

Promoting crafts, through exhibitions, is both an art and a science. More often it is approached only as an art. But to have a successful promotion, it must also be viewed as a science. Evaluating the plan and analysing the business impact of the crafts to the public, involve a professional sense. A precise interpretation of related figures in the crafts presentation could be done through innovative displays. And this could ultimately bring more profits and advancement for the traditional crafts.

Man has always acquired souvenirs from places he has visited. And in the exhibition of arts and crafts, this presents a tremendous business opportunity. Giving the exhibition visitor a craft product to take home or as a remembrance of his trip is beneficial financially as well as culturally

The balance between art and science reflects the dual goal of marketing crafts: education and profit. Exhibition of arts and crafts should therefore pursue to achieve the fol-

Promoting Folk Arts and Crafts: Through Innovative Concepts of Exhibition Display

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lowing guide. The buyer needs to appreciate the value of the handmade object, which includes: the medium, the time, the skills involved, and the preservation of the heritage.

Crafts exhibitions wish to demonstrate the latest developments in arts and crafts. They also draw the visitor's attention to the works of certain craftsmen or artists which could



perhaps encourage the visitor to buy a piece. This will, of course be beneficial to the artist and his work as well as for the survival arts and crafts. The promotion of the arts and crafts may be supported by a number of activities, arranged in connection with an exhibition. For example, workshops held by artists of the craft exhibition and lectures and discussion with craftsmen could help make the visitors more familiar with artists/craftsmen and their work.

Educational workshop demonstration in crafts, explaining certain artistic techniques could help arouse visitor's interests in the arts and crafts. It could teach them to discern quality. From the point of view of the craftsman, a crafts exhibition could compromise a vital source of inspiration. It could be a visual reference from which to select, emulate, improve, or depart for innovation. The exhibition could be a storehouse from which to obtain design elements, particularly lesser known ones during a given period of time.

Out of the aforementioned elements the craftsman is able to produce new excellence. The increased awareness of people in an exhibition makes a craftsman realize that he is not alone in his field of interest. He is one of the heirs in a long tradition which has expressed itself in evolving tangible forms. The exhibition is necessarily an inspiration to him both in preserving the crafts' purity and in improving it through innovations calculated to meet current needs and demands.

The role of good art displays and crafts exhibition could draw public attention. The exhibition of traditional crafts should be like a catalyst



▲ Arts and crafts exhibition display include educational activities, demonstrating and explaining certain artistic techniques. These activities arouse visitors' interest and also teach them to discern the quality of the crafts.

between craftsmen/artists and the public. The exhibition is a kind of a patron, promoting artists. It makes purchases and commissions of art works or establishes contacts between the artists and the public.

Regional exhibitions in every country in Southeast Asia can take an active part in the promotion of crafts, particularly in areas where only a small number of craftsmen/artists are working. But there is something else an arts and crafts exhibition can do for the craftsmen. In view of the special social and economic circumstances in which they now find themselves, exhibition organizers in crafts could explain the situation to give the public a better understandings of the craftsman's changing role.

Organizing and planning to present exhibition-related crafts require additional research and education. Advance discussions about the exhibits or viewing the artifacts with the exhibit curator and visiting the craft's locations are all helpful to the crafts buyer. By doing these he gains an understanding of the country and the culture and thus, fosters the promotion of the crafts that truly reflect the tone of the exhibition or the extent of the collections.

The next step to undertake is a plan for organizing an arts and crafts exhibition.

Observe Crafts Exhibition Areas

When crafts exhibits are present, take note and and list down crafts situations in the display.

Think about why the pieces are arranged as they are. Could they be arranged effectively? What pedestals, tables or furniture are available?

How are the artifacts mounted, hung or arranged? What are the background walls made of? How would you arrange these crafts to have a dynamic locations? List down your own ideas and observations.

These handy bits of information are always needed when you are required to set up a display in your own style and taste.

