BD forum

Bright prospects foreseen for art galleries, artists

With Filipinos' increasing awareness of the value of art works, the BUSINESS DAY: Do certain galactivities of art galleries, and the better standards being set up for the sector, the industry has bright prospects for the future.

This was the assessment made by industry representatives during a recent Business Day forum on art galleries. However, they added that the industry still needs a lot of support from the government, for instance in some form of endowment for the art galleries.

With regards to the government's cultural development policies, the forum participants agreed that there should be an official body to ensure that these policies are followed and that the duplication of functions among the different government cultural agencies are avoided.

The other topics during the forum discussed were: the commercialization of art, the accreditation system for art galleries and dealers, and art as an investment.

Attendees were: Allan Cosio, president of the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP); Barbara Mae Dacanay from Philippine Art News; Didi Dee, owner of Hiraya Gallery; Joey Montilla, assistant curator of Lorna's Garage; Jing Pagulayan, manager of the Greenhills Art Center; Eva Toledo, curator of Sining Kamalig; and Bobi Valenzuela, curator of Hiraya Gallery, Excerpts from the forum follow:

BUSINESS DAY: One very sensitive issue in the art scene these days is the so called commercialization of art. How far can art be commercialized, and why is it commercial-

VALENZUELA: When you put up a gallery, you put up paintings for sale. That act alone is already commercial. I think it is in the manner of how you sell your art works that will distinguish between the commercial art and just plain com-

university-trained artists, I believe that they are a recent phenomena. The Luz Gallery and Solidaridad were the first serious art galleries. But art galleries have been in Manila for so long.

BUSINESS DAY: Was there a recent increase in the number of art galleries?

VALENZUELA: I would say so. As Mr. Pagulayan said, more people are now aware of the value of paint-

BUSINESS DAY: It was said that

leries cater to a certain income

COSIO: Yes.

VALENZUELA: For Hiraya, we cannot make any classification yet. No very rich people have patronized us. Likewise, wala pa talagang true collectors who have patronized us. We have varied clients. They come to the gallery and when they see a good work they buy.

DEE: I don't think we have any specific income bracket in mind. What we're concerned about is putting up good shows. Sometimes, however, the price range of the artist is very high. Naturally, we'll then be getting the higher income

BUSINESS DAY: Galleries maintain a certain selling attraction so as to be different from others. Do you think about these attractions beforehand? Do you study the

VALENZUELA: Actually, we do not think of marketing. We just

want to put up good shows.
BUSINESS DAY: How do you choose the paintings that you dislay in your galleries?

VALENZUELA: We must believe what the artists are doing. Whether they will sell or not hardly enters our minds.
PAGULAYAN: In Greenhills, the

to our gallery and sell their works. But these are all subject to the curator's decision.

PAGULAYAN: There are also consigned, pieces. These are paintings we do not buy but which the artists want to be exhibited. If these pieces are sold, the gallery gets 30% of the sale. In Greenhills, we mostly do outright buying.

BUSINESS DAY: If the paintings are bought outside, is the mark-up 40% or 50%?

PAGULAYAN: Depende rin, This is because, in art, it's very hard to qualify value. There are no definite

BUSINESS DAY: Are you ever caught in a situation where there is a short supply of art works? Is production steady enough?

COSIO: One point I would like to stress is that a painting as an art work is different from a painting that is a merchandise for sale. My main interest is really the relationship between artists and art galleries. I brought with me a documented report from a national convention of artists which was held early last year at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC). One of the topics which we covered was art and the galleries. The report contains an assessment by the panel on art and the galleries

which was composed of several art

gallery owners and a number of

artists. They made an assessment of

the relationship between the artists

and the galleries, after which we

were able to pinpoint the problems

existing. Some recommendations were then made on how to solve

these problems. Some recommend-

ations came from the panel and

the guild of galleries or its equivalent to make all accredited art galleries members: and 7) to act as conciliator or arbiter of relationships and problems among artists, art galleries, and collectors.
BUSINESS DAY: Have the recom-

mendations been adopted? COSIO: No, because to begin with,

there has to be this move to revive the guild of galleries or its equivalent, or maybe form a new one so that they can together, perhaps, adopt a standard or agree on how to look at existing problems. It can-not start from the artists. It has to start from the galleries because we're talking now about the business of art. BUSINESS DAY: Under the

present arrangement, are the artists shortchanged?

COSIO: No, we cannot be general about it. Maybe in some cases yes. But I think that there is really a great need for the galleries to get together like they did before. Then perhaps we can look forward to a better system. There should be a guild of galleries where they can put their heads together, set a system and maybe initiate programs on how to maintain a more regular art market and attract more artists to deal more with the galleries rather than going on their own and selling directly to clients. This is for

BUSINESS DAY: Why do some people say that art is so commercialized now?

