

BERT MONTERONA

All Out Peace Not War

Kalinaw Hindi Digmaan



NM BUTUAN

21 February 2018 - 8 November 2019

NM ZAMBOANGA

29 November 2019 - 25 October 2020

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Cover page:

All Out Peace Not War

2015 • Acrylic on canvas

Introduction

Ana Maria Theresa P. Labrador, Ph.D.

All Out Peace Not War, *Kalinaw Hindi Digmaan* presents the tapestry paintings of internationally acclaimed Filipino visual artist Bert Monterona. The 22 paintings, which feature his advocacies—promoting sustainable living, protecting the environment, campaigning against war, and building a culture of peace—aim to highlight the role of art in preserving indigenous and traditional creativity and custom, as well as addressing issues of social injustice and community development, particularly in Southern Philippines.

Monterona's works illustrate the wealth of his experience and art education during his formative years in Mindanao. Inspired by traditional cultures of both Lumad and Muslims, he borrows motifs and patterns from their woodcarving, weaving, embroidery and brass casting. In this way, he proudly expresses affinity with his community and at the same time convey relevant socio-economic and environmental issues.

The art-making process for his “tapestry” paintings is influenced by the *Mandaya* handwoven skirt (*dagmay*). It involves use of natural dyes, textile paints and acrylics, instead of the usual stretched and primed canvas, a technique that he developed for decades. This innovative art-making process is built upon his adherence to indigenous forms. It complements the subjects and themes of his works and his advocacies, as well as towards harmony between modern technology and traditional ways of life.

The exhibition is a narrative of Mindanao culture and the struggles within, hoping to provoke thoughts of, and foster cross-cultural dialogue on issues of peace, justice, and the environment. As an artist-educator, Monterona believes that art communicates universal elements of human experience. It is a conduit of knowledge that can educate and promote respect and understanding among communities from diverse ethnic backgrounds and social classes in order to achieve a tolerant multicultural society.



Women for Justice and Peace

2015 ▪ Acrylic on canvas ▪ 185.5 x 185 cm

About the Artist



Bert Monterona is a Filipino-Canadian visual artist residing in West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He is actively involved as an artist, educator and cultural worker in a wide variety of practices including design, illustration, painting, sculpture and installation. He is also a scenographer for theater and television shows.

An internationally acclaimed artist, Monterona grew up in Bukidnon with his Talaandig mother and Cebuano father. He was exposed to the challenges of peace-building in Mindanao at an early age which he translated into creative art pieces. His works are mainly influenced by the past and present dynamics of socio-cultural, spiritual and eco-political norms, from daily observations of the environment and events, as well as his interactions with different people.

Since 1987, Monterona has launched numerous exhibitions focusing on the Mindanao indigenous peoples and their culture, in the Philippines, Japan, Australia, Europe and the United States. In 2015, he exhibited his tapestry paintings as guest artist during the *Grand Baz'Art International Arts Festival* in Gisors, France and at the Jockey Club Creative Arts Center in Hong Kong.

He is a recipient of the Western Australia Department of the Arts and Australia Council for the Arts Grants (1995), Asian Artists Award of Vermont Studio Centre, U.S.A. (1998), GSIS Museum Artist of the Month Award (1998), the Art Association of the Philippines Award, and TOMA (The Outstanding MSU-IIT Alumni) Award in Visual Arts of the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Philippines (2008). He is also a finalist in the Philip Morris Group of Companies ASEAN Art Awards (1996-1998 and 2000-2001) and a winner in the International Mural Festival and Competition in Manitoba, Canada (2007).

Monterona became a member of the Executive Council of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) for Mindanao from 1996 to 2001. He is the founder and main visual arts facilitator of the Philippine Artists Network for Community Integrative Transformation of Migrant BC in Vancouver, Canada. In 2006, he received the British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) award as international artist, and was granted a permanent resident status in the Province of British Columbia, Canada. He served as artist-in-residence of the Leigh Square Community Arts Village Mural Project, City of Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada.



