An impressionistic painting of a woman standing in a landscape, holding a large, vibrant red umbrella. The woman is dressed in a long, flowing yellowish-gold gown. The background is a mix of green, blue, and white, suggesting a rainy or misty environment. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, giving the painting a textured, painterly quality.

JAIME LAYA  
ALICE GUILLERMO  
CID REYES  
MA. VICTORIA HERRERA  
FATIMA LASAY

EDITED BY  
RAMON E.S. LERMA

# Tanán

PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS  
PAINTING COLLECTION

















# Tanánw

Perspectives on  
The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Painting Collection

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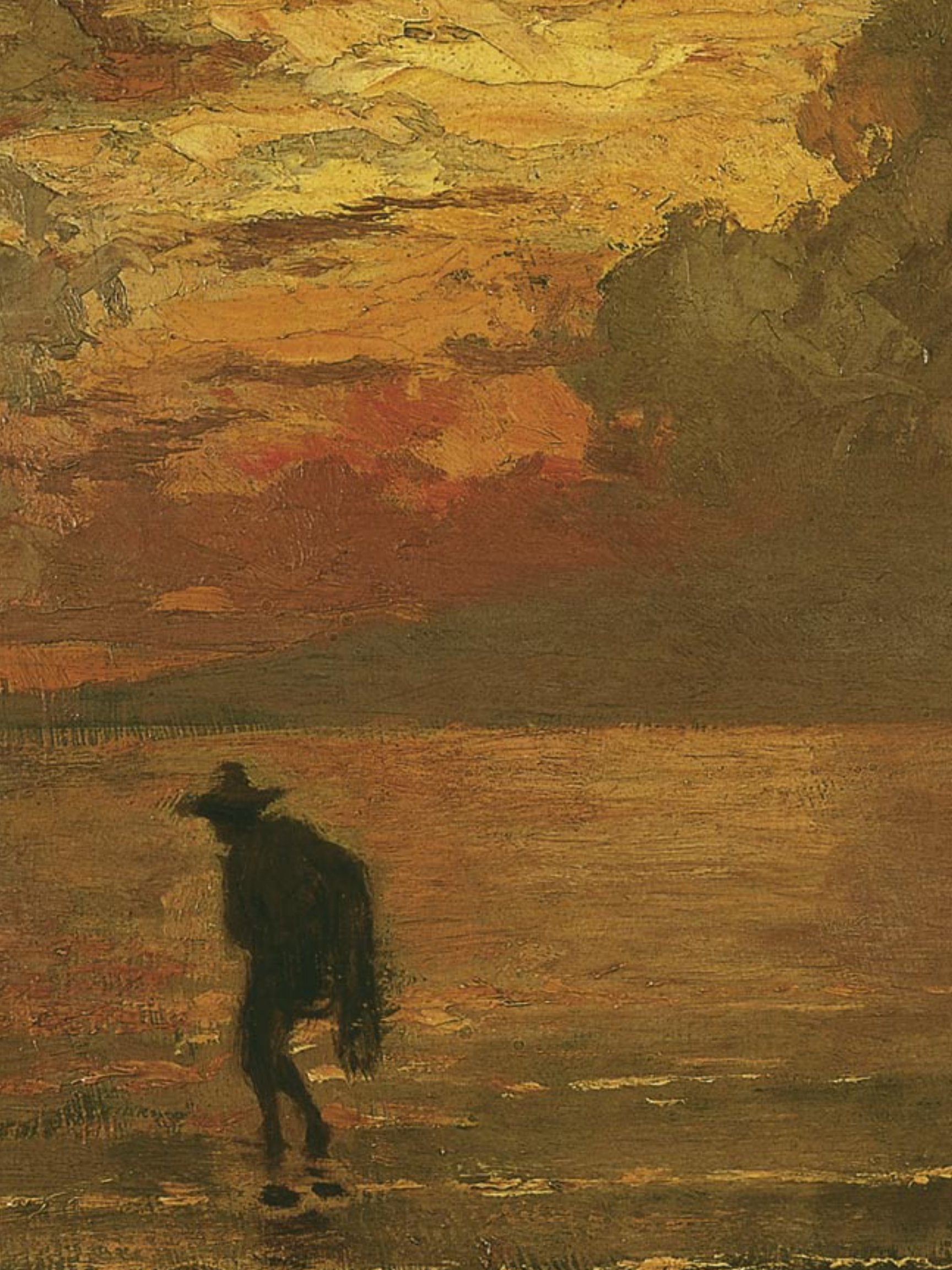


The Executive Business Center on the 5th floor of the BSP building is a veritable museum of the finest in Philippine art.











# Tanánw

Perspectives on  
The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Painting Collection

With essays by  
Jaime C. Laya  
Alice G. Guillermo  
Cid Reyes  
Ma. Victoria T. Herrera  
Fatima J. Lasay

Edited by  
Ramon E.S. Lerma

Published by the  
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas





Ang Kiukok's *Brown Window* (1975) hangs above a console table at the Executive Business Center on the fifth floor of the BSP building.



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# CONTENTS

## FOREWORD

12

*pananâw*

## INTRODUCTION: WAYS OF SEEING THE BSP PAINTING COLLECTION

Ramon E.S. Lerma

17

*anuyô*

## THE PROGENITORS OF THE FILIPINO NATION

Jaime C. Laya

25

*gunitâ*

## MEMORY, HISTORY, SOCIETY

Alice G. Guillermo

107

*diwâ*

## BRUSH WITH SPIRITUALITY

Cid Reyes

173



# CONTENTS

*ganáp*

THE MATERIAL NATURE OF IMAGES AND COLLECTIONS

Ma. Victoria T. Herrera

239

*tanáw*

SEEING AND SHAPING THE WORLD IN THE PHILIPPINE LANDSCAPE

Fatima J. Lasay

307

National Artists in the BSP Painting Collection

372

Sources

374

Glossary

376

Index

378

About the Writers and Editor

381

Committee on BSP Artworks and Paintings / Studio 5 Creative Team

384

Acknowledgments

384



## SA SIMULÂ



We at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas consider the BSP Painting Collection as part of our nation's historical and cultural treasures.

The collection, spanning two centuries and numbering over a thousand pieces, serves as a mirror of ourselves as Filipinos: how we shaped our history, how we grew our sensibility and how we handled our sensitivity.

Two Central Bank governors during their watch endeavored to build the collection. Gregorio C. Licaros and Jaime C. Laya were principally responsible for the breadth and depth of such a collection. That the BSP Painting Collection includes representative works of all the National Artists of the Philippines in the field of painting is a tribute to their ability to discern significant Filipino painters long before they became national figures.

Perception of reality is important and the Filipino artists in the collection of varying persuasions and techniques provide us with perspectives or *tanáw* that are beyond charts and tables.

The paintings inform, enrich and inspire us, helping provide clarity on what we, as a people and as a nation are capable of achieving.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas dedicates this book, a veritable chronicle of our nation through paintings, to the Filipino people.

RAFAEL B. BUENAVENTURA

*Governor*

*July 3, 1999 to July 3, 2005*



## SA HINAHARAP



The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas continues its tradition of promoting better understanding and appreciation of our evolution as a nation with the publication of this book entitled: *Tanáw: Perspectives on the BSP Painting Collection*.

As envisioned by the Monetary Board under my predecessor, BSP Governor Rafael B. Buenaventura, the BSP Art Collection can serve as a powerful catalyst for instilling a strong sense of national identity and love of country, attributes that foster social stability and economic growth.

In our next book, we shall document early industries which were the source of livelihood of our ancestors, as shown through the antique furniture, religious icons, and decorative objects that form part of the priceless BSP Art Collection. Reflective of the exquisite craftsmanship of our ancestors, such as the pre-colonial gold creations that were the subject of our previous book *Ginto: History Wrought in Gold*, these lifestyle possessions highlight the artistry and creative spirit that gave birth to these enduring works of art.

Indeed, there are many reasons why we should feel proud to be a Filipino. The Filipino people can count on the BSP to continue documenting the greatness of our race.

AMANDO M. TETANGCO, JR.

Governor

July 4, 2005 to July 3, 2011









**PAGDIRIWANG** by Jose Joya (1976, Oil, 515 x 700 cm), the biggest painting in the BSP collection, hangs at the Philippine International Convention Center main lobby.







# pananáw

## INTRODUCTION: WAYS OF SEEING THE BSP PAINTING COLLECTION

by Ramon E.S. Lerma

Since its establishment in 1949, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the central monetary authority of the Philippines, has assembled a formidable collection of paintings, which in terms of size and historical breadth rivals that of any museum of national standing.

The nature of the BSP as an institution of state, however, presents certain challenges to its painting collection. In particular, the matter has been raised about how this precious civic resource showcasing the depth, breadth and richness of Filipino creativity can be better utilized, seeing that it is only readily accessible to those privileged few who work within its offices or walk along its grand corridors.

This leads to the inevitable question: “Why did the BSP collect these paintings at all?”

Clearly, reasons of pragmatism – i.e. enlivening the building’s interior spaces or making a visual impact on local guests or visiting foreign dignitaries – appear insufficient in light of the historical importance and exceptional quality of the collection overall. Moreover, the selection of a good number of these artworks bears the hallmark of intelligent thought bordering on curatorial deliberateness – a

cue that quotidian considerations scarcely figured in their acquisition.

Indeed, there can be no better way to explain the existence of this collection, and to justify the substantial public resources involved in procuring these paintings, than to look at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as an institution whose role as repository and custodian goes beyond solipsistic definitions of a country’s material wealth. For the BSP, preserving the Philippines’ cultural patrimony is just as important as tending to its financial well being – an impetus that articulates the high value the organization holds and the lofty ideals that it has about the nation it serves.

Still, the issue of expediency hangs in the balance and needs to be addressed: for how can society fully partake of its rich heritage when these artworks find themselves ensconced within the confines imposed by a body corporate whose very nature mandates strict security and fortification?

Mindful of this condition, the BSP has long endeavored to bring its painting collection beyond its premises. In addition to sending select pieces to its other branches in key cities throughout the country

**NENA SAGUIL**, *Cargadores*, 1951, Oil on plywood, 118 x 79 cm

A fine example of the stylized figurations of the pioneering modernist Nena Saguil, characterized by robust figures and whimsical colors.



as well as showing some of these at the Money Museum located within its premises and the nearby Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) in the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) complex across Roxas Boulevard, the BSP also regularly lends works to the adjacent Metropolitan Museum of Manila and, on occasion, to other museums and public galleries for temporary exhibitions. Most importantly, it published a set of coffee table books from 1981 to 1983 - the *Kayamanan* series - which showcased, in addition to the paintings, its diverse collections of ceramics and jewelry through vivid photographs accompanied by scholarly articles. These handsome volumes proved extremely successful in disseminating knowledge about the BSP's collections - enhancing their significance by underscoring these objects as treasures of the Filipino people.

One of the books from the series, *Kayamanan: 77 Paintings from the Central Bank Collection* (1981), authored by my predecessor at the Ateneo Art Gallery, Emmanuel Torres, provided an appreciation of what he considered to be the most important *oeuvres*, in art historical and aesthetic terms, from among the hundreds of works that he saw.

Torres approached the paintings with the eye of a specialist, expertly admiring his choice pieces, which he arranged chronologically, like guideposts in a single historical narrative. It is by a serendipitous confluence of events that I find myself working on this book today - as if stepping into Torres' position at the helm of the country's first museum of modern art also meant inheriting the opportunity to build upon his legacy at the BSP. And just as Torres represented the pioneering phase of museum practice in the country, laying the groundwork for, among other things, the promotion, organization and understanding of the value of a collection, my own practice as museum curator in a postmodern, contemporary setting finds itself being conscripted into duty presently by the BSP. I am deeply honored to have been given the responsibility of enhancing the estimation of these paintings, and the opportunity to help widen their audience by proposing new parameters for their viewing.

Recognizing that time - like ways of seeing art - has not stood still, the BSP, in this period of increased globalization, sees an even greater need to transgress its precincts and increase the public's knowledge about its collection, not as an esoteric art historical cache of precious objects, but, most significantly, as an invaluable social resource. Looking beyond, yet still respecting these works as signifiers of Philippine culture, the BSP now sees these paintings more expansively: as hallmarks of excellence and competitiveness; indeed as catalysts for interpersonal and cross-cultural engagement to promote and deliver, in keeping with its mission and vision, "a high quality of life for all Filipinos."

In this way, the audience to which the BSP Painting Collection now belongs has moved irreversibly beyond the domain of collectors and art aficionados to the Filipino people at large, and to global society in general. While painting as visual art form has remained intrinsically the same through the centuries, changes in its production, choice of subject matter, presentation and context reflect this movement.

Technology, for example, has ceaselessly sought to transform the way we look at the world, just as postmodernism has taken paintings away from walls and even physical space, smashing their images into bits of binary and HTML code before turning these into the virtual collections revealed, appropriated, manipulated and propagated in cyberspace.

Indeed, if the BSP Painting Collection is to continue to be relevant and significant, then the need to be open and responsive to new perspectives must inform its assessment so that it may continue to witness, fully participate in, and benefit from the wealth of possibilities being presented to the nation in this day and age.

To reflect the more complex and sophisticated terrain that the collection, and its audience, must navigate today, the locus of this book was shifted from being a monolithic, chronological presentation of the paintings, to a publication that proposes to advance a more dynamic, forward-looking agenda of critical discourse. By embracing a multiplicity of perspectives, the BSP would be able to foreground issues of diversity



and representation, while reflecting on notions of ownership, and the relativity of value systems.

In effect, this book re-views the collection by placing the paintings in their entirety within a series of thematic dialogues informed by the divergent areas of experience, expertise and interests of the writers. In so doing, it is hoped that this book would transgress the narrowness of taste and dismantle certain preconceived boundaries and mental constructs of what we as a nation consider important by questioning, examining, and in the process, discovering and re-awakening ideas about our selves.

It is this totality of experience, derived from an untrammelled outlook and careful scrutiny of the BSP Painting Collection, which is presented in this volume. Breaking up the concept of the Filipino experience of reality as sentient being into separate yet inter-reliant components – the self as epistemological, socio-historical, ineffable, material, and ultimately, fulfilling - the chapters of the book were assigned to the writers who could best expound upon these themes.

*Jaime C. Laya*, former Governor of the Central Bank, opens the book with “Anyô: The Progenitors of the Filipino Nation,” in recognition of his seminal role in constructing the composition and quality of the BSP Painting Collection. Focusing on portraiture, Laya takes us back to the original concept of these pictures as mirrors, reflecting upon the works as mementoes and as self-images, engaging readers in erudite conversation as he takes us through episodes in world and Philippine history and describes in sumptuous detail costumes, rituals, and the mores and ways of a bygone era. This chapter is a richly involved retelling of a life consumed by a passion for collecting. As the quintessence of the old world connoisseur, whose taste and critical eye established the guidelines and laid the framework for the acquisition of these paintings - thus shaping the collection into its present form (*anyô*) - no one could be more fitting than he to provide the fundamental methodology for their consideration.

Situating art at the axis of history and society as receptacle of shared and singular experiences or

communal and personal reminiscences, *Alice G. Guillermo*, widely respected academic and one of the country’s foremost art critics, reflects upon the BSP Painting Collection in the second chapter entitled “Gunita,” the Filipino term for “memory.” Here, she speaks about the artworks as a forum where artists and viewers meet: a charged space carved out of the time/space continuum in which various ideas about the Filipino experience are threshed out. Guillermo begins by selecting works that show how our lives are bound to natural forces before delving into societal roles. Deftly, she weaves in a feminist and post-colonial reading of key pieces before embarking upon a highly involving retelling of recent developments in the nation’s history – from post-war reconstruction to urban dislocation and alienation, thence to social upheaval, tenuous calm and the charged bifurcation of images and sensations that embody hybrid tendencies in contemporary Philippine art.

*Cid Reyes*, multi-awarded art historian, critic and visual artist, shifts the analysis of the pictures from the realm of manifestation to the sphere of the indefinable – motivation, meaning and the search for the infinite being at the center of “*Diwâ: Brush with Spirituality*.” In his essay, Reyes stays the historical course charted by Guillermo while tracing that which has gone unencumbered through the ages in the creative impetus, refiguring the inscrutable by journeying through the development of art, from the cave paintings at Lascaux to the age of the Baroque to the controversy-ridden tableaux being celebrated in art museums today. With profound insight, he sets about elucidating his theses by probing into the essence (*diwâ*) of select abstract and figurative works and writing at length about important artists in the BSP Painting Collection. Discerning aspects of the Filipino psyche, Reyes builds up to an ecstatic note, and concludes with a tone that can only be described as forceful yet acquiescent as he comes face-to-face with the sublime.

It is at this juncture that *Ma. Victoria T. Herrera*, who teaches art history, collections management and museum studies at the state university, reconnects with the paintings as objects in “*Ganap*,” a word



in the Filipino language that simultaneously refers to something complete and fully developed, and to the act of doing something, or playing a part - multiple connotations which encapsulate the static yet fluid character of images and collections. As in the previous chapters, the author focuses on the works as sources of meaning, but takes these to another area altogether by seeing these pictures not only as extensions of their makers, but more importantly as signifiers of processes of production and patronage. Individually, Herrera delves into their content, limning their formal and physical qualities, and giving particular attention to their construction through a variety of media. Casting a wider net, she focuses on collecting itself as a creative act, and sees the paintings as a unified, evocative whole. A most interesting portion of this essay is the last section where Herrera comes full circle and takes the works back to their genesis as a corporate and state collection, linking them to their most important progenitor, Jaime Laya.

*Fatima Lasay* was commissioned to write the concluding chapter of the book, "Tanáw: Seeing and Shaping the World in the Philippine Landscape". She worked at the Ateneo Art Gallery, where she served as guest curator and consultant on a number of exhibitions involving new media. It seemed most apt to have an emerging scholar in this flourishing field proffer a new perspective to the collection, which would confront the multifarious ideas, images and technologies present in contemporary Philippine society. Inspired by the author's assertion that the landscape, in the traditional view of Western visual art, was not considered to be as lofty as historical and religious paintings, and in keeping with my concept for this book as a publication that would parry with convention, the concept of a hierarchical reversal wherein the pictography of the *landschaft* is seen as equal to, or as Lasay seeks to show, even more suggestive than other painting genres, proved to me an immensely exciting proposition.

Lasay begins her essay by casting the landscape in the Eastern view as a major genre of painting, which signifies "the ordered state," bringing to mind a quote from Sir Joshua Reynolds' speech to the Royal Academy, where he referred to the power of artists to create a "virtuous society." Lasay builds the case for the landscape as a territory where relationships are established and views presented according to principles of sight, symbol, and imagination. By ending with the prescriptive of the landscape as being more than a reproduction of an external view, but rather - in keeping with its association to the Filipino term "*tanáw*" as "way of seeing" - of being orientated towards a particular concept of beauty, or in expectation of fulfillment in the future, Lasay sounds the clarion call for Filipinos to take on the mantle of artists who will shape bright new realities, and discover new horizons from within.

In the end, *Tanáw* was deemed to be the most appropriate title for this book, seeing that the word encapsulates the encounter between the mind's eyes of the five authors with the BSP Painting Collection, and illustrates "the cuts, fissures, overlays and underlays that reveal the dominant directions and the submerged strains" that exist amongst them. Separate yet one, they represent the fusion of perspectives - reflective, reminiscent, entreating, practicable, and hopeful - that constitute what we have been, what we are, and what we aspire to become.

By putting together this outstanding collection of Philippine paintings, what emerges from these essays is that the BSP not only recognizes that the community which it serves is composed of sentient beings; but that it also continues to elucidate its position within society as an enlightened institution that respects, protects and ennobles the crux of this shared humanity - indeed, upholding what it means to be Filipino.

More than any other treasure of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, herein lays the true measure of its worth. 🌿

VICENTE MANANSALA, *Mamimintakasi*, 1954, Mixed media on masonite, 66 x 58 cm

Vicente Manansala was a leading exponent of Neo-realism, the most significant modern Philippine art movement in the post war era. His paintings emphasized pictorial design over representation, reflecting the artist's "inner vision" of reality.





MANANSALA  
54









Selected paintings in the BSP collection are regularly exhibited at the adjacent Metropolitan Museum of Manila.





The priceless portrait of Urbana David with its original frame hangs above an antique altar table at the BSP.



# *anayo*

THE PROGENITORS OF THE FILIPINO NATION

by Jaime C. Laya





JUAN LUNA, *Portrait of Antonio Paterno*, 1881, Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 55.5 cm



*Like most peoples* the world over, Filipinos like to have their loved ones' and their own images preserved for posterity. We like having our photographs taken, and having our likenesses drawn, painted, or sculpted. These are then framed and hung on walls, displayed atop shelves and tables, dispatched to friends and relatives, lovingly kept in albums, delightedly run on computers and projected on home movie or television screens. Letters received from OCW (overseas contract worker) parents or siblings often bulge with pictures showing off the sender and his adventures.

Portraiture is an ancient art form. Throughout history, pharaohs, emperors and kings have erected statues of themselves to assert power and legitimacy. Their portraits have been struck on coins and medals, as well as carved and painted on their mausoleums in a bid for immortality. Images sometimes attained almost mystical significance. As recently as 1825, Spanish King Fernando VII dispatched his portrait to Manila with the command that it be received with all the ceremony and festivities as if he himself were visiting the faraway colony.

Not surprisingly, ordinary people followed suit. The Egyptians of ancient Fayum buried their dead in coffins painted with lifelike head-and-shoulders portraits. The Olmec and Maya, Aztec and Inca, and the Khmer, had portraits in pottery, ceramics or stone. It would seem that ancient Filipinos were of the same mind. The hundreds of prehistoric secondary burial jars found in Maitum cave in Saranggani, South Cotabato, have covers made in the shape of heads, with features so individualized that they are believed to be portraits.

Our environment is not heritage-friendly and we will never know what art works of the first centuries of the Spanish colonial period have been lost to humidity, insects, typhoon, or earthquake, or to neglect, fire and war. However, written records and surviving works suggest that portrait artists have been active in the Philippines particularly since the early years that Filipinos were being painted, especially from the mid-19th century.

Many art collectors do not particularly care to have strangers' pictures hanging in their homes, but some of the finest examples of Philippine portraiture are in the painting collection of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. In them, we gain a better idea of the development of the Filipino nation. They help us trace our roots and sharpen our sense of national identity.



