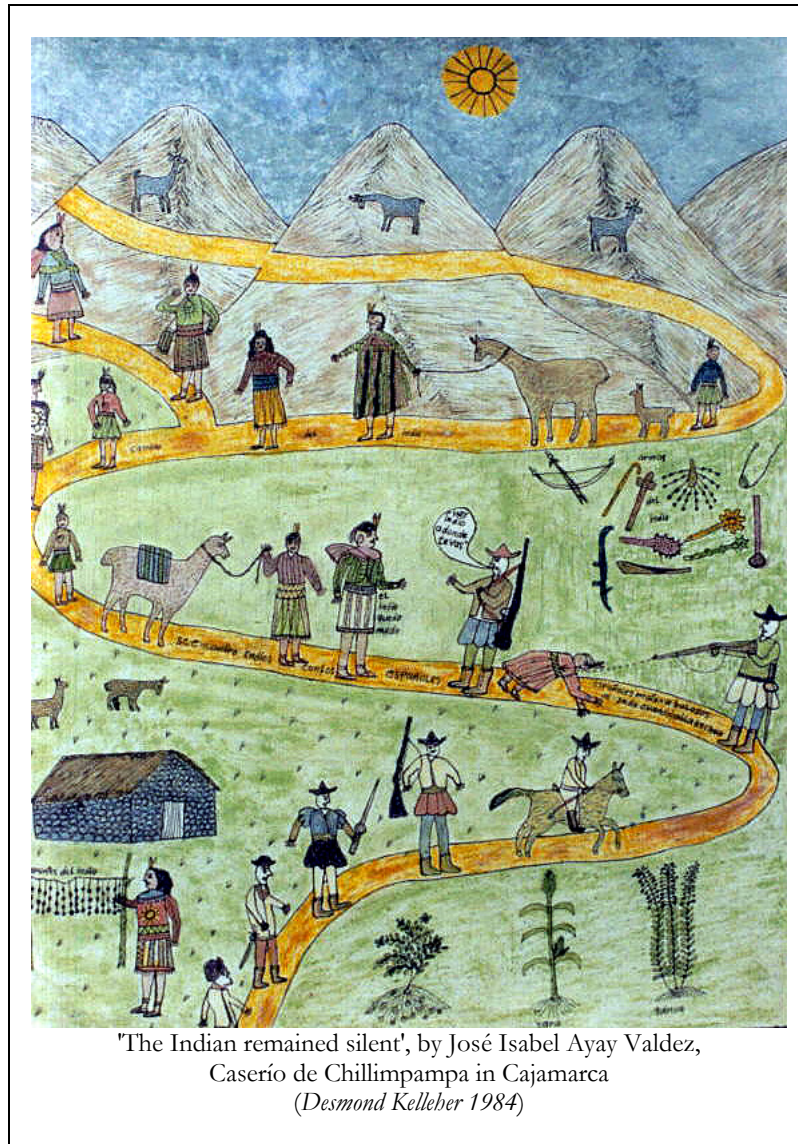


Much More than a Competition

By Desmond Kelleher



I recount here an educational experience I had the good fortune to be involved in for ten years in Peru. I refer to a group of NGOs and other institutions involved in agrarian development in Peru, including the National Campesino Unions who decided to organise and launch a painting and drawing competition for campesinos in 1984. Our aim was to honour rural workers, and show the richness of campesino culture, opening a channel of artistic expression between campesinos. It did lead to greater communications among campesinos themselves and society in general. It demanded great organisational skills and dedication by all the many institutions involved, making it possible for thousands of campesinos to participate in the competition, most of them with the desire to make known to others their way of life. It was a collective effort throughout, a concrete example of a great variety of institutions working together on a worthwhile project. According to José María Arguedas, 'the popular indigenous art of Peru is the purest expression of the personality of the indigenous Peruvian peoples, their creative genius and their finest artistic traditions. Moreover, this art in all its forms and varieties proves in a most interesting manner how the indigenous peoples absorbed elements of Western culture, and how these elements have been transformed and adapted to the nature of our cultures.' I would like to share with you a very interesting educational work experience I had the good fortune to be involved in for ten years in Peru. I refer to the organisation and running of a National Painting and Drawing Competition for Campesinos that started in 1984 and continued for ten years.

Peru in 1984: War and Culture

The competition began during what were very difficult years in Peru. Three years previously Peru's military government had allowed elections for the first time in twelve years. The Communist Party of Peru, more commonly known then as Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path), refused to take part in the elections and instead launched its guerrilla war in the Andean Department of Ayacucho to replace what it saw as a bourgeois democracy with a 'New Democracy'. Their motto was 'Long Live the People's War, it is Right to Rebel'.

