling number of skilled artisans and craftsmen throughout the archipelago, evinces the long tradition. Notwithstanding the ageing of the many seasoned craftsmen or the lack of interest among the younger generation who are attracted by better employment and economic opportunities outside of the crafts, the tradition continues.

Homi Bhabha (1994) in *The Location of Culture* advances the notion of liminal space, the interstice of the 'in-between,' that is perhaps the field of the 'genuine but not exotic' as a cultural space "marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogenous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural differences" (p. 212). The author posits the legitimacy of the syncretic culture or the Third Space. Despite having a colonial and post-colonial provenance, the concept of the Third Space explores cultural differences while eluding the polarity of politics towards "an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism, or the diversity of culture, but on the inscription and articulation of cultural hybridity" (p. 56). Philippine chair designs may well be Homi Bhabha's "Third Space," the genuine expressions of Filipino creativity in everyday objects. The syncretic chair designs demonstrate the assimilation of borrowed and indigenous culture, "a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). The popularity and public acceptance of chairs, the iconic pieces in history, manifest the "authentic but not exotic" dictum (Zialcita, 2008) that ought to ease the tensions and polarities of cultural identity.

The sphere of creative ingenuity, the fusion, hybridity and to a little extent, the transmogrification that took place put to surface the bedrock of Philippine design that continually contributes to local and international

appeal. *Diskarte* is a mechanism for syncretism, a route to initiate new ideas in the sector of the crafts and design. The path aligns with the hospitality culture, an aspect of design culture that translates the Filipino trait in client accommodation where a designer or maker leaves a space for the ideas of the buyer or user, accommodating suggestions and input. The motivation is to gain approval to underscore a consistent aspiration to be the best among peers.

During the initial data gathering, the concept of *diskarte* has surfaced as a basis for the development of a theory in Philippine design culture. *Diskarte* is a colloquial term referring to an effective and resourceful way of doing things. The term is used in specific contexts and often connotes layers of meaning. It could mean a particular way of approaching a challenge or an impressive strategy of solving a difficult situation. Both implies ingenuity and resourcefulness. *Diskarte* is a catch word for many Filipinos. When faced with a seemingly insurmountable logistical or methodological problem, *diskarte* is the inventiveness to create a brilliant solution for many Philippine crafts and design enterprises.

The etymology of the term¹ likely originates from the Spanish word, *descarte* [des-car'-tay], defined as "the cards discarded or thrown out as useless." *Descarte* is "the act of discarding, and evasion, subterfuge" (The New Velásquez Spanish English Dictionary, 2003). Hence, an implied approach is deduced, similarly, a method, strategy, or technique. There is a process of elimination to presuppose a plan of action or a possibility after the process of *descartar*, defined in the *Oxford Spanish Dictionary*, 2nd edition (2001) as "to rule out, dismiss, reject." The *Diccionario Español – Inglés* defines *descarte* as "excuse, pretext" (Raventis, 2002). It dovetails the nuanced meaning of the Filipino *diskarte*. The ostensible reason for a *descarte* is the similar context that transposes the Spanish *descarte* into the Philippine *diskarte* as the strategy to achieve a goal or to implement something in "*pamamaraan ng isang tao upang makuha ang gusto o maisagawa ang isang bagay*" (The New Brainworld Dual Dictionary, 2013)." The translation describes the methods, procedures, or techniques deployed by to achieve something difficult or to carry out an impossible undertaking. The act of discarding in *descarte* is the *diskarte* that concretizes the definition as an approach, method, strategy, or

technique deployed or used. It equates the tenacious trait of the “never-say-die” spirit. *Diskarte*, hence, operationalizes Filipino resiliency. In the chair designs, it engages the bag of tricks to remain competitive and relevant.

A Theoretical Framework: From Andres Bonifacio’s *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (1896) and Philippine Studies

Filipino design exemplars embody the culture of excellence. They aim at mastery in every way that cultivates the sublime in *diskarte*. This premise assumes the applied arts, in the same way as the fine arts do, affect, uplift, and ennoble lives.

In developing the theoretical framework, the poem written by Gat Andres Bonifacio is referenced to tease out the notion of creative patriotism in the excellence manifested by the design exemplars. Addressed to all Filipino creatives, the verses of *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (1896) is a call-to-action in the ideological construct of imaging the nation. It reads:

*Aling pag-ibig pa ang hihigit kaya
Sa pagka-dalisay at pagka-dakila
Gaya ng pag-ibig sa tinubuang lupa?
Alin pag-ibig pa? Wala na nga, wala.*

*Ulit-ulitin man basahin ng isip
At isa-isahing talastasing pilit
Ang salita’t buhay na limbag at titik
Ng isang katauhan ito’y namamasid.
Banal na pag-ibig pag ikaw ang nukal
Sa tapat na puso ng sino’t alinman,
Imbit taong gubat, maralita’t mangmang
Nagiging dakila at iginagalang.*

*Pagpupuring lubos ang palaging hangad sa bayan
Sa bayan ng taong may dangal na ingat,
Umawit, tumula, kumatha’t sumulat
Kalakhan din niya’y isinisiwalat...*

The context of distinction and leadership² provides the overarching assumption to understand design culture through the Philippine chairs. The inspiration is found in the fourth stanza of the poem. The creative patriotism is the theoretical framework. Bonifacio imagines the characteristic mindfulness of one's historical and cultural roots championing the nation and contributing to the patriotic ideals.

