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By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

C HICAGO (*jGLi*) – If somebody is singing behind a camera and you enjoy listening to the song, does it matter to you if the singer is a man or woman?

For some, it does. But for others, it really doesn't matter especially, if the singer did not miss a beat.

This was how Claireyenne Malanyaon, the painter-in-residence of world pound-for-pound boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, sidestepped suggestion that she changes "her name and signature into something more masculine. Or if she were to sign, then, she should do it at the back of the frame because a female sports artist was unheard of."

Maybe, the suggestion came from someone, who is not watching football or basketball games, the sports dominated by men, yet sideline reporting is dominated by women.

Claireyenne got this backhanded suggestion from a shocked guest during last February press conference announcing the welterweight bout on May 7 at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada between Filipino boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao and Sugar Shane Mosley.

When Manny asked Claireyenne, a small wisp of a girl, to come up the stage, carrying her painting that Manny and Shane were to autograph, many thought Claireyenne was a member of Pacquiao Team doing some errands for Manny.

When someone in the audience learned that it was Claireyenne, who painted the mural that Manny and Shane autographed, the fellow advised her that if she wanted to go places, she should change her name into a more masculine name because she was treading on male-dominated arena – sports arena.

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It may be true that among famous boxers, a sport dominated by men, painters of this sport are also dominated by men. One of these well-known painters is Stephen Holland, who was the painter of Muhammad Ali.

So, it is not surprising that Claireyenne was getting this brow beating in this early stage of her career. But she is no stranger to challenges either.

She even turned her struggles into serendipity.

### **LIKE A BIBLICAL PROPHET**

C laireyenne, whose parents resided in Naga City in the Philippines, feels like a Biblical prophet, who has no credibility among his own people.

When nobody encouraged her to set up painting gallery shop in the Philippines, where she could showcase her paintings, Clairienne switched to Plan B – try her luck overseas.

She felt that her alternative plan appeared to be working for her.

Her first foray overseas involved her collection of nudes in exotic birdcages, which was later chosen as part of a New York exhibit. The gallery in Soho, New York was surprised to find someone like her, and that her work was sold out. When asked to explain her subject matter, her answer revealed what was to be the foundation of her own brand in her approach to painting.

She said that a bird in a cage, no matter how beautiful, was not unusual. But when a nude, a fellow human being was in a cage, regardless of how beautiful the cage is, would always be jarring to the soul and would catch attention.

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Even then, the young artist did not want to go for the usual, nor just painted what was obvious. But she aimed to project ideas in a way that was creative and conveyed a message. Beyond giving her a break, the Soho gallery also gave her an advice that was to influence her painting. They told her to focus on human interest and to paint in oil (although she could not stand its smell) if she really wanted to find her place in the sun.

Using her formula of her success in New York, Clairienne went to Singapore, where its museum welcomed her work. She found it ironic that museums from other countries are willing to exhibit her work but not in her own country. In the Philippines, one has to be a national artist to get such a coveted invitation, she muses.

### **PAINTER OF A KING**

She also had an exhibit in Dubai, making her the second Filipino artist to do so. For this exhibit, she did a portrait of the King of Dubai. When the King saw her work, he arranged for her to be given a VIP treatment on her last days in Dubai.

Then, on another occasion when she was waiting for a meeting with a known collector who was late, she decided to review her collection, which she intended to show him. A French couple near her saw her art collection and asked who the artist was. They explained that they had been disappointed over what they had seen thus far because there was nothing extraordinary about them. The couple eventually made arrangements for her work to be shown in London and Paris.

When she was in the Philippines, her three-year old son pointed her to the boxer he had been watching. She was amazed that the boxer was able to catch the attention of a young child.

## For Pacquiao, This Filipina Painter Is a Knockout Artist - MabuhayRadio

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Since then Claire had followed the fights of the boxer, Manny Pacquiao. She decided to chronicle his fights by painting them.

Rejecting criticisms from friends and colleagues that she was spending time and money for painting Manny even if she was not commissioned to do so, Claire moralized that she did so to preserve the legacy of Manny for bringing honor to his country.

So when one of her old patrons, the former Manila Mayor Lito Atienza said he was going to introduce her to someone very important, all her efforts paid off. It turned out that she was going to meet Manny Pacquiao.

When they met, she acted as if she was going to have a job interview by taking with her portfolio of eight paintings, all in 4 x 8 murals, to show Manny. Manny was amazed and delighted to see the paintings.

His favorite was the one with Ricky Hatton because that was his major title fight then. Claire gave it to Manny as a gift. Then Manny invited her to show her paintings in Las Vegas and signed all of the paintings! Once again it seemed new doors were opening for her. She had only planned of doing an exhibit of her Manny Pacquiao series in one of the Philippine hotels, and now she was going to have one in Vegas.

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At the run-up of the fight on May 7, some of her painting exhibits of Manny and other boxers will greet the boxing fans near the gate of the MGM Grand Garden Arena. # # # ( [lariosa\\_jos@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net) )

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