By 1981, three of the Andean Departments were declared in a state of emergency and the military moved in. Terrible massacres were perpetrated both by Sendero and the counterinsurgency of the military, and in many cases innocent *campesinos* were the victims. Within a few years, Sendero had focused its actions on the cities, especially on Lima, blowing up electricity pylons that caused regular blackouts in the entire city. They were also responsible for car bombs and selective killings. At the same time the country was experiencing a severe economic crisis that - as always - weighed heaviest on the poor.

Some would have questioned the idea of starting a painting and drawing competition for *campesinos* during such turbulent times. Yet the professional Peruvians I worked with in NGOs involved in agrarian development programmes at that time embraced cultural promotion as a vital aspect of their work and commitment to a Peru striving for a more just and inclusive society. It was at such a time that the idea of a painting and drawing competition for *campesinos* was first considered.

In the beginning

The original group who organised the first competition consisted of nine Peruvian NGOs engaged in promoting agrarian development, whose main offices were based in Lima but whose work projects and regional offices were in rural Peru. Also represented were the National *Campesino* Unions.

I was working at that time in the Communications Area of one of those NGOs called Servicios Educativos Rurales (Rural Educational Services, SER). Three of us from our Communications Area represented SER on the organising committee of this new venture, a Painting and Drawing Competition for *Campesinos*. My colleagues were María Inés Barnechea and Liliana Prado. We worked with great enthusiasm for ten years supporting this project.

Debating the issue

We had quite a lot of discussion on some aspects of the project that needed looking into before launching the competition. The fact that participants would be competing for a prize was thought by some to jeopardise the objective we had of inviting *campesinos* to express in their own way the reality of their daily lives. In other words, we feared that participants would be more motivated towards winning the monetary prize than expressing and making known their own reality.

Given the multicultural and multiethnic nature of Peru others wondered if the participants from the various regions could compete fairly with each other. Possibly the most serious criticism came from people who suggested that the competition could not compare with the other sophisticated Peruvian forms of creative expression, such as the outstanding works of the Paracas funeral shrouds and the Inca and Ayacucho Wari weavings or the creative metal or silverwork that sprung from Peru's abundance of minerals and semi-precious stones. Other significant forms are their wood carvings as an art form, like the famous San Blas pulpit in San Blas church in Cuzco or the famous *retablos* (miniature altar-pieces), inspired by Spanish altar-pieces. Another form of popular artistic Peruvian expression cited in our pre-competition debate was the finely carved pieces that include the Tablas de Sarhua, called after the village where the painted boards (tablas) are made. One could also mention Peru's superb leather works that include chests, armchairs and a huge variety of saddles, harnesses and other riding pieces.

Among popular creative works, a special place must be occupied by the famous *mates burilados*, the engraved decorated gourds or dried pumpkins said to be the oldest cultural object of Peru. The oldest decorated one was discovered with clear patterns of wild animals and snakes in the Huaca Prieta, an archeological site from the late pre-ceramic period (3500-1800 BC) in the Chicama Valley in northern Peru. It has been said that the engraved dry pumpkin represents the spirit of the Andean Peruvians and others have referred to the *mate* as the Andean newspaper.

Garay (2008) wrote:

Creativity and need of expression seem to have no limits for Peruvian artists. After mastering the art of stone, clay and metal sculpting, craftsmen found on the surface of certain fruits a perfect supporting element to let their souls talk. The pumpkin also known as 'mate' (Lagenaria vulgaris) has become an ideal canvas for the engravers' art.....a dry pumpkin represents the artistic spirit of the Andes.

Yet not least among all these popular cultural expressions are the countless forms of music, dance and song performed throughout rural Peru.

Another serious question that arose in the debate that preceded launching the competition was the significance of painting or drawing on paper for *campesinos*, given that the use of paper and pencil is more related to the culture of the Spanish. As Bonilla *et al.* (1990: 31) point out, 'the use of paper and pencil is related to the culture of the "Conquistadores", those who either ignoring or despising the culture they encountered, broke the dialogue and tried to impose their ways of expressing or speaking.'

We saw at a later date, in the course of the competition, that this rupture of dialogue between the indigenous Peruvians and the invading Spaniards was creatively and graphically portrayed in the second year of the Competition by an entry titled 'El Indio quedó mudo [The Indian remained silent]' by the *campesino* José Isabel Ayay Valdez from Caserío de Chillimpampa in Cajamarca.

