



Kenneth Cobonpue's latest design project is a chapel made with 2,765 bamboo poles. Located on the grounds of his alma mater, Cor Jesu is at the Sacred Heart School-Ateneo de Cebu in Mandaue City. [shs-adc.edu.ph](http://shs-adc.edu.ph)



and the people. "There were about 300 residents back then. They lived without electricity and relied on growing their food and foraging," Sakiyama recalls.

In 1991, Sakiyama and his wife, Junko, moved to the island permanently. A former teacher at the now-defunct Hearts and Hands, which was Tokyo's biggest quilting school and organizer of an eponymous annual festival in Shibuya, Junko established quilting as a livelihood for Caohagan's residents in 1996. These days, visitors can easily spot the island's quilters. They now number over a hundred, and make up about a fifth of Caohagan's population.

They work together inside the nipa huts, with fabric scraps wrapped around their fingers.

"Our quilts evoke a feeling of love, so if you put one in your home, it will also radiate love," Katsuhiko says as he unfurls a white bedspread with green appliques forming a banana and coconut leaf pattern. A 2x1m Caohagan quilt takes three months to finish by hand, and a typical design shows off the area's flora and fauna.

All quilts are soaked in the ocean and dried in the sun before they leave the island. In the Philippines, they are sold only at Abaseria Deli Cafe in Cebu City, and the profits go back to the island community in the form of scholarships and new infrastructure.

"Our buyers sing praises for the good quality and craftsmanship of our quilts," product manager Tom Higashida adds. "In Caohagan, quilting has become a source of joy and a means to a sustainable livelihood for the quilters. Buyers love what they get because they know it is made with love."

[caohagan.com](http://caohagan.com)

## Cebu

### COMMUNITY

## Spread the love

On an island two hours from Cebu airport, a tight-knit community finds a love for quilting

From Mactan-Cebu International Airport, it only takes a couple of hours to reach Caohagan by car and pump boat. And yet, the 500m-long island – best known for its coral reef sanctuary and thriving population of sea turtles and giant clams – feels very remote. The privately owned island also has another claim to fame: a quilt-making community whose products have been exhibited in fairs abroad and are sold in the United States, France and Japan.

The story of Caohagan Quilts began in 1987, when Katsuhiko Sakiyama (pictured) left his job in Tokyo and traveled the world in search of a place to retire. He ended up on the island, where he fell in love with the rustic lifestyle