## Portraits in Philippine Life

Portraits can be read at different levels. Obviously, we can look at a portrait as the image of a particular person. However, at another level, the sitter's identity becomes secondary and an unknown face can be considered as a representative Filipino of a particular era, occupation, or social class. A portrait, then, is not simply that of a specific individual; it is also that of an *ilustrado*, a civil servant, an activist, a weather-beaten farmer, a *gobernadorcillo*, a parish priest, a landlord or tenant, a teacher, an entrepreneur.

We can imagine that the faces in these portraits could have been how our forbears looked like—maybe a disciplinarian great-grandfather, a kindly grandmother, or a loving maiden aunt. With faces as reference, we also have a better sense of how our people were tempered—from the time spiritual salvation was the single-minded concern, through revolution and independence, war and peace, development and stagnation.

Official portraits hang in government, academic, religious, and business precincts. Malacañang's Reception Hall is impressive with its grand dimensions, giant chandeliers and formal portraits of Philippine Presidents from Emilio Aguinaldo to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Supreme Court walls have a complete series of past Chief Justices. The Department of Education hangs in its Reception Hall portraits of the Education Secretaries of the past hundred years. The University of the Philippines' College of Medicine long ago wisely began to commission portraits of deans from the best artists of their times. The walls of the Monetary Board Room are lined with pictures of Central Bank Governors from Miguel Cuaderno to Rafael B. Buenaventura.

Examples of official portraits are in the BSP collection. Vicente Rivera y Mir presents a benign looking President Manuel L. Quezon, the other side of the imperious and fiery orator who fought for Philippine Independence ("A government run like hell by Filipinos is far better than a government run like heaven by Americans.") The portrait of an unnamed archbishop must have hung in a convent, possibly even in the old Manila Archbishop's Palace that crumbled in the fire and shelling of Intramuros in February 1945. Another portrait shows a man, perhaps a faculty member, wearing the toga and hood of the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, established in 1611.

European kings ruled by Divine Right and handed down power through dynastic succession. The nobility did the same, practicing primogeniture through which the aristocratic title and its associated estates, ancestral homes and heirlooms descended intact from a father to his eldest son or, failing a son, to the nearest male relative. Genealogy was important and the related arts of heraldry and portraiture developed early on. Heirs would receive, among other things, portraits of the bearers of the family name, their spouses and children, sometimes in unbroken series going back centuries. People later gathered pictures of rulers and famous men for instruction and inspiration. In time, they collected portraits as works of art.

The Philippine elite never quite had the relative economic clout or the strong dynastic inclinations of the European nobility and landed gentry. The concept of an eldest son succeeding to the family estate and of heirlooms passing undiminished from generation to generation is foreign to us and most people are unaware of their ancestry beyond two or three generations. Portraits are understandably of limited meaning in such a cultural context.





**VICENTE RIVERA Y MIR,** *Portrait of M.L. Quezon*, 1940, 134 x 96 cm

Vicente Rivera y Mir presents a benign looking Manuel L. Quezon, the first President of the Philippine Commonwealth, the other side of the imperious and fiery orator who fought for Philippine Independence.



Filipinos have long hung religious works in their homes, but have not always had their portraits painted. It seems even in Europe before the 19th century, portraits were painted mainly of royalty and of the high nobility and senior ecclesiastics. Ordinary people may therefore have thought it presumptuous to have themselves painted. Vestiges of old beliefs could have affected portrait commissions, noting that Islam prohibits the depiction of the human image and that some traditional cultures believe that a person suffers harm when his likeness is taken. In any case, there is no record of Philippine pre-19th century non-religious and non-official portraits and none seems to have survived. Intellectuals and artists alike also considered historical painting to be more elevated and significant as compared to portrait, genre, still life, and other forms of the art.

However, more and more Filipinos grew rich in the 19th century with the expansion of international trade. With new wealth would have come a desire to show off and the means to indulge. In particular, portraits of a fortune's founders and of the founder's parents and children would have been a logical idea, as they subtly suggest economic and social success and aesthetic refinement as well. A formal portrait is also a suitable marker of life's milestones—perhaps a wedding or a 50th birthday or other significant event. We see examples of these types of portraiture in the BSP collection.

Charming images of childhood include an infant's portrait, still in its original gilded frame. Another, of a little girl wearing a feathered bonnet, is the work of Miguel Zaragoza. Jorge Pineda painted a young girl dancing with a tambourine and wearing a gypsy costume, probably a reminder of how she looked like in a bygone celebration.

During the Spanish regime, young children of provincial families were packed off to Manila to live in school dormitories or nearby boarding houses, as Jose Rizal was when he left home at the tender age of ten to enroll at the Ateneo Municipal. Rizal could have looked like the boys depicted by an unknown artist in a double portrait that came from Pasig, when he bade goodbye to Calamba and childhood. Possibly a souvenir of the time when the subject was given a medal is the Fernando Amorsolo portrait of a good-looking young man in a cadet's uniform.



ANONYMOUS, *Portrait of a Child*,  
Undated, Oil on panel, 22 x 18 cm





**JORGE PINEDA.** *Portrait of a Girl Dressed as a Gypsy*, 1914, Oil on canvas, 149 x 88 cm  
Portraits of a fortune's founders and of the founder's parents and children subtly suggest economic and social success and aesthetic refinement as well.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Portrait of a Cadet*, 1954, Oil on canvas, 69.5 x 54.5 cm

Possibly a souvenir of the time when the subject was given a medal is the Fernando Amorsolo portrait of a good-looking young man in a cadet's uniform.





**ANONYMOUS**, *Portrait of Two Ateneo Students*, Circa 1900, Oil on canvas, 94 x 67 cm

National Hero Jose Rizal could have looked like the boys depicted by an unknown artist in a double portrait that came from Pasig.







The spouses Juana Dilag and Joaquin Santiago, who would have been of the rice land-owning gentry, were Bulaqueños painted by another unknown artist of the late 19th or early 20th century. Don Joaquin, as he would have been known, does not look like an absentee landlord but, rather, has the appearance of one who took an active hand in running his affairs. There were friar lands in Bulacan and he could also have been administrator or possibly the discontented lessee (like the Rizals of Laguna) of a religious order's hacienda (one of the largest being the Bocaue and Marilao lands owned by the Real Monasterio de Santa Clara). He may also have at the same time been a Katipunan supporter, of which there were many among the landed Bulacan folk.

The demure Urbana David y Mendoza stands with an illuminated book in her beautiful portrait. The young lady's family lived in Hagonoy, Bulacan on the shores of Manila Bay, and must have owned bangus fishponds and rice fields. She wears an embroidered top covered with a red fichu and a flowery saya covered by a black tapis. It is said that the sitter subsequently entered the convent; and perhaps the painting was commissioned as a memento of Urbana's final days with her family. One wonders if the pure white baro, the contrasting cheerful and somber colors and the little flowers of her saya against a dark background allude to her decision. The painting bears the initial "YA," believed to be that of Ysidro Arceo.

An unsigned painting attributed to Hilarion Asunción shows city folk, a young mother and her child said to be of the fabulously wealthy Tuason family who were in the China trade and owned valuable Binondo property and much of present-day Quezon City. It shows the two in an obviously well-appointed home—the flowery carpet would have been unusual and costly. Garbed in the latest fashion of the turn of the 20th century, the mother wears a baro't saya—a piña top with pañuelo and a blue saya modestly covered by a black tapis. The child (possibly a little boy, as little boys used to wear dresses following European custom) is in a long green dress with a pink belt, enriched with lace at the collar, cuffs and hem.

Photography became widespread from the 1880s and it was customary to exchange photographs and to fill albums with formal studio portraits of one's friends and relatives. Having one's studio portrait taken became one of life's milestones. Cheaper, quicker and rendering a perfect likeness, framed life-size photographs, both full length and half-length, lined living room walls. Photo-oleos—large studio photographs enhanced and colored by airbrush—served in place of oil portraits, like that of a woman holding a Japanese parasol, signed "J.R. de Jesus".

An old man, distinguished in jacket and bow tie, was painted in 1928 by Teodoro Buenaventura. He would have been someone who had successfully navigated the troubled waters of the last years of the Spanish colonial regime and the Philippine Revolution and of the uncertainty and hardships of the war against the United States, before finally being able to contribute to the country's progress and prosperity under the American regime.

The woman painted in her green baro't saya by Victor Diores would have been of the generation that grew up during the same period: educated in English and increasingly career-oriented. She would also have been of the generation that suffered the ordeal of World War II and participated in the ensuing period of reconstruction and development.

**ISIDRO ARCEO**, *Portrait of Urbana David*, Circa 1830s, Oil on canvas, 79.7 x 60 cm  
It is said that the sitter subsequently entered the convent; and perhaps the painting was commissioned as a memento of Urbana's final days with her family.





VICTOR C. DIORES, *Portrait of a Lady Dressed in Green Terno*, 1920s, Oil on canvas, 70 x 54.5 cm  
The women of her generation were educated in English and increasingly career-oriented.



The hippies and yuppies of the 1970s and 1980s were student activists and protesters—against the establishment, the Vietnam War, Martial Law, oil price and jeepney fare increases—climaxed by EDSA I and the end of the Marcos administration. It was only appropriate for them to be painted by their fellow activist, the avant-garde Onib Olmedo. His works *Woman with Dog* (a toothy and menacing-looking pooch) and *Man with a Beard* are memorable. They show how Olmedo imaginatively and effectively suggested appearance and character, without departing from his characteristic style and limited palette.

Portraits are luxuries hung in spacious homes, paid for by surplus income. The poor, all too often with neither income nor walls, own little more than snapshots. However, character studies and the work of social realist artists often depict individuals and are therefore portraits, albeit of nameless and unsung persons who probably never see the finished works. Dominador Castañeda, a colleague of Amorsolo at the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Fine Arts, painted a farmer in bright sunlight, with no attempt to romanticize or to flatter. Neatly dressed, perhaps on his way to church or some other celebration, there is no mistaking that this is a man of the soil, not a model dressed up as a farm worker.



ONIB OLMEDO, *Woman & Dog*, 1978, Oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm

The activist Olmedo imaginatively and effectively suggested appearance and personality, without departing from his characteristic style.



People also hang portraits of heroes and achievers as a source of inspiration and as an expression of patriotism. Memoirs of U.S. Presidents sometimes note how humbled they are at being greeted, on entering the White House, by the images of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. One can only surmise that a newly-elected Philippine President is similarly moved upon seeing the portraits of his or her predecessors and is inspired to self-sacrifice upon encountering the portraits of Jose Rizal in a conference room and of heroes of four centuries lining a long ground floor corridor.

Similarly motivated, portraits of past company heads, heroes of war, science and the arts are sometimes hung in offices or homes. The Jorge Pineda portrait of Rizal could possibly have been painted for a corporate boardroom or a home library. Alfredo Guerrero, a medical doctor and painter, did the portrait of Dr. Joseph Lister (1827-1912), considered the founder of modern antiseptic surgery, no doubt a man the doctor-artist admired.

The portrait tradition is still very much with us. Young matrons often have themselves portrayed in oil, and the main living room wall of many a home is given over to the lady of the house in her wedding finery or in her Sunday best. Images of her offspring, frequently as adorable children and, less frequently, that of the master of the house himself, may also be found on nearby walls. Portraitists wait, charcoal and paper in hand, at shopping malls.

A big part of wedding budgets is often earmarked for still pictures and videos of the ceremony and reception. Families still sit for formal studio photographs (though less frequently than in the past) and graduation pictures in cap and gown are a must for commencement programs from kindergarten to college. The old lady in Ricarte Puruganan's *Graduation* must have been bursting with pride, evident in an unusual graduation portrait that touchingly highlights the value Filipinos place on education.

People also hang portraits of heroes  
and achievers as a source of inspiration  
and as an expression of patriotism.

**JORGE PINEDA**, *Portrait of Dr. Jose Rizal*,

Circa 1930s, Oil on board, 59.5 x 41.5 cm

The Jorge Pineda portrait of the National Hero could possibly have been painted for a corporate boardroom or a home library.









**SIMON FLORES**, *Doña Miguela Henson*, undated, Oil on canvas, 58.5 x 42.5 cm

Young matrons often have themselves portrayed in oil, and the main living room wall of many a home is given over to the lady of the house in her wedding finery or in her Sunday best.





**RICARTE PURUGANAN**, *Graduation*, 1935, Oil on canvas, 111 x 90 cm

The old lady in Ricarte Puruganan's *Graduation* must have been bursting with pride, evident in an unusual graduation portrait that touchingly highlights the value Filipinos place on education.



## Social and Business History

History is made not alone by politicians, or by religious, military or business leaders. They play vital roles, of course, but it is society as a whole that has made the Filipino nation. History becomes more real when we are able to associate names with events, and faces with names. We know how Magellan looked like, but regrettably not Lapu-Lapu; Legaspi but not Soliman or Matanda. We have little idea of the appearance of our ancestors of the 17th and 18th centuries, who became Catholics and suffered martyrdom, who were gathered into *poblaciones*, forced to labor on public works, or build and crew Spanish galleons. It is only in the 19th century that we start to see the faces of *naturales* or *indios* who went into commercial agriculture and world trade and who, more recently, became the country's *pensionados*, civil servants, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

To digress a bit, ethnic background used to be more precisely defined. “Filipino” or *insular* or *criollo* was a person of pure Spanish blood who was born in the Philippines. A Spaniard or *peninsular* was a person of pure Spanish blood who was born in Spain. The Chinese were known as *sangleys*. One with purely indigenous blood was a natural or an indio. A *mestizo* could be mestizo Español or mestizo sangley.

Ancient Filipinos are illustrated in old manuscripts, the most celebrated of which is the Boxer Codex (Lilly Library, Indiana University, USA), handwritten and drawn in the early 17th century. Richly attired, Filipinos then adorned themselves with tattoos and gold jewelry such as those in the BSP collection of excavated gold.

Under Spanish colonial policy, pre-Hispanic *datus* became *cabezas de barangay* and were co-opted into the Spanish administrative system. The more influential were appointed, later elected, *gobernadorcillo* or town mayor. This group was given land and was assigned to collect tribute to the Spanish king. Ordinary people became the *datus'* tenants and had to work a certain number of days on public works such as roads and bridges, galleons, churches, public buildings, and fortifications.

We can imagine how our forbears of the 17th and 18th centuries may have looked like only from ethnographic drawings produced by scientific expeditions such as those of Jean François Galaup de la Perouse (1785-86) and Alejandro Malaspina (1792-1793), some of which were printed as engravings in books and periodicals. The border illustrations of Murillo Velarde's map of the Philippines (1734) and decorative illustrations of maps such as the 18th century “East India Islands” engraved by English mapmaker Thomas Bowen show *indios* engaged in their daily tasks.

The appearance and activities of Filipinos of the early 19th century are depicted in watercolor *tipos del pais* (native types) and albums of Philippine scenes brought home as souvenirs by departing expatriates. These show *indios* and *mestizos* as, among others, students, pot makers, water carriers, cloth vendors, and boatmen. Jose Honorato Lozano, in particular, painted street scenes, landscapes and genre works depicting town and farm life. The BSP collection has 20th century Ricardo Gloria drawings that are in the same spirit, including a country girl in a long-sleeved baro over a tapis-covered brown saya, wearing a scapular and a large *salakot*.

The likenesses of Spaniards in the Philippines were more extensively recorded—portraits in oil or in engravings of religious and government functionaries. The Philippines was a little known colony and the journey from Spain was long and dangerous. The departure of a small group of





**VICTORIO EDADES**, *Portrait of Fr. Silvestre Sancho*, 1938, Oil on panel, 121 x 37 cm

Fr. Silvestre Sancho was Rector of the University of Santo Tomas where Victorio Edades was a professor.





**HILARION ASUNCION**, *Martyrdom of Fr. Martin of Saint Nicolas of Zaragoza*, 1870, Oil on canvas, 62 x 43 cm  
Fr. Martin de San Nicolas de Zaragoza, a young Spanish Recollect friar who, according to the inscription on the painting, died a terrible death in 1632, grilled fifteen hours over a low fire.



nuns (belonging to the Convento de Santa Ysabel de Toledo) for the Philippines aroused great public interest and admiration. Before the group sailed for Manila in 1620, the young Diego Velasquez, later King Philip IV's Court Painter, portrayed the group's leader, Mother Jeronima de la Fuente (Museo del Prado, Madrid). She founded and was the first abbess of the Real Monasterio de Santa Clara, located in Intramuros until its destruction at the end of World War II.

Malacañang and the Ayuntamiento used to have portraits of governors-general, possibly including Juan Luna's portrait of Governor-General Ramon Blanco (now at the López Memorial Museum, Pasig City) and of Blanco's daughter dressed as Minerva (now at the Casa Manila Museum, Intramuros). Officials also brought paintings home to Spain at the end of their respective tours of duty, such as the recently discovered Damian Domingo miniature of Governor General Pascual de Enrile y Alsedo (United Laboratories, Inc. collection).

The Church has a strong sense of continuity. The long hall of the Archbishop's Palace in Vigan, Ilocos Sur looks unchanged since the 19th century and is still hung with crimson curtains and life-size full-length portraits of bishops of yore, including a pair of rare Severino Flavio Pablos. The Intramuros motherhouses of religious orders had portraits of priors and paintings of sainted members of the order, if not in agony of martyrdom, then in ecstasy of divine vision. The UST Museum has many of these that happily escaped the destruction of Sto. Domingo in Intramuros. The BSP has a portrait of Fr. Silvestre Sancho, Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, painted by Victorio Edades who was a professor at the University. The portrait could well have joined the series.

Portraits of priors and paintings of sainted members of the order, if not in agony of martyrdom, were in ecstasy of divine vision.



ANONYMOUS, *P. Francisco Paliola S.J.*, 1800s, Oil on canvas, 86 x 65 cm  
The Italian Jesuit Francisco Paliola was killed, evidently beheaded while evangelizing in 1645.



The stereotype Spanish friar is a fat lecher and oppressor, and the colonial government official is commonly presumed to be a crook and tyrant; but there surely were many who gave of their best and contributed greatly to Philippine spiritual, scientific, intellectual, social and economic development. Spaniards introduced Filipinos to the wheel and the plow. From across the Pacific they brought new flora and fauna that we now take for granted—food plants like the sweet potato, cassava, kidney bean, peanut, tomato, pineapple, squash; and domestic animals like the duck, goose, ox, and horse. Over the years, they organized the resources (to be sure, including indio forced labor) to build roads, irrigation systems, fortifications, bridges, ports, and other public works. It is very telling that even at the height of the revolution, parishioners frequently protected and sheltered their *curas párrocos* (parish priests), and that the Catholic faith in the Philippines has remained strong to this day.

One can sense the idealism and zeal of the early missionaries and converts who traveled across the seas to an unknown land, at the risk of martyrdom. Hilarion Asunción depicts Fr. Martin de San Nicolas de Zaragoza, a young Spanish Recollect friar who, according to the inscription on the painting, died a terrible death in 1632, grilled fifteen hours over a low fire. The Italian Jesuit Francisco Paliola was killed, evidently beheaded, in a place called Ponot in Mindanao while evangelizing in 1645. More recently, Fr. Victor Ballanas was wounded and killed in a 1909 encounter allegedly with members of the Philippine Independent Church (“Aglipayans”), which was founded by native priests who broke away from the Catholic Church during the Revolution against Spain.

People liked to have images of their respective name saints, e.g., the painting of San Norberto painted by Hilarion Asunción for Don Norberto Castor of Guagua, Pampanga. Going one step further, people sometimes had themselves painted as their patron. Paintings of saints are not necessarily faithful likenesses and the subjects of such works are identified principally through costume, hairstyle, apparent age, attributes, and other characteristics. (16th century Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán used to portray fashionably dressed Spanish matrons with a palm leaf, a wheel, an ointment bottle, or whatever it was that alluded to the sitter’s saint of choice.) The 1873 San Roque by Simon Flores de la Rosa has such distinctive features that it could well have been painted to resemble the owner or perhaps a revered priest.

It was also common in Europe for donors or owners of altarpieces to have themselves pictured at prayer before the holy images. This was evidently followed in the Philippines as well. Mariano Asunción’s painting of Nuestra Señora del Pilar, patroness of the wealthy Manila district of Santa Cruz, shows kneeling worshipers who could well have been real people. The iconography of San Isidro includes the farmer Isidro, his landlord Juan de Vargas (*the patrón*) and angels plowing and harrowing a field. (God sent angels to finish Isidro’s tasks so he could hear Mass.) The great variety in the appearance of the *patrón*—sometimes with Caucasian, mestizo-sanglely or indio features; in Barong Tagalog or suit; at times young or old, fat or thin—suggests that these images could be portraits.

The charming little painting of San Isidro Labrador, who is the patron saint of Madrid and of farmers and laborers, is attributed to Juan Arceo. San Isidro is painted with a kneeling landlord wearing a black tailcoat and white dress pants, possibly a portrait of the Spanish officer for whom the painting was made. It is also possible that the *naturales*, who stand at either side of the nativity group in the icon from Bohol, were also the same persons who commissioned the painting.





**JUAN ARCEO (Attrib.),** *San Isidro Labrador*, Late 18th Century, Oil on panel, 35.5 x 28 cm  
 San Isidro is painted with a kneeling landlord wearing a black tailcoat and white dress pants, possibly a portrait of the Spanish officer for whom the painting was made.





**ANONYMOUS**, *Portrait of Sy Jao*, Circa 1890, Oil on canvas, 156 x 104 cm

Sy Jao and his mother with his son, shown in a pair of portraits in the BSP collection, would have been the first and second-generation ancestors of a Filipino-Chinese family.



Colonial business activity centered on the galleon trade that lasted from 1565 to 1815. Porcelain, silk and other trade goods were imported from China and other Asian countries and then exported across the Pacific to Mexico and ultimately to Europe. Importers were mainly Chinese, while exporters were mainly Spaniards entitled to galleon cargo space. They controlled trade until the late 18th century when ships from other countries were finally allowed entry, paving the way for the establishment of British and American trading houses.