Make a Working Plan

Preparing a dimensional plan of works of the exhibition area is important in arranging the work. Some galleries can provide an information plan. Draw the room's plan in your sketchpad, pacing off the length of each wall. Make a note on architectural features and furnishings. Indicate the location of doors, window pilasters, airconditioning vents, light switches, and light fixtures. Sketch to scale any furniture, built-in cabinets or room dividers. List the pedestals, tables or other portable furnishings available which maybe needed. These elements will influence the placement of craft pieces.

Use the Right Materials and Equipment

Considering the materials, background, and tools to be used is necessary. Displaying folk arts and crafts needs proper attention especially on the artifacts fragility and other characteristics. Tools and equipment needed for the installation of the exhibits vary according to the materials to be displayed and the make-up of the exhibit space. For example wood paneled or carpet-covered walls call



▲ Craft items of the same design can be displayed on one table, pairing pieces of different textural design.

for claw-hammer and nails, whereas, concrete walls require a drill and special nails.

If the artifact collection includes small or medium size forms in fiber, clay, ceramics, wood, or metal, the exhibition space should have furnishings to display those artifacts items securely and attractively. Another way is to improvise pedestals, tables, or cabinets to display forms. For a traditional crafts look, usage of indigenous materials like bamboos, barks, twigs, stone, and palm leaves could add a tropical ambience to the display.

To achieve a compact assemblage of background and props, various equipment and materials are needed. A combination of local materials and contemporary media is recommended, like masking tape, adhesive tape, staples and staple gun; straight pins, t-pins or push pins; sheets of abaca fiber, sa-a paper or dropcloths, etc.

Label of Craft items

Utilitarian crafts and other functional crafts are easily identified by knowing the craftsmen who made them, their functions and the local materials used to make them. It is suggested that the exhibition organizer ask crafts people to supply the following information for each piece submitted for display: (1) Traditional name of the crafts item, (2) Local function of the craft (3) names of craftsmen (4) materials used, and (5) price of the craft. These information items should be printed legibly and pasted below and near the crafts' item. Information of the crafts on local setting and historical background could be provided by the craftsman who made it. These information should be written well and also displayed near these crafts.

Work out Craft items for Display

Crafts items to be displayed should be submitted early, with appropriate identification. If an exhibi-

tion of crafts is organized by a larger group, committees and subgroups could be formed. Designation of works and other responsibilities is appropriate for a big exhibition as it ensures a workable scheme.

Musical instruments, personal items, home furnishings, and other similar items require special attention for both secure and attractive display. Consultation with artists about the problems peculiar to the display should be done long before installation day. For example, does the artist have stands, props, pedestals and local stands complementing his works?

Oftentimes, a craft exhibition is rejected by the jury because it is not ready for the show exhibition. To avoid such an untoward happening do not include a piece which does not

meet the requirement, in the exhibit. Provide prior notice of the crafts exhibition rules to those submitting works.

When all preparations are completed and the installation of items are done, plans, tools identification cards and collected works are next.

How do you begin to arrange your display for the exhibition?

Create a Focal Point

The initial step here is to distribute all craft items around the exhibition area and assess what you have. A good exhibition show has a focus. A craft exhibition, organized by one person, usually has a theme.

But finding a major focus for a group show is more difficult unless a theme is pre-arranged. Look for a common trend in the media, styles or techniques that can unite the exhibition. Otherwise, diversity of media or technique could be the focus.

Arrange each Craft Exhibition Properly

The placement of each craft item is significant. The light, the height in relation to the viewer and to the adjacent pieces, and the relationship of each piece with architectural features should be considered while arranging the craft pieces.

