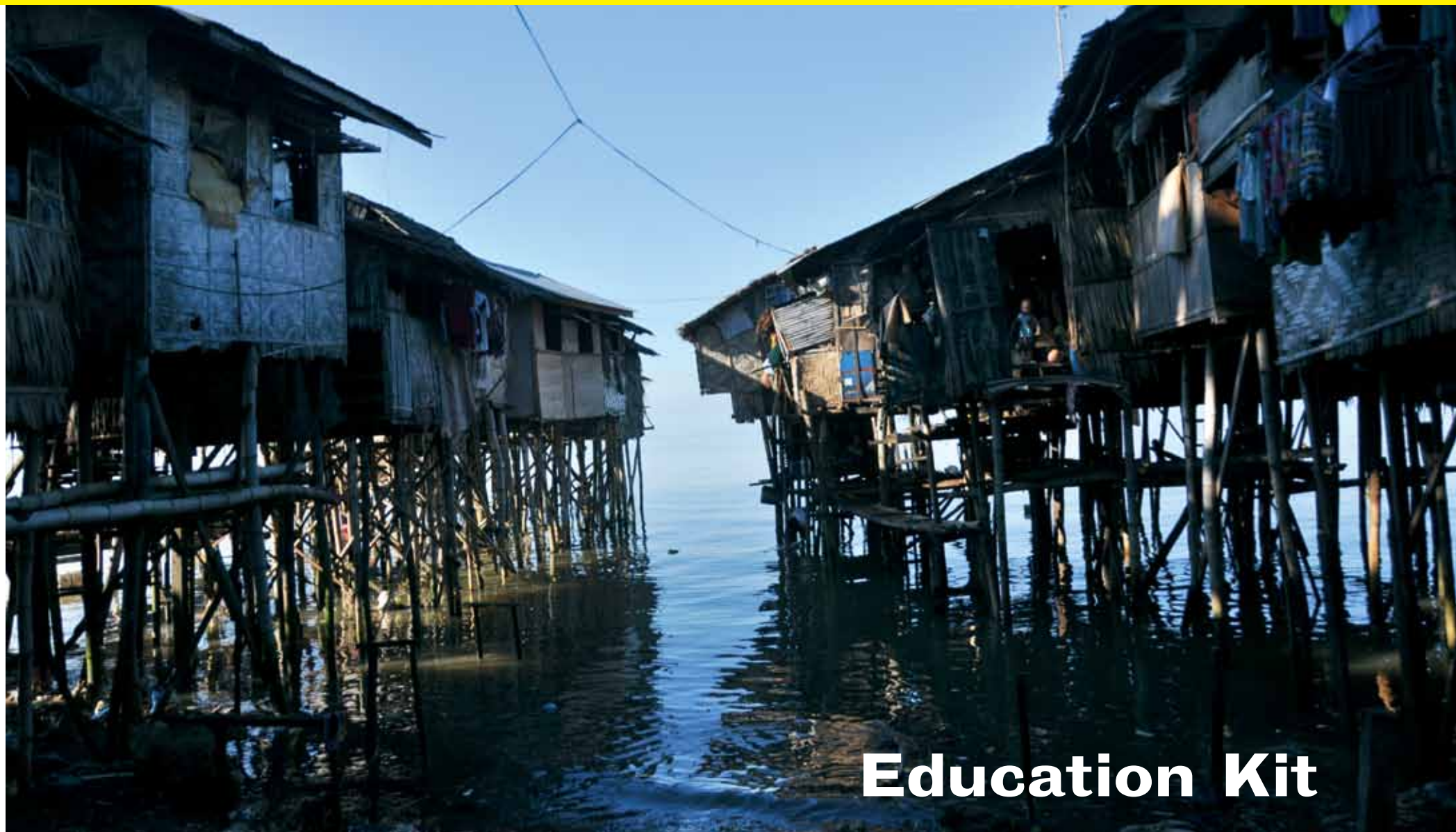


**Alfredo Juan Aquilizan  
Isabel Gaudinez-Aquilizan  
In-Habit:  
Project Another Country**

 Sherman  
Contemporary  
Art  
Foundation

**Museums  
& Galleries  
NSW**



**Education Kit**

## Introduction

This Education Kit has been produced by Museums & Galleries NSW in conjunction with Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation to support the touring exhibition *In-Habit: Project Another Country* by artists Alfredo Juan Aquilizan and Isabel Gaudinez-Aquilizan.