The artist depicts the meeting of Indigenous and Spaniards in the Andes. The indigenous

(surprisingly he uses the term Indio for his own people, a disparaging term used by the Spaniards for the indigenous) who are coming down the mountain road (he calls it 'Camino del Indio [the Indian road]'), meet the Spaniards going up. The artist writes 'Se encontró Indio con los españoles [Indian meets Spaniards]', a meeting of two cultures! The Spaniard asks 'Hoy (for "Oye!") Indio, ¿A dónde te vas? [Hey Indian, where are you going?]' Then the artist writes 'españoles matan a balazos al indio cuando habla quechua [the Indian is shot dead by the Spaniards when he speaks Quechua]', his native language.

It is of note that the artist also compares the Indigenous to the Spaniard in other ways: above the shooting scene he shows us 'armas del indio [the weapons of the Indian]' and at the bottom right of his painting the three foodstuffs most associated with the Quechua-speaking Andean people: acshu (the Peruvian purple potato), maíz (corn) and quinoa. And finally, on the bottom left, he shows us 'los apuntos del indio [Indian calculations]' - the famous Quipu, the counting method of Inca times. What a stark way of portraying the rupture of two cultures!

That scene reminds me of another scene in the same region of Peru, Cajamarca, that took place centuries before, on 15 November 1532, when the historical rupture of this dialogue between two cultures was so vividly enacted between Indigenous and Spaniards. The Spanish invading force, led by Francisco Pizarro, was face-to-face with the Indigenous army led by the Inca Atahualpa on the plains of Cajamarca. A popular but wildly disputed legend states that the priest who accompanied Pizarro, Vicente de Valverde, supposedly handed the Bible to the Inca Atahualpa, telling him that it was the written word of the one All Powerful God and that he, Atahualpa, should accept this God. Atahualpa supposedly took the Bible, held it to his ear and not hearing any voice or word spoken said 'Why does it not speak to me?' He then threw it to the ground saying that the God who could not speak was not so all powerful after all and hence not worth adhering to.

Supposedly this is what gave the Spaniards the reason to attack, starting the Battle of Cajamarca on 16 November 1532. The conquistadors then

fell on Atahualpa and his followers, slaughtering great numbers and taking Atahualpa prisoner. Dialogue was broken and the conquistadors, either ignoring or despising the culture they encountered, broke the dialogue and imposed their way of expressing or speaking (Bonilla *et al.*, 1990: 31). These concerns over the use of paper and pencil or pen for *campesinos* in a competition gave rise to much debate among the organising Committee of the Painting and Drawing Competition for *Campesinos*.

A desire to participate

We also looked at the concept of competitiveness in the Competition. We were aware that it is something that is alive and well in popular Peruvian culture and especially so in the case of *campesino* culture. Lots of their dances are competitive. Take for example the dance called in Quechua 'Atipanakuy', where one dancer performs his steps and then stands back to let the other dancer go forward to try to do better steps. Another example is the famous dance called 'Danza de las Tijeras (the Scissors Dance)', where again each dancer performs in turn trying to outdo the other in skilful steps all to the rhythm of the large scissors they continually click as they dance.

There are countless competitions for dance groups throughout rural Peru. In urban areas where people have migrated from rural Peru they have brought their music, song and dance with them and each year they vie with each other in closely contested competitions that draw huge crowds. They do contests to win a prize but the fact of participating and having the opportunity to display their talents is greatly appreciated by the contestants. We had to ask ourselves, why launch a painting and drawing competition for people with such a rich history of other creative and sophisticated forms of artistic expressions? However, taking all that debate on board and recognising the many and varied forms of popular cultural artistic expressions I referred to above, we still opted for the painting and drawing competition.



Danza de las Tijeras (scissors dance) during one of the national workshops at Chaclacayo, Lima (Desmond Kelleher 1984)

First Beginnings: Campesino Day (24 June 1984)

The Competition was launched in 24 June 1984, *Campesino Day* in Peru, by the nine NGOs and the *Campesino* Unions, with the intention of honouring rural workers and to show the strength and richness of the *campesino* culture. We aimed at creating a space for *campesinos* to portray in graphic form the reality of their everyday lives in rural Peru.

We did not want the competition to be like the traditional competition where people participate, win a prize and that is the end of it. We made every effort to gain the widest possible *campesino* participation, making use of the national and local media to invite participants; radio, television, newspapers and also obviously relying on all the contacts available to all the NGOs and to the other institutions and *Campesino* Unions involved. It started off as a collective effort and remained so throughout the ten years of its existence.