The dissection of the verses, thus, probes the paradigmatic abstraction to formulate the organization of the study. "*Pagpupuring lubos ang palaging hangad sa bayan*" is a constant aspiration to bring honor to the homeland to manifest a nationalism and the 'pride of place.' The dutiful service is in itself the creative patriotism that renders *diskarte* as a commitment to excel in the crafts and design. The design exemplars, the talented artists, artisans, craftsmen, and designers, who have dedicated themselves to cultivate the craft bring honor to the motherland in "*Sa bayan ng taong may dangal na ingat*" or the 'men and women of virtue.' The distinction and leadership in *husay at angat* (excellence and distinction), *pagka-malikhain* (creativity), and *diskarte* (ingenuity), are the attributes of virtue that earn for them the honor and recognition. They manifest the pride of place, the Philippines. In "*umawit, tumula, kumatha't sumulat*" or 'creative productions in music, poetry, design, and literary arts, the *kaalamang bayan o diwang makabayan* (consciousness local or national spirit) is preserved. Every creative act that brings the consciousness, the sense of being Filipino, is a testament of the pride of cultural roots. It reveals the spirit that nurtured it in "*kalakhan din niya'y isinisiwalat*," a notion that brings to the light the steep customs and traditions that shaped the design forms or '*lubog sa kultura*.'

Every creation is a carrier of a culture. Design elements sourced from the local manifest the levels of reflexivity, a consciousness that endeavors to keep alive or exalt customs and traditions. The allusions and references are the ideals and ideas that the local culture inspires in the inclusion or evocation that honors a cultural legacy.

The ideals of Bonifacio: *pagpupuring lubos, dangal na ingat, kumatha, at kalakhan* describes the hypothetical design culture premised on the concept of bringing pride to the nation. The model extracts from the poem the variables and correlates to postulate in every creative ingenuity a design culture that ennobles. The variables and correlates transposed the abstractions

to a set of perceptible qualities that the iconic and popular Philippine chair designs will demonstrate. Based on the same metrics, the selection of subjects, informants, and representative design samplings, is to be guided by the four qualities:

1. *May dangal, husay at angat na iniingatan* (aiming at excellence in every way),
2. *Malikhan at madiskarteng pagkatha* (creative, innovative and ingenious),
3. *Lubog sa kinalakhan* (steeped in tradition), and
4. *May kaalamang bayan o diwang maabayang sinisiwalat* (displaying or disseminating local or national spirit).

The Filipino craftsmen, designer, or producer is an exemplar when he/she exhibits an ideological drive to project an image or to imagine a nation in his/her chair design propositions. They consciously demonstrate the integration of design elements that recall cultural and collective memories in the creation of crafts and design that reflect the culture around them. Indigenous elements include the use of local skills and materials exhibit the extent of the exemplar's cultural and ethnic consciousness. *Kaalamang bayan o diwang makabayang* includes the aspects of *kalinangang-bayan* or folk culture in the crafting and making of chair designs. Folk and indigenous culture provides design inspirations and sources to include the practice of skills and knowledge of local materials. The *katutubong galing* or indigenous skills and the *kaalamang bayan* or folk knowledge reflect the local and national characters since both are part of the collective memories of the community. Motifs, techniques of production and design vocabularies represent local or national traditions; they evince the *pagka-malikhain at pagka-madiskarte* whether in the face of challenges or constraints. The latter tests the mettle of the design and production domains to bring about the *malikhain at madiskarteng pagkatha o paglikha* in the creative, innovative and ingenious works. The design culture manifests the *diskarte* as the *pamamaraan* or method of being resourceful. *Diskarte* showcases the *husay* or excellence in establishing and maintaining the distinction or *angat*. The flair and aesthetic sense of the Filipino projects

an image of the nation; the ideological drive resonates a spirit of patriotism, imbuing the creative output with the intentional act of creating masterpieces to represent the nation to the world.

Creative Patriotism: The GAMABA, the National Artist Award and Philippine Studies

The creative patriotism criteria distilled from *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* develops the rubric defining the design exemplar. It is a necessary step to identify the parameters of the case studies for both the deceased subjects and existing informants. The determination of the sampling as archetypes of design culture may potentially arise issues of hegemony or marginality. By establishing verifiable attributes, it advocates the inclusivity and impartiality to foster authentic representations.