This resource is primarily aimed at teachers and students from Primary and Secondary levels. It can also be used by museums and galleries staff, as well as community access groups.

This resource offers:

- ◆ Insight into the artistic practice of Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan.
- ◆ An overview of the themes and ideas from *In-Habit: Project Another Country*.
- ◆ A series of focus questions and activities relating to the exhibition.
- ◆ Worksheets for Primary, Secondary and family groups.
- ◆ Exhibition visit and post-visit response activities.

## How to use this Education Kit

The material in this resource is designed to complement a visit to the exhibition and can be used in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue. Use the images, activities and ideas in this kit to assist with pre-visit preparation, as a guide during your gallery visit and to develop post-visit activities.

### For Teachers

The information in this resource is directed towards Primary and Secondary students and is designed to provide enrichment and extension for many key-learning areas including Visual Arts, English and Visual Literacy, Cultural Studies and ESL/NESB. Teachers are advised to adapt contextual information in the resource to suit the needs of their students or to integrate areas of this resource into existing classroom units of study. The resource includes Primary and Secondary Worksheets that can be used by students during visits to the exhibition.

### For Gallery Staff, Family & Community Groups

The resource provides additional information on the artists and their practice, as well as contextual information on the exhibition. There is an Activity Trail that can be used during a visit to the exhibition.

Throughout the resource **key terms are in bold** and a glossary is included at the end of this kit. A guide to additional publications and resources has been provided to assist in further study.

## About the artists

Isabel Gaudinez-Aquilizan  
b. 1965 Manila, the Philippines

Alfredo Juan Aquilizan  
b. 1962 Ballesteros, Cagayan province, the Philippines

Live and work in Brisbane, Australia.

The husband-and-wife team, Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan, make collaborative artworks that engage with ideas of **migration, dislocation, memory and diaspora**. They undertake large-scale creative projects that involve collecting everyday materials and make formal installations by transforming found objects.

The Aquilizans and their family moved from the Philippines to Australia in 2006, experiencing first hand the struggle of displacement and the shifting between cultures. For their work *Project Belonging: In-Transit* (2006), the artists drew directly on their experience of migration. The artists gave themselves and each of their five children a **balikbayan** box in which to pack their belongings to relocate to Australia. Each box contained carefully selected items of clothing, books, toys and personal effects. The work was presented at the 15th Biennale of Sydney in 2006 with the entire contents of each box intricately stacked into individual cube formations. *Project Belonging: In-Transit* documented their family's migration and reflected on ideas of dislocation and change. The stacked contents of each **balikbayan** box became a portrait of each individual and a metaphor for the personal.

The Aquilizans incorporate a collaborative approach to their art making that allows individual and collective dialogues to emerge from their work and encourages storytelling and exchange between individuals, families and communities. A key part of the Aquilizans' practice involves engaging local communities through workshops and art making activities that contribute to growing **assemblages** and large-scale sculptural **installations**.



Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan. Image courtesy the artists.

For the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery in 2009, the Aquilizans produced *In-Flight (Project Another Country)*. The work was constructed from hundreds of small handmade aeroplanes piled high in the gallery space and suspended from the ceiling. Using recycled, inexpensive and impermanent materials, the artwork continued to evolve and change over the duration of the exhibition through the process of **aggregation**. Children and adults visiting the exhibition could make their own planes and contribute these small sculptures to the ever-growing installation. *In-Flight (Project Another Country)* echoed the movement of people across cultures and the transit of cargo across borders. The interactive artwork reflected the artists' approach towards fostering individual and collective memory whilst encouraging **co-authorship** through collective art making.

## Exhibition Overview

*In-Habit: Project Another Country* presents two separate but interconnected works considering the ideas of ‘place’ and ‘home’. Using commercial scaffolding and masses of recycled cardboard boxes, the artists transform the gallery space into a fantastical village that references the precarious stilt-house settlements of the Badjao people of southern Mindanao, the Philippines. *In-Habit: Project Another Country* was commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in 2012. The artists worked with local school groups to generate hundreds of makeshift housing structures from used packing and cardboard boxes.