Continuing Revolution

1998 • Oil on canvas tapestry ▪ 178.5 x 257 cm

The Philippines is blessed with abundant natural resources. Filipinos have a very diverse cultural heritage. Yet, all this richness is often neglected. Wars or conflicts in our land, especially during the past century, have hindered our progress in terms of the economy, politics and culture.

The central figure in this painting is a woman holding up a flag. She represents the historical struggles of the Filipino people. On her lap is a child, holding up his arms and clenching the ropes of peace. The child wears a symbol that looks like the letter "H" sideways but is actually the letter "K" which is usually associated with the revolution. The child may represent future struggles, but at the same time, he is also a symbol of hope that the younger generations can experience peace through justice.



Free the Bird and Cage the Warheads

2002 ■ Oil on canvas tapestry ■ 170.5 x 147.8 cm

Killings, tortures, and disappearances are common in the Philippines. Human rights violations are on the rise. Among the most targeted are farmers, ethnolinguistic groups, cultural workers and activists.

This painting shows a group of women engaged in a ritualistic dance that seeks to stop the killings, torture and human rights violations in the country.



No to War

2002 • Oil on canvas tapestry • 178 x 148.5 cm

Painted in 2002 within the context of armed struggle between the Philippine government and Muslim and Christian groups in Mindanao, this painting depicts a multi-sectoral population who despite their ideological differences have banded together in the name of peace. The group pushes forward along with female figures bearing trumpets. Together, they join forces to protest a war which has only resulted in the evacuation of thousands and the loss of hundred of lives.



Culture of Peace

2002 ■ Oil on canvas tapestry ■ 174 x 148 cm

In 1999, the bishops and *ulamas* (Islamic leaders) declared a Week of Peace, to be celebrated annually every last Thursday of November until first Wednesday of December. On such occasions, art takes a primary role in the promotion of peace as with this painting where we see women in traditional costumes and musical instruments such as gongs, *kudyapi*, *karaga*, and *kulintang* performing together to promote peace.



Peacebuilding

2002 • Oil on canvas tapestry ▪ 172 x 148.5 cm

The figures in this painting hold symbols of art and culture. Perched on top of them is a dove symbolizing peace. The painting illustrates the artist's belief that art plays an important role in achieving peace in Mindanao. For the artist, art is one of the most effective tools in increasing people's awareness about the war situation. He believes that as communities and sectors interact, participate, and consult with each other in the peace building process, they will find effective tools to achieve peace in the country.



Thanks Giving

1995 ■ Mixed media ■ 201 x 174.5 cm

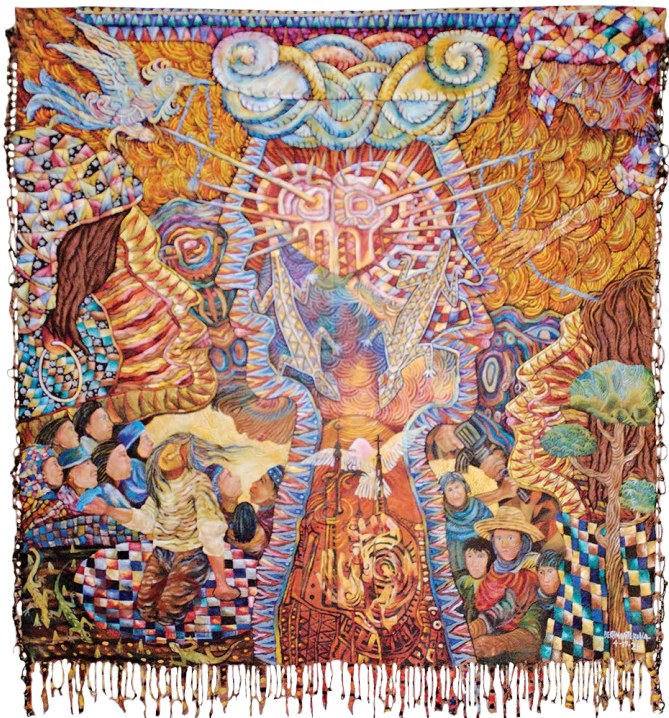
The *Lumads* believe that house lizards are symbols of thanksgiving. When the sun sets, these gentle creatures would consistently climb down from whatever tree or building they come from to kiss the land and give thanks for the beautiful day.