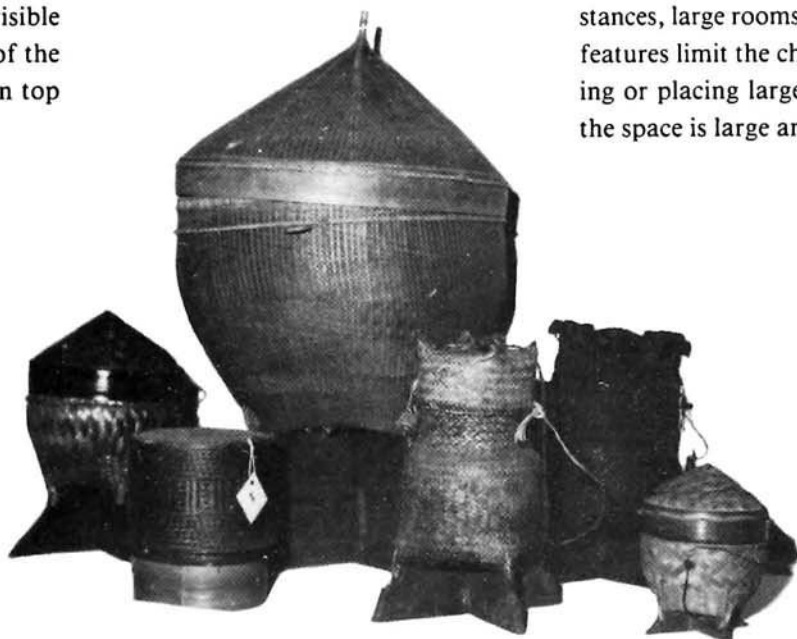
Temporarily arrange the pieces around the exhibition area. Lean rigid or framed works against the surface you plan hold the display sheets or local textiles could be used, as dropcloths. Spread mats could also be used as backgrounds.

Select eye-catching artifacts to be displayed at entrances. They should attract people to the exhibition show. Ideally, these eye-catching craft items should also characterize the theme of the exhibition. Often, large pieces are most dramatic and exciting because of their commanding sizes.

Develop a Size Rhythm

If the craft items to be displayed is composed of large and small works, the first thing to do is to display large pieces first. In some instances, large rooms and architectural features limit the choices for exhibiting or placing larger work. Even if the space is large and uninterrupted,

▼ A display of basket food containers in various sizes, shapes and textural designs. Showing their functional relationship, these craft items are mounted on a small wooden stand to keep them more visible for viewing. Descriptions of the crafts are also displayed on top of the pedestal.



place large pieces first to develop a visual rhythm to balance visual weight.

Design Open Space

To avoid an unpleasant arrangement of crafts, consciously develop a rhythm in the size and the spacing of adjacent works. Consider how much space to leave around each piece to allow the viewers to study the individual piece, without enticing them to leave for the adjacent work.

But pieces belonging to a group, such as a set of pots, baskets of various sizes classified as a set or an ensemble should be closely spaced to complement their relationship. This enhances the continuity of viewing the crafts.

To some extent, other artists prefer closely spaced, tight shows.

This attitude stems from the legitimate desire to show as much craft items for sale as possible. In many cases, however, the audience often react to crowded exhibitions and say: since there were so many to choose from, we did not know which to choose they all look similar.

Whether you prefer crowded or spacious exhibitions, consider the practical, aesthetic, and psychological effects of the arrangement. If ceramics or fragile items are not under glass or behind a protective case, place them in relatively high and isolated positions. An elevated or distant position conveys an untouchable feeling. The same technique works

for items such as a chair, which is a part of the exhibition but not meant to be casually used by the viewers. Heavy sturdy items can be placed in low position to contrast and balance the various exhibitions.

The deliberate arrangement of pieces - heavy versus light, high versus low, colors versus neutral tones, creates both a delicately balanced exhibition and untouchable feelings. On the other hand, a show could be arranged to invite touching and feeling.

Ceramic, wood, bamboo, metal fiber and soft stone sculptural pieces often require space to enable viewing from all sides. This creates a three-dimensional visuality of the craft item. Sculptural items in the round should be provided with strong support or well based pedestal to avoid any accidents to the viewers.

