

# 黑暗中的微光：

## 專訪藝術家邱雅茹

### Aping Ismahasan

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從高雄市區到那瑪夏，是單程至少兩小時的車程。大眾運輸的選項也很少，要先搭客運再從甲仙、旗山或是杉林轉公車上山。一月初春時節，我和同事從美術館出發，接近那瑪夏山區時，司機大哥指著右側河谷另一側的山壁，說那裡有莫拉克風災前的道路，早已被摧毀，與現今的道路相距甚遠。風災發生至今十五年，當時摧毀了無數部落的家園與族人的生命，但也喚起了不少人回鄉的決心，藝術家 Aping Ismahasan（漢名「邱雅茹」，以下簡稱「Aping」）就是其中一位。

#### 創作的萌芽開端

Aping 從小生長在那瑪夏南沙魯里，母親是布農族、父親則是來自屏東霧台的魯凱族，原本就讀護專的她畢業後留在北部工作，直到莫拉克風災後，決定結束北漂生活回到部落跟家人生活。從事手工藝與文化傳承的母親，以及很早就對繪畫展現高度熱情的弟弟，讓 Aping 耳濡目染，開始走上創作的道路，鑽研手工藝飾品、植物採集、花藝以及後來的纖維創作與複合媒材裝置。一踏入那瑪夏築夢工作室，一家三人的作品互映成趣。媽媽林素雲的貼布繡作品、弟弟書巴里的油畫與牆面彩繪，以及 Aping 的植物採集庫、花藝裝飾、裝置作品，三人的作品各不相同，卻和諧並存，且能看出交互的影響。

2017 年，Aping 開始嘗試以民族植物及乾燥花材創作，設計了七件人體花藝裝飾，題為〈封面人物〉，希望以植物的立場觀看人與大自然生態之間的關係。

她結合人體彩繪、花藝與攝影，以強烈的用色與裝飾語彙，將七種植物擬人化為七個角色。其中五組是跟弟弟書巴里偕同創作，這組作品的首次公開發表，也是在書巴里 2018 年的個展中。

2021 年，Aping 入選桃園市原住民族文化會館藝術家駐館計畫，她從布農族的植物藤編頭飾發想，加入乾燥後的那瑪夏民族植物假酸漿花、蕙苡以及銀飾點綴。交融傳統與當代技法、由人造與有機物構成的頭飾，展現她對於自身文化、身體與自然的自信姿態。上述兩組作品都可以看到 Aping 從原本的工藝與花藝基礎之上，開始尋找更精準、淬鍊的視覺語言，去呈現她對於文化與生態的思考。

#### 從土裡長出的再生力量

Aping 創作的一個重要轉折點，是 2021 年她參與布農族策展人彼勇·依斯瑪哈單（Biung Ismahasan，以下簡稱「彼勇」）策畫的臺灣澳洲原住民中學藝術交流計劃「野犬神話」。也是在這次的計畫中，她直面當初對部落帶來巨大創傷的莫拉克風災。

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最初當策展人彼勇引導她以風災為題思考時，Aping 是有些抗拒的。一方面是莫拉克造成了許多族人離世，包含她的父親，家人也受困、受傷。風災重創了住家、部落、土地、道路，甚至讓人與人之間破碎。另一方面則是因為風災發生時，她在北部，之後才返鄉，與親身經歷的族人的「第一視角」，以及很快到來的救難人員的「第二視角」相比，空間與時間的距離讓她認為自己只擁有「第三視角」，在災難發生之後回到部落陪伴、觀察部落重建。

她提到即便至今，每年七、八月雨季時，一顆心還是懸著，持續的習慣與適應季節與風雨變化。「我不是當事者都有這樣的心理狀態，何況是當時受難的族人？」風災後重回家園的族人，如何面對這個每年重覆回想起的創傷，回歸日常，是 Aping 過去 15 年來持續見證的。看著族人日日的努力、復甦，對 Aping 來說是一種無比正面的激勵，也讓她想用品去致敬這種經受過巨大的壓力、逆境或創傷而生存、倖存下來的人，所展現出的求生力量。

而作品的造型，則是來自某次採集的啟發。Aping 的描述太過動人，摘錄如下：「有一日，植物採集的路上，經過一處燒墾過不久的小山坡地，土地上冒出了巒大蕨的枝芽，陽光穿透其身，美麗極了！有種像是在展現生命力光彩的姿態，令人奪目，我看了許久，有種覺醒的感受，如同生命的動力再次被鼓舞。所以我形塑了巒大蕨的型態，創造出具有生命力的象徵符號。」她特別提到，因為巒大蕨是叢生的植物，代表群聚的族人以及「團結」的