PAGULAYAN: Maybe they say this because, right now, more people are becoming aware of art. Also, so many people are now buy-ing paintings. I think these are the

BUSINESS DAY: From the dealers' point of view, how profitable is art

PAGULAYAN: I think it is profit-BUSINESS DAY: Is Greenhills Art

Center a new gallery?
PAGULAYAN: Yes, we only start-

ed last July. BUSINESS DAY: Do you specialize

in certain kinds of paintings? PAGULAYAN: I believe that

Greenhills Art Center is the very first corporate gallery in Manila and in the Philippines.

DEE: What do you mean by a corp-

PAGULAYAN: We have so many incorporators,

DEE: Hiraya Gallery is also a corporation. The only distinguishing factor is that it is more within the family

BUSINESS DAY: Are art galleries a recent phenomena or have they been around a long time?

VALENZUELA: If you will consider the Mabini galleries, they have been around for a long time. But for the galleries that cater to the SPECIAL REPORT

when buildings started to rise, the walls had to be filled with paintings. There was a buying spree. Was this the cause of the awareness of the value of paintings?

VALENZUELA: I would say so. But according to some people, when Mrs. (Imelda) Marcos started buying paintings and then prodded the Blue Ladies to buy, that started

BUSINESS DAY: Would you say that the market has been growing? VALENZUELA: It has grown because of the awareness.

BUSINESS DAY: Do you have an existing classification of galleries? Are there galleries which cater only to a certain kind of market, or which sell only certain types of paintings?

COSIO: Yes, there are galleries which cater only to certain types of artists. Kanya-kanya. I believe it is like this everywhere. The gallery owners decide on what kind of paintings they will market or what group of artists they will handle. Greenhills Art Center, for instance, has been dealing with artists who do the presentational kind of painting - still life, etc. Luz Gallery, on the other hand, concentrates more on abstract art.

BUSINESS DAY: Is there any specific trend?

COSIO: No. It depends on what you're talking about at the moment and whom you're talking to. That's the way I look at it.

only attraction we have is a coffee shop which is open to everyone. In one portion of the gallery, there is a book shop where you can buy books on art.

BUSINESS DAY: What is the usual price range of paintings that you have in your respective galleries?

PAGULAYAN: When we put up the Greenhills Art Center, our main objective was to pick up the new artists and help them in their career. So we try to buy their pieces. Now, for the artists who have already established a name for themselves, the prices of their works are, of course, different,

MONTILLA: I'd like to go back to the question on what makes one gallery different from another. What is fascinating about our gallery is my mother. People would go there and she would just talk to them about almost anything con-cerning the history of Philippine heritage and the arts. Also, our gallery caters to the collections of young artists. The gallery is not really as lucrative as the Greenhills Art Center. It's just a house. It actually started as a garage. We didn't have any car so we converted our garage into a gallery.

BUSINESS DAY: How do you look for artists and for paintings? Can an artist just approach you and sell MONTILLA: We have what we call outside buying. Some artists come

from the convention's delegation. BUSINESS DAY: What were some of the recommendations? COSIO: After having pinpointed the problems and having declared the assessment on how the relationship of the artists and the galleries were at that time, certain recommendations were reached: 1) to adopt a standard consignment form

or agreement between artists and galleries. The latter should review their existing consignment terms with the view to encouraging artists to consign their works; 2) to look into possible arrangements with insurance companies for a standard insurance policy coverage against art losses and damage; 3) to establish and maintain a service arm with adequate facilities for authentication of art works; 4) to establish a code of ethics for art galleries and the artists; 5) to establish and maintain a simple but effective system for accreditation of those involved in the business of art. Such a service arm shall guide and assist duly accredited art galleries in maintain

a reputable standing; 6) to require

the good of the market, the protection of the collectors, art buyers, artists, and the art galleries as well. There would be some sort of a

mutual development.
BUSINESS DAY: What were the reactions of the galleries getting organized

COSIO: They were already organized before.

VALENZUELA: What caused it to die a natural death?

COSIO: I think it was just a lack of leadership. Also, maybe it was a lack of interest at that time.

BUSINESS DAY: What do you mean by accredited art galleries? COSIO: Well, if you have an association and you agree that there will be accredited members, there is some sort of prestige there.

BUSINESS DAY: Does that imply any standards?