Dynamics of Education, Culture and Religion

1998 • Oil on canvas tapestry • 232.5 x 227 cm

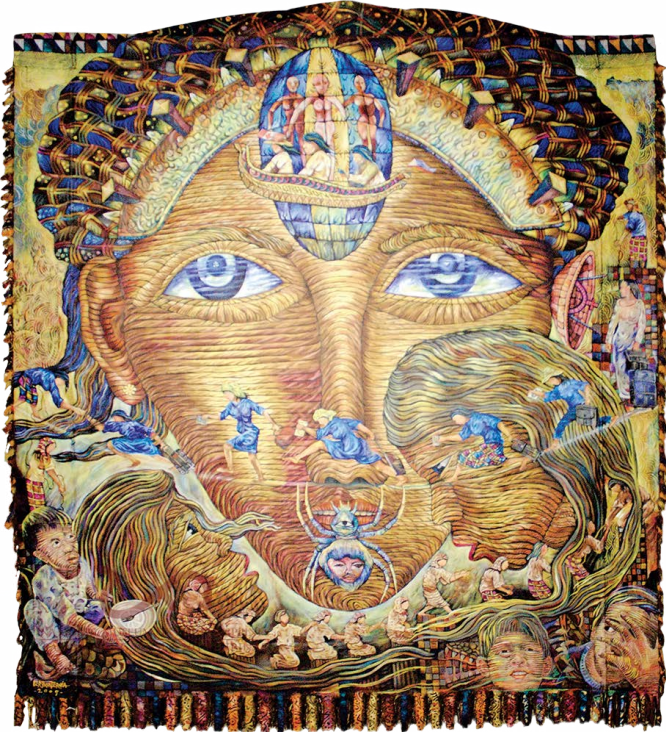
This work is a commentary on the educational system of the Philippines which was instituted under the influence of the colonizers, first by 300 years under Spanish rule, then with decades under the Americans. This work is rich in symbolism. The feminine sun figure symbolizes hope. Overlapping it is a zigzag figure which symbolizes rivers or the ebb and flow of change. There are two human figures on each side wearing crowns on their heads reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty and representing the Americanization of education and religion. One of the figures holds an apple with the letter "A." The artist feels it is absurd that there are no apples in Mindanao, but children learn the alphabet by reciting "A is for apple."



The Heart of Unity in Diversity

2000 • Oil on canvas tapestry • 169 x 159 cm

This work symbolizes different religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, achieving unity through dialogue. These different sides are represented by the figure of a Muslim bird of peace on the left side, and of a rosary on the right side. The artist believes that the people are at least unified in their belief that unity and harmony could be achieved through non-violent means. Bridging the divisions at the center towards the bottom is a dove representing peaceful negotiation.



Portrait of Women's Plight II

2009 ▪ Oil on canvas tapestry ▪ 200 x 184 cm

This artwork portrays migrant women and their struggles. The central figure is the face of a woman. In her forehead are some women caged inside a globe symbolizing the restrictions faced by these migrant women. The headdress of the figure symbolizes the culture and practices that need to be swept aside while they reside in another country and do their daily work. On the left ear of the figure is a satellite antenna which symbolizes the women's need to communicate with their family. Through online chatting and long distance calls, women strive to maintain a connection with their children and other family members at home.

The child on the bottom left side has an empty plate symbolizing hungry children and the poverty that pushes women to work abroad. The spider is a metaphor for men who have pushed their wives and daughters to work abroad.



