

On the Cover

The following is based on an interview with the artist, March 17, 2003.

Although born in the Philippines, Salvador Bidaure has lived and painted in Guam for many decades. His associates (mostly Chamorros) on Guam consider him one of the islanders. Bidaure feels that this island developed his interest in art.

Bidaure came to Guam in 1948 with the U.S. Air Force. He remembers drawing at a very early age. Already interested in painting, he began his art career with the Air Force's Special Services. He began learning by doing. He painted signs, posters, and murals—some of them huge—while with the Air Force. He later had formal art training from an extension program sponsored by the University of Michigan. He decided that all he wanted to do was paint, not teach. He left Guam to spend six months in the Philippines as an apprentice to another artist. While there, he came to the realization that artists use their own feelings in painting and cannot always tell someone else what to do. So he returned to Guam to paint what he knew from his childhood in the Philippines and from his association with the Chamorro culture in Guam.

Although most of Bidaure's paintings are in Guam, some are in museums in Hawaii and the Philippines, and he has had one-man shows. A commission that brought him to the forefront of art in Guam came from the Bank of Hawaii. The original sketch that won him the commission is currently used on the bank's credit card. The final mural, consisting of 30 eight-foot panels, was painted one panel at a time in his garage. The colors are bright, the theme is the daily activities of the Chamorro, and the effect is striking. Among other things happening in this mural, fishermen stand in the water seining for fish and a man carries a basket of fruit on his shoulder while a boy carrying a large fruit walks next to him. A *caribao* is hitched to a wooden cart that men are loading, and women carry baskets of fruit while boats sail in the distance. The sun is rising and stars are in the sky.

When asked what the greatest challenge was in painting this mural, he replied that it was making sure that the edges came together correctly. When the panels were installed, there were only two places that did not meet exactly, and he was able to quickly repaint the edges.

Bidaure paints mostly with acrylics; sometimes he uses oils. He is skilled at arranging his paintings to convey movement and attitudes. He likes to paint family life and pastoral scenes. Bidaure paints from memory, combining themes from his childhood in the Philippines and his life in Guam. Some of his themes are reminiscent of Gauguin's Tahitian paintings. People in Bidaure's paintings have the large hands and feet of Diego Rivera's Mexicans. Bidaure developed a style around 1992 that focuses on the defining lines, the outer limits, of his subjects. He says that painters have two things to work with: form and content. For him, content is the most important. He is continually updating archetypal images and indigenous myths to use in his work.

The Chamorro concept of *mangningi* (respect) is the topic of the painting on the cover. Bidaure remembers that in the Philippines, as among the Chamorro of Guam, children are urged to pay respect to elders. The child brings the hand of an older person to the forehead. There is no kiss as the Spanish might do. It is a touch to the forehead or nose. According to Bidaure, the image on the cover is a family. The son is paying respect to the older person (perhaps a grandmother) seated in the chair. The rest of the family is behind him. The mother is guiding the daughter, telling her what to do, while the father looks directly at the viewer. Bidaure has captured a special tenderness in this family scene. The church in the background symbolizes the Chamorro's religious orientation, which is mostly Catholic. The nipa huts in the background depict the traditional homes of the Chamorro. The trees are generic trees of Guam, not specific trees such as breadfruit or banyan.

Bidaure acknowledges that he can do serious portraits but asks, "Why compete with a camera?" Viewers benefit from his decision to put his feelings into his work and not to duplicate the job of a photographer.

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