Landowners began large-scale planting of crops—rice, sugar cane, coffee, tobacco, coconut, indigo, abaca for rope—intended both for domestic consumption and for export. In the process, they cleared the forests of Central and Southern Luzon, the Cagayan Valley, Negros, and ultimately Mindanao. They splurged on mansions, furnishings, carriages, and jewelry; educated their children in Europe; imported luxuries such as ice from New England, wine from France, silks from China. They commissioned religious images and family portraits. In the 1880s, the mosaic virus ravaged coffee plantations in Brazil and other countries and for the few glorious years that it took for the disease to reach our shores (and it did), Batangas was the world's largest coffee producer and exporter. Lipa became synonymous with lavish lifestyle and conspicuous consumption.

The Chinese have always played a big role in Philippine business. Chinese merchants have been trading with Filipinos since pre-Hispanic times. During much of the Spanish regime, the Chinese Parian and Binondo districts became centers of trade in silk, porcelain and other goods for shipment to Mexico and Europe on the annual galleon.

With intermarriage, the Chinese were gradually assimilated into the local community and founded some of the Philippines' old families.



ANONYMOUS, *Portrait of Sy Jao's Mother and Sy Jao's Son*, 1860s  
Oil on canvas, 156 x 103 cm



The Chinese were also artisans—gold and silversmiths, shoemakers, cabinet-makers, brick-layers, etc. With intermarriage, they were gradually assimilated into the local community and founded some of the Philippines’ old families. Sy Jao and perhaps his mother and his son, shown in a pair of portraits in the BSP collection, would have been the first- and second-generation ancestors of a Filipino-Chinese family.

The Paternos of Manila had a remarkable series of family portraits that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries, some of which are in the BSP collection. Among them is “Man with a Queue” by Severino Flavio Pablo, one of the earliest Filipino painters known by name. Signed and dated 1852, it is one of less than a dozen of the artist’s known works. The Paterno family was founded by a Chinese immigrant named Ming Mong Lo, described as “an apothecary of Mandarin ancestry.” He arrived in the Philippines during the 18th century and adopted the name Jose Molo on his conversion to Christianity. Severino Flavio Pablo, one of the earliest Filipino painters known by name, painted the *Man with a Queue*. Signed and dated 1852, it is one of less than a dozen of the artist’s known works. The painting could be a posthumous portrait of Ming Mong Lo, shown in his pigtail and piña barong tagalog.

Ming Mong Lo is ancestor, among others, of the Paterno, Madrigal and Zamora families and had many distinguished descendants. His son, Paterno Molo (1786-1853), went into wholesale and interisland trade and was a well-known entrepreneur. His children were baptized with the surname Paterno. One of those children, named Maximo Paterno (b. 1830), carried on the family business, profiting tremendously from the coffee trade. His house occupied a whole block between Carriedo and the present P. Paterno Streets in Quiapo. He was implicated along with other prominent businessmen in the Cavite Mutiny of 1872, and was exiled for ten years in Guam. He nonetheless still sent his sons Pedro Alejandro (1857-1911), Antonio (1860-1895), Maximino (1863-1929) and Antonio, to schools in Spain. Don Maximo passed away in 1900 and appears in his old age in a Felix Martinez portrait. Pedro Alejandro was prominent in the affairs of the Spanish Colonial, Aguinaldo and American Regime governments. He has several portraits in the BSP Collection. The portrait of Antonio Paterno by Juan Luna (dedicated “A mi querido Antonio”) may have been painted soon after the sitter’s arrival in Madrid. He is shown as a pleasant young man, looking a bit uncertain in his loose suit, an *ilustrado* newly arrived from distant Filipinas, and a prospective recruit of the Propaganda Movement. Antonio took up medicine at the Universidad Central de Madrid and on his return, served as municipal doctor of Marikina where he began a private medical practice.

An Amorsolo portrait of an old lady painted in 1929 is most likely a posthumous portrait based on a photograph, and shows either Doña Teodora Devera Ygnacio (1837-d. 1902) or her niece and stepdaughter Doña Agueda Paterno (1853-1915). Doña Teodora was the third wife of Don Maximo and the sister of the formidable Don’s second wife. Doña Agueda, eldest child and daughter of Don Maximo’s second marriage, managed her father’s affairs while he was in exile and remained single. She was a well-known figure in Manila society in the late Spanish colonial period. Family history narrates that members of the Paterno family, including the two ladies, sought refuge in Pangasinan during the revolution and were unfortunately held up by *tulisanes* on the way.





**SEVERINO FLAVIER PABLO, JR.**, *Portrait of Ming Mao Lo*, 1852, Oil on canvas, 85 x 64.5 cm

Severino Flavio Pablo is one of the earliest Filipino painters known by name.

This is one of less than a dozen of the artist's known works.





**FELIX MARTINEZ**, *Maximo Paterno*, 1895, Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 49.5 cm

Maximo Paterno (b. 1830), carried on the family business, profiting tremendously from the coffee trade.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Agueda Paterno as an Old Woman*, 1929, Oil on canvas, 66 x 52 cm

Maximo Paterno's daughter managed her father's office while he was in exile, having been implicated in a mutiny against Spanish rule.



**SIMON FLORES**, *The Quiason-Henson Family*, Circa 1880, Oil on canvas, 146 x 111 cm  
Wealthy entrepreneurs like the Quiasons of San Fernando, Pampanga and Sta. Cruz, Manila, who were painted by Simon Flores de la Rosa, pose in their impressive homes.



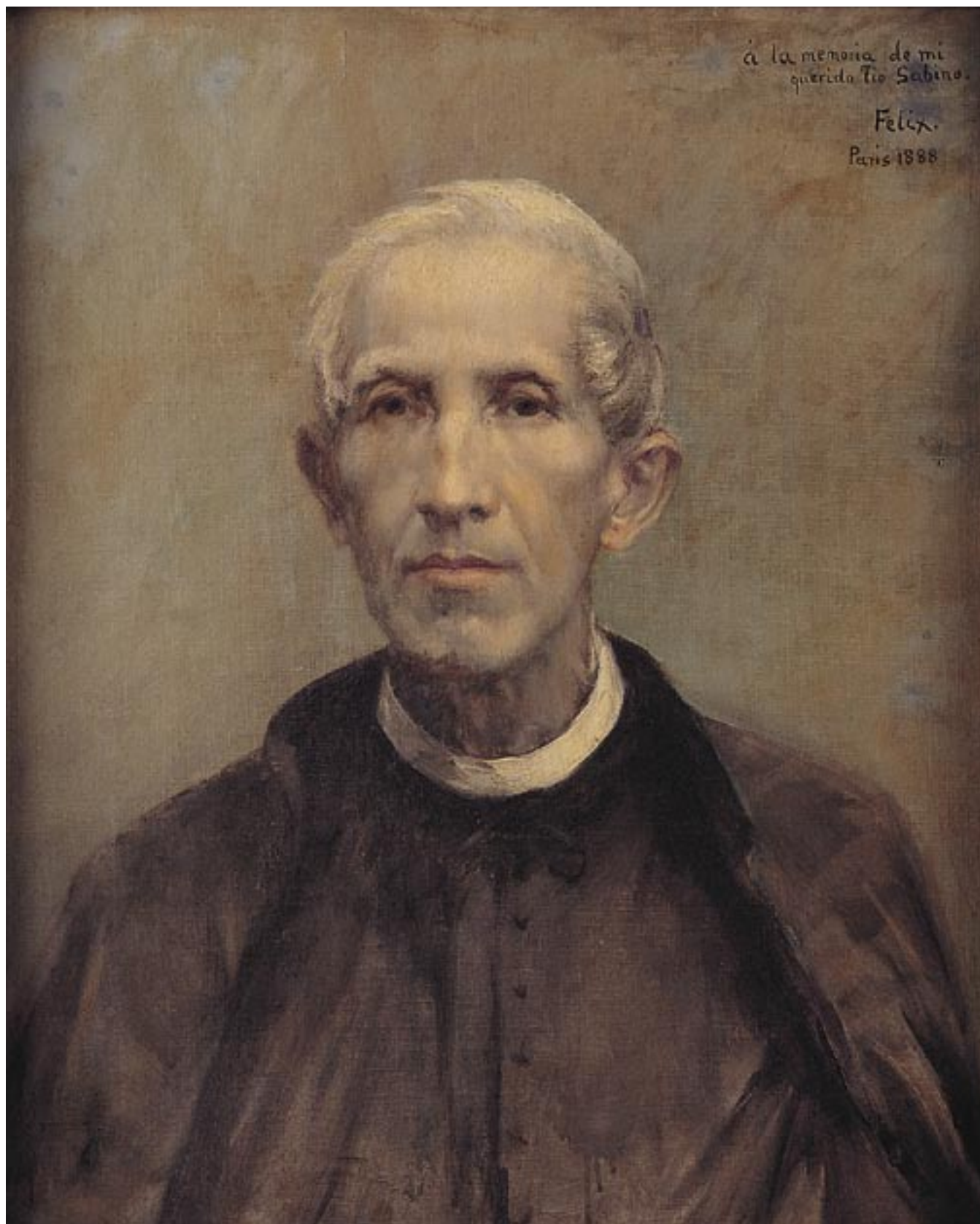
Entrepreneurs flourished, mainly in trade, agribusiness and shipping. The wealthy put their money into commercial real estate, *accessorias* for rent in places like Binondo, Sta. Cruz and Quiapo, and added to their net worth through money lending. These would have been people like the Quiasons of San Fernando, Pampanga and Sta. Cruz, Manila, who were painted by Simon Flores de la Rosa posing in an impressive sala; the unknown matriarch seated in a carpeted living room; and the ladies from Candaba, Pampanga, Doña Quintina Castor de Sadie and Doña Severina Ocampo de Arroyo, whose children—and properties—had been united in marriage.

Women were active not only in household matters. They held the money and were treasurers of family farms and other enterprises. The Paterno women were jewelers and were into weaving and embroidery. Rizal's European sojourns were supported by his eldest sister Saturnina's jewelry business. The three women in a small group portrait by an unknown artist (found in Obando, Bulacan) would have been of the same mold as their contemporaries and province-mates, the celebrated "Women of Malolos." The latter were strong women who ignored the objections of their parish priest and went straight to the Governor-General for permission to establish a school. They were activists—being both anti-friar and pro-revolution—who also managed large households, supervised haciendas and ran wholesale and retail establishments dealing in rice, textiles and European imports.

The move to secularize parishes fueled the revolutionary movement. Since the 16th century, the religious had led in evangelization, organizing parishes and serving as parish priests. In the church organization, however, parishes are under the jurisdiction of bishops. Difficulties arose when bishops began to assert their authority over parish priests who were friars and who, in turn, therefore received orders from their respective religious superiors—a classic violation of a management principle, the unity of command. A decision, therefore, was made to assign parishes to secular clergy who reported to the local bishop. Because religious orders accepted only Spaniards and secular priests were mostly indios, the dispute quickly turned racial. Filipino priests pressed for their right to serve as parish priests, while the Spanish incumbents resisted. One thing led to another and, compounded by other conflicts, a reform movement grew seeking among other things equality for Filipinos and Spaniards not only in religious but also in civil and political matters.

Matters came to a head in 1872 with a mutiny of arsenal workers in Cavite. Wages could have been the primary issue, but the government took advantage of the situation and arrested more than a hundred individuals, among them suspected leaders of the secularization movement. Some, including Filipino priests Jose Burgos (acting canon of the Manila Cathedral), Jacinto Zamora (parish priest of the Cathedral) and Mariano Gomez (parish priest of Bacoar, Cavite) were executed without evidence. Others were exiled, including businessman Don Maximo Paterno who remained in Guam for ten years. The injustices, mass executions and the ensuing repressions set into motion the train of events that led to the Propaganda Movement (note that Rizal dedicated *El Filibusterismo* to the martyrs of 1872), the formation of the *Katipunan* and ultimately the Revolution that erupted in 1896.

Fr. Jose Sabino Padilla (painted in Paris in 1888 by his nephew Felix Resurrección Hidalgo), who was attached to the Manila Cathedral, and Fr. Gregorio Noblejas were secular priests who would have benefited from early secularization. The Hidalgo portrait shows European influence in characterization and dramatic lighting, as if the gentle old priest were standing in the moonlight. On the other hand, the portrait of Fr. Noblejas by an unknown artist is more traditional, showing him as if interrupted in his meditation but with none of the characterization and *chiaroscuro* that makes the Padilla portrait so memorable.



**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO**, *Portrait of Sabino Padilla*, 1888, Oil on canvas, 66 x 54.5 cm

The Hidalgo portrait shows European influence in characterization and dramatic lighting, as if the gentle old priest were standing in the moonlight.





**ANONYMOUS**, *Padre Gregorio Noblejas*, Circa 1880s, Oil on canvas, 101 x 73.5 cm  
On the other hand, the portrait of Fr: Noblejas by an unknown artist is more traditional, showing him as if interrupted in his meditation.

The Propaganda Movement was started by children of the elite, the ilustrados, who schooled in Spain and other European countries. They published *La Solidaridad* and in general sought reform to control friar and government abuse. Rizal wrote *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* in Europe. Their days were not always lightning and thunder, however. As the forerunner of today's art *aficionados* who have themselves painted by members of the "Saturday Group," Pedro Paterno sat for four artists. (He fancied himself as a scion of ancient Tagalog nobility and styled himself "Prince of Luzon.") The resulting works, possibly all done in Rome in 1892, are in the BSP collection. A painter named Puerto showed him in three-quarters right profile, Juan Luna painted him facing front, and Miguel Zaragoza did his left profile. Spanish Sculptor Mariano Benlliure must have modeled Paterno's head in clay which the artist would later cast in bronze. (About half a dozen monuments standing today on Madrid's plazas and streets are by Benlliure.)

Matters grew from bad to worse back in the Philippines and in 1892, Andres Bonifacio organized the Katipunan with revolution as the objective. Hostilities began in August 1896 and suspected revolutionaries were caught, given summary trials and executed. Rizal, already on his way to Cuba to join the Spanish army medical corps, was arrested and shot on December 30, 1896. Peace was restored with the *Pact of Biak na Bato* in November 1897, mediated by Pedro Paterno. Among other things, the Pact provided for the exile of Emilio Aguinaldo and other revolutionary leaders to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the Spanish-American War erupted and the U.S. invaded the Philippines. The American fleet, commanded by Admiral George Dewey ("You may fire when ready, Gridley"), sank the Spanish navy in the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. Aguinaldo returned from Hong Kong via an American gunboat with the understanding that the United States would support the revolution against Spain. Aguinaldo quickly rallied the troops, declared independence on June 12, and encircled Manila. However, the United States government decided to make the Philippines a colony. On August 13, the Spaniards surrendered to the Americans rather than to Aguinaldo, whose forces were already in control of most of the country.

Matters were getting more and more uncomfortable and in September, Aguinaldo decided to transfer the capital from Cavite to Malolos, Bulacan. The Malolos Congress was convened, with Pedro Paterno as President of the Revolutionary Congress. A Constitution was written. In December 1898, the Spanish-American War ended with the Treaty of Paris. Among other things, the Treaty provided for the transfer of the Philippines to the United States, much to Filipino dismay. Soon after, in February 1899, the first shot of the Filipino-American War was fired. The war lasted more than two years, continuing until Aguinaldo was captured in Palanan in March 1901.

Peace gradually returned. The ever-resilient Paterno emerged as a member of the Philippine Commission, the interim lawmaking body organized by the Americans, together with other stalwarts such as Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera and Benito Legarda. However, the flame of nationalism and hopes of independence refused to be extinguished. Memories of the revolution remained alive and the heroes of the revolution were revered. The old couple, painted in 1911 by L.D. Tecson, appears to be of a veteran of the revolution and his wife. The Gervosa portrait is more explicit, of a *revolucionario* still wearing his striped *rayadillo* uniform against a waving red Katipunan flag—itsself a form of protest.

JUAN LUNA, *Portrait of Pedro Paterno*, 1882, Oil on board, 33.5 x 23.5 cm

Pedro Paterno sat for four artists: three painters and a sculptor. The resulting works, possibly all done in Rome in 1892, are in the BSP collection.





A mi querido  
Pedro  
Roma 1968





PUERTO, *Portrait of Pedro Paterno*, 1882, Oil on panel, 35.5 x 25 cm





MIGUEL ZARAGOSA, *Portrait of Pedro Paterno*, 1882, Oil on panel, 35.5 x 25 cm

Memories of the revolution remained alive and the heroes of the revolution were revered.



**L.D. TECSON**, *Old Man in Americana Cerrada*, 1911, Oil on linen, 71.5 x 56 cm  
The old couple, painted in 1911 by L.D. Tecson, appears to be of a veteran of the revolution and his wife.



**L.D. TECSON**, *Portrait of a Wife*, 1911, Oil on linen, 72 x 57 cm





**GERVOSA**, *Katipunero*, 1940s, Oil on canvas, 59 x 43.5 cm

The Gervosa portrait is more explicit, of a *revolucionario* still wearing his striped *rayadillo* uniform against a waving red Katipunan flag—itsself a form of protest.

Modernization was rapid during the American regime and the Commonwealth. The civil service was professionalized. Improvements were made on all fronts, most dramatically in health and education. American schoolteachers (known as “Thomasites”) arrived in force. The highway network and other public works were expanded and improved. The modern school system was born, with a grade school in every town, a high school in every province, and the University of the Philippines, the Philippine Normal School, and the Philippine School of Arts and Trades at the tertiary level. Promising young people were sent for graduate study in the U.S. as government scholars or *pensionados*. Luis Rivera, painted by Fabian de la Rosa in a white suit, could have been among the bright young men who helped run the civil service or some private organization.

American investment poured into mining, banking, trade and commerce, agriculture, and manufacturing and there was a large American community. Sonia Rifkin, beautifully dressed in silk, and the unknown American boy, both painted by Amorsolo, were of this circle. The Rifkin family eventually returned to the United States. In 1982, Mrs. Rifkin’s daughter gave the portrait to the BSP. The boy’s portrait may have been forgotten in the chaos of World War II and remained unclaimed in the artist’s studio until the mid-1970s, when the author purchased it from Amorsolo’s widow. In 1983, the author donated the painting to the BSP to “keep Mrs. Rifkin company”.

The Americans quickly recognized agrarian unrest among the tenants of the religious orders. The Friar Lands Act was one of the first laws of the American regime, through which government bought haciendas owned by the Augustinians, Dominicans, and other religious orders, for resale to Filipinos. While many of the buyers were already landowners, the Act at least transferred ownership to Filipinos. Opportunities also widened for ordinary people and many sailed for Alaska and California to work in canneries and farms. A legislature was organized and a series of independence missions were dispatched to Washington, D.C. to lobby for independence. Women’s suffrage was a big issue and was approved after an intensive campaign. The kindly-looking lady in the blue dress could have been among these early feminists.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO,**

*Portrait of an American Boy, undated*

Oil on canvas, 64.5 x 49.5 cm

This painting was donated to the Central Bank  
by former governor Jaime Laya.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Portrait of Mrs. Sonia Rifkin*, 1930, Oil on canvas, 105 x 78 cm

American investment poured into mining, banking, trade and commerce, agriculture, and manufacturing and there was a large American community.

Sonia Rifkin, beautifully dressed in silk, and the unknown American boy, (left) both painted by Amorsolo, were of this circle.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Imelda Cojuangco*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 145 x 86.5 cm

An Amorsolo portrait of the young Mrs. Imelda Ongsiako-Cojuangco of Tarlac and Manila typifies the generation that suffered grievously in World War II but had the strength and grace to move on.



Manila was bombed in December 1941, prelude to three years of the Second World War. Peace returned after the horrific month of February 1945, when much of Manila south of the Pasig was razed, its residents massacred by the trapped Japanese or shelled by the liberating Americans. After the Philippines became an independent country on July 4, 1946, priority was given to reconstruction and development. Business gradually revived and life resumed.

Old ways persisted and ladies were primarily concerned with making homes for their families, raising children, managing family finances, and doing charitable work. They were members of organizations such as the Catholic Women's Club and the Legion of Mary. They also tried to outdo each other and until the eve of the Oil Crisis, Martial Law and Land Reform, the rich—Negrenses and Ilongos, Pampangueños, Bulaqueños, Novo Ecijanós, Batangueños, and Quezonians—competed in the lavishness of their annual balls.

An Amorsolo portrait of the young Mrs. Imelda Ongsiako-Cojuangco of Tarlac and Manila typifies the generation that suffered grievously in World War II but had the strength and grace to move on. (Members of the Cojuangco family were massacred in February 1945 while seeking refuge in the De la Salle campus.) Mrs. Cojuangco's portrait shows her as a bejeweled young lady in the white Ramon Valera terno that she wore to a Malacañang ball. Today, Mrs. Cojuangco is a well-known civic leader and philanthropist, active in social, cultural and religious work. There was a misunderstanding and the painting entered the BSP collection through the Byzantine Manila art market. Mrs. Cojuangco tried to purchase her portrait on learning of its whereabouts, but government regulations prevented its sale. Also by Amorsolo is the portrait of Teodoro Valencia, a distinguished journalist who was a product of the American regime educational system and who also experienced the horrors of World War II. Mr. Valencia donated his portrait to the BSP in 1982.

**FERNANDO AMORSOLO,**

*Portrait of Teodoro F. Valencia*

1964, Oil on canvas, 63 x 50 cm

Also by Amorsolo is the portrait of Teodoro F. Valencia, a distinguished journalist, who was a product of the American regime educational system and who also experienced the horrors of World War II. Mr. Valencia donated his portrait to the BSP in 1982.



The Spaniards had never fully succeeded in subduing the peoples of the Cordillera highlands and Muslim Mindanao. Till well into the 19th century, contact between the peoples of the lowlands and Muslim Mindanao was made mainly when the latter raided the former for loot and slaves, which explains the watch towers that line the coasts of Visayan islands and Luzon all the way up to the Ilocos. Only after bloody campaigns were these areas conquered by the Americans and incorporated into Philippine territory. With peace, the new Filipinos began to be depicted in lowland art, such as Victorio Edades' *Moro Lass*. By way of footnote, the term "Moro" is no longer politically acceptable; one uses instead ethnic nomenclature (e.g., Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, or Samal) to refer to the Muslim peoples of Mindanao.