Visualize the Craft Item

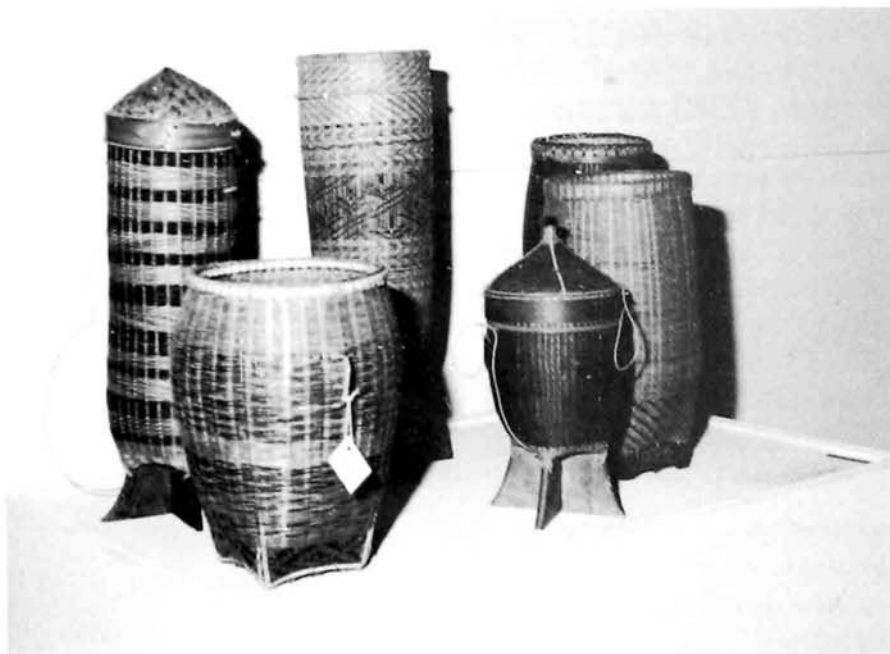
As soon as you have placed each item in a provisional location for the exhibition, move backward and assess the overall arrangement.

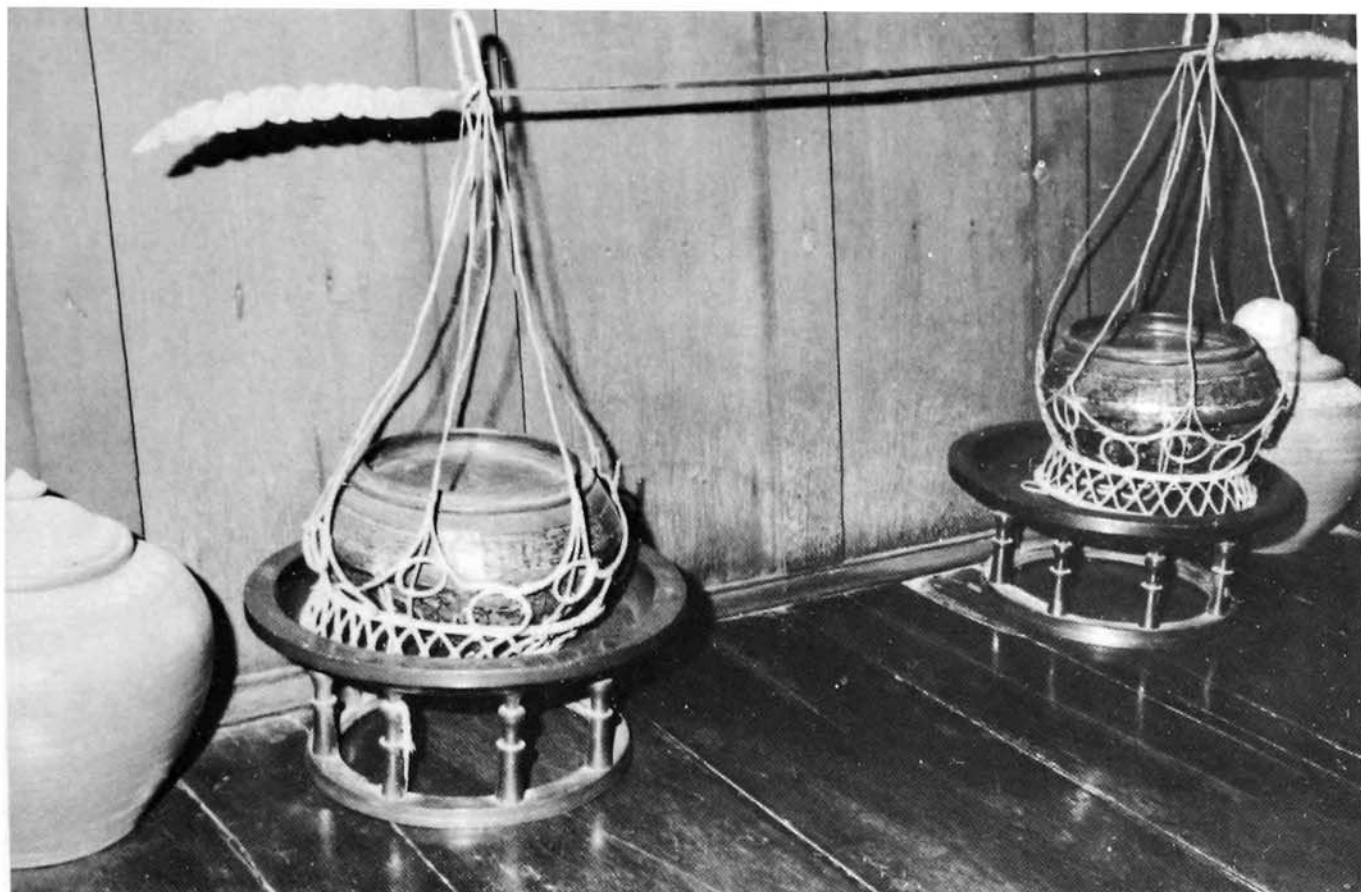
Is one area visually heavier than the other because of the physical size or color intensity? Do adjacent pieces clash in color or mood? Are there interruptions in rhythm? With these guides, you could rearrange pieces to correct the distracting elements. When you have corrected the oversights begin the actual installation.