COSIO: That means you're following a certain standard set by the BUSINESS DAY: Is there any gov-

ernment agency supervising the selling of art pieces? COSIO: In a way, yes because

they're all licensed to sell. BUSINESS DAY: Are all the art

works authenticated? PAGULAYAN: Authentication is only being done for old pieces.

COSIO: Yes, If the artist is around, he authenticates his piece. The problem of authentication arises

(Continued on page 16)

Bright prospects foreseen for art galleries, artists

(Continued from page 15) only when the artist is deceased. The museum then does the authentication. They're supposed to be the authenticating body for the

government.
BUSINESS DAY: What are some of
the major problems of artists in their
dealings with art galleries? Is there any pressing demand to produce or come up with an art work?

ALENZUELA: When an artist is scheduled for an exhibit, our only demand is that the show be a good one. Some artists take the exhibits for granted, and as a result the shows are a disappointment. In making this particular demand, we take sway some of their problems. Whenever we can support them that, As far as they are concerned, their only obligation is to put more love, time, and effort into their works.

works, and effort into their works.

COSIO: As I see it, the biggest problem of the artists and the art galleries is the lack of some sort of an endowment from the government. In some countries, galleries of an endowment, we have formed the countries of an endowment, we have the countries which still do not have legal support from the government in the form of an endowment. As of now, we still don't have a council for the arts or it a equivalent to the countries, they have this per cent for the art means that a certain percentage of any government construction, whether it be a bridge, alibrary, or a city hall, goes to the arts. We do not have that kind of support whatsoever. It's BUSINESS DAY: Have you made.

BUSINESS DAY: Have you made representations to the government? COSIO: We're still working on it. As a whole, however, we already have the governments cultural development policies. But there is no official body which sees to it that all these policies are followed. Bight now, there are everal governments with the second of the second of

Hight now, there are several govern-ment cultural associates existing.

National Museum, the National National Museum, the National Line Control of National Lan-suage, and the CCP (Cultural Cen-ter of the Philippines). But each of them has its own functions, And there are times when they duplicate each other's functions because here is no body which sees to it that this does not happen, Right low, there is no government autho-comment of the control of the con-trol of the control of the country that you will call the sole cultural signery in the country that speaks for the arts. The CCP also needs that kind of support.

assess the art scene in the past de-cade? Would you, say that Filipino rtists produced good works?

MONTILLA: I can say that during
the past two years the works have

he past two years the works have seen relatively good.

**ALENZUELA: From my viewpoint, the art scene has not really
produced any outstanding artist or
it work during the past 10 years.
In terms of quantity, yes, Quaity-wise, however, there was really
so significant work in the sense
hat a certain artist or art work
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at a certain artist or
BUSINESS DAY: What factors
wought about the absence of signiicant works?

secause they have more to say.

DEE: Maybe it's also the demand or a particular kind of painting. I bink that one consideration and the same that the same t

ng public? Isn't that a function of he art galleries? FOLEDO: It should be a primary concern. In Sining Kamalig, for nstance, we try to make a good salance of shows. We try to orga-size the calendar in order to fit, et's say, some very good selling

shows and more or less predict the products that will naturally sell, and at the same time be able to afford putting in more promising talents, Also, we try to organize shows that may not be of commer-cial value but which are highly edu-

BUSINESS DAY: So, principally, you wouldn't consider Sining Kamalig a commercial gallery?

you wouldn't consider Sining Kamalig a commercial gallery? TOLEDO: We have to define this. We are a commercial gallery in the sense that we have to maintain a certain amount of sales. But we are primarily here to educate and help MISINISS and the sense that we have to maintain a publishing some sense of the sense of dealing more on a commercial basis.
BUSINESS DAY: Did you say that
there already is an accreditation
system existing right now?

TOLEDO: Yes, largely through the

AAP.
COSIO: Until the guild of galleries is revived, I don't think a formal accreditation can be started.
BUSINESS DAY: Why do you say that the dealers are largely responsible for the sector's commercial-

think there are any aesthetics or any claims of a higher plane at all. BUSINESS DAY: So it is just a buy and sell thing.
TOLEDO: It is really more on a buy and sell aspect

BUSINESS DAY: Do these dealers

BUSINESS DAY: Do these dealers comprise the majority?

TOLEDO: Pm afraid so, Majority of these dealers have organized themselves into galleries. These are actually the little galleries that started as a house-to-house dealership and have eventually gotten licenses. There are really no standards for delineation, no distinctions at all. If you file your license, for instance, and you have a small place, you're a gallery.

BUSINESS DAY: If ever a guild would set up such standards, what would these standards bet Would it define on accredited gallery as one which principally attends to educa-

define on accredited gallery as one which principally attends to aducting the public about art and only think of commercialization as a secondary matter?