概念，因此她用麻繩纏繞鐵絲，以冒出芽的巒大蕨為靈感打造出一組黑色裝置，名為〈重（叢）生〉。不同於一般人將黑色視為死亡或禁忌的代表色，Aping 反而認為黑色是無比正面的，因為只有在完全都是黑色的狀態下，微光才能顯現。

接著她帶領部落的孩童，在一個象徵部落休憩工寮 Taluhan 的小棚底下翻整一片小土坡，將黑色裝置插入土中，並播種白蘿蔔、龍鬚菜。經過四個月，地表從光禿禿變得綠意盎然，還採收了白胖的蘿蔔。而隨著台澳計畫的結束，Aping 將裝置回收，看著作品展出後就此被捨棄而有些捨。於是她將已經被土壤吸收侵蝕的麻繩鐵線零件組裝，形成一株叢結綻放，向外延展的黑色花蕊新作〈再生〉。

許多藝術家會巧手改造漂流木、廢棄物或現成物成為作品，但少有藝術家會將自己的作品再度拆解，創作成新的作品。從〈重（叢）生〉到〈再生〉，Aping 將植物造型再次轉化，思考生命的循環與修補。她並不執著於物件的永存，反而更強調媒材的永續與觀念的再進化，希望自己的創作能夠總是重新翻轉、重複再利用，打破了對於作品就是完成式的固有觀念，形成一種總是流變、生長的創作有機體。

〈重（叢）生〉與〈再生〉的創作思維，不僅本身是永續環保的實踐，也持續探問著：當我們經歷過一場極具災難性，以及破壞性的事件之後，我們能不能夠再以更溫柔的方式，親近這塊土地？天災背後可能是長久對於山林的忽視及破壞，如何珍視我們所立足的這片土地，尊重的拿取與給予，重建人與土地的共存關係，是 Aping 創作中的核心思維。

### 採集對土地的意識

構思作品之外，日常的採集就是 Aping 的修行課題。那瑪夏位於玉山及阿里山山脈之間，屬於中低海拔闊葉林溫暖熱帶氣候，豐富的植物生態讓布農族過往祭儀、造屋與生活都廣泛應用植物。Aping 隨口一數的民族植物就包含樟樹、構樹、假酸漿、月桃、無患子、咬人貓、五節芒等。也因為要採集，她必須觀察、感受環境與氣候，惦記著不同種植物開花結果的時間，盤算著雨季來臨前要採收、乾燥。經過好幾年的摸索，才逐步形成她的採集時間表。可以說，因為採集的實踐，讓她對生態有更敏銳的覺知，也更留心地方的民族植物如何生長與被應用，建立起她對土地的意識。雖然當代生活不再需要傳統的部落知識才得以生存，但 Aping 認為去學習維護山林的傳統規範，才能保留並掌握原住民在山林生長的脈絡，回應自身的文化與身分。

除此之外，Aping 對於採集還有一套自己的原則：「花材的使用必須跟自己的生活及文化有關」、「夠用就好，不庫存也就不會浪費」。纖維的使用能回歸、融入大自然之中，不造成生態上長久性或無法復原的破壞，是她努力的目標。因為採集的動作就是拿取，要如何尊重自然，只拿該拿的，是她作為採集人的責任。「每採集一株植物，我就覺得是在利用它們，我有這個責任去把它們利用好，讓大家知道可以怎麼做。」以身作則，即便力量微薄，也還是 Aping 希望帶來的正面影響。

### 小結

Aping 對於創作的思考謹慎而綿密，關於部落、關於土地以及族人，她很小心地拿捏自己的位置，不希望過度的干涉或是為他人代言，也不急於馬上的去釐清、盤點，而是在外圍持續、緩慢的觀察。除了對於視覺、色彩與材質的敏銳直覺，她也善於透過書寫記錄自己的觀察跟省思，並且投入原住民生態知識的傳承與教學，因此她雖然創作的作品數量不多，但每個系列背後都蘊含了豐富的概念。

Aping 曾在自己的粉專上寫道「被稱為原住民族不是一種選項，成為原住民才是我們的選擇。只有學會在地知識，透過分享，我們的文化才會越來越紮實。」期待 Aping 能持續的紮根深化她對於植物、生態與原民文化的實踐，未來發展更多元的創作形式，分享她在這片土地上孕育而生的思考與觀察。

# Glimmers in the Dark: An Interview with Artist Aping Ismahasan

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It is an at least two-hour drive one-way from downtown Kaohsiung to Namasia District. Not many public transportation options are available, either; one has to take a long-distance bus first and then switch to a local bus from either Jiaxian, Qishan or Shanlin to travel up to the mountains. In January 2024, early spring, I started my trip from the Museum with colleagues. When we were approaching the mountain range of Namasia, the driver pointed to our right at the cliff on the other side of the valley, telling us that was the route people used to take before the damage of Typhoon Morakat. Long destroyed, it is far from today's route. Fifteen years have passed since the typhoon hit. Back then, it destroyed countless homes and took countless lives in the local tribe, but it also evoked many people's determination to return to their homeland, including artist Aping Ismahasan (or Chiu Ya-Ru, her Mandarin name).