The underprivileged have long figured in art. Spanish 17th century artists Velasquez and Jusepe de Rivera, for example, executed numerous paintings of street urchins, beggars, the disabled and deformed. The BSP collection shows Filipino artists doing the same, from *The Blind Beggar*, a rare Telesforo Sucgang painted in 1890 before the artist left for Spain for further art study, to Amorsolo's blind old man playing the guitar, with his grandchild raptly listening. Many later artists called themselves social realists and produced marvelous portraits of *sacadas*, fisherfolk, and construction workers.



**VICTORIO EDADES,**

*Moro Lass*, 1981, Oil on plywood, 77 x 53 cm

With peace, the new Filipina began to be depicted in lowland art, such as Victorio Edades' *Moro Lass*.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Ang Dalaga*, 1929, Oil on panel, 41.5 x 34 cm

Amorsolo was for decades the portraitist of matrons and debutants, government officials, and corporate honchos.



**TELESFORO SUGGANG**, *The Beggar*, Circa 1890, Oil on canvas, 122 x 78 cm

A rare Telesforo Suggang painting in 1890, before the artist left for Spain for further art study.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *El Ciego*, 1928, Oil on canvas, 66 x 48.5 cm

Many later artists called themselves social realists and produced marvelous portraits of *sacadas*, fisherfolk, and construction workers.

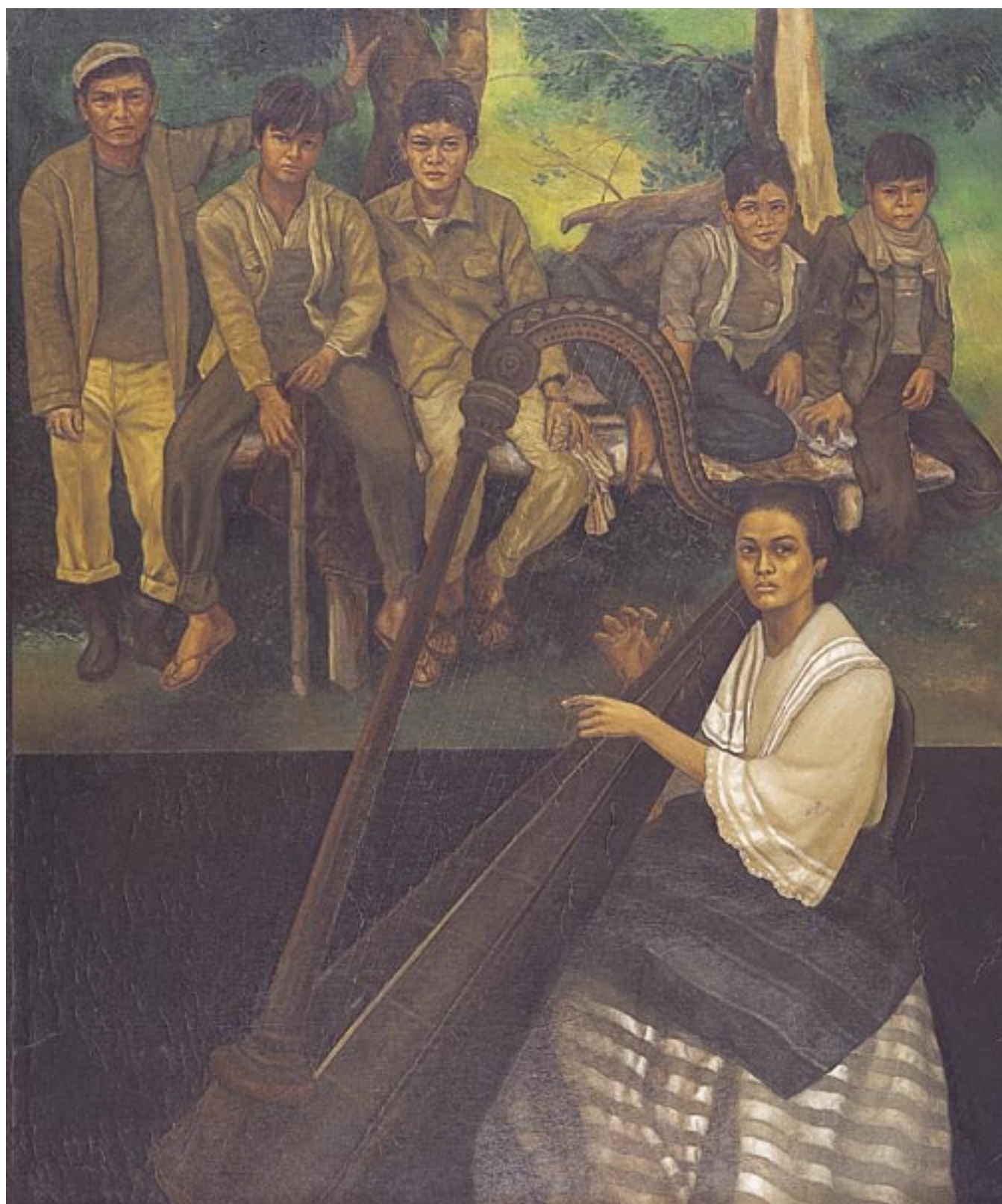
An example of this genre is Renato Habulan's evocative painting of a woman in a *baro't saya* playing the harp before a group of young and roughly dressed farm workers, possibly waiting for a ride home after the day's labors. The work eloquently underscores the wide gap between rich and poor—in dress and material possessions, as well as in mindset. There seems to be a distance between the workers and the harpist, assigning them to different physical, mental and emotional spaces. One can imagine the harpist thinking of how music enriches the life of the uncultured masses while the intended beneficiaries patiently wait, distracted and unheeding, for their truck ride home. The working classes keep the rich in comfort, yet the workers seem more at peace than the fidgety-looking woman. The workers, all real people, are unknown even to Habulan, who advised the author that he painted them from a photograph that he took while on a visit to Canlubang, Laguna. (It should be noted, however, that Canlubang was in fact one of the more enlightened sugar haciendas; its proprietors, the Yulo family, did away with the *sacada* practice of the landlord-tenant tradition, and instead hired salaried regular and seasonal field workers who, incidentally, were known as *tabaseros*.)

*Antipas Delotavo* shows an unkempt and barefoot peon before an unfinished wall of the ultra-modern Philippine International Convention Center, then being rushed for the 1976, IMF-World Bank Board Meetings. The painting, while that of an individual, is easily understood as a memorial to the thousands who labor on monumental government buildings, including those who perished in the ill-fated Film Center, and an indictment of policy prescriptions for economic stability whose consequences hit the poor most of all.



**ANTIPAS DELOTAVO**, *Sa Harap ng PICC*, 1982, Oil on canvas, 147 x 177 cm  
Antipas Delotavo shows an unkempt and barefoot peon before an unfinished wall  
of the ultra-modern Philippine International Convention Center.





**RENATO HABULAN**, *Sacada*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 121 x 106.5 cm

Renato Habulan's evocative painting of a woman in a *baro't saya*, playing the harp before a group of young and roughly dressed farm workers, is an example of portraits of sacadas, fisher folk and construction workers.

## Lifestyle

Portraits reflect the sitter's lifestyle. Dressed in their best, the 19th century elite was depicted surrounded and adorned by appurtenances of wealth and refinement. The relative peace and order of those years allowed the rich to live luxuriously, and to flaunt it. One can appreciate, too, the origins of the agrarian discontent and the *Hukbalahap* movement that would erupt in Central Luzon decades later. The homes of the affluent were full of dizzyingly expensive mirrors, bentwood furniture, lamps and chandeliers from Europe, tables topped with Carrara marble, and Persian carpets. The portrait of the long-haired Pampanga matron Miguela Henson painted by Simon Flores de la Rosa shows her at her toilette before a European style marble-top dresser table, her jewelry laid out beside a large bottle of eau de cologne.

Like Doña Soterania Puson y Quintos de Ventenilla (then one of Pangasinan's richest women) whose likeness was painted by Dionisio de Castro in 1892, upper class ladies were portrayed in their Sunday best, garbed in elaborate silk and embroidered piña, jusi or abaca. Gold, pearls and diamonds embellish the rings, *peinetas*, *criollas*, *tamborines* and *alfajores* on their hair, ears, neck and fingers. They gaze at the viewer holding handkerchief, fan, prayer book, or rosary, occasionally accompanied by an ivory image inside a bell jar. However, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, they were also hard-working entrepreneurs and indeed, brave supporters and financiers of the Philippine Revolution against Spain and the Filipinos during the Philippine-American War.



Portraits also allow us to trace the changing designs of Philippine costume and jewelry.

A.R. SANTOS, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1940, Oil on board, 46.5 x 35.5 cm  
Portraits reflect the sitter's lifestyle.





**DIONISIO DE CASTRO**, *Soterania Puson y Quintos Ventenilla*, 1892, Oil on canvas, 100 x 84 cm

Like Doña Soterania Puson y Quintos de Ventenilla (then one of Pangasinan's richest women) whose likeness was painted by Dionisio de Castro in 1892, upper class ladies were portrayed in their Sunday best, garbed in elaborate silk and embroidered piña, jusi or abaca.



**SIMON FLORES**, *Severina Ocampo de Arroyo*, 1874, Oil on canvas, 84.4 x 59.7 cm

This portrait by Simon Flores gazes at the viewer holding handkerchief, fan, prayerbook and rosary, accompanied by an ivory image.



Portraits sometimes show details of interior design, like the grand sala of the Quiason family, although they reveal only occasional glimpses of furniture and furnishings like carpets and wallpaper. However, portraits also allow us to trace the changing designs of Philippine costume and jewelry. Some paintings are so detailed as to precisely show embroidery motifs and techniques. Women used to wear a separate baro and tapis-covered saya. In the second half of the 19th century, the fashion was for wide skirts with strips of multi-colored silk or satin (the so-called “Maria Clara” after Rizal’s heroine). In the 20th century, the baro’t saya became a slim gown with a train, and made with matching colors and material (hence *terno* as a matching set of top and skirt). The tapis disappeared. Painters faithfully reproduced various embroidery types, including the difficult *sombrado*, whereby elaborately cut piña appliques were sewn with the tiniest of stitches to piña cloth.

We can also trace in portraits the evolution of the terno’s sleeves. They were tubular till the mid-19th century but became the lavishly embroidered wide “Maria Clara” sleeves of the 1880s, the still wide but stiff sleeves of the early 1900s, the stiff but large and shaped “butterfly” sleeves, and finally, the small and stiff version of today’s terno. Similarly, the large kerchief that covered shoulders first became triangular, and later the thickly starched and elaborately folded *pañuelo* of the 1930s to the 1950s that ultimately went the way of the tapis.

The BSP collection has two portraits, possibly by the celebrated Justiniano Asunción of Sta. Cruz, Manila, showing 1880s fashion. These are the Jimenez portraits—Domingo and his daughter Leticia who lived in Pandacan, Manila—which show the beautifully embroidered piña clothes of the type worn by the late 19th century elite, baro with pañuelo in the “Maria Clara” style for the young lady and a barong tagalog for her father.

These women were also hard-working entrepreneurs and indeed, brave supporters and financiers of the Philippine Revolution against Spain and the Filipinos during the Philippine-American War.



SIMON FLORES, *Quintina Castor de Sadie*, 1874,

Oil on canvas, 84.4 x 59.6 cm

Women used to wear a separate baro and tapis-covered saya.









**JUSTINIANO ASUNCION (Attrib.),** *Portrait of Leticia Jimenez*, 1870s, Photo oleo, 68 x 51 cm  
Leticia Jimenez' *baro* with *pañuelo* in the Maria Clara style shows off the fashion of the 1880s.

**JUSTINIANO ASUNCION (Attrib.),** *Portrait of Domingo Jimenez*, Late 19th Century, Oil on canvas, 70 x 52 cm  
The Jimenez portraits – Domingo (opposite) and his daughter Leticia (above) show the beautifully woven piña clothes of the type worn by the late 19th century elite.

Amorsolo portraits of two ladies show fashions of the 1930s—single-piece, floor-length gowns with matching top and skirt and a meticulously folded pañuelo. By then, the tapis had gone out of fashion and sleeves had already become shorter, shaped and stiff. The elderly lady wearing a gold pendant is in traditional attire, her hair in an old-fashioned bun. The other lady has a more fashionable hairdo, neckline and color scheme.

Daily wear was less elaborate and made of the rougher sinamay, woven from abaca rather than piña, such as the clothes of the mild-looking woman wearing a printed blue saya, painted by the little known A.R. Santos. Men's fashion was more static. A black tuxedo and bow tie or certain variations thereof was *de rigueur* for formal occasions until the 1950s, when President Ramon Magsaysay made the *barong tagalog* acceptable anywhere.



VICENTE VILLASEÑOR, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1891, Oil on masonite, 49 x 35 cm  
Some paintings are so detailed as to precisely show embroidery motifs and techniques.

FERNANDO AMORSOLO, *Woman with a Locket*, 1935, Oil on canvas, 66 x 49 cm  
The elderly lady wearing a gold pendant is in traditional attire, her hair in an old-fashioned bun.









**SIMON FLORES**, *Portrait of Andrea Dayrit*, Circa 1870s, Oil on canvas, 81 x 58 cm

The BSP collection has an attractive portrait of Andrea Dayrit of Pampanga, a half length that shows the confident woman in an elaborately embroidered piña *baro at panuelo*, with her left arm resting on a pinkish cushion.





**FELIX MARTINEZ**, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1908, Oil on canvas, 48 x 37 cm

The large kerchief that covered the shoulders first became triangular; and later became the thickly-starched, folded *pañuelo* of the 1930s to the 1950s.



**DIOSDADO LORENZO**, *Portrait of a Woman Holding a Banga*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 61 x 46 cm

Diosdado Lorenzo's painting of a woman in *balintawak* with an *alampay* over her left shoulder, is in greens, blues and browns.



The Filipina maiden has also metamorphosed over the years. The shy and demure Filipina of romance novels does not quite tally with a number of male expatriate reports, who tell of being doused and dunked in the Pasig River by gleeful clinging-wet damsels. However, the transition of the Filipina from the Spanish colonial period convent school *interna*, to American period public school student, to *maestra* or *farmaceutica*, suffragette, rich and bored baby boomer, and finally, to activist and NGO worker, is readily seen in portraits.

The BSP collection has an attractive portrait of Andrea Dayrit of Pampanga, a half-length that shows the confident woman in an elaborately embroidered piña baro and pañuelo, with her left arm on a pinkish cushion. Diosdado Lorenzo's painting of a woman in *balintawak* with an *alampay* over her left shoulder, is in greens, blues and browns. She looks less like a villager than a young matron costumed as a country lass. The Edades portrait of a young lady in red, on the other hand, looks like one of those "ladies who lunch"—pampered, aloof and indifferent. Demetrio Diego's painting of a girl, barefoot and sitting atop rocks by the seashore is a pleasant contrast.

The transition of the Filipina from the Spanish colonial period convent school *interna*, to present-day activist and NGO worker, is readily seen in portraits.



VICTORIO EDADES, *Lady in Red*, 1970s, Oil on masonite, 122 x 99 cm

The Edades portrait of a young lady in red, on the other hand, looks like one of those "ladies who lunch"—pampered, aloof and indifferent.

In the 1840s, Jose Honorato Lozano created an apparently uniquely Filipino art form, the *letras y figuras*. A name (or in one case, the words *Views of Manila*) is painted with letters contrived with people, vegetation and objects, against a background of Manila scenes. A portrait of the work's subject sometimes appears, unidentified, somewhere in the composition, either as a full-length figure or a half-length miniature. Almost all of the two dozen or so extant *letras y figuras* are in watercolor; only one oil is known.

The BSP collection has two *letras y figuras*, both painted by a Liliw, Laguna resident named Miguel Añonuevo in 1885. The first is of the artist's own name, "MIGUEL AÑONUEVO", and shows a festive scene. The background is of a large house—which could well be his own—with a fiesta-decorated façade behind an elaborate wrought iron fence. Perhaps it was painted to commemorate a fiesta of which Don Miguel was *hermano mayor*. An all-male band (*musikeros*) playing violins, base, flute, and trumpets, spells out "MIGUEL." Potted plants spell "AÑONUEVO." An inscription reads "Liliw, 3 de Noviembre 1885."

The second work spells EUSEBIA SOLAYBAR, possibly the artist's wife. In pencil, it shows women at various domestic tasks – picking fruit and flowers, feeding chickens, bathing in spring water under a bamboo spout, and so on. The work is actually a collage, with a pasted cutout of roses possibly from a greeting card.



MIGUEL AÑONUEVO, *Eusebia Solaybar*, 1885, Watercolor, 51 × 63.5 cm

The second work spells EUSEBIA SOLAYBAR, possibly the artist's wife. In pencil, it shows women at various domestic tasks – picking fruit and flowers, feeding chickens, bathing in spring water under a bamboo spout, and so on.





**MIGUEL AÑONUEVO**, *Miguel Añonuevo*, Late 1800s, Watercolor, 50.5 x 63 cm

The BSP collection has two letras y figuras, both painted by a Liliw, Laguna resident named Miguel Añonuevo in 1885.

## Aiming for Immortality

The passage from earthly- to after-life is an all-important event in our culture and art. Filipinos, both Christian and non-Christian, have deep-seated beliefs and elaborate rituals regarding death and burial. Nineteenth century travelers' accounts and artists' drawings describe the funeral of a child as a procession led by a band and where the dead child was carried on a platform, propped upright on a chair. Elders would record the exact ages (to the day) of children and other survivors of someone who passed away. Even today, in some parts of the country, small children are still handed over and across a dead parent's coffin, and clothes and other personal belongings of the dead are fed to a bonfire.

The Crucifixion and the Death of St. Joseph were frequent subjects of Philippine colonial art, apparently intended to comfort the dying. Possibly inspired by such death scenes, families sometimes commissioned a *recuerdo de patay* (literally, remembrance of a dead person). European painters occasionally painted the dead (e.g. Jacques-Louis David's *Death of Marat* which was, however, more of a propaganda piece), but it seems only in the Philippines that this type of art was so widespread.

Simon Flores de la Rosa did several of *recuerdos de patay* in the late 19th century. One, painted for a Bacolor, Pampanga family, hung in a bedroom. It shows a recently departed sixteen-year-old in an embroidered piña top and a striped silk skirt, lying stiffly on a four-poster bed. One can readily empathize with the poor girl's parents, but it must have scared later generations of children made to sleep in that room and bed. A similar picture is in the National Museum, of an infant lying in its crib surrounded by flowers. The Juan T. Gatbontons and the author admired the painting very much, but no one wanted to bring it home. Lest such an accomplished work be lost or destroyed, the three decided to jointly purchase the work and donate it to the Museum.



VICTOR C. DIORES, *Tomas Bordin on his Deathbed*, Circa 1920s, Oil on canvas, 51.5 x 69.5 cm  
Tomas Bordin remembered in a portrait, lying in state in a four-poster bed with lace curtains tied with blue ribbons, spread with a Chinese carpet and a straw mat (*banig*), with red pillows.





VICTOR C. DIORES, *Portrait of Tomas Bordin*, 1903-1923, After 1923, Oil on canvas, 52 x 42 cm  
He is seen in a head-and-shoulders portrait, a young man dressed in a white suit, a typical civil servant, junior executive, or professional of the early 20th century.



VICENTE VILLASEÑOR, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1891, Oil on masonite, 49 x 35 cm

The Villaseñor portrait from Nagcarlan shows a woman in mourning black, sitting before an open stand with books and writing implements, and on the wall, a cartouche with the date January 1, 1891.



Apart from the inscription in the painting that he was born on December 11, 1903 and died on March 13, 1933, the BSP has no other information on Tomas Bordin. He is seen in a head-and-shoulders portrait, a young man dressed in a white suit, a typical civil servant, junior executive, or professional of the early 20th century. He is also remembered in a second portrait, lying in state in a four-poster bed with lace curtains tied with blue ribbons, spread with a Chinese carpet and a straw mat (*banig*), with red pillows.

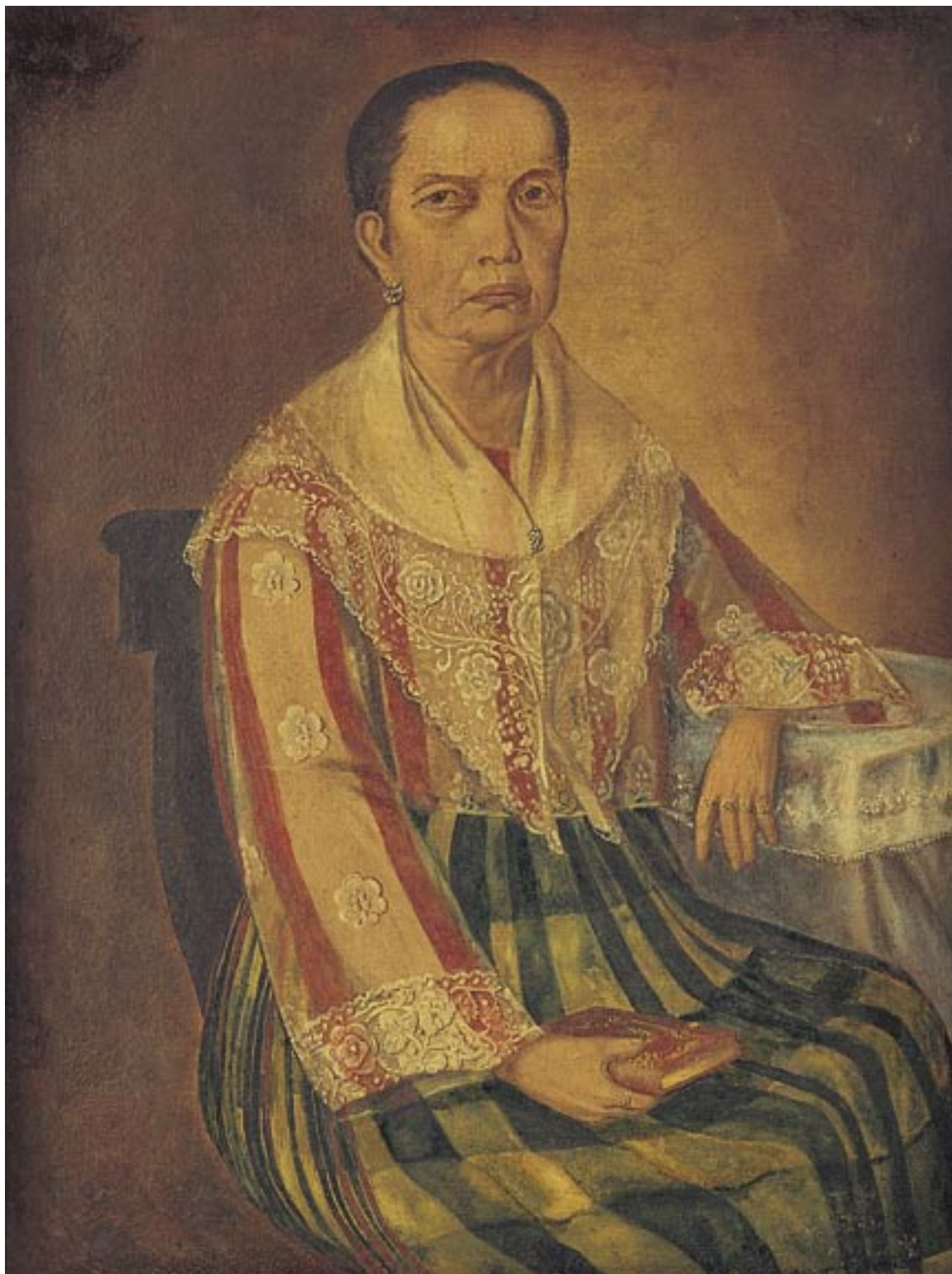
Don Mariano Villafranca was among the naturales who occupied senior positions in the Spanish colonial civil service. He was appointed to the judiciary and to other posts enumerated in the *cartellino* of his portrait by Justiniano Asunción, which also states that he died in Sta. Cruz, Manila on 27 October 1878 at the age of 48 years, three months and five days. Unlike the portrait of his vivacious wife Filomena Villafranca (Eleuterio Pascual collection) also by the same artist, this work shows Don Mariano standing stiffly and gazing steadily at the viewer. It is possible that the latter had been badly damaged at some point and vandalized in restoration. However, it is in all likelihood a *recuerdo de patay*, too, very much like a similarly lifeless Asunción portrait of a Biñan, Laguna worthy (till recently with the sitter's descendants, the Carillo family) that is explicitly labeled "Fue retratado siendo cadaver..." (The portrait of a corpse!)