*In-Habit: Project Another Country* is an **interactive and accumulative installation** that will continue to grow, develop and change over the duration of the exhibition. Visitors to the exhibition are invited to create their own cardboard house or dream home and add it to the existing dwellings. As the exhibition is touring to six different art galleries and museums, each **incarnation** of the project will be **site-specific** and the evolving configuration of cardboard dwellings will respond to the architecture of each exhibition venue.

The artists’ approach to collaboration, community and collective art making is an important aspect of the work. The evolving installation brings up ideas about **co-authorship, reciprocity** and exchange. The artists have created a site where a makeshift and improvised township can evolve and a place where dialogues about home and belonging can be exchanged through art making.

Accompanying the interactive installation is a **multi-channel video** work that focuses on the Badjao children; a severely underprivileged minority group, who often resort to begging on the streets. As a demonstration of their resilience and optimism, the children perform song routines that infuse their local dialect with western rap music and the playing of makeshift drums. The Aquilizans document these performances and reveal that even though this community remains bound by poverty, the children manage to transform everyday complications and difficulties into creative energy.



*In-Habit: Project Another Country*, 2012

Used transport cardboard boxes, packing tape, handcrafted cardboard houses, makeshift drums and sound, single channel video projection plus 5 LCD screen installation. Installation view, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney. Photo: Jacob Ring. Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation 2012. Image courtesy the artists.

“Like many artists who have first-hand experience of shifting between cultures, the Aquilizans create work that is informed by the struggle of displacement, but also advantaged by the bird’s eye view afforded by seeing one’s place of origin from the distant perspective of another place. The current iteration of their *Another Country* series, *In-Habit*, explores the culture of the Badjao people through the lens of the artists’ own diasporic psyche. The Badjao live on the edge, in every sense, of southern Mindanao, the easternmost island of the Philippines. Traditionally fisherman and pearl divers who lived nomadically at sea, the Badjao are now one of the world’s most marginalised ethnic groups, inhabiting makeshift houseboats and stilt houses on coastal settlements along the Sulu Archipelago.”

– Felicity Fenner, *Tallstoria*. Excerpt from exhibition catalogue. *In-Habit: Project Another Country*. Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, 2012, Pg 91-92.

## Interview with the artists

Q. Isabel and Alfredo, how long have you been making artwork together?

Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan (A+I): **We have been working together for almost two decades now.**

Q. Where did the idea for *In-Habit: Project Another Country* come from?

A+I: **We have been working on the idea of dislocation and settlements for a number of years now, even before when we were still living in the Philippines and exhibiting our projects in different parts of the globe. It was on one of the trips back to the Philippines that we became interested in the sea gypsies, the Badjao, because of their nomadic existence and their present situation. We had this idea to incorporate it in our project 'Another Country' which is all about the idea of living somewhere else, the idea of always being 'in between' when you leave home and not having a place that you can call home anymore.**

Q. Can you describe your experience working with the Badjao community in the Philippines?

A+I: **It was a quite an experience as we always enjoy working with community. That is the work that we do most of the time anyway. It was also an eye opener as it gives you a perspective of how people live and how we associated with them - being migrants ourselves and living away from home.**

Q. What do you think it would be like growing up as a child in a Badjao community compared to Australia?

A+I: **Growing up in a country where people have access to everything is not something that we can compare with. The Badjaos are marginalised people living a very destitute existence in very strained circumstances but what we have observed is happiness as they have a strong sense of community. I cannot say much about Australia as we have been living here only for the past seven years.**



*In-Habit: Project Another Country*, 2012

Used transport cardboard boxes, packing tape, handcrafted cardboard houses, makeshift drums and sound, single channel video projection plus 5 LCD screen installation. Installation view, Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney. Photo: Jacob Ring. Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation 2012. Image courtesy the artists.

Q. Why did you choose to use cardboard boxes as the primary material for *In-Habit: Project Another Country*?

A+I: **We used cardboard boxes because of their association with travel. They have a history of holding and transporting things, are readily available and easy to work with. The boxes are also something that we identify with being always on the move.**

Q. Anyone can make a house and add it to the growing installation. What do you think about the different structures and multiple understandings of 'home' that are present in the work?

A+I: **It is quite interesting as everyone has their idea of what a house should look like according to their own point of view. It is also about a lot of things like their dreams, their aspirations and their memory of home. In the end it becomes a collective memory, an imagined community.**

## Key Themes and Concepts

### Home and Family

Investigating the idea of 'home' is a central concept operating in Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizans practice. Home is often thought about in the context of the family, as a place of origin and an environment that offers happiness, support and safety.