Assemble the Display Materials

Install each piece of crafts to its location. Craft items that require to be hanged should be done first. Small pieces of dissimilar sizes or irregular shapes can be hung with their centers a little above eye-level. In some cases, it may be necessary to hang two small pieces, one over the other, to carry equal weight when seen with their larger neighbors. Avoid hanging a large piece over a small piece. An exception should be where the small piece is dark and bold enough to appear visually heavier than the large one. Avoid hanging items in a zigzag pattern unless they are located up on a flight of stairs or a ramp wall.

► A set of tubular plaited bamboo crafts arranged in various sizes. Crafts are given more emphasis when displayed on white space background.





▲ A display of clay pots showing the combination of its functional parts. Note the dynamic design provided by the handle and suspender.

Use pedestals, stands, supports or other free-standing work close to walls or dividers. Be sure to place the work in a position where viewers may see all the sides. Viewers should not be compelled to squeeze between the work and the wall for a better look. Free-standing pieces should not obscure adjacent hanging works.

Free-standing art forms should attract attention to the exhibition and direct the flow of movement of the audience. For instance, a free-standing piece placed directly between opposite doors will allow the audience to go around it. A slow moving audience will have a chance to fully admire those free-standing pieces. But be careful, the free-

standing work should not be too large and should not cause accidental tripping.

The Final Thing to Do

If a group appoints an installation committee, choose one person from the committee to direct placement of the entire show. The director of the exhibition may seek advice from other committee members, but the director should make the final decision. Some groups ask members to install their own work (first come, first serve), but this produces an inconsistent show. Volunteer to install exhibits to gain experience. Take every opportunity to analyze exhibitions to see why they succeeded or failed.

As a conclusion, promoting arts and crafts through exhibitions in galleries should attempt to accomplish: financial support for the exhibition and the craftsmen, a better understanding of traditional craft skills and the cultural environment, in other words education and profit.

Furthermore, an exhibition of crafts should emphasize the importance of preserving a distinct national culture. Contacts with the craftsmen and the public in our increasingly industrialized world require strong cultural mechanism to create the technology which will further enhance our development and help us plan our future in Southeast Asia.