Till the 1930s, photographs were commonly taken at the gravesite, just before burial, with the open coffin surrounded by the bereaved. A recently published book (Tahanan: A House Reborn, by Reynaldo G. Alejandro and Vicente Roman S. Santos) reproduces a photograph taken at the 1915 Malabon burial of an old lady. She is shown in her tilted coffin, full length and frontally, looking for all the world as if she were posing with the widower, their grown children, grandchildren, relatives, and neighbors. The same book reproduces photographs of several children who died in infancy at various times, all lying in state.

It is also likely that two Laguna portraits in the BSP collection, while not necessarily of cadavers, were painted to mark a death. The Villaseñor portrait from Nagcarlan shows a woman in mourning black, sitting before an open stand with books and writing implements, and on the wall, a cartouche with the date January 1, 1891. A painting's date is normally inscribed inconspicuously and indeed, is often entirely missing. Its prominence in the portrait is obviously of significance and is most likely the day the sitter died or was widowed. The second portrait is of a woman from Liliw that has the inscriptions "1894" and "A la edad de 47 años y 3 meses", most probably the sitter's exact age at the day in 1894 when she passed away.

Unfortunately, there is no foolproof way of assuring immortality. The Philippine Family Code and tradition call for equal division of family wealth with each generation. Heirlooms therefore tend to be dispersed every twenty-five years or so. It is also frequent practice to leave ancestral homes and heirlooms to unmarried children, thinking of them as reliable custodians. However, maiden aunts or uncles have been known to bequeath the family patrimony to doctors, nurses and friends who took care of them in their final days, rather than to nephews and nieces who never bothered to visit, or worse, who had demanded their inheritance even while the elders were still breathing.

As old high-ceilinged ancestral homes are torn down, sold off or rented out, what to do with their furnishings becomes a problem. Not everything is divisible and over-scale furnishings and old portraits simply don't fit into the bungalows, townhouses, or condos to which descendants move, or the smaller houses and apartments they buy when they migrate. Some people simply don't care about people they never saw, ancestor or not. It is awkward and difficult to decide which heir gets a valuable painting. All too often the decision is made to sell (ancestral portraits, *recuerdos de patay*, and all else) and split the cash.



**ANONYMOUS**, *Eulogia Aliño de Hidalgo*, Undated, Oil on canvas, 65 x 49.5 cm

A cursory glance is all it takes to see Doña Eulogia Aliño de Hidalgo of Boac, Marinduque as the archetypal Filipina matriarch of old.



## The Art of Portraiture in the Philippines

Our first known portraitists are Damian Domingo (whose surviving works include miniatures of early 19th century governors-general, of landowner and merchant Domingo Roxas, and of various relatives) and Severino Flavio Pablo (who seems to have worked mainly for religious orders). They were followed by a number of others, with Antonio Melantic, Juan Arceo, Ysidro Arceo, and Justiniano Asunción among the best known. In the 1890's, the most sought-after portraitists were Juan Luna, Felix Resurrección Hidalgo and Fabian de la Rosa.

There was no lack of portraitists available to the 19th century provincial gentry, who could be painted during a Manila trip or who could invite a Manila artist to visit. Simon Flores de la Rosa lived in Bacolor, Pampanga and painted Central Luzon rice and sugar plantation owners. Vicente Villaseñor did the same in the provinces of Tayabas (now Quezon) and Laguna for coconut planters. The reputation of Antonio Melantic, recorded as a resident of Manila's Binondo district, rests on his portraits of an elderly Padilla and his grandson (who grew up to be the painter Felix Resurrección Hidalgo), and of members of the Francia family of Pagsanjan, Laguna. Justiniano Asunción painted not only Manileños but also the Biñan, Laguna elite. Dionisio de Castro of Pangasinan is best known through his portrait of Doña Soterania Puzon de Ventenilla. There were also active limners in Bulacan (i.e.g., Emiliano and Crispin Lopez), Ilocos (e.g.i.e., L. Giron), and other provinces.

More recently, Diosdado Lorenzo, Fernando Amorsolo, Carlos "Botong" Francisco, Victorio Edades, Vicente Manansala and Federico Aguilar Alcuaz were in high demand for portraits. Amorsolo was active from the 1920s until he passed away in 1972. Botong Francisco was famous for his murals and scenes of local life, while Vicente Manansala developed his own style of "transparent cubism", but both also could and did excellent portraits, such as Botong's portrait of Alejandro Roces (sitter's collection) and Manansala's portraits of his family and friends. Among young people and the artistic crowd, Onib Olmedo succeeded in capturing likeness and personality without departing from his characteristic expressionist distortions and limited palette. These days, a few artists like Gig de Pio specialize in portraits and others like Benedicto Cabrera (Bencab), Jaime de Guzman and Elmer Borlongan can also be persuaded to do exceptional portraits.

Painters of the 19th century tended to be miniaturists, faithfully reproducing every rosary bead, or each stone and pearl of the subject's many rings, and exquisite piña embroidery down to the last stitch of exquisite piña embroidery. In a few cases, the actual clothes worn by the sitter still exist and match to the smallest detail the painted needlework.

Artists also followed accepted conventions in the sitters' pose and facial expression, including important details such as the disposition of hands and fingers. Portraits were usually half-length. They were also usually of individuals, which makes the mother-and-child portrait attributed to Hilarion Asunción uncommon. Group portraits are very rare in Philippine art and the Quiason family portrait by Simon Flores de la Rosa is one of only two of this genre known to the author, the other one being another Quiason family group (Locsin collection), also by Simon Flores. It was only later that artists became more creative in composition and background, and in other respects adopted more painterly techniques, even as they skillfully simulated varying textures of silk, piña, abaca, jusi and the glint of precious metals and stones.

The best portrait painters are praised for their success in reading and depicting their subject's character. Strength of personality, haughtiness, wistful melancholy, or kindness, show clearly in the best works. A cursory glance is all it takes to see Doña Eulogia Aliño de Hidalgo of Boac, Marinduque as the archetypal Filipina matriarch of old—no-nonsense disciplinarians who managed their households and properties, and raised their children, all the while keeping an eye on potentially errant husbands who concentrated on politics, or were engaged in prestigious but poorly-paying professional work.

While in Paris, Felix Resurrección Hidalgo did two portraits of his mother (1888 and 1897), portraying her as a mild-mannered lady seen through the eyes of a loving and homesick son. The Manila Hidalgos were landlords with rental property in the business and residential districts of Quiapo, Sta. Cruz and Binondo, and their lives could have been less stressful than that of the Marinduque Hidalgos who grew coconut and abaca, and sailed inter-island ships.

Portraits of the artist's family and friends are often more interesting and accomplished, being painted more spontaneously and perhaps more affectionately than commissioned works. Simon Flores painted a small portrait on ivory of his brother-in-law, the unassuming-looking Monsignor Ignacio Pineda Tambungui of Bacolor and Guagua, Pampanga. Justiniano Asunción painted his Paterno and Carillo relatives in what are some of the most striking Philippine portraits of the 19th century. In a virtuoso performance, Juan Luna is reputed to have painted half a dozen family members in a single day. Vicente Manansala painted, just after World War II when art patrons were few, extraordinary and quite unusual, formal portraits of relatives and friends. Dashed off with little effort to flatter, and using the cheapest of material, Manansala succeeds in showing the simplicity and tenacity of ordinary Filipinos.



**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO**

*Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1888*

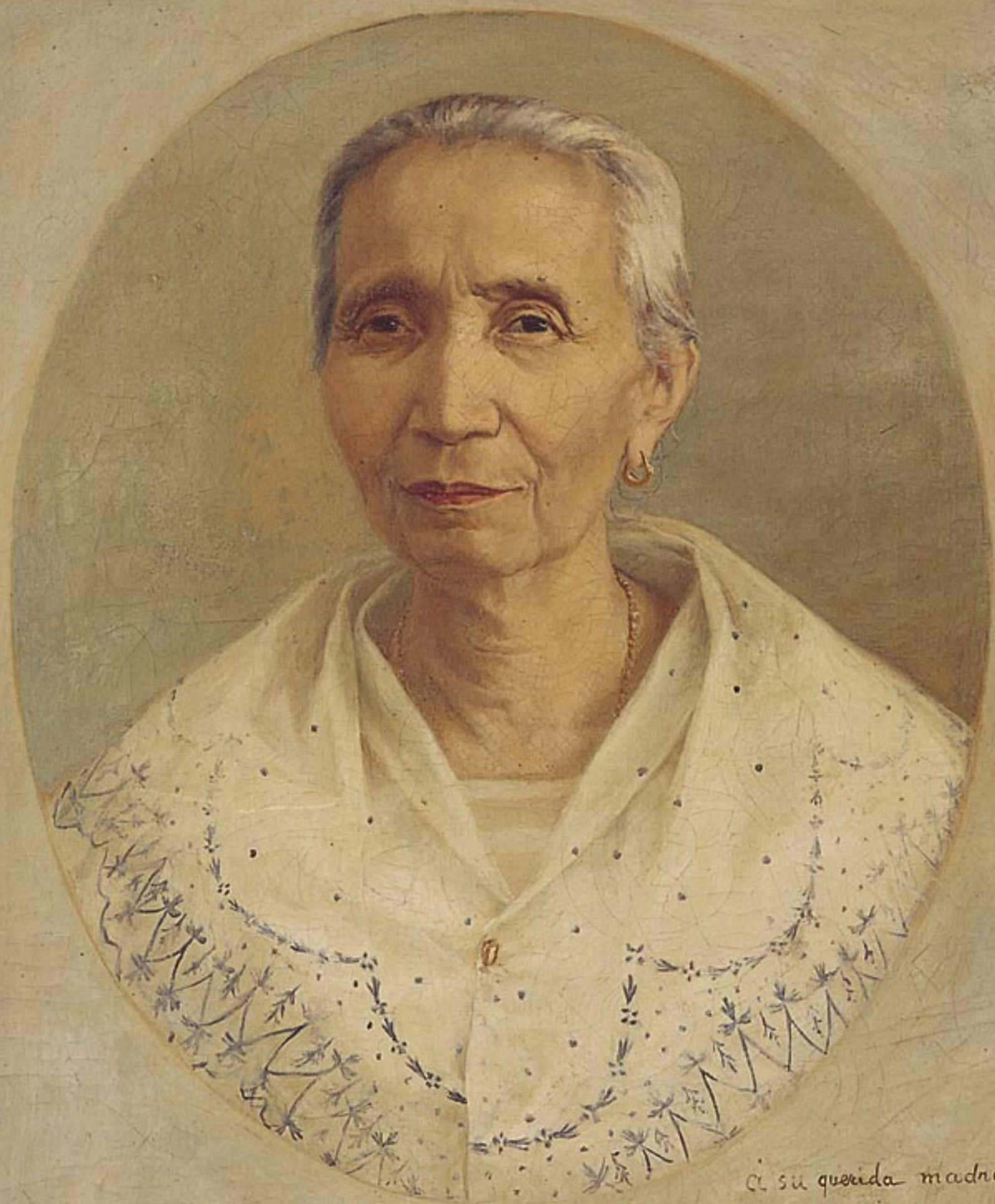
Oil on canvas, 66 x 55 cm

**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO,**

*Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1897, Oil on canvas, 62.3 x 48.3 cm*

While in Paris, Felix Resurrección Hidalgo did two portraits of his mother (1888 and 1897), portraying her as a mild-mannered lady seen through the eyes of a loving and homesick son.





à sa querida madre

Felix R. Hidalgo

Paris/897.

Amorsolo was for decades the portraitist of choice of matrons and debutantes, government officials, and corporate honchos. He was obviously uninspired in many of these, but his family portraits are different, notably those of his first wife Salud and of Maria, his second wife, and their children. Family members also posed for Amorsolo's genre works. *Woman Reading* is his wife Maria del Carmen Amorsolo. The painter's daughter, Sylvia Lazo tells the author that the artist's handyman Marcelo ("Mang Elo") Buenaventura is the *sabungero* (cockfighter) or a bystander depicted in many an Amorsolo. The *Smiling Girl* is based on one of the maestro's daughters. A son of Jorge Pineda also told the author that the painter's genre works feature relatives and neighbors inveigled to pose—notice how the same old lady is absorbed at *panguingue* in one painting and at *sungka* in another.

Artists frequently paint self-portraits, a specialized type of painting that has attracted connoisseurs over the centuries. The Uffizi Gallery in Florence has the world's largest collection of artists' self-portraits, gathered since the days of the Medicis. Rembrandt painted over sixty (60) self-portraits, about one each year till his death, and the series constitutes a vivid and tragic visual autobiography that chronicled his rise to success and tragic fall to penury. The BSP collection has self-portraits of Victorio Edades and Jaime de Guzman. The latter also has remarkable self-portraits in the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the National Museum.

De Guzman's work, entitled *Las Flores Para Dante*, has many meanings. With great imagination and subtlety, the artist juxtaposes images and colors: white flowers, the Black Nazarene of Quiapo, the Philippine flag, the triumph of death, and two portraits of himself. What could the dead be, for whom flowers are offered—lost illusions, forsaken dreams and ambitions, wasted years, abandoned hopes, unanswered prayers?



VICENTE MANANSALA

*An Old Woman*, Undated  
Oil on burlap, 61 x 46 cm





**VICENTE MANANSALA**, *Portrait of an Old Man*, 1945, Oil on canvas, 58 x 43.5 cm

Vicente Manansala painted, just after World War II when art patrons were few, extraordinary and quite unusual, formal portraits of relatives and friends.



**FABIAN DELA ROSA**, *Portrait of Luis Rivera*, 1921, Oil on canvas, 61 x 54 cm  
Portraits were usually half-length. They were also usually of individuals.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Woman in Blue*, 1944, Oil on canvas, 51 x 41 cm  
The kindly-looking lady in the blue dress could have been among the early feminists.



Portraiture is a long standing tradition in the West. The happy combination of active patronage, continuing artistic creativity, and a system of apprenticeship and training enabled European artists to produce masterly portraits by the Middle Ages. Titian was painting Charles V and his son Philip II at the time of the Spanish arrival on our shores in the 16th century.

Filipinos easily learned the art of engraving, and 17th and 18th century books had illustrations by masters such as Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay. They also learned the art of miniature painting, probably using as models similar objects brought from the old country. However, the art of painting on canvas or panel is different in its larger scale and with its unfamiliar colors, materials and techniques.

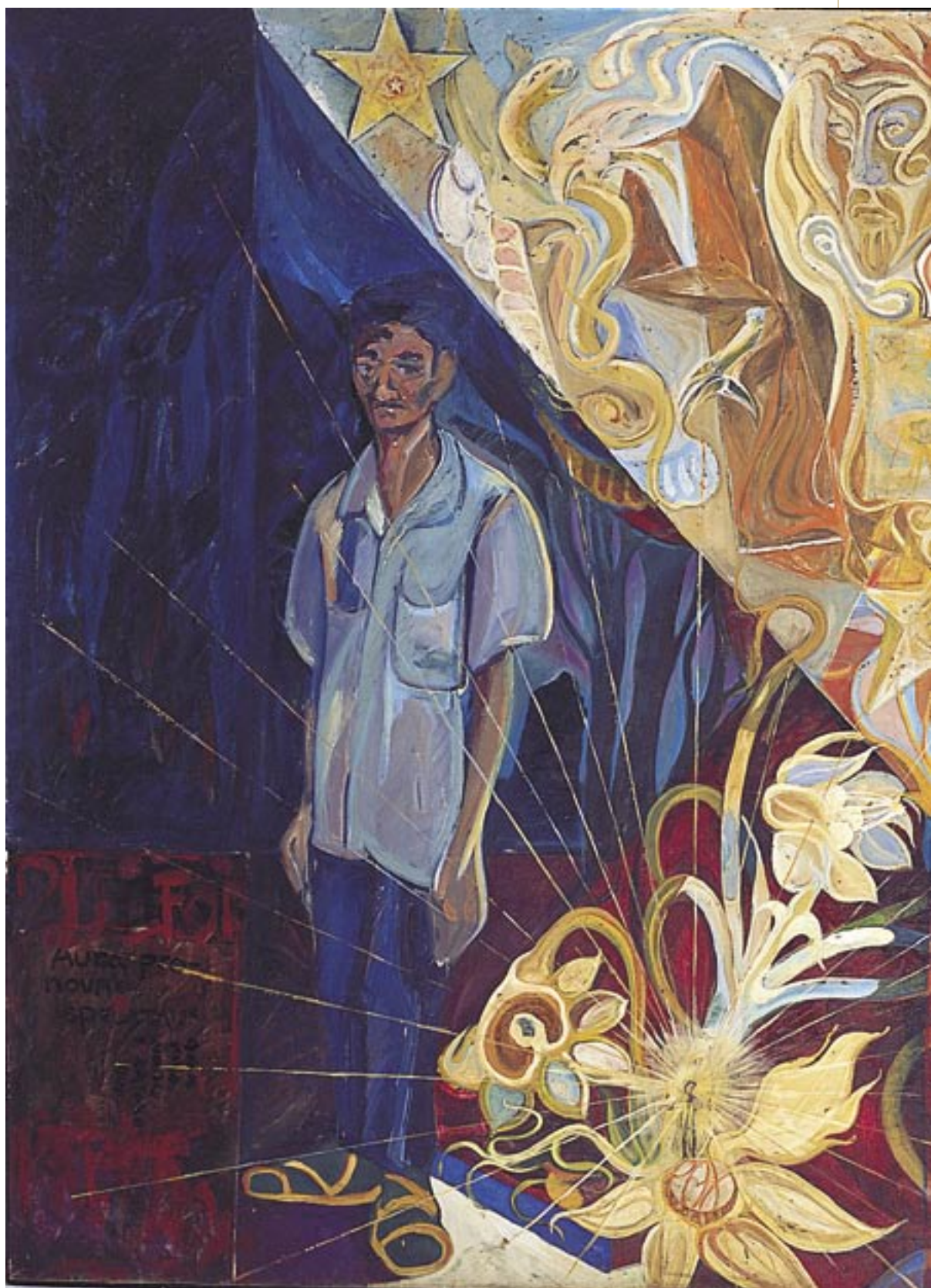
Spanish civic and religious officialdom were the first local art patrons, commissioning religious scenes, portraits of archbishops and government functionaries, saints and martyrs, as well as wall decorations. Early works would have been done by peninsulares—painters among Spain-or Latin America-born friars, soldiers, and civil servants, e.g., architects and surveyors—and in due course, by their indio or sangley assistants. Till Mexican independence and the end of the galleon trade in 1815, the Philippines was governed through Mexico and artistic influences presumably followed the same route. After ties were broken, contact with Spain became both direct and more frequent. One is therefore tempted to think of Philippine portraiture as the oriental branch of the long and distinguished history of Spanish portraiture, an area in which some of that country's greatest painters—including El Greco, Diego Velasquez and Francisco Goya—excelled.

Formal instruction in painting began with the creation of the Academia de Dibujo in 1823 (though it closed soon after) and early local painters and portraitists would have learned mainly from engravings that found their way to the Philippines. There must have been few or no works by the great European masters or, at most, copies thereof, that could have instructed and inspired these early painters. The portrait of King Fernando VII that arrived in 1825 was by First Spanish Court Painter Vicente López, but it could hardly have been an influence on the artists of the time, being inaccessible at the Ayuntamiento and naturally being in a regal style.

A revitalized Academia de Dibujo y Pintura opened in 1850 on Cabildo Street in Intramuros as a satellite of Spain's premier art school, the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. Its first professors were San Fernando-trained, notably Agustin Saez who was with the Manila Academia from the 1860s to the 1880s. They brought copies of works of Spanish and Italian masters including Velasquez, Murillo, Alonso Cano, de Rivera, and Reni. Some of Saez's students, including Juan Luna, Felix Resurrección Hidalgo and Lorenzo Rocha went on to Spain on government scholarships for further art studies. Amorsolo trained at Madrid's San Fernando and acknowledged the famous painter Joaquín Sorolla as a major influence. He returned to the Philippines and was professor and Director of the then UP School of Fine Arts, where he taught or influenced generations of artists.