For *In-Habit: Project Another Country* the artists examine the multiple, varied and complex understandings of home by creating a space in which a diverse and imaginary township can be progressively built. Each cardboard structure or dwelling is crafted differently as each individual creates a house that reflects on their own understanding of home and place.

The artists look to the Badjao community of the Philippines who construct precarious stilted houses over the sea from impermanent and makeshift materials. The artists have worked with the Badjao's **accumulative** and disarrayed style of architecture that 'makes-do', as a way to question whether the bricks and mortar that make a house are what constitutes a home. *In-Habit: Project Another Country* emphasises the role of community in our construction of home and the importance of **collective** imagination in building the places in which we live.

### Dislocation and Displacement

The artists continue to draw on their personal experience of migration to reflect on ideas of dislocation and displacement in their practice. A sense of dislocation can result from moving or shifting from one's place of origin. For *In-Habit: Project Another Country* the artists responded to the plight of the Badjao people, a severely marginalised community from their own place of origin, the Philippines.

The Badjao were originally sea faring nomads, an indigenous ethnic group of Maritime Southeast Asia, who lived and worked on the sea front. As international boundaries



*In-Habit: Project Another Country*, 2012  
Location photographs, BADJAO Community Seaside II, Barangay, Matina Aplaya, Davao City, Philippines. Photo: Alfredo Juan Aquilizan. Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation 2012. Image courtesy the artists.

and borders became more strictly imposed, the Badjao people have been forced to remain sedentary and base their communities on the shorelines like that of southern Mindanao.

The displacement of the Badjao is reflected in the improvised cardboard shantytown of *In-Habit: Project Another Country*. The artists' choice of recycled cardboard implies impermanence and the temporary nature of each incarnation of *In-Habit: Project Another Country* can be understood as a metaphor for displacement and transience.

## Collaboration and Storytelling

**Collaboration** is the act of working with another individual or other people to realise or create something. For the Aquilizans, collaboration is a key characteristic of their practice - they collaborate with one another and with local communities to realise their works. For *In-Habit: Project Another Country* the artists engage the community and exhibition visitors in generating the cardboard houses that accumulate to form the large-scale installation. The installation recalls the Badjao **Torosiaje**; the temporary settlements and stilted houses built by the Badjao people.

For the first **incarnation** of the project at Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation (2012), the artists undertook a series of workshops with local schools to begin generating cardboard houses. The **aggregation** of homes continued over the duration of the exhibition as gallery visitors continued to make and contribute their cardboard houses to the ever-growing structure. Each **incarnation** of the project at a different exhibition venue will reflect the collective memory of the specific community it engages. Each resulting installation will therefore be different and diverse in appearance. The configuration of cardboard dwellings will bare the individual and **collective** characteristics of a particular group of people who have engaged and contributed to this evolving artwork.

*In-Habit: Project Another Country* encourages storytelling and exchange via these methods of collaboration put in place by the artists. Through collective art making the artists aim to forge new relationships, foster **interactivity** and generate discussion. The role of the artist as the sole 'maker' or 'author' of the work is **subverted** by the Aquilizans, who prioritise **collective** interaction and creative thinking through **collaborative** art making.



*In-Habit: Project Another Country*, 2012

Local community workshop held at Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation 2012  
Image courtesy Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation

## Primary Worksheet

Walk around the exhibition space and describe what you see. Where are you? What does it look like? What are things made of?

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Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan made this artwork in response to their experiences with the Badjao people in the Philippines. The Badjao people are often called 'sea gypsies' and live in coastal settlements. They build their houses on stilts over the water. What do you think it would be like to live in a house built over the sea?

