

# IslandPress

Stephanie Syjuco



"Stone-age" serenity: For centuries the gentle Tasaday have led a life of apparent ease in the jungle with only simple stone tools like the hammer-ax (top). Bottom, in the cave they call home, several Tasaday entertain visiting anthropologists Carlos Fernandez (left) and Manuel Elizalde (right).

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*Inverted Cave, The New York Times (Accession No.1974.264, from the collection of the Center for the Study of the Study of the Tasaday), 2022*

Photocopy transfer on white Hannemuhle Copperplate paper

45 3/4" x 61 1/2"

Edition of 4

Part of an extended print series, this large-scale work focuses on photographs and documents from popular newspapers and articles about the Tasaday, a so-called Stone Age tribe "discovered" in the Philippines in 1971. By excerpting images from printed news clippings and enlarging them to outsized, handmade proportions, Syjuco attempts to show a fragmented narrative that never quite clearly depicts the ethnographic subject itself, but instead focuses on the captions, headlines, adjacent articles, advertisements, and at times humorously ironic

public sentiment that the Tasaday inspired. The hand-rubbed image transfer process uses black and white photocopies, lending the work another level of print mediation, with the tiled-together segments producing a tactile, fragmented whole. Made with multiple studio assistants, the individualized marks become a conceptual nod to the varying vantage points of an ethnographic gaze cast decades ago in the Philippines.

**The Center for the Study of the Study of the Tasaday** (The CSST) is a meta-archive and study center focused on the media, narration, and pictorial portrayal of the Tasaday, a so-called stone age tribe “discovered” in the Philippines in 1971 and the subject of subsequent controversy. Rather than focus on the veracity of the Tasaday themselves (were they a hoax?) The Center for the Study of the Study of the Tasaday flips the lens to examine the study of the Tasaday itself as the subject matter — the media infrastructure, books, news clippings, pop psychology, and fervor generated by the anthropologists, politicians, and international celebrities who flocked to study and protect them, and in so doing, created their own mythology of whiteness, primitive-ness, and innocence.

**Stephanie Syjuco**

(March 1, 2022)

Artist website for the larger project: <https://stephaniesyjuco.com/projects/center-for-the-study-of-the-study-of-the-tasaday>

Flickr folder of reference images/production shots:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/49646846@N00/albums/72177720295597498/with/51787273345/>