The earliest signed and dated portrait in the BSP collection, the *Man with a Queue* of 1852 suffers from poor anatomy and perspective, even as it compares favorably with works of self-taught American limners of the same period. Talent certainly abounded and artists exposed to mainstream Spanish art excelled quickly. Luna, Rocha and possibly others received portrait commissions from the Spanish nobility, suggesting that their works were considered comparable with those of established portraitists such as Mariano Fortuny, Ignacio Pinazo, Federico de Madrazo, Ramón Casas, and Eduardo Rosales.

One can only speculate how the art of Philippine portraiture could have developed had our artists known first-hand the works of 19th and early 20th century European and American masters. At the same time, it is important to realize that Filipinos now create works like the De Guzman



**JAIME DE GUZMAN,**  
*"Las Flores" Para Dante,*  
1971, Mixed media, 207.5 x 336.5 cm  
The self-portrait of De Guzman is  
entirely Filipino in terms of its impact  
and distinctive style.





self-portrait. While it bears traces of international influence—a Mexican undertone if you will—de Guzman’s work is entirely Filipino in terms of its impact and is entirely in his own distinctive style. It is clear that artists like de Guzman can hold their own, rivaling today’s best portrait artists, anywhere. Philippine art does not march to a different drummer.

## Roots: The People who Built the Filipino Nation

The National Portrait Gallery in London is fascinating. Founded in 1856, it was intended from the start to be “a gallery of original portraits, such portraits to consist as far as possible of those persons who are most honourably commemorated in British history as warriors or as statesmen, or in arts, in literature, or in science.” Works are chosen on the basis of sitters’ achievements, not on a work’s artistic merit, though many are masterpieces done by the greatest artists of their day. Today, the gallery’s primary collection consists of some 10,000 portraits, of which about 4,000 are paintings, sculpture or miniatures.

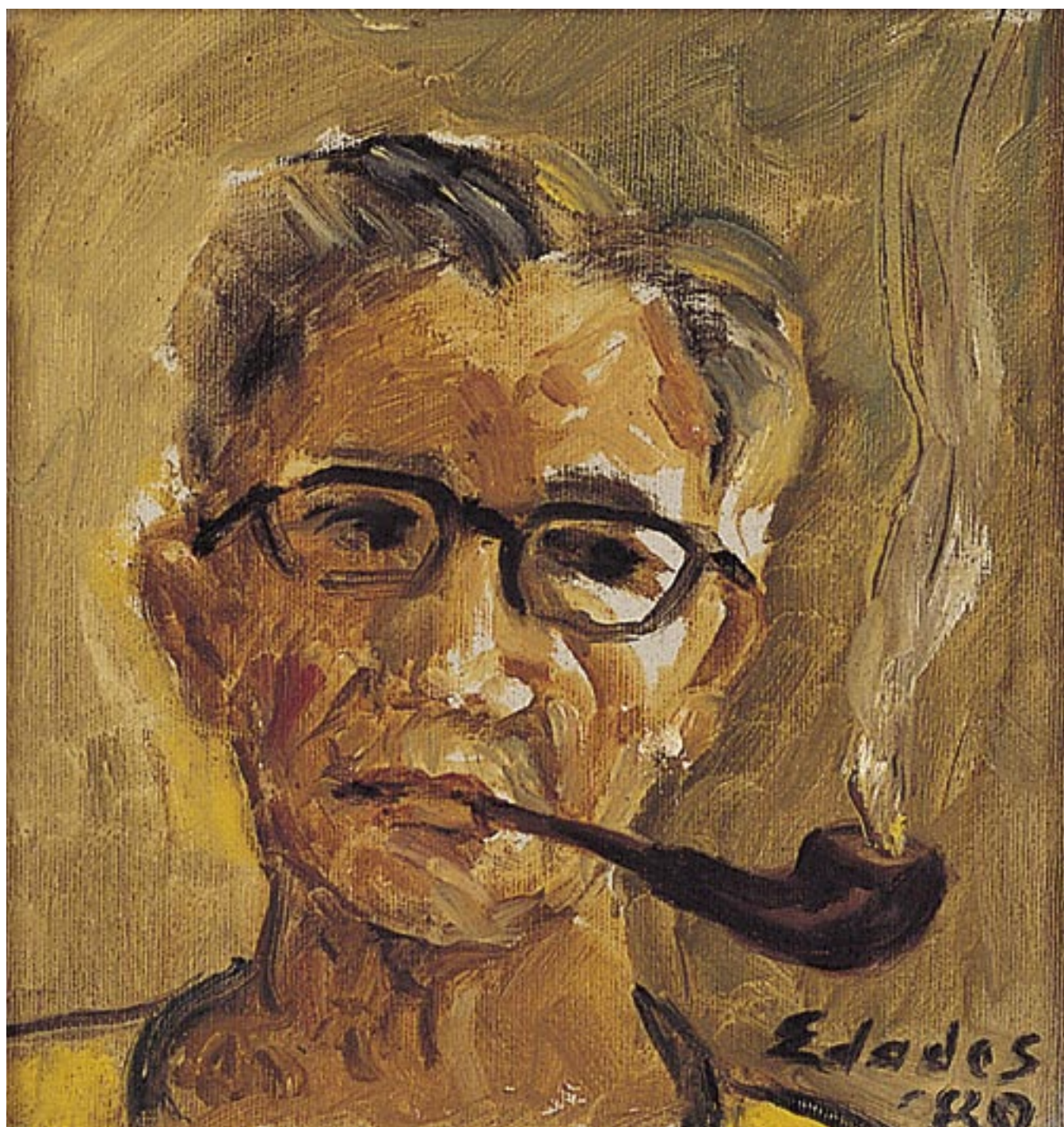
Each day, crowds of schoolchildren and adult visitors—close to a million and a half each year—see how personalities of the past looked like: British monarchs from Henry VII and Henry VIII to today’s Elizabeth II; diplomats and soldiers including the Duke of Marlborough (who humbled Louis XIV) and the Duke of Wellington (victor of Waterloo who captured Napoleon); painters and sculptors, musicians and architects, writers—Joshua Reynolds to Francis Bacon, George Handel to John Lennon and Andrew Lloyd Webber, Christopher Wren to Norman Foster, William Shakespeare to D.H. Lawrence; Prime Ministers and Members of Parliament—Lord Melbourne, Winston Churchill, Tony Blair; leaders of the church; scientists and inventors—Isaac Newton, Richard Arkwright; leaders of industry; sports champions; achievers in whatever field who helped put the “Great” in Britain.

People one has only read about remain alien, until one sees their faces and they suddenly come alive. Names and history become more real, and even the casual visitor readily sees how the exhibits give not only knowledge and aesthetic pleasure, but also reinforce love of country and pride in a noble past. It is also easy to see them inspiring determination in young minds, to be of service to their country in due time.

The Philippines does not have a rich tradition of portraiture and the BSP collection is the closest the country has to a national portrait gallery. Through it, we have a better idea of the people who made the Philippines what it is. The sitters may have long become dust, but their likenesses survive. Little may be known of their lives, perhaps even their names have been lost, but they can be regarded as representatives of their respective eras, social classes and occupations. On Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas walls we imagine an assembly of past leaders of church and state, captains of industry, pioneers of science, social butterflies or ordinary people—rich and poor alike.

The vague past becomes vibrant present as portraits flesh out names in history books, old accounts and family trees. In studying their faces, clothes, and expressions, we discover our roots and begin to understand a bit more of the lives, times, character, attitude, and concerns of the people who have made the Philippines what it is. In so doing, we learn more of ourselves and of today’s Filipino. 🌿





VICTORIO EDADES, *Self-Portrait*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 22.5 x 22 cm

Artists frequently paint self-portraits, a specialized type of painting that has attracted connoisseurs over the centuries.





The Governor's conference room features paintings that depict typical rural scenes.









MAGBABANIG by Angelito Antonio graces a quiet corner  
at the BSP Executive Business Center.



# gunità

MEMORY, HISTORY, SOCIETY

by Alice G. Guillermo





FERNANDO AMORSOLO, *Woman with Banga*, 1938, Oil on canvas, 55 x 40 cm



*Some of the best art* in the country, when gathered to form a sizeable public collection such as that of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, becomes a treasure-trove and repository of the nation's collective experiences and memories. In the context of a collection such as this, art appeals both to the public sense of nationhood and common identity as to the personal or individual recollections of the members of society.

Art lies in the axis of history and society and is a privileged zone inducing thoughtful reflection, proffering options for change, as well as dynamically shaping identity through time and events. But in relation to these general functions, art is also perspectival, ever calling into play the subjective and social consciousness of the artists and the viewers who meet in the work.

The art of a country does not speak in unison but with many voices – as in the telling of a narrative from different points of view, concerns and interests. Thus, instead of a seamless national fabric, there are cuts, fissures, overlays and underlays that reveal the dominant directions and the submerged strains, as well as the various negotiations and mediations between the indigenous and the colonial, that take place in the making of art.

There is, for one, the pervasive sense of place in much of Philippine art from the late nineteenth century to the early decades of the American colonial period. After all, place, territory and space defined by conventionally determined boundaries always constitute the basic premise. The new conceptual awareness of geographical definitions was heralded by the 17<sup>th</sup> century introduction of cartography, which was then the only secular visual form in a field entirely given to religious content. This was the map of the archipelago commissioned by the Jesuit Murillo Velarde and executed by the skilled engravers Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay and Francisco Suarez who proudly affixed the qualification “Indio tagalo” to their signatures. To be sure, this map served Spanish colonial interests in firming up their territorial claim to the colony vis-à-vis contenders such as the Portuguese, for instance. Interestingly, it had also the first secular genre scenes in the illustrations that furbished the two sides of the map. These sought to convey the setting with natural features such as plants, trees, animals, and birds labeled correspondingly, along with various indigenous inhabitants and colonial settlers in their costumes and engaged in activities appropriate to their position in the social hierarchy. The strategy of labeling the “exotic” plants and animals is without doubt an act of colonial appropriation in the view that the very naming of hitherto unknown objects gives one claim to them.

## The art of a country does not speak in unison but with many voices – as in the telling of a narrative from different points of view, concerns and interests.

One of the precious gems in the BSP collection is the mural-size work in oil on canvas by the Angono artist Juan Senson entitled *Vista Parcial de Angono y Laguna de Bay* painted in 1895 and exhibited in Manila on January 23, 1895 at the *Exposicion Regional de Filipinas*. Senson's panoramic landscape, with its remarkable freshness and clarity of style, portrays people in a natural setting. Merging nature and culture, it attests to a new optimism in a period marked by social change. Indeed, this landscape with its genre elements is one of the most fully realized late 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings in terms of spatial composition and pictorial scope even at a time when the predominant visual art form was portraiture in the miniaturist style. While the work draws from Western conventions, as in the presence of the horizon line in the area of the bay, it is not limited by a single point perspective. For, in fact, the artist's view of Angono is closer to what is called "cognitive mapping" since the artist spreads out the topography of land and water not from a single vantage point, but as the mind knows it to be configured – from various angles simultaneously.

A particularly admirable quality of the work is its atmospheric clarity, a sense of air and space in which the different human figures go about their work. It is also to the artist's credit that there is a subtle sense of rhythm and movement in the environment, as in the waters of the lake with *bancas* and in the dense grove of trees and bamboos in the background. Notably, its suggestion of humanism imbues it with a secular spirit, one that is in harmony with nature. Likewise, its secular vein harks back to pre-colonial times, and to the early period of contact with the West. For old settlements such as Angono and another lakeshore town, Paete, have memories that go back before the conquest, as Paete can claim its woodcarving tradition from before colonial times, carrying over its name from the indigenous term for "chisel."

For many decades, the early landscapes were pastoral idylls, timeless as they followed season after season of planting and harvesting with the nipa hut as human dwelling and the loyal carabao serving as man's trusty aid. There were stretches of rural countryside; sometimes Marikina or Antipolo were singled out as towns of more lively color. Felix Martinez has scenes of rice paddies with a building, perhaps a *municipio*, across the open fields sparkling with sunlight.

Fernando Amorsolo, of course, is the master of the rural landscape, with his canvases characterized by stretches of rice fields, nipa huts, spreading mango trees, bamboo groves, and rippling streams. Sometimes, there were people engaged in various communal activities in this setting.

In Cenon Rivera's work *Tao at Kalabaw*, for example, done in his stained glass style, the peasant is a Christ figure with a halo.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Midday meal in the Fields*, 1941, Oil on canvas, 62 x 87 cm

Fernando Amorsolo, of course, is the master of the rural landscape, with his canvases characterized by stretches of rice fields, nipa huts, spreading mango trees, bamboo groves, and rippling streams.



**JUAN SENSON,**

*Vista Parcial Del Pueblo De Angono Y Laguna De Bay*

Circa 1850s, Oil on canvas, 121 x 185 cm

This landscape, with its genre elements, is one of the most fully-realized late 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings in terms of spatial composition and pictorial scope even at a time when the predominant visual art form was portraiture in the miniaturist style.







In the midst of these landscapes of the agricultural cycle, the figure of woman emerged and was codified into a model of social virtue in the tradition begun by Fernando Amorsolo. She was the *dalagang bukid* depicted in a painting as a smiling young woman holding a scythe in one hand and a sheaf of grain in the other. While farmers behind her are busily engaged in the field, she stops to look at the viewer in her peasant's costume and bandana, conveying a picture of effortless toil. Another painting shows the *dalaga* smiling prettily, her headgear lifted by the breeze in the bamboo grove; this time she is holding a *banga* or clay pot, a vessel containing hot rice to feed the hungry peasants. With other men and women taking their lunch or resting in the shade of a large tree, her slim figure is silhouetted against the golden fields of harvest, as in Amorsolo's *Midday Meal in the Fields* and *Resting in the Shade*. In these paintings, one perceives the warmth, even heat, of harvest time, even as one seeks the shade of a spreading mango tree.

For a long period of time, Manila did not seem to project a presence in the provinces and, therefore, there was no sense of a centralized organization, or of a dominant body politic. In this light, folk memory and sense of place can be likened to an undifferentiated continuum of a life within nature bound up with the natural cyclical processes of birth, growing up, maturity, and death, each stage marked by rites of passage. Throughout history, the woman has always rocked the cradle as in Nestor Leynes' painting *Duyan*, where she bends solicitously over the child in the bamboo crib. She is also the one who attends to household chores, as in Vicente Manansala's *Give Us This Day*. In Carlos "Botong" Francisco's painting, woman as wife or daughter, surrounded by baskets, *bilaos*, and clay pots, prepares fish for a peasant's evening meal of sour *sinigang* soup, the light falling on her gleaming skin. Here, one sees how Francisco appreciated the aesthetics of everyday life, which started a vogue for folk arts and crafts and, later, antiques. In Teodoro Buenaventura's *Mag-Ina*, a mother passes on to her young daughter the tradition of women's work in a kitchen laden with fruits and vegetables. The young girl stands attentively to her mother's gentle admonitions while a dog peskily overturns a basket under the table.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Resting in the Shade*, 1939, Oil on canvas, 69 x 86 cm  
In this Amorsolo painting, the Filipina's figure is silhouetted against the golden fields of harvest.

**CARLOS V. FRANCISCO**, *Sinigang*, 1959, Oil on canvas, 135 x 90 cm

In Carlos "Botong" Francisco's painting, woman as wife or daughter, surrounded by baskets, *bilaos*, and clay pots, prepares fish for a peasant's evening meal of sour *sinigang* soup, the light falling on her gleaming skin.













**VICENTE MANANSALA**

*Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread*

1981, Oil on canvas, 69 x 86 cm

Throughout history, the woman is the one who attends to household chores, as in Manansala's *Give Us This Day*.





TEODORO BUENAVENTURA, *Mag-Ila*, 1936, Oil on canvas, 53 x 44.5 cm

A mother passes on to her young daughter the tradition of women's work in a kitchen laden with fruits and vegetables.



Yet it cannot be truly said that this was the only way our ancestors lived. Typical of an art historian's symptomatic reading, one necessarily invokes what is left unsaid by imagery in the visual arts. The depiction of a purely sensuous feudal existence during the American colonial period, typified by Amorsolo's idealized rural scenery, shows the reverse of the incipient social inequities and conflicts which lasted to the 1930s – periods in Philippine history which were marked by, among others, violent uprisings in the provinces of Pangasinan and Central Luzon by the so-called *colorums*, the names of their leaders, Papa Isio and Valentin de los Santos, still resounding in the collective memory. Belonging to millenarian cults, they believed that indigenous amulets, the *anting-antings*, would render them invulnerable to the constabulary's bullets, although subsequent bloody events proved them to be mistaken.

The static ahistorical images of the countryside, likewise, failed to reflect the dynamism of the coastal settlements bustling with riverine commerce, the waterways serving as arteries of communication and exchange. The natural harbors from the North to the South were also lively hubs of trade with foreign merchants, as in the long precolonial trade with China. More than any other Filipino painter, Alfredo Carmelo best captured the romance of ships at sea.

Typical of an art historian's symptomatic reading, one necessarily invokes what is left unsaid by imagery in the visual arts.



IRENEO MIRANDA, *Lavandera*, 1917, Oil on canvas, 110 x 73 cm  
The figure of woman emerged and was codified into a model of social virtue.



**PEDRO SALAZAR**, *Church of Caysasay*, Undated, Oil on linen, 67 x 95 cm  
Salazar's work was probably the prototype of many paintings of churches  
which are being used by artists as subjects today.



In time, the endless tropical *paysages* became vitalized by a new and ideological element – the Church – which literally grouped communities together “under the shadow of the bells.” In one painting in the BSP collection, Fernando Amorsolo captures the historic moment of the first baptism, an image that would leave an indelible mark on Filipino culture. On a clear day in the islands, a priest raises the host, which is the central point of the image. Behind him, a high draped cross casts its shadow while a Spanish soldier stands with his upraised lance signifying imperial power over a kneeling populace professing submission to Christianity. The spiritual significance of the event is brought out by the clarity and brightness of the atmosphere, the depth of space that opens outwards to the sea, and the areas of white and gold in the altar, the vestments and the foreign flag.

For a long time, painting and sculpture were devoted to religious subjects in the hope of gaining converts to the Catholic Church. Paintings of Christ and the saints, patrons of the various friar orders – Dominicans, Augustinians, Franciscans, Jesuits, and Recollects – adorned the many churches that were built all over the country, exemplified in the BSP collection by Damian Domingo’s *Apotheosis of Saint Thomas*. It was also Domingo who opened his atelier to students as the early *Academia de Dibujo y Pintura*. Religious sculpture in stone, wood, and ivory adorned the façades and interiors. Stations of the Cross in different folk styles were carved for the walls. On the day of the town fiesta, the patron saint was brought out in procession for townsfolk to participate. The painting and sculpture of holy figures became trades in themselves, meeting the demands not only of the ecclesiastical orders but also of lay people for their private devotions in their smaller altars at home. Guilds especially devoted to woodcarving were formed in Santa Cruz, Quiapo, and Paete. Master painters were found in Bohol with its refined church art. Leoncio Asuncion and Mariano Madrinan, both belonging to large artistic families, were widely known as carvers of *santos*. Indeed, it was religious art which won over the hearts and minds of the people.

Later, the church itself became the focal point of the visual arts. In Pedro Salazar’s painting of Caysasay Church, the building and its mission complex occupies the entire visual field even as it colonized the consciousness of the native populace. Done in a folk naïve style, the vantage point of the painting is from above in order to gain a complete bird’s eye view of the ground below. The façade of the church with its two towers is flush front, conveying an imposing aspect. Its niches with saints and the arched windows of the convent are like watchful eyes which monitor their actions. For the people living in its shadow, it had an inescapable material reality, and the course of their day was marked by the church bells calling to prayer.

The imposing Taal Cathedral is painted by Salazar in a similar style with its white stone fence which has long since been removed. There is a painting of the bells of the church in its tower: the smaller black one silhouetted against the bright space of sky, the bigger one within, tied to a post in the belfry.

Salazar’s work was probably the prototype of many paintings of churches which are being used by artists as subjects today, albeit in different forms: as architectural structures showing the fusion of the colonial and the indigenous; as centers of the community with life bustling around them; or as indicators of the passage of time.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has paintings of practically all the churches in the Philippines done in different media and in different styles. There are a number of paintings of old churches, their grounds bustling with activity.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**

*Baptism in Cebu, 1948*

Oil on canvas, 89 x 138 cm

Fernando Amorsolo captures the historic moment of the first baptism, an image that would leave an indelible mark on Filipino culture.





In his colorful style, sometimes utilizing paper collage, Manuel Baldemor depicts a procession beginning from the church of Paete and going around the spacious plaza. There is another painting that shows Quiapo church in the 1950s with vendors of different wares – herbal remedies, medals, scapulars, and candles – lined along the sides, as well as stalls of street food, with *caretelas* passing by. Vicente Manansala would later paint the huddled vendors in his neo-realist style of transparent cubism with only the ironwork boundaries as reference to the church. He would likewise do the same image in a stark black and white watercolor.

Quiapo, then, was the navel of the city where everyone converged, bereft of the heavy islands of concrete and the pretentious decorative pillars which now divide the once resounding space of Plaza Miranda. For his part, Loreto Racuya would paint Binondo Church after Mass with people and carriages gathered in front. Leonardo Hidalgo followed suit by painting the back of the same church taken over by various establishments – a picture of urban commerce encroaching upon religious space. But even in these paintings there still remains the spirit of conservative restraint and recollection, for they do not as yet account for the milling crowds and the feverish activity that marked these populous districts in the 1970s. Indeed, Rodolfo Ragodon's painting of a plaza with a church and its adjacent convent entitled *Intramuros ca. 1700* is done in a clear, linear style – the human figures like fixed objects casting long shadows on the ground, reminiscent of Renaissance paintings.



**MANUEL D. BALDEMOR**, *Procession*, 1983, Acrylic & collage, 61 x 91 cm

Manuel Baldemor depicts a procession beginning from the church of Paete and going around the spacious plaza.





**VICENTE MANANSALA**, *Candle Vendor*, 1971, Watercolor, 67.5 × 67 cm

Vicente Manansala would later paint the huddled vendors in his neo-realist style of transparent cubism with only the ironwork boundaries as reference to the church.



**RICARTE PURUGANAN**, *Bullfight*, 1941, Oil on canvas, 64 x 75.5 cm

Other artists approach the subject of the fiesta differently. There is Ricarte Puruganan's painting of carabaos fighting head-on in a fierce wrestling match.