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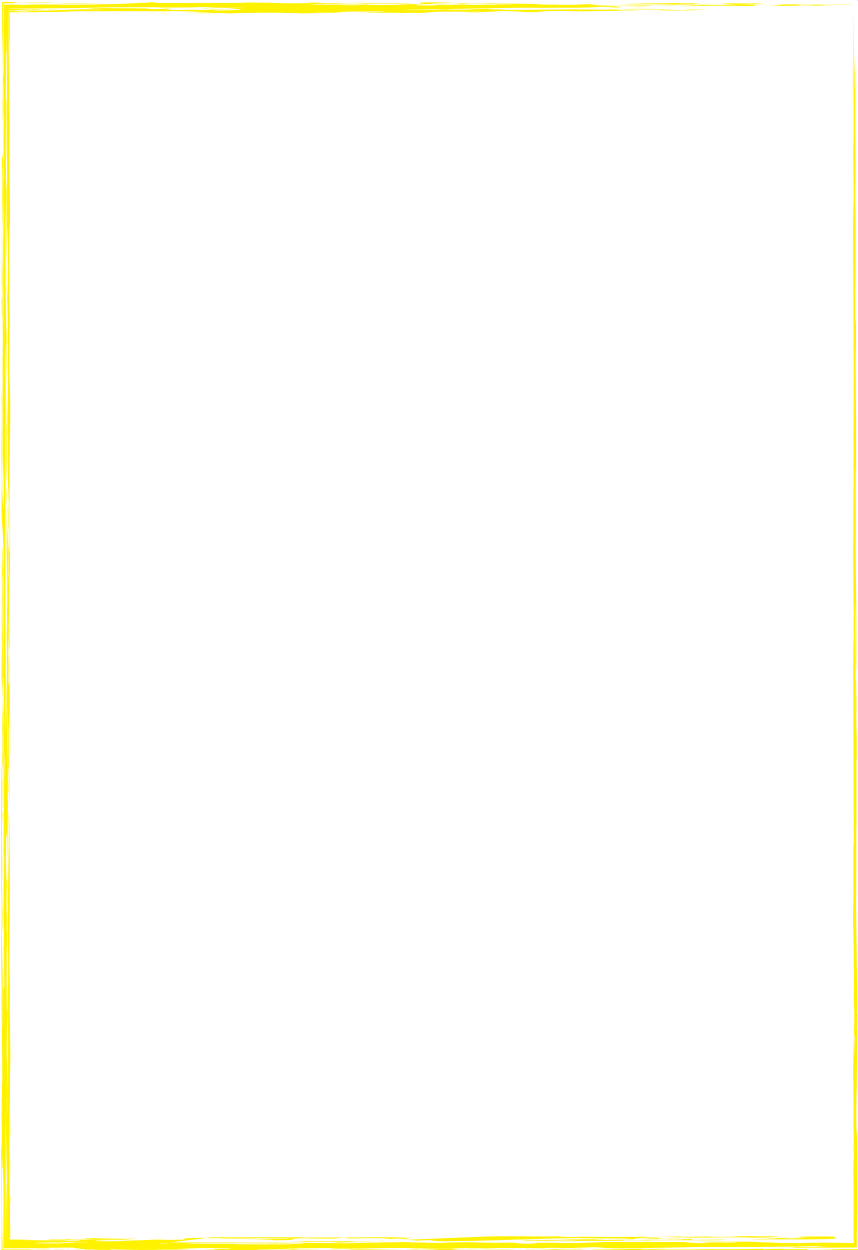
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Design and make your own cardboard house to contribute to the exhibition. Draw a picture of your house in the box above. Who lives there? Draw them into the picture too.





Describe the house you have made for the exhibition. Is it similar to the home you live in now? How is it different to the houses of the Badjao people?

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Why do you think the artists chose cardboard to make the houses? What other recycled materials can you think of that could be used to make an artwork?

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Watch the videos of the Badjao children rapping and performing music. Can you sing or play a musical instrument? Why is making music important and what emotions can it express?

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**Back in the classroom:**

◆ Reflect on your visit to the exhibition. What did you like about *In-Habit: Project Another Country*? What was fun and exciting about your experience? How did it make you feel?

◆ Be inspired by the videos of the Badjao children rapping and performing. In groups of 2-3 make up a song and perform it to the class. You could even make your own musical instruments!

◆ As a class start collecting recycled materials to build your own village at school. How can you reuse and transform everyday materials to make a collective artwork?



The exhibition intertwines videos of the Badjao children rapping and singing amongst an ever-growing installation of cardboard homes and structures. How do the varied and multiple forms and media used by the artists create an immersive experience for the viewer? Do they work well together and what sort of environment do they create for the exhibition audience?

