

Del Mundo's Modernization of Our Pottery Industry

Centers of glazed pottery started, with initial steps taken in first rate tile work and other pioneering efforts

It is a long way from the Royal Pottery Factory in Berlin, Germany, to Tiwi, Albay—and a superficial examination of affairs might indicate that it is just as much of a distance between the products of the two places, both of which go in for glazed pottery. The Royal Pottery Factory of Germany has turned out some of the world's finest wares, while the products of Tiwi are hardly in that class, artistically.

But Tiwi products (and others from other towns on Luzon) are at least the best clay products that have been produced in the Philippine Islands, which is something. And, under

the direction of young Salvador del Mundo, of the Ceramics Department of the Bureau of Science, even art is having a voice in local products, although so far, emphasis has been on the utilitarian value of the pottery made in the Philippines. Del Mundo, who has been at his present stand for about a year and a half, is one of the very few German-speaking Filipinos we have met; the language is an accomplishment he acquired in Germany, where he studied the ceramic arts at said royal factory, as well as in various northern Germany points, in Czechoslovakia, and so on.

(Del Mundo will also tell you, with a certain justifiable pride, that the Germans taught him to drink beer, which is also a not-so-common accomplishment among his race; and this perhaps accounts for the product which is—a beer stein, if you please, which represents a section of bamboo—made by him and his assistants, and a glazed pottery product with a Philippine twist.)

Considering that he started from absolute scratch, del Mundo has accomplished much in the short time he has been on the job. We respect the young man for his intelligence, and for unbounded energy and enthusiasm, and for imagination. He has perhaps been the spark which has started a new industry in the Philippines, a most useful one for the country, and one which promises possibilities for a bit of export trade as well.

For example, one job he has done is to have designed a three-burner stove, to be made of glazed pottery, and to replace the inefficient, smoky little one-burner clay affairs which the peasants now use as their sole means of cooking. The stoves were designed, tested, and are now being made commercially—and sell for ₱4 each, which puts them within reach of every native family. An excellent job. But he

has gone further, and is making experiments to find a fuel which will replace wood, and perhaps add even more to the efficiency of his stoves, and to their cheapness of operation. He has taken coconut charcoal for his basic material—using coconut shells which are a waste by-product. This, when made into charcoal, becomes a sort of coarse powder, and hence must be made into briquettes. He tried clay, which worked fine, but wet weather washed the clay out—so that was out. Then he tried coal tar. That worked fine, too, but we import coal tar and that runs the cost up—so that was out. Now he is trying molasses, no less—also a waste by-product. So far his experiments with molasses have proved very satisfactory, and it looks as though from two waste materials he will succeed in producing a fuel cheap enough for native use, and much more efficient than wood. Coconut charcoal is hardly ceramics—which is one reason why we think del Mundo will go a long way in the development of this infant industry.

Glazing adds more than 100% to the value of clay products, del Mundo tells us. For example, an unglazed flower pot which sells for 15 centavos, when glazed sells for 40.

Very amusing is the story he tells about the enterprise of certain neighboring Asiatic races. Del Mundo's idea is to help develop this industry for his own people, which is natural enough, and laudable. But he noticed Japanese and Chinese at his Carnival exhibition, and at other places where he was expounding on the

art he has learned. Now two of the three principal pottery-making establishments he has succeeded in starting are operated by them—Chinese at San Pedro Macati, and Japanese at San Pedro Tunasan, Laguna. An Ilocano at Candon, Ilocos Sur, makes the stoves mentioned, and Tiwi is also a Filipino enterprise.

These places go in so far only for articles of a commercial nature—pots, stoves, and so on. All glazed. The formula for the glazing material is not given out, being a bit on the chemical side and probably difficult for peasants to handle right. So he makes the glazes in his department, and sells them, cheap, to the pottery makers. And, of course, shows them how to use them.

The art is confined, so far, to the department itself. This takes the form of glazed tiles, some of which are excellent

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Bu. of Science Photo

Samples of tiles made by Salvador del Mundo, chief of ceramics at the science bureau. The tiles are well designed by artist studios of more than usual ability, not mere craftsmanship, and the glazing is done excellently. Cost of such tiles is a factor in their use in walls and floors, but one adaptation would be their use in serving table and tea table tops.

An American Artist's...

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distance, and not only that, but complete silence while work was in operation. So *simpatico* and so early was everything that the artist forgot how very hard he was working. His model in one position when one of the village Valentinos, who spoke English, vouchsafed the information, "She say she get tired," and that was the end—no more could silence or pose be regained.

Contrary was the experience in Navotas, near Manila. There everyone not only talked continuously but gathered in mobs about the artist and kept up a ribaldry of jests, possibly due to the ray evening hour approaching, and the glory of a Philippine sunset; whereas in Zamboanga, work was carried on in the dignified midmorning's glow.

At Jolo, though the women swimmers chasing pennies in that port are veritable Gauguin south sea canvasses come to life, it was the men who caught the artist's eye. Amid another respectful silent crowd in the market, he enthusiastically did a sketch of a handsome youth richly costumed; and upon completion, in offering a fee in payment of the posing, he was informed that the young sitter was a datus! The self-possessed young man most graciously bowed us goodbye.

There is an old adage that implies artists are often hungry; usually from lack of funds, though modernly, it sometimes is from lack of cooks' artistry, for a connoisseur in beauty is frequently a connoisseur in foods as well. Wherever are found artists' groups, Greenwich Village, Soho, Montmartre, Montparnasse, the Balneario, there will be found good restaurants—amusing surroundings as well as artistic food are half the life of an artist—and will you believe it when world gossamers tell you that they eat joyously in the Philippines?