Expanding to Other Regions

To promote the competition right from the start we coordinated with institutions in the various regions of rural Peru through the working contacts of the original nine NGOs whose personnel were engaged in agrarian developments in rural Peru and likewise through the *Campesino* Unions who represented the great majority of *campesinos*.

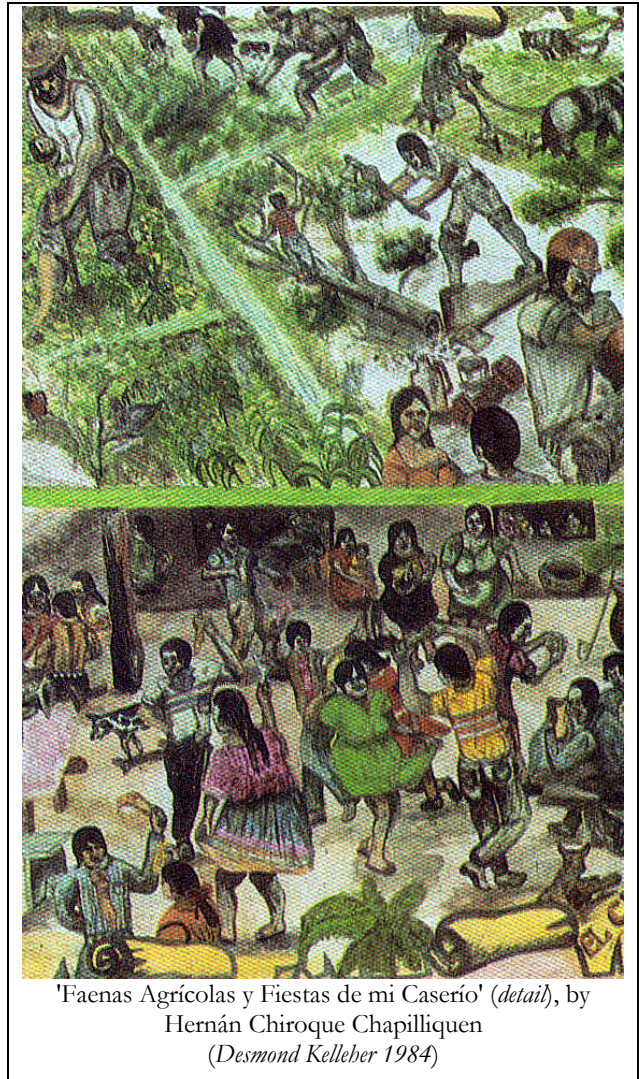
In 1986 for the third competition, the regional and local institutions such as NGOs, *Campesino* Unions and public institutions that up to then had supported the competition were then officially formed into Regional Committees and in time became part of the National Organising Committee. Such was the response from the regions that by the third competition in 1986 we had Regional Committees in fourteen Departments of the country. They were able to organise and award prizes in their own region first and then take part at a national level with a selection of their best entries.

The number of entries for the first year of the competition in 1984 was 213 and by the sixth competition in 1989 there were 627 entries. But because by that time we had Regional Committees and only a selection of paintings/drawings from these regions entered the final phase at a national level, this meant that in truth there were a far greater number of participants in the competition overall.

Expressive letters

As the Competition took hold, the *campesino* participants made it abundantly clear to us that the overriding motivation they had for participating in the Competition was not necessarily to win the prize money but rather to let *campesinos* from other parts of rural Peru and Peruvian society in general know about their community, their village, their particular reality, their particular customs, their problems and their longings for a more just society and a better quality of life. We had encouraged the participants to write accompanying letters for their paintings and drawings - which most of them did - and this proved to be invaluable not only in helping people to understand their images better, but also to learn much more about the *campesinos'* daily lives and their reality.

Over the ten years of the competition we received hundreds of these letters. I did research on those letters and published my work for the participants in one of our workshops on the competition. Very few of the letters referred to the idea of winning a prize.



'Faenas Agrícolas y Fiestas de mi Caserío' (detail), by
Hernán Chiroque Chapilliquen
(Desmond Kelleher 1984)

The majority expressed their desire to communicate something, to make known their community, their village or town, their customs, their daily lives, their problems, their sufferings, especially in those years of political violence. They wanted others to know them just as they themselves wanted to get to know *campesinos* from other parts, their particular customs and their daily lives.