COSIO: It is taken for granted that when you set up a gallery, it is business. You set it up for profit. But what are the other moral obligations of galleries? These are the things that have to be worked out. That was why I was saying that a guild is very important so as to draw up a code of ethics for galleries and maybe for artists.

TOLEDO: Yes. There should be some sort of a symbiotic relationship.

COSIO: Touching on the existing problems now, the code of ethics may include, for instance, the behavior of some galleries with regards to their dealings with artists. And then perhaps they might agree to put an attractive consignment the galleries so that the artist will just deal with the galleries so that the artist will just deal with the galleries and not with the flyby-night dealers. BUSINESS DAY: But artists do sell their maintains not only to the gal-

their paintings not only to the gal-leries but also to the dealers,

COSIO: That's one of the pro-blems. They sell direct to the buyers, And the artists say: if you don't want us to do that, then make your offer more attractive. Makikita mo na parehong may problema. There have been severa problema. There have been several recommendations on how to solve this problem. It is really still in the developing stage. I am sure that the galleries are very much aware of these problems and will come up with the solutions, up the solutions. BUSINESS DAY: Is there such a thing as Philippine art?

COSIO: Philippine art is art made

by a Filipino.
TOLEDO: How would you expect
the thing to be defined? Philippine
art as something strictly Filipino?
It's always like that. To me, anything called Filipino and which has
to contain something local is a very ntain something local is a very

COSIO: That's identity.
TOLEDO: No. It's Philippine art. It
always comes into question.
COSIO: I think we're very far from
that. We may be closer to regional-

istic art. TOLEDO: You're talking about an

IOLEDU: You're talking about an enlightened faw: To some extent, it probably depends on the philosophy of the artist. I think your art is Plipino if you paint something about the Philippine society. TOLEDU: That's social realism. If you do any other concern, you'll not longer called a Pilipino, is that

BUSINESS DAY: Do we have good

Filipino painters?
TOLEDO: Definitely. Going back to what I was saying earlier, if you do anything modern or anything that is aside from what you're expected to do, it's no longer Filipinian that you're expected to do, it's no longer Filipinian was a saying the saying the saying that it is no longer filipinian was a saying the saying that it is no longer filipinian was a saying that it is no longer filipinian was a saying that it is no longer filipinian was a saying that it is no longer filipinian was a saying that it is not say in the say in t

pino.
COSIO: The art being produced nowadays reflects exactly what kind of a people we are, Hindi parepareho ang mga mukha natin. nowadays reflects exectly which can be considered to the control of the control o

a little success. I wish they could a little success. I wish they could be a little success. I wish they could be successed by the success of the success of

thing to do with the times. But it is definitely not the artist. definitely not the artist. BUSINESS DAY: What factors were present then, and which no longer existed in the 1970s? COSIO: Maybe there was more challenge then. Ficaso and the rest, for instance, wanted to break sway of the company of the control of the cont

lost.
COSIO: That is your personal opinion and I respect that, But when I look at the young artists and the paintings they come out with, they have very good and daring works. This is true especially for those who still do not have any status to protect. They have not painting to lose keys bire ng bira. Ang

TOLEDO: Pero attitudes din 'yon. These are the things which we basically do not pick up in school. They just come along the way. COSIO: For me, it all goes back to concern, support, and guidance. As I said earlier, if there is no legal and definite subsidy from the govern-an go anywhere. This is because they need that kind of support,

cherwise they will ask; what difference does it make it in that this
or that? But if he is getting some
kind of a support, then he feels that
he is backed up and has got a responsibility to show good works.
You know, 'yung mga tiga UP
(University to show good works.
You know, 'yung mga tiga UP
(University of the Philippines) ang
sinasobi ano ba ang nilalabas ng
mga artists? Wala. Yon ng Yon,
'yon na ang nakikita namin. Hangyon na ing 'you're unfair. Wala
kaming support. That is what is
happening. The government is doing a good job supporting education. The artists do not have support like education has, So, what
find it around here. At the same
time, you're bombarded by foreign
media, citing all the beautiful things
nutside of this country. And you
absorb it. So now more than ever,
the colonial mentality is stronger.
Whatever is outside is more beautitiful than what is here. You ruminds
are more sensitive now because of
tiful things, You don't see it here.
You see it outside and you get it.
You don't see the beautiful things,
around here because nobody supports the artists. Now, if there will
be some kind of a support for culthen things will be balanced.