The Critics and Censorship

2011 • Acrylic on canvas tapestry • 197 x 189.5 cm

This work is a commentary on the idea of censorship. Critics usually exercise their judgements based on their culture, beliefs, religion, politics, education, class, race and religion. Based on these factors, critics could give either constructive or destructive statements. The artist abhors this kind of thinking as he believes that peace-building requires the opposite. He looks to an ideal wherein there is sensitivity to different faiths, class backgrounds, cultures, races and religions. He abhors all forms of prejudice, racism, discrimination and exploitation in this planet.



Peace Must Be Based on Justice

2012 ▪ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ▪ 163 x 157 cm

War is a game and a big business, often waged to attain economic and political power. No one wins in a war. Peace could never be attained through war. It only leads to loss of lives and properties. Peace is not just the absence of war. There will be peace only when people could live morally within a system with fairness, justice, equality, and where people have a place to live comfortably, work decently and eat meals regularly.



The King and Queen of Hurts

2011 ▪ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ▪ 188 x 189 cm

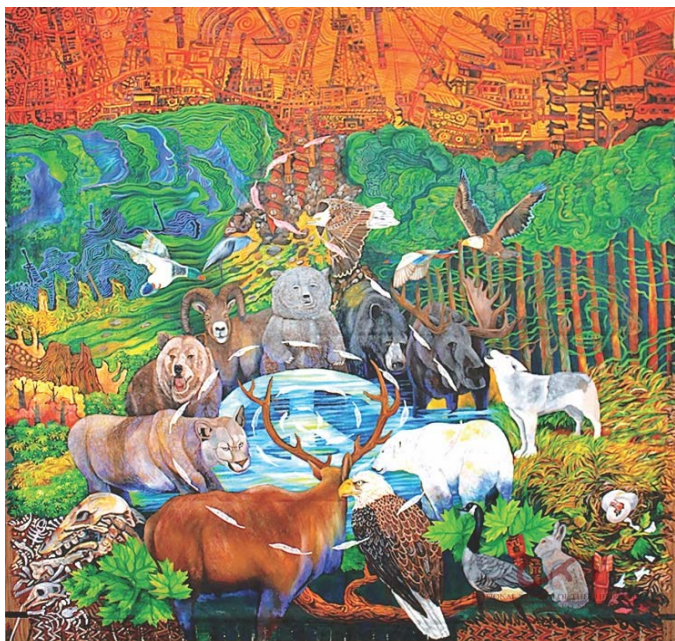
One of the more personal works in this exhibit, this painting is about the artist's experience going through divorce. As a peace activist, having a failing marriage was an excruciating ordeal. The artist felt like a fraud when he wanted to teach others to live a harmonious lifestyle but failed in his own marital relationship. His struggle is represented by the King and Queen of Hurts inspired by playing cards. The broken heart is a recurring image in this piece.



Global Warming II

2012 • Acrylic on canvas tapestry • 185 x 184 cm

Climate change must be everybody's concern and we must not just leave it to the environmentalists and scientists as symptoms of destruction are evident and could be felt in different parts of the world. It is time to act now and think about the future of the next generation under climate change. Artists have the opportunity to do something about it and be a part of the healing process. Protect the environment and save the next generation!