In my research on the letters for the workshop I included a list of the occupations of all the participants of three of the Competitions, the third, fourth and fifth (1986, 1987 and 1988). To mention just some, apart from the majority who presented themselves as *campesinos*, there were also: a carpenter, a housewife, an artisan, a shepherd and a shepherdess, a street vender, a maid, a tailor, a knife sharpener, a plasterer, a fisherman, a washerwoman, a lorry driver and a part-time worker, among others.

What campesinos portrayed

What did the *campesinos* express in their paintings/drawings? In general they wanted to make known their community and their way of life to *campesinos* in other parts of Peru and to society in general. In line with the theme for each year, which was always quite open, they represented in their images their community, their fiestas and customs, their sufferings, problems and protests, their marginalisation, the political violence they endured in those years, their desire for a better quality of life and for greater justice in rural Peru and the campesinas' participation in rural life.



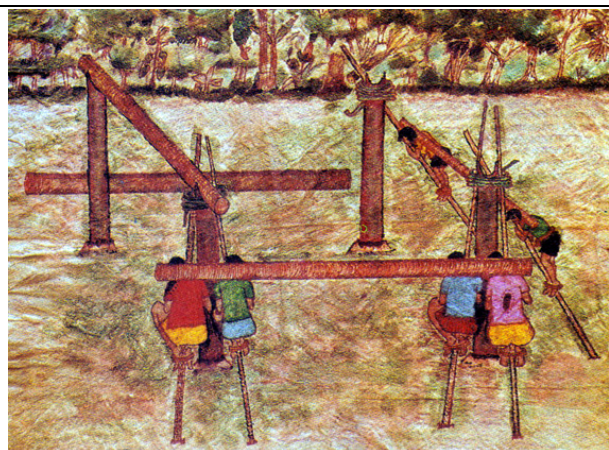
'Nuestra Historia de los Uros', by Sabino Pío Sueña Jilepay and Cristina E, Sueña Coila, Puno
(Desmond Kelleher 1984)

A very descriptive painting that captures the vital energy of the *campesinos* and their capacity for work and celebration was the winner of the fourth Competition, 'Faenas Agrícolas y Fiestas de mi Caserío' by Hernán Chiroque Chapilliquen.

Quite a different scene is portrayed by an entry from the other extreme of southern Peru on the shores of Lake Titicaca where the Uros people live on floating islands. The painting is the combined effort of two popular artists, Sabino Pío Sueña Jilepay and Cristina E, Sueña Coila, Puno.

I would like to pay a special tribute to the popular artists from the rainforest region of Peru who participated in great numbers all through the years of the competition with beautiful and exciting images. It is worth noting that artists from the region won first place at a national level for three consecutive years - though I do not wish to take away in any way

from the marvellous entries of other regions. If I was allowed more space here I would gladly take you on a tour of entries from the other regions. The painting that won the fifth Competition in 1988 depicted the construction of la Maloca, the Bora chief's house and the artist Manuel Ruiz Mibeco tells us of the colours he used: pink, blue, yellow, red and green from crayons, and brown, bright green and black from natural dyes.



'Construcción de una Maloca', by Manuel Ruiz Mibeco, Brillo Nuevo, Río Yahuasayacu, Río Ampiyacu, Loreto
(Desmond Kelleher 1984)

In Peru we most often referred to the rainforest region as the Amazon region. I would like to quote here what one of the Coordinators of the Amazon Region said of the paintings/drawings they received at a Regional level:

They present us this Amazon region full of traditional myth and communal values, their fiestas, dances, customs, and daily activities such as hunting, fishing, extraction of natural resources and attention to tourists. One appreciates in their images their organisations, their strikes and campesino mobilisations, their struggles for better prices for their products, their dependence on nature, sometime cruel as when they suffer from floods and what is typical to this region they portray their means of transport along the rivers (Bonilla et al., 1990: 161).

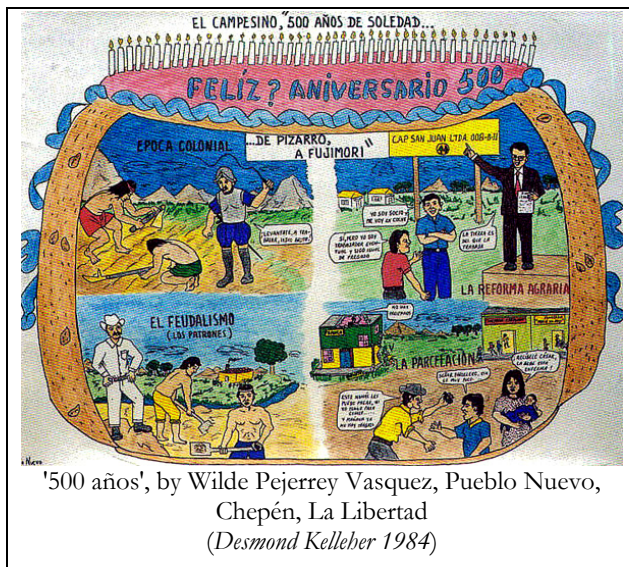
He also refers to the letters that accompanied many of the paintings/drawings:

The letters also surprised us by their rich content. We found in them not only greetings, expressions of thanks and good wishes but also profound thoughts and insights on their reality. The letters are decisive as many of them help us to understand better the

images especially for those of us who are not of the same ethnic origins (Bonilla et al., 1990: 162).

One unique theme was the occasion of the so-called 'celebration' of the 500-year anniversary of the 'discovery' of Latin America by the Spaniards, a term that was later changed by the Spaniards to a 'meeting of two cultures', due to widespread protests from Latin America, especially from the indigenous parts of the continent. The theme of that year's competition was '500 años [500 years]', what the arrival of the conquistadors to Peru meant for the indigenous population and the consequences for the indigenous population thereafter.

One entry by Wilde Pejerrey Vasquez, a 36-year-old *campesino* from Pueblo Nuevo, Chepén, La Libertad, in Northern Peru, was in the form of a cake with lots of candles and four scenes depicting the abuse *campesinos* and the indigenous population in general have suffered over the centuries up to present times. He titled it: 'The *Campesino*, 500 years of Solitude: Happy? Anniversary 500 ... From Pizarro to Fujimori'.



It shows the *campesino* being abused by the Spaniard, who lashes him, saying 'Levántate, indio bruto y trabaja [Get up, brute Indian and work]'. Later, after independence, more slave labour under feudal lords and more abuse again in more recent times during the Agrarian Reform and the period of Cooperatives are depicted. Here he shows the plight of part-time workers who were paid miserable salaries. The husband protests at the poor pay he is receiving, while being told at the same time 'There's no

work tomorrow'. His wife says 'Take it Cesar, our baby is sick'.

Judging the Images

We were fortunate to have excellent judges in the closing stages of each competition. We made sure there would always be a good balance on the panel, including a popular artist, an art critic or an anthropologist and a representative of the *Campesino* Unions as well as a representative of the Organising Committee. We were well supported over the years by anthropologists like Juan Ansión and Karin Lizarraga and by the art critic Roberto Miroquesada, sadly now deceased and to whom the book *Imágenes y Realidad, a la conquista de un viejo lenguaje* (Images and Reality, conquering an ancient language) was dedicated. From the third year of the Competition onwards, we also invited the *campesino* winner of the previous year to be on the panel of judges. I represented my NGO, Servicios Educativos Rurales (SER) on one occasion. I was impressed by the professional and meticulous manner in which my fellow judges performed their duty.

Only once in the ten years did I witness an unpleasant experience. On that occasion a well known art critic who had been invited to be on the panel came along to act as one of the judges. He entered the area where all the paintings and drawings were laid out and where the other judges were already present, he looked around and then without a word, just turned around and walked out! I can only surmise that he thought the scene and the people he was to work with were beneath him! He is still writing as an art critic for one of Peru's leading papers.

All roads lead to Lima

For the first few years of the competition we invited the winners, three in number, to the awards ceremony in Lima. For the winners, many of them from very remote regions of Peru, it was a novelty, apart from receiving a monetary prize, to get to Lima the capital, a first time for most of them.

Those of us based in Lima organised their stay there and after the awards ceremony, we took them around Lima to see the sights, organised

radio and television slots and accompanied them to art galleries and Lima's museums. Those who were from inland Peru were so anxious to see the Pacific Ocean! However, as an aside, I remember years previously being in Lima with an elderly friend from the Andes mountains who was visiting for the first time and had never seen the sea. When I took him out to a good vantage point to view the Pacific expanse, I was expecting an exclamation of wonder from him, when all he said was: '*Ab, había sido agua, no más!*' [So, it was only water after all]!



Winners of the 1987 competition in Plaza San Martín. Rufino Fiestas Pazo (Piura), Mamerto Díaz Rodríguez (Loreto), and Hernán Chiroque Chapilliquen (Piura)
(Desmond Kelleher 1987)

I was fortunate enough several times to have the opportunity to guide the winning artists around Lima in my beautiful small sky-blue Volkswagen car of those years and to enjoy with them their enthusiasm on discovering their own capital city, City of the Kings.