## The Budding of Aping's Artmaking

Aping grew up in Nansalu Village, Namasia District, born to a Bunun mother and a Rukai father from Wutai, Pingtung County. After having graduated from a junior college of nursing, Aping stayed in northern Taiwan for work before she decided to end her journey in the north and move back to her family in the tribe owing to Typhoon Morakat. Influenced by her mother, an artisan who also works on cultural inheritance, and her younger brother,

who had shown his passion in painting since young, Aping embarked on her journey of artmaking by studying handcrafting, plant collecting, floral design, and, later, fiber art and multimedia installation. Upon entering Namasia Dream Studio, we were welcomed by an intriguing scene where the works by the family of three complemented one another. From appliqué works by her mother, Lin Su-Yun, oil paintings and wall paintings by her brother, Subali, to Aping's plant collections, floral decorations, and installation works, the three artists' creations show differences but coexist in harmony, revealing each individual's influence on one another.

In 2017, Aping started to create art with ethnobotanical plants and dried flowers, with a result of seven pieces of body floral decorations collectively titled *Cover People*, which examined the relationship between human and nature from a plant's perspective. She combined body painting and floral design with photography, while using vibrant coloring and decorative vocabulary to personify seven plants into seven characters. Five among them were co-created with Subali, with the debut of the entire collection also on Subali's 2018 solo exhibition.

In 2021, Aping was selected as an artist-in-residence for Taoyuan City Indigenous Culture Center, where she drew inspiration from traditional woven rattan headpiece of the Bunun people and created her works with dried Namasian ethnobotanical plants—*Khasya trichodesma* and *Job's Tears*—and silver decorations. The integration of traditional and modern techniques, of artifacts and organisms, reveals her confidence in her own culture, body, and nature. Both projects evidenced Aping's effort in searching for a more accurate and refined visual language to build upon her crafting and floral design techniques and present her thinking in culture and ecology.

## The Power of Revival Born from Land

An important turning point in Aping's artmaking occurred when she joined Bunun curator Biung Ismahasan's Wild Dog Project, a cultural exchange project between Taiwanese and Australian Indigenous middle schools. That was also the first time she directly faced the tremendous trauma Typhoon Morakat had brought to the entire tribe.

In fact, when Biung the curator first tried to propose the typhoon as the thematic concept for her, Aping was somewhat against it. On one hand, the typhoon had greatly damaged

homes, the tribe, land, and roads, and even tattered people's relationship and connection with each other. On the other hand, she was living in the north when the calamity hit and only returned home afterwards. With such distance in time and space, compared to the 'first person's perspective' of those who personally experienced the typhoon and the 'second person's perspective' of the rescue workers who arrived soon after, Aping believed that she only had a 'third person's perspective' in providing post-catastrophe company for her people and observing the rebuilding of the tribe.

As she mentioned, she would still be on tenterhooks now during the rainy season every July and August, needing to constantly accustom and adjust herself for the change of season and rainfall. "Even I, who didn't personally experience it, can feel this way. How would the actual victims in the tribe feel?" For the past 15 years, Aping had been witnessing how people returned to their homeland post-typhoon, how they dealt with the trauma that recurs on a yearly basis, and how they got back on track in their daily life. For her, seeing her people strive and recover day by day was an extremely positive encouragement. She thus hoped to pay tribute with her work to the willpower of those who had experienced such overwhelming stress, adversity or trauma and still survived and outlived it.

The work came into shape when Aping was on a plant gathering trip and stumbled upon an inspiration. Here is an excerpt from Aping's beautiful, touching description: "On one of my plant gathering trips, I walked past a stretch of sloped land that was just burned for cultivation. There were shoots of eagle fern on the ground, and the way the sunbeam shone through them was simply gorgeous! There was something dazzling in the way the plant postured as if it had been showing off its livelihood. I stared at it for a long while and felt somehow awakened as if I had been encouraged to live vigorously again. That was why I shaped the work in the form of eagle fern, through which I hoped to create a symbol of livelihood." She particularly mentioned that eagle fern, as a tufted plant, also symbolized the cluster and solidarity of her people. She thus twined hemp ropes and iron wires together to create a black, eagle-fern-shoot-shaped installation and named it *Rebirth*. Unlike the more common impression of black as the color of death or taboo, Aping found it extremely positive because only in the complete dark could glimmers be seen.