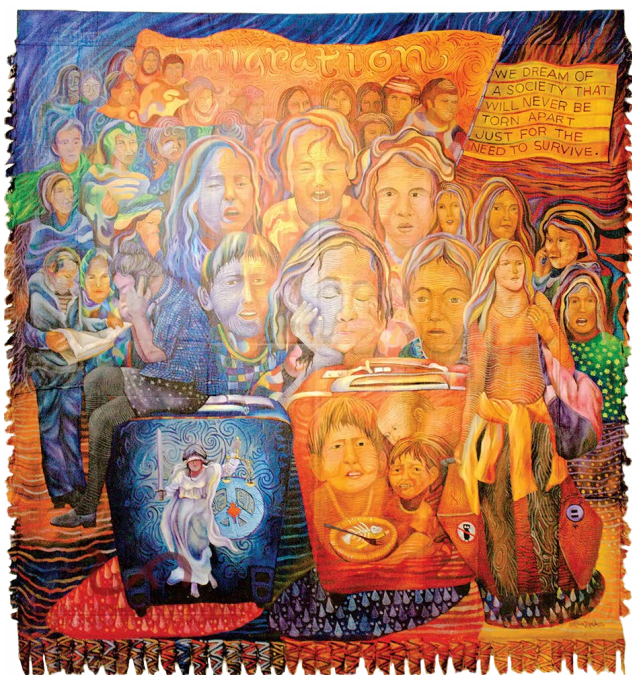


Peace Talk

2012 ■ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ■ 183 x 188 cm

This work is about an imaginary summit of the animal kingdom. It makes a call for all women and men of good will to take responsibility in the effort to protect the environment, prevent war and build a culture of peace.

If humans will not protect our environment, then the animal kingdom may have to be our guardians.



Migration IV

2013 ▪ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ▪ 196.5 x 188 cm

Migration is the movement of people from one country to another across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new or semi-permanent residence. People migrate for the reasons of peace and safety, seeking a chance of a better job, better education, more social security, a better standard of living, and greater political or religious freedom.

Some migrants leave their countries because of political persecution, conflict, bad economic conditions, corrupt political systems, or environmental degradation. Some are temporary labor migrants. Many overseas contract workers migrate for a limited period of time in order to take up employment and send money home.



Vision of Unity in Diversity for Lasting Peace

2015 ▪ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ▪ 185.5 x 182 cm

Where there is peace, there is unity and understanding amongst communities of diverse cultures, faiths, races and colors. This work makes a call for all women and men of good will to take responsibility in the effort to protect the environment, prevent war and build a culture of peace. Peace-building requires the opposite. Sensitivity to different faiths, class backgrounds, cultures, races and religions facilitate the understanding of differences. The artist wishes no more prejudices, racism, discrimination and exploitation in this planet. Respect for people's war for a just and lasting peace remains. Yet war leads to loss of lives and properties. There should be a complete stop. Concern for the next generation resonates in the call.



All Out Peace Not War

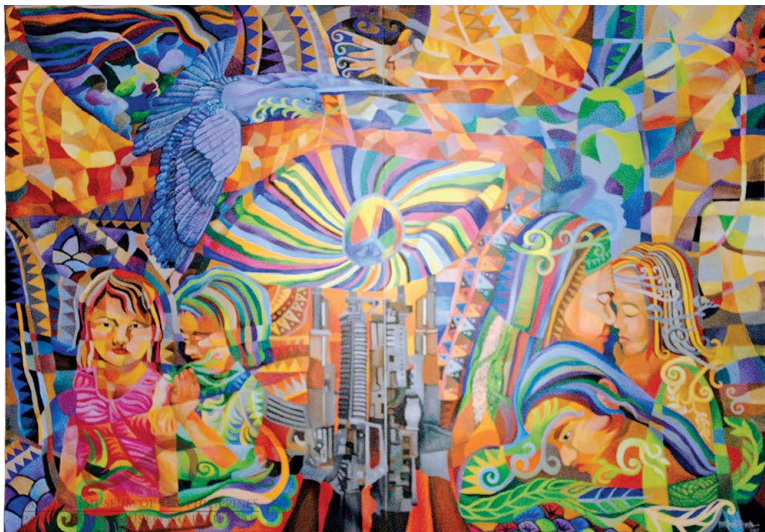
2015 ■ Acrylic on canvas tapestry ■ 187 x 180.5 cm

If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have to struggle; we won't have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which the whole world is hungry of Gandhi (1869 - 1948).



Peace on Kris

2017 ▪ Acrylic on canvas ▪ 117 x 162.3 cm



Prayers for Peace

2017 ▪ Acrylic on canvas ▪ 117.2 x 162 cm



Children Wish for Lasting Peace
2017 ▪ Acrylic on canvas ▪ 154 x 101.8 cm



Peace Based on Justice
2017 ▪ Acrylic on canvas ▪ 101 x 154.5 cm

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