Were the Hotel Plaza of Zamboanga plumped down on the Mediterranean coast, it would be

famous for its menus. So too would the little hotel in Pagsanjan, whose fried chicken and salad are the creations of artists. In Manila, old world amusement that belongs in the life of an artist when eating is supplied by La Palma de Mallorca, the Oriente, Delmonico's, the Arcade, Sukiyaki, and the little afternoon coffee court that gathers in the Crystal Arcade: so many times this winter, that group might easily, in our thought, have been Montparnasse de Paris. Manila's Restaurant de Paris is veritable franchise. Dining there, one may choose their own world atmosphere and be in Fez, Morocco, in Saigon, in Noumea, New Caledonia; or, if dear to the heart, in Marseilles on Friday when *boulehnaisse* is served; or within the cordial portals of the famed Napoleon house of Hotel du Nord, in Arles.

As our old professors, encouraging our study of languages, used to say, "not until you speak another language do you appreciate your own," so, too, perhaps, it is in seeing artists' subjects.

Not until many artists' haunts have become known and their religious must appreciate the beauties at hand. So the roadway from Taytay to Pagsanjan with its old churches and spots as lovely as Venice; and from Malahay and Lilio to Los Batos; old walled and battlemented Cavite, mangos and bananas in Manila markets, the pottery section of the Yanzco market, and Paço cemetery at twilight, with its delightful sexton who proclaims himself St. Peter, and slyly waxes a colossal rage thought it were a duels sword—these are but a few of the sunset joys that the Philippines haven to artists: that they have proffered us in these few months, and that offer an intreguement for returning to the islands next winter.

And why shouldn't American artists return year after year to the Philippines, instead of shivering and doing again and again the subjects that for centuries have been done in southern Italy, Greece and Egypt, since all this oriental-occidental beauty lies peacefully encompassed in the world's most gorgeous sunsets, amid an understanding people?—M.M.W.

Our Humble Apologies

By one of those errors that forever remain inexplicable, something the mind seems sure of when it is merely taking night for day, we recently attributed *The Index* to a bank that does not publish it, instead of to the New York Trust Company, that does publish it, very competently, under the editorship of Dudley L. Parsons. In the correspondence thus provoked, Mr. Parsons has been very generous about the slip.

"I believe," he writes, "that the best answer to the charges made in your open letter would be contained in a brief statement of the policy followed in preparing articles for *The Index*. We attempt to prepare concise authoritative and unbiased presentation of a topic of current interest. The necessity of keeping articles at length suitable for reading by busy men makes it imperative that only the major features of a subject be treated in any detail. An attempt to single out any minor features could only result in disproportionate emphasis, and a lack of balance for the whole article. . . . To give adequate treatment of the Philippine market in an article devoted to a domestic situation in which the foreign aspects must be summed up in about 50 to 100 words would, at best, be inconsistent."

Editor Parsons says the *Journal* praise it will not be modest enough to withhold from its readers:

"Finally, we appreciate your generous praise of *The Index*, and hope, with an understanding of our position, that you will continue to find it of value. For our part, although we receive a great volume of regional economic journals, I can frankly state that very few achieve the high standards usually maintained by The American Chamber of Commerce Journal."

The italics are ours, and if our embarrassing slip has been the means of bringing us another occasional correspondent on matters of economics, we take it as providential after all.—W. R.

Del Mundo's Modernization...

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(see illustrations); vases, decorative brick-work, and statuary. He has developed a glazed tile out of clay, which is very inexpensive—two tiles for one centavo—and could be very effectively used for walls or floors. Then he has worked out larger, white tiles, which are about six inches square, and which are decorated with Philippine scenes, hand-painted. These are beautiful things. Another young man, one of del Mundo's assistants, whose name is Leon A. Sanzang (a pupil of Amoroso), works on these tiles and has produced designs for table tops which, typically Philippine as they are, should find a ready market.

Perhaps del Mundo's most radical introduction here is the use of molds instead of the old potter's wheel. This eliminates the necessity for skilled labor, is much cheaper and faster. He uses 100% Philippine materials. Felspar is still scarce here, so his production of refined porcelain is limited. There is plenty of kaolin, and he gets flint in sufficient quantities from Pasukin, Ilocos Norte.

The ceramics industry is moving along. It would go faster and do more for the country with a bit of money to do with. We suggest that it would be an excellent thing for the government to set aside a little money—P1,000 would do nicely—to help the cause along. Del Mundo would make it pay dividends.

U. S. PENSIONS IN P. I.

On January 31, 1933, the annual payments to the United States was making in the Philippine account of pensions, service benefits, etc., summed P3,200,000 or \$1,600,000. The number of beneficiaries was then 7,053. This included veterans, their widows and minor children and sundry other beneficiaries. Eight hundred American veterans were in this number, and 1,400 American veterans' widows and minor children or other dependents; Filipino veterans numbering 4,811 were included, of whom some 100 were in the Philippine division of troops organized for the World War and federalized after the armistice from November 20, 1918 to December 31, 1918. Other Filipino veterans, of the 4,811, are about equally divided between scouts of peacetime service and scouts of the insurrection period. The Economy Act of March 20, 1933, cut off 1,400 pensions that were being paid in the Philippines, including those of 400 Americans. It is believed that the pension legislation of March 28 this year, passed over President Roosevelt's veto, restores all these pensions less a 25% reduction, and that individual undeserving cases will be taken up one by one and eliminated on their merits. The new legislation makes November 11, 1918, the date of the closing of World War service and therefore eliminates pensioners of the federal period of the existence of the Philippine division, save such as establish presumptive disability. Many details are to be worked out, but this year's pension payments will far exceed last year's in the Philippines.

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