Later, Aping led a group of children from the tribe to plough the soil beneath a shelter symbolizing *taluhan*, the traditional rest shelter, and built a small mound

there to install the black eagle-fern pieces and grow white radish and chayote leaves. In four months' time, the bare ground turned green and lavish, with a harvest of big, fat white radishes. When Aping had to dismantle the installation work as the Taiwan-Australia exchange project came to an end, she felt somewhat reluctant to discard it. And that was how the new work, *Regeneration*, was born, in the form of black, tufted, and outspreading stamen made from the recycled, soil-eroded rope-wire pieces.

Many artists have creatively transformed driftwood, waste materials or found objects into artworks, but rarely do artists dismantle their own works and turn them into new creations. From *Rebirth* to *Regeneration*, Aping brought another transformation to the shape of the plant as a way to ponder the cycle and revamping of life. She was not fixated on the perpetuation of objects; instead, she highlighted the sustainability of materials and the re-evolution of concepts, hoping that her own artmaking could always re-invent, repeat, and recycle. This breaks the conventional idea that a piece of artwork is in its perfect tense and develops the concept of creative organisms always growing, always evolving.

The creative thinking of *Rebirth* and *Regeneration* was more than practice of sustainability, but raised a further question: After experiencing an extremely catastrophic and destructive event, are we able to approach the land in an even gentler way? Behind natural disasters, the hidden issue may be our long-term negligence and damage to the mountains and forests. Then, how to cherish the land we are rooted in, how to form a respectful give-and-take relationship, and how to rebuild the coexistence between people and land, constitute the core concept of Aping's artmaking.

#### To Gather the Awareness of Land

Apart from conception for her artwork, Aping's main routine practice is regular gathering. Namasia is located between Mount Jade and Alishan Mountain Range, categorized as a tropical-climate medium- and low-altitude broadleaf forest, with its rich floral ecology offering numerous possibilities for the Bunun people to apply plants in rituals, ceremonies, house building, and life in general in the past. Common ethnobotanical plants, as Aping spontaneously named, include camphor tree, paper mulberry, *Khasya trichodesma*, shell ginger, Chinese soap berry, stinging nettle, and Japanese silver grass. As part of plant gathering, she needs to observe and feel the environment and weather, to memorize the

blossom and fruition time of different plants, and to plan the timing of gathering and drying before the rainy season. Only after years of exploration has her current gathering schedule gradually come into shape. It is safe to say that, because of her practice of gathering, she has established a keener awareness of ecology and paid more attention to how local ethnobotanical plants grow and are used. These all build into her awareness of land. Although traditional tribal knowledge is no longer necessary for survival in the modern lifestyle, Aping believes that only when she learns how to maintain the traditional rule of nature can she preserve and grasp the context of how her Indigenous ancestors live and thrive in the mountains and, in turn, respond to her own culture and identity.

On another note, Aping has her own set of principles for plant gathering: “The use of floral materials has to be relevant to one’s own life and culture,” and “Only gather what is enough; no stock, no waste.” As fibers can return and blend back into nature, such application aligns with the goal that she strives for, namely, not to cause long-term or permanent damage to nature. On the other hand, the action of gathering is essentially taking. How to respect nature and to only take what should be taken is her responsibility as a gatherer. “Every time I gather some plant, I’d feel like I’m using it, so I have the responsibility to use it well and make people know how to use it properly.” However little impact she could make as an individual, Aping still expects herself to bring positive influence by leading by example.

### **Conclusion**

With prudent and tightly woven creative thinking, Aping carefully positions herself in the context of her mother tribe, land, and people. She tries not to excessively intervene or speak on others’ behalf, nor to make an immediate clarification or inventory, but to constantly and slowly observe on the outside. In addition to her keen instinct for visuals, colors, and materials, she is also good at documenting her own observation and reflection through writing. Particularly with her dedication to preserving and educating about Indigenous ecological knowledge, although she has not had a long catalog of works yet, each of her series is enriched with various and profound concepts.

Aping once wrote on her own fanpage, “Being called Indigenous is not an option, but becoming Indigenous is our own choice. Only when we have learned and started to share local knowledge can our culture become richer and firmer.” We look forward to seeing Aping continue solidifying and deepening her roots in her practice of plant art, ecology, and Indigenous culture, develop

an even more diverse artmaking approach in the future, and share with us her reflection and observation born from this land.

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