Later in the competition it was decided to hold the awards ceremony in the different regions. Again in 1988 I represented the National Organising Committee, and travelled to my beloved Cuzco for the prize-giving that year. Two of the winners of the competition of that year were from the Cuzco region, and the winner of first place was from the rainforest of Peru. He was Manuel Ruíz Mibeco, whose winning painting was mentioned above, a Chief of the Bora Tribe from a place called Brillo Nuevo on the Ampiyacu River, a branch of the Amazon River some 120km east of Iquitos in the Department of Loreto.



The author Des Kelleher speaking at the Awards Ceremony in La Casa Campesina, Cuzco, 1988
(Desmond Kelleher 1988)

I had an Irish connection with him. It was in Manuel's area that the Irishman, Roger Casement, in 1910/11, as British Consul, denounced the murderous rubber slavery of the Bora tribe by the British registered Peruvian Amazon Company controlled by the rubber baron Julio César Arana. I witnessed Manuel's great joy in reaching Cuzco, the capital of the Inca Empire. The ceremony was held in 'la Casa Campesina [the *Campesino* House]'. I put a lot of effort into giving my speech in Quechua, which I was proud to do. I had worked for seventeen years near Cuzco, where I learned Quechua, so I felt right at home among the *campesinos* of the Cuzco region and accompanied by a Bora chief.

The Travelling Exhibition

Early on, we realised that it was vital that the winning images should circulate throughout the country. This was to ensure that the communication among *campesinos* and the nation in general, which the participants really wanted, would take place. To achieve this, we put together a collection of the paintings/drawings which we called la muestra ambulante (the travelling exhibition). We ensured that it would be representative of the great variety of entries to the competition, that it would include regional winners and at the same time portray the variety of themes that the *campesinos* had wished to portray.

The use of paper in this case proved an advantage both for the participants and for those of us in the Organising Committee who had to prepare the paintings/drawings for exhibition. For the participants, since paper was available to all, it was not expensive and could be despatched from the most distant parts of

the country. Still we did not insist that the images be on paper alone. Some were very creative and expressed their ideas on other materials, such as dried animal skins. After each competition we organised exhibitions of the paintings/drawings in various venues in Lima and other cities.

Another aspect of the diffusion of the paintings and drawings was the roundtable events we organised in Lima and other cities and towns not only to bring *campesino* art to as wide a public as possible but also to motivate debate and discussion on the theme of culture in a society like Peru that is so multicultural and multiethnic. We used the travelling exhibition extensively each year throughout rural areas; at *campesino* meetings, fairs and in public areas of towns and villages when launching a new competition.

I quote one example of the efficacy of rotating the travelling exhibition, from one of the Regional Organisations in Huaura, a rural town some two hours north of Lima:

The exhibition of the painting/drawings ('the travelling exhibition') in twelve districts and in six cooperatives gave rise to a very interesting debate about art and *campesino* culture, which resulted in a greater participation in future competitions with painting/drawings that portrayed the reality of our region (Bonilla, J. et al., 1990: 131).

As another way of diffusing the paintings and drawings of the *campesinos* we produced a full size poster of the winning entry of each year and attractive calendars and post cards.

Natural Resources and Natural Colours

Another aspect that was very evident over the years was the creativity of the *campesinos* in the use of natural resources and materials to create natural colours, a fact they alluded to in their very detailed letters. José Espíritu Tafur is just one example. A *campesino* from Caserío Chumbe, Bambamarca in the Department of Cajamarca, he gained first place in the Second Competition in 1985 with his painting entitled 'La Pobreza [Poverty]'. More interesting still is the fact that on returning home to Cajamarca after gaining first prize in the competition he then taught a group of *campesinos* in his area the use of natural dyes for painting on paper. In his accompanying letter he wrote:

I have painted with materials taken from our mountains or, as we say, from Mother Earth, where we Peruvians live. I used black nettle (ortiga negra), leaves of the papelillo tree, flowers of chochocon and flowers of the mustard tree and of the suncho and the fruit of saca saca. For the first time I have discovered this mine of painting material in my village of San Miguel (Bonilla, J. et al., 1990: 38).