Have of the control of the passe of the AP
Passe any scholarshin? ture like there is for education, then things will be balanced. BUSINESS DAY: Does the AAP

have any scholarship? COSIO: We don't have a definite COSIO: We don't have a definite scholarship because we don't have a definite subsidy. So, the people we send to foreign competitions and exhibitions are on a case to case subsidiary of the competition of artist is improving. But there is no such thing. We have sent so many people to Paris via a sponsorship. But because there is no definite and regular program of that nature,

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are also collectors.

DEE: In our case, we had a frame shop first. To maximize space, I felt that a gallery would go hand in hand with a frame shop and viceversa. That was what prodded me

versa. That was what prodded me to go into the gallery.
VALENZUELA: That was the original idea. Later on, when we were already into the gallery, we saw a lot of things that we could do as a gallery. So, our original idea progressed. We would like to believe that with our attitude, we are a growing gallery.

BUSINESS DAY: What are some of the things that you have been doing beyond your original intentions? VALENZUELA: When we deal beyond your original intentions? VALENZUELA: When we deal with artists, sometimes it can get very frustraiting. Kung nababasa mo lang sila sa diyaryo, maganda ang tingin mo sa kanila. But when you see and talk to them, they come up wala tuloy 'yung respecto mo sa kanila bilang artist, Siguro, may mag kulang doon na the gallery can fill in. Wrong values. Wrong attitudes, Discipline, I don't know but some artists think that because they are artists, they should not have a sense of time and discipline at all. I am very strict about discipline, a sense of time and discipline at all. I am very strict about discipline, a sense of time and discipline at all. I am very strict about discipline, a sense of time and discipline at all. I am very strict about discipline, a sense of time and the sense of time and the contained and the sense of time and tim

emphasis on social commentary paintings.
DEE: I didn't say that.
VALENZUELA: Hiraya gave the impression that we were only sup-porting social realist works. To cor-rect some facts, in 1981, out of 16 shows, we only exhibited works of three social realist painters.

DEE: I think what happened there was that we were one of the few galleries that was willing to support the social realist painters. So, people thought that we are a gallery that only cater to social realist arises, which is not true. Brown that the social realist arises, which is not true. Brown that the social realist arises, which is not true. Brown that the social realist arises which is not really a social realist and the social realist arises which was not really in the social realist and the so

only in our second year.
BUSINESS DAY: How would you assess the 16 shows?
VALENZUELA: The three social

VALENAUGLA: Ine three social realist exhibits we did gave us more reputation than all the others. BUSINESS DAY: Did the shows generate a lot of interest in terms of sales and visitors?

sales and visitors?
VALENZUELA: Yes,
BUSINESS DAY: What about the
social realist exhibits in particular,
DEE: Yes, They were good shows,
COSIO: There's another thing, You COSIO: There's another thing, You also have to separate shows and art dealings. The gallery shows are different from the art dealings that go on in the stock room. The latter I understand is really the bread and butter of the galleries.

BUSINESS DAY: Are the galleries making the paintings affordable to the property of the part of the part

TOLEDO. Yes. That should also be an aid.
BUSINESS DAY: Would you consider galleries a high risk benture?
DEE: It actually depends on what kinds of paintings you want to cater to. If you're the kind of gallery who buys paintings outright in the hope that in two years time these would increase in value, you'd be investing a lot. With us, I don't think it was along that line.
BUSINESS DAY: If I wanted to put up a gallery, how much would I had the word of the wo

Couling you have to know the artists and you have to know the artists and you have to be familiar with their works.

TOLEDO: If you're acquainted with the artists and you know the art world, it will be easier for you to start on a low budget because them you're actually operating in sonal relationship you have built up sonal relationship you have built up with them. But if you're entirely new in the business, it will take a long time to build the confidence. So, how do you do it? You go about it by investing more than the person who has been in the art world longer. And to signify your intention, you start buying outright from the artists.

intention, you start buying from the artists, COSIO: One-thing that will be help-ful to emphasize is that art is a good investment. I think instead of telling people how lucrative the gal-lery business is, it is better to say: just buy paintings. It is good invest-

BUSINESS DAY: In the current art market, there seems to be an obsession for names.

COSIO: Hindi na. My assessment is that people are looking for lower priced paintings. They love the paintings. They're beautiful. Pero nahihintakutan sa presyo. You see, it shows our present financial condition. Talagang mahinp, Most of the process are low and the works are good.

by not so well known artists because their prices are low and the works are good.

BUSINESS DAY: What are the properts for artists and galleries? lessening of galleries, some sort of a sifting process, There will be better standards.

BUSINESS DAY: When do you think can you organize a guild strong enough to make representations to the government?

COSIO: We have been working for a national body—a national tody—a national courrential courrential course of the strong c