The criterion-matrix juxtaposes the rubrics from the creative patriotism metric drawn from the ideals of Andres Bonifacio to those of the national awards developed by the Cultural Offices of the Philippine Government: The National Artist Awards and the Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan and the concepts of Philippine studies. It takes into account the mandates of the national recognition bodies that endows the status and prestige to consummate artists and craftspeople. The standards and specifications of the two award-giving bodies are plotted alongside related local concepts sourced from Virgilio Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and Zeus Salazar's *Pantayong Pananaw*. The aim is to compare and validate the extracted variables in order to categorize design culture. Congruent concepts in Philippine studies are appropriated to essay the 'thick descriptions' in the analyses and synthesis.

The use of vernacular imitates the approach to Philippine studies; local terms capture adequately local ideas and meanings. In visual reading, implied contexts are denoted and expressed through language resonance. Local language provides the nuances, for example of the term *kagalingan*, or talent, which in both the broad and specific sense is singly understood as ingenuity or *diskarte* of different modes. *Diwa* or consciousness refers to a mindset, the psyche that reflects the collective experiences of individuals and of the nation. *Diwa* preserves the cultural and collective memory that, in

the case of the woodworking tradition probably dates to the uncertain epoch of the *balanggay*, the period of boat migration in the pre-colonial history. Related to the concept of *diwa* is the transfer of customs and traditions that preserve the local and ethnic knowledge or *katutubong galing*. Shared techniques and common methods in the production and trade of the chair manifest it; the workshop practices passed on to generations of craftsmen exemplify the culture of *kapwa*, or a sense of brotherhood that is subsumed in the collective experience and cultural memory. The socio-economic and political relations in the *balanggay* period, also rooted the idea of *kapwa* and the extended kinship of *sakop* or dominion. The latter is the kinship characterized by a form of reciprocity (Junker, 2000, pp.121-130) that translates the 'patron-benefactor-kindred-vassal relationships' in any structure and organization. This notion is the fluid concept of family, the flexible unit extending to the practice of *pakikipagkapwa*, or empathizing. Most settings for chair-making activities usually spring from family enterprises; the organization of workshops and ateliers typifies the intimate structure of the craft production, where goodwill and beneficence are customary. The in-house staff and personnel of modern design houses, are also usually formed by immediate family members, augmented by manpower sourced from within the small community or adjacent barangays. The set-up is an indirect form of *pakikipag-kapwa*, interpreted as a business *diskarte*, particularly when the leaders and impresarios are regarded as providers of livelihood opportunities to their kin and to the community when the former is actually employing a strategy in order to sustain political leverage or social power in the sharing of economic benefits.

The innate inventiveness and enterprising resourcefulness manifest the *malikhain at madiskarteng* Filipino, the resourceful and creative Filipino. The culture of excellence is beyond the kind of ingenuity of the "recycling habit and coping mechanism that transformed the surplus army jeeps, bequeathed by war reparations, into the colorful and uniquely Filipino jeepney" (Francisco & Arriola, 1987, p. 130). The jeepney is an icon of mass culture which blends the ethnic and folk arts with the industrial aesthetic of the vehicle. The improvisation, however, becomes a problematic ground to explore the never-say-die spirit of a resilient nation.

The culture of excellence cultivates the sublime in *diskarte* and is premised on a belief that the applied arts as in fine arts, can affect, uplift,

and ennobled lives. The 1999 National Artist for visual arts, Jeremias E. Navarro, had earlier asserted, with reference to St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of art, that "the test of the artist does not lie in the will with which he goes to work but in the excellence of the work he produces" (1950, p. 4). Recipients of the national awards, the National Artist Award and Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan possess the high-quality standards of the craft and are able to maintain nationalistic consciousness. The *makabayang diwa*, with which the innate talent manifests *katutubong galing at kaalamang makabayan*, is constant in the aspiration for honor and distinction. The commitment to this ideal, affirmed by the *pagkilala* or peer recognition ramifies the established leadership and character, the *pagkatao* of the Filipino design exemplars. The acknowledgement from colleagues and the community is an endorsement of an aura. It advances design culture as "culture competence, the skills and talents of the members of society, collective to society" (Fajardo, 1990, pp. 93-94). The psyche projects and imagines the nation, through a portfolio of representative works.

In the tabular presentation, the key ideas of excellence cut across: from Andres Bonifacio's *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (1896) to the National Artist Award (1972) and the GAMABA (1992). The matrix also contains topic-interests of Philippine Studies to tease out the hypothetical design culture. It lists the concurrences and similarities; the vernacular terms underscore the traits of the quintessential. The attributes are material in the formulation the framework to posit a replicable model that can fully integrate the entire segments of the creative sector in the scholarship.