José Espíritu Tafur, 35 years
Caserío de Chumbe de Chontabamba, Cajamarca
(Desmond Kelleher 1988)

In other regions such as Loreto, the Amazon region, the frequent use of natural resources and materials was similarly notable. Some created their images on the bark of a palm tree called chambira. Others used the dried skin of the sajino (a pig-like animal) or of the ronsoco (the largest rodent in the world), of deer or even of the lagarto (the lizard). For colouring their paintings, they also used the natural dye extracted from the seeds of the achiote bush or tree. That natural dye is used in other parts to colour food products, such as cheese, fish, and salad oil. It is interesting to know that achiote was long used by American Indians to make body paint, especially on the lips - which is the origin of the plant's nickname, the 'Lipstick Tree'. The use of the dye in the hair of the men

of the Tsáchila of Ecuador is the origin of their usual Spanish name, the Colorados.

Our Workshops: Time out to Reflect

After the Fourth Competition in 1987 we held an evaluation workshop with members of the National Organising Committee and invited experts in art and culture to accompany us. It was a time for all of us to get together to reflect on different aspects of the competition, to take time out to understand at a deeper level the great richness of the themes portrayed by the *campesinos*, to reflect on cultural problems in the context of Peru's turbulent reality and in a practical way to plan together for the continuing activities of future Competitions.



Group work at a National Workshop in Chaclacayo, Lima
(Desmond Kelleher 1988)

We were greatly assisted in this reflective and planning process by experts like the well-known anthropologist and expert in Andean culture mentioned above, Juan Ansión, who accompanied us for many years of the competition. He enabled us to 'see' much more in the painting/drawings than we would have appreciated on our own.

I remember how on one occasion they reminded us that what the *campesinos* presented in their painting/drawings represented the collective sentiment of a people. Mentioning the word 'collective' brings to mind many of the painting/drawings that were created by more than one individual. There were examples of works done by groups, or by fathers and sons, or mothers' clubs, or wives and husbands.

One campesina, Marina Bardales Andrade from Loreto, wrote in her accompanying letter:

From the moment I heard about the competition, I told my husband that I was going to participate. But he said to me 'No way you are going to win!' I answered him 'I don't care but I want to participate'. Well, as things turned out later, he was convinced and he helped me with the drawing (Bonilla et al., 1990: 38).

The presence of Campesinas

Right from the start of the competition, campesinas were participating with paintings/drawings that vividly portrayed their own reality and the vital role they play in everyday life. We admired paintings/drawings that depicted their role in rural organisations such as mothers' clubs but also their active presence in *Campesino* Unions, their presence in *campesino* protests or marches, often in the front line and of course their role in their daily labours both at home and out in the fields beside their husbands.



Juan Ansión, anthropologist and expert on Andean culture in a plenary session at a National Workshop, Chaclacayo, Lima
(Desmond Kelleher 1988)

Final year of the Competition (1996)

After the Seventh Competition in 1990 it was decided to hold subsequent competitions every two years, so what were to be the final three Competitions were held in 1992, 1994 and 1996 - and there the Competition as a project came to an end. Why? One of the principal reasons was - as often is the case - finance. Throughout the previous years the competition had been financed through the various NGOs that received support for this project from their sponsors. After supporting the project for ten

years, the sponsors declined to continue that support. The Organising Committee had wanted to carry out a final sistematisation of the project including digitization of the images that had arrived in Lima, but finances were not forthcoming. Those images that I have referred to are now in the keeping of the University of San Marcos in Lima.

Also by that stage some of the NGOs were prioritising certain other areas of their work and it was getting harder to maintain the organisational capacity demanded for such a year-round commitment. I do believe it was a marvellous collective effort by a huge number of committed people for a long period of ten years, who demonstrated that they could work together with great enthusiasm for a very worthy

project that benefited a section of Peruvian society who embraced it and made it their own.

I round off this account of the National Painting and Drawing Competition for *Campesinos* with an extract from the letter of Carlos Garcia C. from Ancash, which accompanied his painting for the Fifth Competition in 1988:

I want to greet and thank each and everyone of you for the opportunity you gave us to manifest, even if it be through a painting poorly done, but which nevertheless expresses some of the concerns that we feel (*Bonilla et al., 1990: 30*).

Desmond Kelleher

References

- Bonilla, J.; Carrillo, H.; Plaza, N. and Prado, L., *Imágenes y Realidad a la Conquista de un Viejo Lenguaje* (Perú: Comisión Coordinadora Nacional del Concurso Nacional de Dibujo y Pintura Campesina, 1990).
- Garay, K., "History of the Pumpkins. The amazing art of engraved gourd" in *Andina, Agencia Peruana de Noticias*. Available online (<http://www.andina.com.pe/Ingles/Noticias.aspx?id=piZH51wmNw4>), accessed 19 May 2008.