But while the church plazas were centers of gregarious activity, an exception would be Irineo Miranda's *Procession* with its white-robed nuns in a line entering a well-lit church from a shadowy and damp garden, reminding one of the *beatas* who spent quiet lives within convent walls in hours spent praying or embroidering priestly vestments. Beyond this, however, the painting has a quality that links him to the European symbolists with their affinity to Art Nouveau and Art Deco in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Even in earlier rural landscapes without a view of the church, its presence is nevertheless implied as a gravitational center. This is seen, for instance, in Felix Martinez' *Passage to Antipolo* where a group of pilgrims form an informal procession to Antipolo Church, the popular shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage. Later, Fernando Amorsolo would paint *Sunday Morning Going to Church* showing a group of people (a woman with a yellow umbrella provides a bright accent to the cool palette) leaving their nipa hut in the shade of a mango tree and crossing the open field to go to church. One likewise recalls his painting of the church of Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur, with its long stone steps and flaming fire tree by the side as a family comes from the baptism of their infant child.

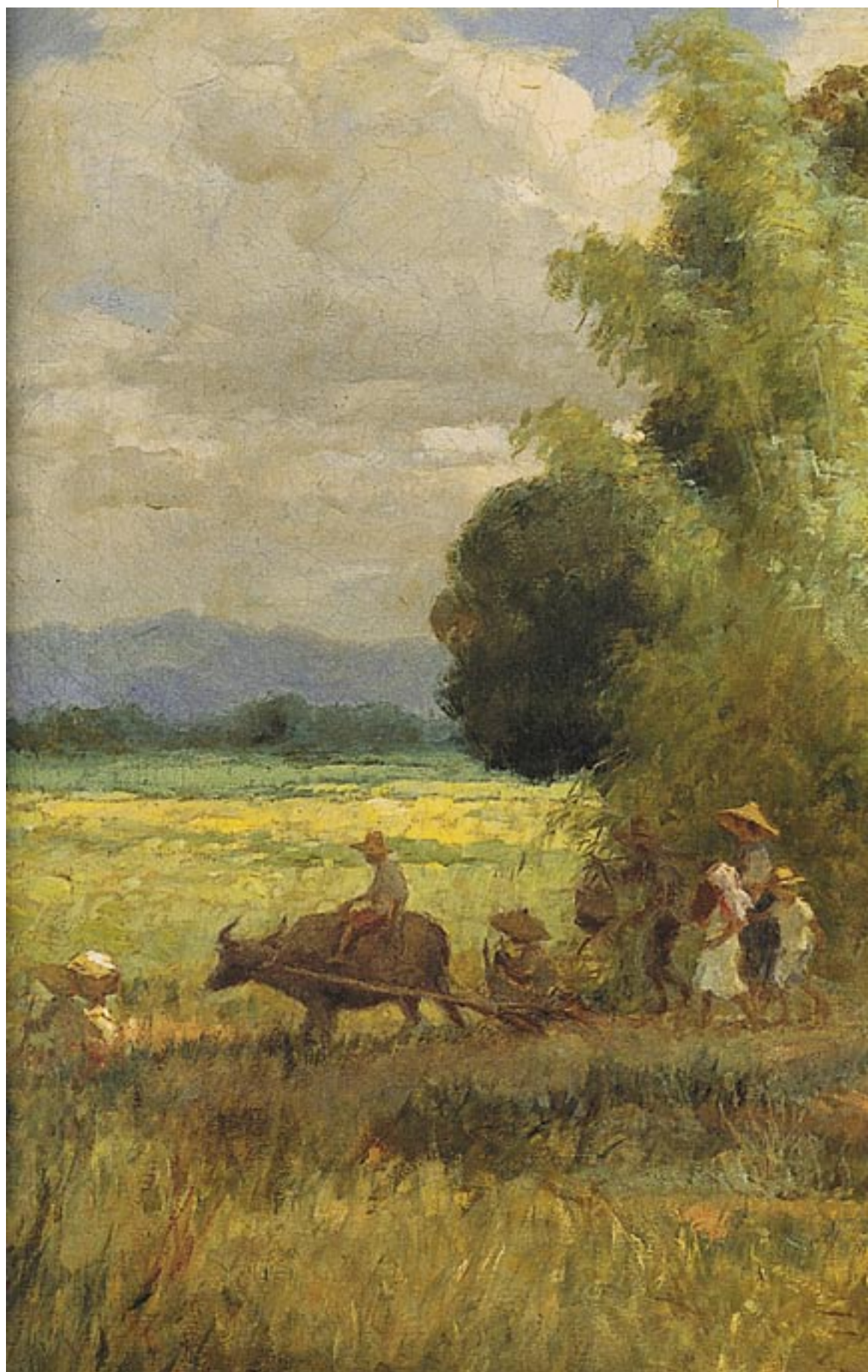
Then there are the fiesta paintings, in *Ati-Atihan*, Claude Tayag relied on fresh colors and design, primarily through his use of masks rendered in a flat style. An unusual fiesta painting is Hugo Yonzon Jr.'s carabao race in Obando where carabaos change from slow and sluggish creatures to devil-ridden animals. There is also Ricarte Puruganan's painting of carabaos fighting head-on in a fierce wrestling match. But Amorsolo was arguably the master of the fiesta painting, and in one work entitled *Antipolo*, he shows a couple dancing the *tinikling* surrounded by a large number of



MARIO PARIAL, *Ati-atihan*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 75 x 90.5 cm

Ethnic themes associated with the fiesta also appeared, as in the painting of Mario Parial referring to the *ati-atihan* with its masked and soot-blackened revelers.

**FERNANDO AMORSOLO,**  
*Sunday Morning Going to Church, 1953*  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm  
A group of people are shown leaving  
their nipa hut, about to cross the open field  
to go to church on a Sunday morning.









## In genre works, one sees the *bayanihan* character of Filipino life, especially that of the rural folk

people under a spreading mango tree with a bullcart on the left. All these take place in the shadow of the massive stone church which, set on a high ground against the sky with cumulus clouds, dominates the scene.

Various genre activities accompanied the fiesta such as the preparation of *puto bumbong*, as seen in Slim Torres' work; while maidens are serenaded in Carlos "Botong" Francisco's, and Jose Blanco's, *Harana*.

Most of all, there was Christmas, as in Jorge Pineda's painting of a woman seated beside a window with a *parol*, and a small table with *kakanin* waiting for the special guest.

In genre works, one sees the *bayanihan* character of Filipino life, especially that of the rural folk since their basic occupations of farming and fishing require communal effort and industry. In contrast, there appear too quiet moments of leisure, such as in Jorge Pineda's *Sungkaan* where two elderly people, both now retired from farming, play the folk game of shells beside a window; or the players may be a grandmother and a child, as in Rody Roa's work. Still by Jorge Pineda, a young man and woman play *siklot* on the bamboo floor with utmost concentration since her virtue may be at stake. Before a low native table or *dulang*, four elderly women play *panguingue*, a game of cards. The work typifies the artist's use of *chiaroscuro* to lend interest to the work, the light from the kerosene lamp falling on the faces of the players.



CLAUDE TAYAG, *Ati-Atihan Tribe No. 14*, 1982, Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 182 cm

Tayag relied on fresh colors and design, primarily through his use of masks rendered in a flat style.

JORGE PINEDA, *May Hinihintay*, 1932, Oil on canvas, 66 x 45.5 cm

Jorge Pineda painted this scene of a woman seated beside a window with a *parol* and a small table with *kakanin*, waiting for a special guest.













CARLOS V. FRANCISCO, *Harana*, 1957, Oil on canvas, 55 x 120.5 cm

Various genre activities accompanied the fiesta such as Carlos "Botong" Francisco's, *Harana* of maidens being serenaded.







The mid-nineteenth century marked the beginning of the process of opening up the country to international trade through cash crop agriculture. Mexico had obtained her independence through revolution and the Philippines was left on its own to the distress of the Spanish colonialists. A solution to the floundering colonial economy was to open the country to world trade. Given the new situation, former rice lands were now planted with such crops as abaca, coffee, and sugar bought by foreign merchants who paid for these in cash. This eventually gave rise to a new middle class – the *ilustrados* – consisting of native landlords and their agents, mainly Filipino-Chinese. With their money, they built large mansions of wood and stone in the native style – the *bahay-na-bato*. They also realized the value of education, sending their sons to school in Manila and later to Madrid and the other European capitals, which exposed them to liberal ideas. Soon the *ilustrados* began to assume a lifestyle that was heavily influenced by the West, and imports of European amenities such as furniture, chandeliers, mirrors and silverware became the cachet of social status. Classical caryatids and columns embellished the interiors and façades of houses. Sometimes, heavy velvet curtains were used despite the heat of the tropical climate as some of the portraits of the period show.

The anonymous painting *Portrait of Two Ateneo Students* heralds this period of economic and social change. Done in the academic style, the young lower school pupils are dressed in formal black and white uniforms with bow tie, pressed pants, and matching shoes. Even at their young age, the budding gentlemen have mastered social conventions, one confidently leaning his arm on a small table, as they clutch their books and gaze at the viewer with self-importance. They are well on their way to becoming perfect *ilustrado* leaders, learned and discursive, knowledgeable in the arts of good breeding and compromise. In time, they will occupy the top posts of the colonial bureaucracy and profess loyalty to *Madre España*.

Art appeals both to the public sense of nationhood and common identity as to the personal or individual recollections of the members of society.

JORGE PINEDA, *Sungkaan*, 1931, Oil on canvas, 70 x 51 cm

*Sungkaan* shows quiet moments of leisure, where two elderly people, both now retired from farming, play the folk game of shells beside a window.

There are, of course, the numerous portraits that were in vogue in the period – those of the master portraitists Simon Flores y de la Rosa, Justiniano Asuncion, Isidro Arceo and Dionisio de Castro. The women were cynosures of *ilustrado* wealth and refinement, timeless models for future generations in their embroidered finery, their prayer books, their gilded rosaries, and precious saints in *virinas*. However, one such portrait catches our eye, that of Doña Miguela Henson by Simon Flores y de la Rosa. The artist portrays her as standing before the fashionable three-part mirror of a dressing table in her costume of *pañuelo*, embroidered *camisa*, broad sleeves and skirt aproned with a black and sheer *enaguas*, her splendid long hair hanging straight and loose. To an extent, it is vanity that impels her, as though posing for a portrait (we see her reflection on the first panel of the looking-glass) holding a fan between her fingers. And much like any woman today, she scrutinizes her face for what imperfections it may show, while she checks her costume for its capacity to conceal and reveal. Still, it is a moment of self-reflection, now that she is free, at least temporarily, of women's chores. It is the time for her to know. Even her exquisite garments draw her one step away from the purely instinctual and sensuous functions of her body that she has always, and so intimately, known. It is culture overcoming nature. And for her, it becomes a precious moment of self-affirmation – a coming into being.

It is in this context that the portraits of women reading come to be viewed. Starting from Simon Flores' well-known painting of a mother teaching her daughter to read in *Primeras Letras*, this intellectual activity signifies a number of things. Previously submerged in the darkness of ignorance and pure instinct, women have finally gained access to education; they have become lettered. Fernando Amorsolo shows a woman reading on a low bed beneath a window, the light falling on her shoulders and the pages of the book. How concentrated she is in her reading! She now has more access to leisure; or she has discovered the pleasures of reading rather than a match of *sungka* to while away the hours. She does not only live to serve her husband and her children by cooking in the kitchen or rocking the cradle, and playing the role of a good wife and mother, but to attend to her own personal development as well by claiming the precious time to read a book.

Given her posture of relaxation, one can surmise that the book can only be secular in content, perhaps a narrative at a time when novels proliferated in society. But the significance of the scene for the woman seems to be lost on the master Amorsolo. In her private moment of reading, she is only a subject for the male gaze. Here, the artist is more interested in the way her figure reclines languorously on the bed, or how unconsciously sensuous her hair falls over her shoulders on one side while the other exposes an area of skin and, indeed, how her skirt follows the contours of her limbs to her ankles and the tip of a toe. A patronizing element lurks in this painting about how an exquisite creature such as this could have any intellectual interests at all.

For his part, Ricarte Puruganan has a different approach to the subject. In his painting, the woman reading holds a book on her lap, but she is looking outside the window of her curtained bedroom. While she may not be entirely inattentive to her reading, there is an implied dialogue between interior and exterior, between the consciousness within and the reality without. Her reading gives her a new grasp of the world in terms of the intellectual disciplines of science, sociology, and politics; and she has come to learn of the different aspects of natural and human life. The quick look in her eyes signifies that she has arrived at the crux of understanding.





**RICARTE PURUGANAN**, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1934, Oil on canvas, 51 x 74 cm

In this painting, the woman holds the book on her lap, but she is also looking outside the window of her curtained bedroom.

The quick look in her eyes signifies that she has "arrived" at the crux of understanding.







**FERNANDO AMORSOLO,**

*Reclining Woman Reading*, 1942

Oil on canvas, 57.5 x 75 cm

Fernando Amorsolo shows a woman who has discovered the pleasures of reading.

But the woman did not only read; she was also a painter, as in the canvas of Fabian de la Rosa. The woman looks at the model, then transfers the subject to the canvas, mediated by her own way of looking at the world. This becomes an interesting problem since it is the man who is often represented as creator of the masterpiece. But in this case, it is the woman who stands in his place. Who or what could be the subject of the painting? Could there be a female gaze? Is there a female point of view and sensibility in the arts? Yet, these considerations go beyond the domain of the image itself into the concerns of psychology and aesthetics. Nonetheless, the woman as painter assumes the role of the one who gazes and thus achieves equality, if not a reversal, in the power relations between men and women.

In the early years of the American colonial period, Dr. Toribio Herrera (he was also a medical doctor) did a painting of a woman looking into a cave. Here the solitary figure of a woman is an unlikely presence in her light costume and orange umbrella in the sunny outdoors. She stands before the entrance of a dark and rocky cave where she looks in wonderingly. Is her bright figure metaphorical: does she contemplate the mysteries of the universe or the darkness of superstition and of unscientific thought now put into question by the sciences? It is an allegory of knowledge face to face with mystery and the vast unknown in the age of reason. This was painted at a time when women had begun to claim access to higher education.



**TORIBIO HERRERA**, *Woman in a Cave*, 1927, Oil on panel, 24 x 33 cm

Here the solitary figure of a woman is metaphorical: does she contemplate the mysteries of the universe or the darkness of superstition and of unscientific thought now put into question by the sciences?

**FABIAN DELA ROSA**, *La Pintora*, 1926, Oil on panel, 40.5 x 26.5 cm

The woman as painter assumes the role of the one who gazes and thus achieves equality, if not a reversal, in the power relations between men and women.







All in all, women enjoyed a greater measure of freedom in this period. Unforgettable, too, is Dr. Herrera's painting of a woman (with a partner) soaked through in the inclement weather where her umbrella is of no use against the wind and rain. This work is also unusual in the fact that their backs are turned to the viewer. Artistically, this fact signifies a transgression of the convention in the visual arts that the subject should face front or be in profile. With such works as these, Toribio Herrera is known for his paintings of women in unexpected situations going beyond the predictable works of Fernando Amorsolo; although stylistically, Herrera was grouped with the so-called Amorsolo school associated with the UP School of Fine Arts.

In this context, too, were the paintings of the *bahay-na-bato* that constituted the domestic setting of the *ilustrados*. Dominador Castañeda's painting of an old house shows it at its best, with red bougainvillas blooming at its entrance and clambering beside the windows. The chickens scratching the ground in front lend a casual and rural note to the scene. The tall electric post implies the passage of time, marking the gap between the construction of the house in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and its electrification in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even as it basks in an eternal sunlight.

E. Plaridel shows a Vigan street at noon in the time of the town's apogee. By cropping the painting, we see part of the house on the left with its capiz windows on the second floor and the window with *rejas na buntis* on the ground floor bathed in the hard Vigan sunlight. An inner patio has a large tree that connects to the next building in the street. Another artist, Ramon Peralta, painted a vertical group of houses with a balcony on the highest floor and below, a canal with a small bridge in the middle distance, arching to the opposite side.



DOMINADOR CASTAÑEDA, *An Old House with Red Bougainvillea*, Undated, Oil on canvas, 41.5 x 56.5 cm



One artist painted the interior of a *bahay-na-bato* with its gleaming wooden floors, its shiny round table at the center, and the sunlight from the windows streaming into the living room with its mirrors and furniture. Another painting of a Vigan house has finely turned balusters gracing the *verandillas* under the capiz shell windows. The main entrance features a *media luna* with a radiating design. But in front of the elegant façade, a woman vendor, overtaken by hard times, waits for customers on a bench with her basket packed with rice cakes. There is too the unusual painting of Augusto Fuster of Galeria Ongpin: a studio with easel paintings crowded on the walls.

But let us not forget that many of the *bahay-na-bato* were included in the *letras y figuras* which were commissioned by the elites of the day, probably merchants who profited from the new system of cash crop agriculture. On a piece of Manila paper or fine canvas, the illustrious name was emblazoned with different figures in various genre activities forming the letters of the alphabet. The example here is that of Miguel Añonuevo. However, it does not have the touch of the master Jose Lozano who sometimes added scenes of Manila Bay and the Pasig River, as well as houses and their interiors. Lozano was the son of a lighthouse keeper and as such he spent long hours watching the ships come sailing into the bay, each one flying their countries' colors. It was the time when foreign merchants came to trade, exchanging cash crops for money in a new market economy. Among Lozano's best known works are *Jose Feced y Temprado* and *Balvino Mauricio*, the latter work painted on canvas shows the owner's well-appointed mansion which is said to have been described in the opening chapter of Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* at the *tertulia* of Capitan Tiago.

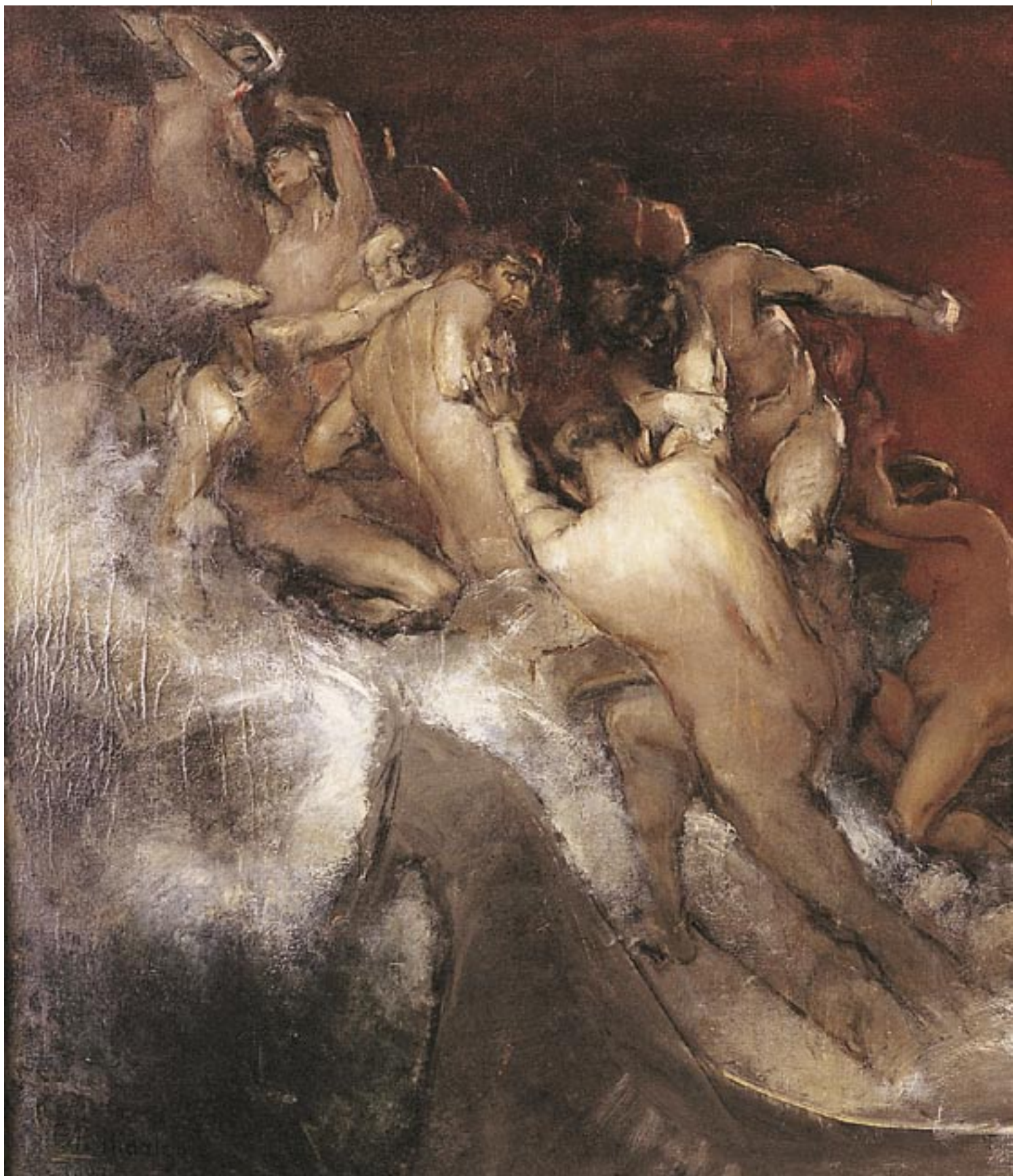
But what is one to make of the paintings of Juan Luna and Felix Resurrección Hidalgo, gifted expatriates who pursued their art in Europe? In the BSP collection are Hidalgo's *La Barca de Aqueronte* and *Virgenes Christianas Expuestas al Populacho* that won a silver medal in the 1884 Madrid Exposition, as well as Luna's informal *Serenade*.

As a student of the Madrid Academy, Hidalgo had to assume a foreign culture and imagination, which drew its roots in the classical antiquity of ancient Greece and Rome. In *Virgenes Christianas*, two young women are stripped bare for the delectation of noisy gesticulating men engaged in the slave trade. They are hapless creatures subject to lascivious male scrutiny. Such classical subject matter amply provided the pretext for an image of male dominance.