Table 1. Criterion - matrix of the Filipino design exemplar

Bonifacio (1896)	National Artist Award (c. 1972)	Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan (GAMABA) (c. 1992)	Pilipinolohiya, Pantayong Pananaw and Siklohiyang Pilipino (1970s to 1990s)
<i>Lubog sa kalakhan</i>	Living artists who are Filipino citizens at the time of nomination, as well as those who died	Should be a Filipino citizen or group of citizens belonging to an indigenous/traditional cultural community	<i>Diwa, Kapwa, Kaalamang bayan, Katutubong galing, Pagkatao, Kalinangang bayan</i>

	after the establishment of the award in 1972 but were Filipino citizens at the time of their death	anywhere in the Philippines, engaged in Filipino traditional art in the following categories: folk architecture, maritime transport, weaving, carving, performing arts, literature, graphic and plastic arts, ornament, textile or fiberart, pottery and other artistic expressions of traditional culture	
<i>Iniingatan ang dangal, husay at angat ng sining</i>		Should have been engaged in the tradition and craft for a significant period of time with at least 50 years of existence and documentation. Should have passed on and/ or will pass on the traditional crafts and skills to other members of the community by virtue of teaching.	<i>Kagalingan, Katutubong galing, kalinangang bayan</i>
<i>Malikhain at madiskarte</i>	Artists who have pioneered in a mode of creative expression or style, thus earning distinction and making an impact on succeeding generations of artists.		<i>Malikhain</i>
<i>Isinisiwalat ang kaalamang bayan o diwang makabayan</i>	Artists who, through the content and form of their works, have contributed in building a Filipino sense of nationhood.	Should have passed on and/ or will pass on the traditional crafts and skills to other members of the community by virtue of teaching	<i>Diwa, Kapwa, Kaalamang bayan, Kaugaliang/Kamalayang Pilipino, Pagkilala</i>

Conclusion

Design culture is a relatively new topic in Philippine studies. As an attempt to bridge the narratives of resourcefulness and creativity, the fluid notion of creative patriotism and creative ingenuity or *diskarte* are essayed as key aspects that buttress the hypothesis. A well-constructed approach is explored in the search of design culture. The phenomenon is a national discourse that necessitates a holistic approach. What is needed to be developed is the methodology for the concept that surfaces during the investigation, the springboard grounding the study.

Predicaments enable a particular set of responses that turn to good use the challenges to create design innovations. The multi-disciplinary study approach suggests the challenges of engaging a mixed method. The development of a road map establishes and ensures the objectivity of a tactic that seeks both depth and breadth of the arguments. Adopting the same fluidity to filter a kaleidoscope of sources and evidence to give flesh to an expanded scope with longitudinal span is a pivotal task. The arena of Philippine design culture deserves larger space in scholarship to advance an authentic progress for the Philippines. Future studies are hoped to continue the enrichment of the theory- building of Philippine design.

The preceding discussions have essayed the development of the theoretical framework to explore design culture and creative patriotism through the works of the Filipino design exemplars. The juxtaposition of the metrics, the resonance of qualitative standards across Andres Bonifacio's *Pag-ibig sa Tinubuang Lupa* (1896), the National Artist Award (1972) and the GAMABA (1992) have surfaced the design exemplar, the commonalities as a mirroring that reinforces the established rubric. It delineates the variables and correlates of design culture in the domains of creative production to model the specificity and the confluence of creativity, ingenuity, and nationalism. A replicable structure postulated for the design study frames the approach to identify, classify, and describe the theoretical, conceptual, and operational design culture. Narratives of creative ingenuity reify the collective contribution in consolidating the design culture. The development of an approach to a methodology for the study of Philippine crafts and design sector enriches design history, theory and practice through the Philippine chairs.

Guillerma L. Mendoza is a faculty member of the College of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Santo Tomas. She obtained her Doctor of Philosophy in Philippine Studies from the Tri-College of the University of the Philippines in Diliman during the 2020 onset of the pandemic. Her dissertation on Philippine design culture is the springboard for the Commission on Higher Education – National Commission on Culture and the Arts research and creative grant, the Salikha project “Diskarte: Understanding design culture through the Filipino chairs,” implemented under the Research Center for Culture, Arts and Humanities of the University of Santo Tomas.

Notes

¹ Rev. Fr. Angel Aparicio, O.P., Spanish friar of the Dominican order, helped trace the origins of the vernacular term to the strategy or tactic in a game of cards (personal communication, 2017).

² The idea of connecting the theoretical framework to the poem of the national hero is indebted to Prof. Matthew Santamaria, Ph. D., who referred to it as the “Bonifacio effect”; the mapping out of the abstract ideas culled from the poem was contributed by Dean Elena Mirano, Ph.D.

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