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**Back in the classroom:**

- ◆ Write a paragraph detailing your subjective response to the exhibition. What emotions or feelings did the work activate for you, and why?
- ◆ As a class, use the internet and library to research the Philippines and the Badjao people. Using one of the walls in your classroom, compose a visual and verbal research web. What new information can you find out about this country and its diverse culture? How does this research enrich your understanding of the artwork?
- ◆ In groups research and brainstorm other artists who work collaboratively or collectively. Prepare a short presentation on another artist duo or group to talk about why artists sometime work this way?

## Glossary

### **Accumulative**

Gathering or growing by gradual increases.

### **Aggregation**

The collection or accumulation of multiple things or objects.

### **Assemblage**

A collection or gathering of things to make an object.

### **Balikbayan box**

In Filipino culture this is a packing box with personal belongings that is intended to be sent overseas.

### **Co-authorship**

Acknowledging a collaborating or joint author.

### **Collective**

Something done by people acting as a group.

### **Collaborative/ Collaboration**

The action of working with another individual or a group of people to produce or create something.

### **Diaspora**

This can refer to people dispersing from their homeland, or the dispersion of a language or culture.

### **Dislocation**

Refers to sense of displacement often experienced when a person or group changes their cultural or geographical environment.

### **Displacement**

The condition of having been displaced.

### **Incarnation**

One version in a series of versions.

### **Installation**

Often a site-specific, three-dimensional artwork that is designed to transform the perception of a space.

### **Found object**

An existing object, artefact or material not intended as art. A found object often has specific aesthetic and metaphoric value.

### **Metaphor**

A thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.

### **Migration**

The movement of persons from one country or locality to another.

### **Multi-channel video**

A video that uses multiple monitors or screens.

### **Nomad**

A person or group who have no permanent or fixed abode and travel from place to place.

### **Reciprocity/reciprocal**

Something that is given, felt or done in return.

### **Subvert**

To undermine the power and authority of an idea, established system or institution.

### **Torosiaje**

The temporary stilt-house settlements of the Badjao people.

### **Transience**

Impermanence or the state of being unfixed or impermanent.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Exhibition catalogue:**

*In-Habit: Project Another Country.*  
Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, 2012.

## **Further research**

### **Books & Magazines**

Aquilizan, Alfredo Juan. *M201: In God We Trust. 50th la Biennale di Venezia*, Laguna, Philippines Humanities Dept., College of Arts & Sciences, University of the Philippines, 2003.

*6th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 2009.*  
Exhibition catalogue. Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, QLD, 2009.

Fenner, Felicity (Edt). *Concrete Culture.* Exhibition catalogue. Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts, UNSW, 2008.

Thompson, Nicholas. *Project Belonging: Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan.* *Artlink*, Vol 27. No 2. 2007.

### **Web**

<http://sherman-scaf.org.au/exhibition/alfredo-isabel-aquilizan-in-habit-project-another-country-2/>

<http://www.janmantonart.com/portfolio/alfredo-isabel-aquilizan/>

[http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/apt/apt6/artists/isabel\\_-and-\\_alfredo\\_aquilizan](http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/apt/apt6/artists/isabel_-and-_alfredo_aquilizan)

<http://drawingroomgallery.com/artist/alfredo-isabel-aquilizan-2/>

### **Video**

[http://www.dasplatforms.com/das\\_cinema/alfredo-isabel-aquilizan-sherman-contemporary-art-foundation/](http://www.dasplatforms.com/das_cinema/alfredo-isabel-aquilizan-sherman-contemporary-art-foundation/)

## Acknowledgments

This Education Kit has been commissioned by Museums & Galleries NSW in conjunction with Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation to support the touring exhibition *In-Habit: Project Another Country* by artists Alfredo Juan Aquilizan and Isabel Gaudinez-Aquilizan.

The project will be touring to the following venues in 2013 – 2015:

**Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery**  
3 August 2013 – 8 September 2013

**Bathurst Regional Art Gallery**  
31 January 2014 – 16 March 2014

**Pinnacles Gallery**  
5 April 2014 – 4 May 2014

**Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art**  
1 August 2014 – 3 October 2014

**Tweed River Art Gallery**  
17 October 2014 – 14 December 2014

**Cairns Regional Gallery**  
5 January 2015 – 8 March 2015

For further information about the exhibition and tour, please contact:

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Cover Image:

*In-Habit: Project Another Country*, 2012  
Location photographs, BADJAO Community Seaside II, Barangay, Matina Aplaya, Davao City, Philippines. Photo: Alfredo Juan Aquilizan. Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation 2012. Image courtesy the artists.

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