*La Barca de Aqueronte* shows nude figures representing souls of the dead divested of all material trappings, clambering from the roiling waters onto Charon's boat which will bring them to Hades. The boatman Charon himself is seen in dramatic silhouette against a burst of preternatural light.

In Luna, one recalls the dying gladiators dragged along the floor of the spoliarium, at the basement of the Roman colosseum, where they are stripped of their last worldly effects and dumped in a dark corner to be claimed by their loved ones. All these were classical subjects done in the mural or heroic size obligatory in expositions of the Academy.

A leading premise of colonialism is the superimposition of a foreign culture upon an indigenous one such that the indigenous imagination and memory are rechanneled to assume a false past and borrowed history. The narrative of the Roman Empire takes root in the artistic imagination to produce paintings of a bygone era, although we may assume that there arises at this juncture a critical awareness of the persecution and oppression of the other by the dominant class.







**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO,**

*La Barca De Aqueronte*, 1887

Oil on canvas, 113 x 158 cm

*La Barca de Aqueronte* shows nude figures representing souls of the dead divested of all material trappings, clambering from the roiling waters onto Charon's boat which will bring them to Hades. The boatman Charon himself is seen in dramatic silhouette against a burst of preternatural light.

**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO,**  
*Las Virgenes Cristianas Expuestas al Populacho*  
 1884, Oil on canvas, 115 x 157 cm  
*Virgenes Cristianas Expuestas al Populacho*  
 won a silver medal in the 1884 Madrid  
 Exposition. Two young women are stripped  
 bare for the delectation of noisy gesticulating  
 men engaged in the slave trade. Such classical  
 subject matter amply provided the pretext for  
 an image of male dominance.







Luna's work, *Serenade* (also called *Woman with a Guitar*), is one of his best European paintings. In a modernist vein, the subjects are a woman and her suitor in a café in Madrid, Barcelona, or Paris. The tone is very European and the scene is part of early café society, the woman being a singer and guitarist. With her back turned to the suitor whispering compliments, she looks intently and interestedly at something or someone outside the picture plane. Is it a favored suitor? The scene is reminiscent of Edgar Degas' *Woman with Chrysanthemums* where the woman projects an intense and scheming gaze at something or somebody outside the picture plane, the object of interest unknown and unseen to the viewer.

Now, in this painting Luna transgresses the formal conventions of the Academy and takes on the quotidian tone associated with Impressionism. Although the style itself falls short of Impressionism with its flickering surfaces and fresh colors, its tone situates it at the beginning of modernism with Edouard Manet and the first Impressionists. In his letters to Jose Rizal, in fact, Luna wrote about his visits to Impressionist expositions that stood up to an academic style already in decline. He spoke of Pissarro and Monet and his visits to the steel foundries at the heart of the Industrial Revolution. Still, as in his painting of bourgeois women in a theater loge, Luna shows a split imagination and its excruciating consequences: on one hand, modernizing European and, on the other hand, the formal academic spirit of his last portraits, such as *Nena y Tinita*.

The *ilustrados* who studied in Europe were dearly enamoured of what the Old World had to offer – a bohemian life in the cafés, the opera, books, fencing, all of which they were loathe to part with – and instead ardently pressed the Spanish government for reforms through the Propaganda Movement. But the local revolutionaries of the Katipunan headed by Andres Bonifacio, who enjoyed none of these and had little to regret, conducted a full-scale armed revolution against Spain. There are no paintings of the Philippine Revolution in the BSP collection, save for an Amorsolo depicting the three Agoncillo ladies sewing the first Philippine flag. With the men having waged a successful armed revolution, was this the women's rather belated contribution to the Revolution? No, for in fact, many women joined the revolution with their husbands, as many chronicles attest.

However, independence was not meant to be achieved at this stage, and the Malolos Republic was of short duration (Juan Luna was sent as an emissary to the United States but was cut short by his death in Hong Kong in December 1899). The country was soon occupied by the Americans after Commodore George Dewey's mock battle of Manila Bay. More Filipino blood was shed in the Philippine-American War. The young general, Gregorio del Pilar, was one of its most famous casualties. He is shown by artist Carlos Valino, professor at the UP College of Fine Arts, as a white figure on a horse leading his men to battle at Tirad Pass. This was how he was described by the American soldier who fired on him in a diary quoted in Leon Wolff's book *Little Brown Brother*. All that were left of his effects were a letter from a certain Dolores and an embroidered handkerchief. However, this painting of him leaves an image of courageous Filipino resistance to American colonization.

During the American period, the imagery shifted from the *bahay-na-bato* to the commercial establishments in Manila, along with a change in street names from Spanish to English. The former Puente de España became Jones Bridge, the artery joining two sides of the Pasig. It is interesting to note here that there are two paintings of the same bridge in the BSP. The first, by Victor Dioces, a painter of the late Spanish Period, is in somber academic tones with its straight horizon line cut only by tall electric posts, its massive ravelins in the dark water. It signifies a slow and quiet pace

JUAN LUNA, *Serenade*, 1897, Oil on canvas, 87.5 x 47.5 cm

This is one of Luna's best European paintings. Here, the artist transgresses the formal conventions of the Academy and takes on the quotidian tone associated with Impressionism.







of life, with a few people strolling by the railings. The second, painted by V. Cabisada much later, is in a sketchy, more modernist style; it concentrates on the clusters of tall buildings beyond the bridge at night, the better to bring out their lights and their reflections in the water. Though not of the bridge itself, the contemporary artist Gamaliel Subang painted the barges on the Pasig like rotting and abandoned crafts in the murky water.

For the majority of Filipinos, the American period was a meager but peaceful time – at least on the surface. In the countryside, a source of irritation was the fact that the American colonial government did not institute land reform but instead coddled the big landowners, such as the Church and the *ilustrados* who occupied positions in the bureaucracy. What these paintings do not show is the unrest in the countryside, which exploded into bloody peasant uprisings that were indeed the obverse of the Amorsolo idyll. As for the lakeshore dwellers in towns such as Angono and Binangonan or seashore folk in Navotas, the fishermen continued with their toil, as in a painting by Vicente Manansala of *Two Fishermen* hauling the boat containing their catch to the shore in the early morning or evening where the clouds gather in the sky and bring out tones of brown and green on the land. But in one painting we are reminded that the Filipino-Chinese did their trade by balancing baskets of their wares on their shoulders or the aluminum containers that carried the ingredients for steaming *mami* soup.



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V. CABISADA, *Jones Bridge*, Undated, Oil on hubbok, 63.5 x 122 cm

This work is done in a sketchy, more modernist style.





**VICENTE MANANSALA**, *Fishermen*, 1949, Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 56 cm

This painting shows fisherfolk hauling the boat containing their catch to the shore in the early morning or evening where the clouds gather in the sky and bring out tones of brown and green on the land.



**NORMA BELLEZA**, *Maggugulay*, 1977, Oil on canvas, 92 x 105.5 cm

The entrepreneurial spirit gave rise to the many petty trades that became depicted in genre paintings among them Norma Belleza's *Maggugulay*, which shows rich hues of reds and blues in different patterns, as well as the artist's *horror vacui* composition.



The peaceful prewar world was fading fast. In Manila, Lino Severino, the poet of the *Vanishing Scene*, shows the Ayuntamiento in a sullen mood, its windows boarded up and its glory days over. He has two other paintings in the same series of *bahay-na-bato* in a state of disrepair. Eulalio Evangelista has a painting of a 1930s *accessoria* such as those found in Santa Cruz district. It has an all-wooden structure except for the iron grills that slide in a groove to protect the shops on the ground level. At a window, a string of laundry hangs to dry. Leonardo Hidalgo's painting of old Paco Cemetery shows the passage of time in the abandoned ruins and dead trees in blue somber tones.

Meanwhile, the entrepreneurial spirit gave rise to the many petty trades that became depicted in genre paintings: the *Maggugulay* of Norma Belleza in rich hues of reds and blues in different patterns, as well as her *horror vacui* composition. *Savings in Bao* by the same artist shows women keeping money for their children in coconut shells. Angelito Antonio followed suit with his candle vendors, a subject which Manansala had earlier popularized in his transparent cubist style. Even Anita Magsaysay-Ho shows women among cages at the market haggling over fish and fowl, while Victorio Edades presents his earthy *Market Scene* with a man bringing in his cart of produce to the market. In the baywater, shell pickers in the early morning mist collect their meager catch in small baskets, as in a painting by Elias Laxa.



ANITA MAGSAYSAY-HO, *Tawaran*, 1982, Oil on canvas, 86 x 137 cm

Anita Magsaysay-Ho shows women among cages at the market haggling over fish and fowl.

But the peace would not last long, for the Second World War would come to the Philippines with the Japanese invasion of Asia in its quest to create the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which it sought to build under its leadership. Shedding his rural idylls, Fernando Amorsolo evocatively conveys the devastation of war in *The Burning of the Intramuros*, the neo-classical building going up in billowing black smoke while the sky and water are colored like fire. Amorsolo also painted *Woman with a Bandana*, which depicts a survivor of the war, scrounging for food amidst the rubble. Clutching her bandana, she looks up from the ruins, as though at an unseen stranger, her eyes pleading for succor.

Galo B. Ocampo, one of the first three modernists along with Victorio Edades and Carlos “Botong” Francisco, also depicted the Second World War in his paintings. The BSP is fortunate to have two of his major works, the *Nuclear Ecce Homo* and *Flagellants*.

*Nuclear Ecce Homo* is the second of two Ecce Homo paintings. In the first, warplanes fly over Christ’s head and parachutists fall from the sky. The second shows Christ in the middle of a desert in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion, while the pockmarked globe filled with craters is behind him against a background of unnatural blue clouds in an orange sky. Christ’s face is hooded like a flagellant; his arms are bound and his figure conveys an expression of utter helplessness. The threat of nuclear war that accompanied the Second World War and the decade of the Fifties threatened to divest him of his humanity as it intended to wipe out the human race.

*The Flagellants* continues Galo B. Ocampo’s series of paintings inspired by the Second World War. Here, the artist chooses flagellation as his metaphor for atonement for the war. In this surrealist painting, three hooded men, submerged underwater, go through a ritual of purification as they flog their bare backs with thorny lashes. The war is the sin which they must purify themselves from as it had wrought great damage to their fellow men. Yet the artist seems to have a concept of morality that makes no distinction between evildoers and victims. All men are culpable as members of humanity and they share the same guilt – they must repent for their common sin.

In an earlier work from the series, a flagellant in penitent’s robes prostrates himself before a church while warplanes dropping bombs whiz in the air above him. For every sin, there must be retribution, but must the victim assume the aggressor’s burden of guilt? Where would the atonement be? An alternative point of view, transcending personal or communal accountability, shows that there is always one person, a solitary saint, who does penance for the sins of all men.

But the peace would not last long,  
for the Second World War would  
come to the Philippines.

FERNANDO AMORSOLO, *Woman with Bandana (Liberation)*, 1946, Oil on canvas, 82 x 65 cm

This painting depicts a survivor of the war scrounging for food amidst the rubble. She is shown clutching her bandana looking up from the ruins as though at an unseen stranger; her eyes pleading for succor.













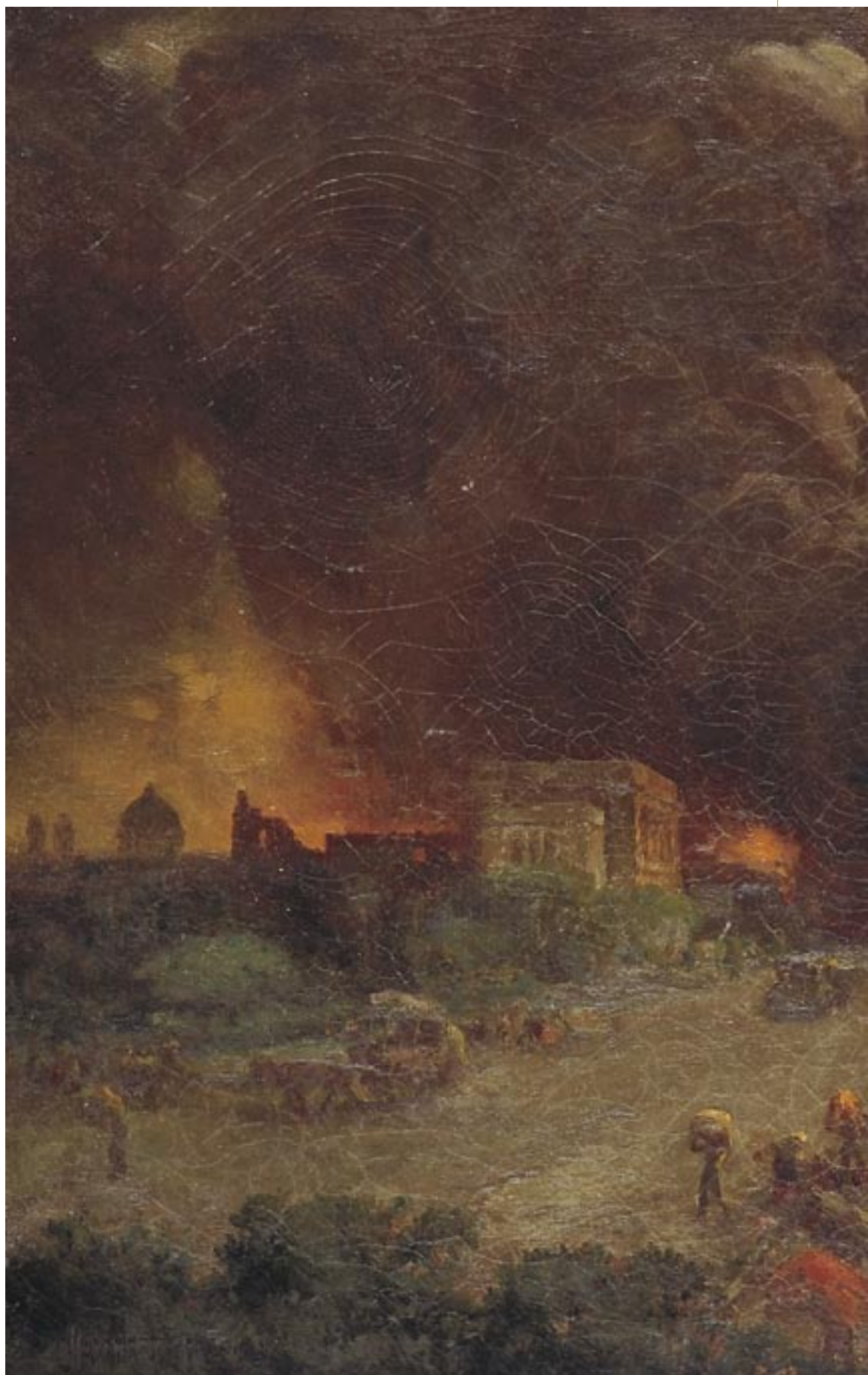
**GALO OCAMPO**, *Nuclear Ecce Homo*, 1982, Oil on canvas on masonite, 75.5 x 61 cm

Christ's face is hooded like a flagellant; his arms are bound and his figure conveys an expression of utter helplessness.

**GALO OCAMPO**, *Flagellantes*, 1953, Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 39.5 cm

*The Flagellantes* continues Galo Ocampo's series of paintings inspired by the Second World War. Here, the artist chooses flagellation as his metaphor for atonement for the war.

**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**  
*Burning of Intramuros,*  
1942, Oil on canvas, 72 x 100 cm  
*The Burning of the Intramuros,* shows the  
neo-classical building going up in billowing  
black smoke while the sky and water are  
colored like fire.







The country's difficulty in recovering from the war was caused primarily by widespread dislocation. There was, likewise, something ingenious and *ad hoc* in the character of the times. The U.S. army jeep was transformed into a sturdy vehicle for public transportation, its somber and purely functional aspect disguised by all kinds of decorative accessories – flying horses, paintings of all sorts on the sides, names of family members written with a flourish – a visual cacophony best captured by the paintings of Antonio Austria, among many other artists. The jeepney replaced the *tranvia* or streetcar and the horse-drawn carriages of yore, acquiring the notorious reputation of being the “king of the road.” It is widely said to be a symbol of Filipino identity: gregarious, noisy, and devil-may-care. In a painting by Carangal Kiamko, a passenger jeepney breezes by the old structure of Santa Cruz de Cebu in a juxtaposition of the past and the present. Later, motorcycles from Japan were fitted with sidecars to become tricycles, which served as a handy vehicle for short distances. The artist Soriano shows it laden with produce for the market as it goes its merry way.

The widespread devastation of the war gave rise to shacks and lean-tos, which up to the present have not disappeared from the urban landscape. The ancestral *bahay-na-bato* succumbed to the general proliferation of *barong-barongs*, as in the painting by Fred Buhay, where they are clustered into slums or squatters' colonies with swarming populations. Punctured tires hold down the roofs, strings of laundry are found everywhere and the ubiquitous *sari-sari* store is the center of community gossip. As the jeepney became a popular subject for paintings after the war, so did the *barong-barong* as seen in the works of Mauro Malang Santos, Vicente Manansala, and Manuel Baldemor who replaced the gentle landscapes of Amorsolo with survival scenes from life in the city.

At this point, the Filipino-Muslims made their presence felt in the *sari-manok* paintings of Abdulmari Imao, his many variations on this motif later executed in three-dimensional form. Victorio Edades had earlier introduced a Muslim subject in *Moro Lass*, showing a Maranao girl in a festive costume with a diagonal sash. He had previously introduced ethnic themes in the painting of an Igorot woman before a *bulol*, an ancestral spirit figure. The painting of the Maranao lass must have been done in Davao where he later settled.

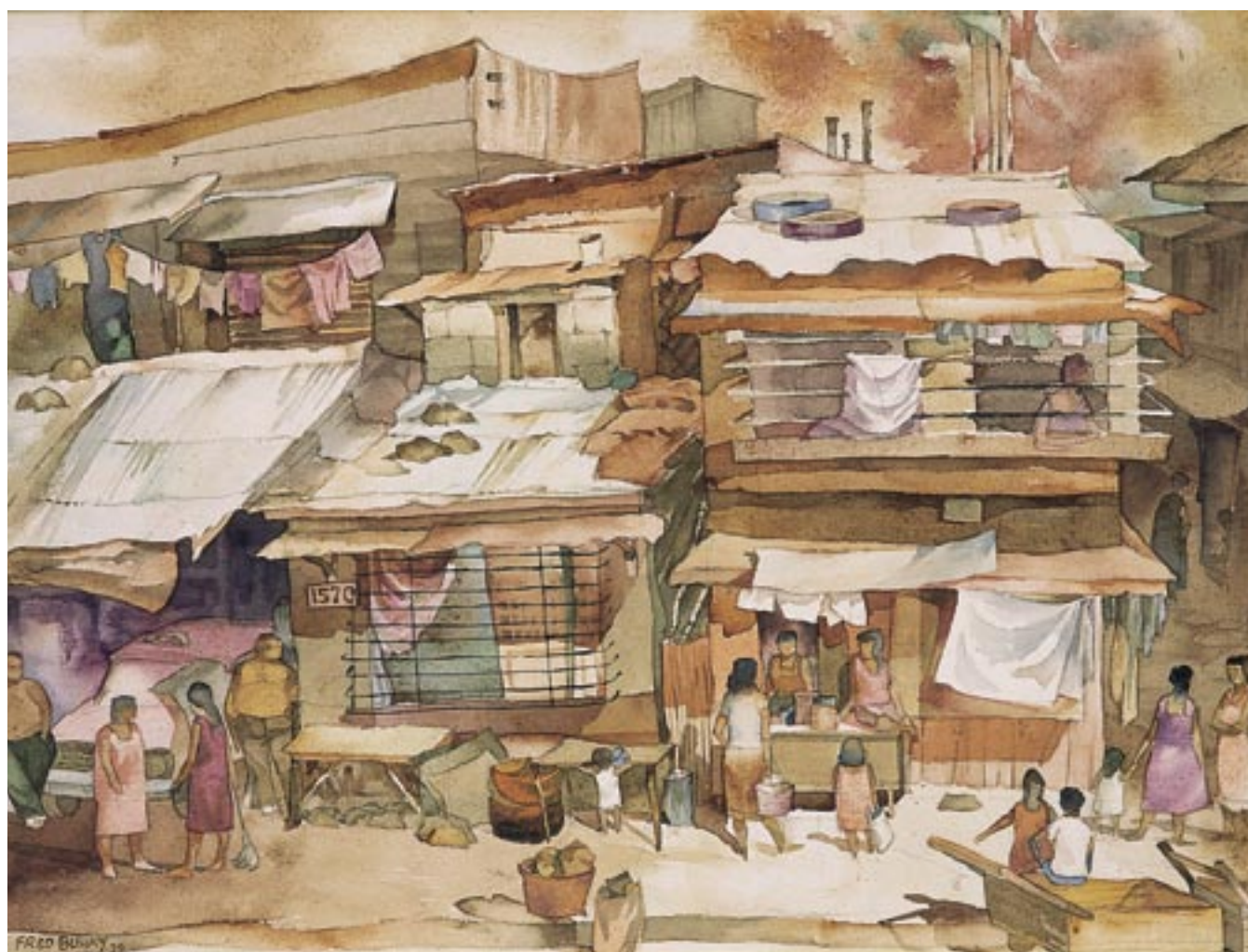
Ethnic themes associated with the fiesta also appeared, as in the painting of Mario Parial referring to the *ati-atihan* with its masked and soot-blackened revelers. These started to become *en vogue* in the decade of the Sixties and Seventies when many artists started using indigenous motifs and



ANTONIO AUSTRIA, *Jeepney Super De Luxe Harurot*, 1982, Oil on canvas, 61 x 122 cm

The U.S. army jeep was transformed into a sturdy vehicle for public transportation, said to be a symbol of Filipino identity: gregarious and noisy.





FRED BUHAY, *Barong-Barong*, 1979, Watercolor; 35.5 x 51 cm

The widespread devastation of the war gave rise to shacks and lean-tos, which up to the present have not disappeared from the urban landscape.



ONIB OLMEDO, *Mother and Child*, 1971, Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 81.5 cm

The distortion of the figures lends a mixture of pathos and dignity, with the child being ensconced in the large body of his protective mother.



experimented with vernacular materials culled from the environment, integrating these into collages and assemblages. This was an important development in Philippine art because it made people aware of non-Christian groups who were part of the body politic but were hitherto marginalized.

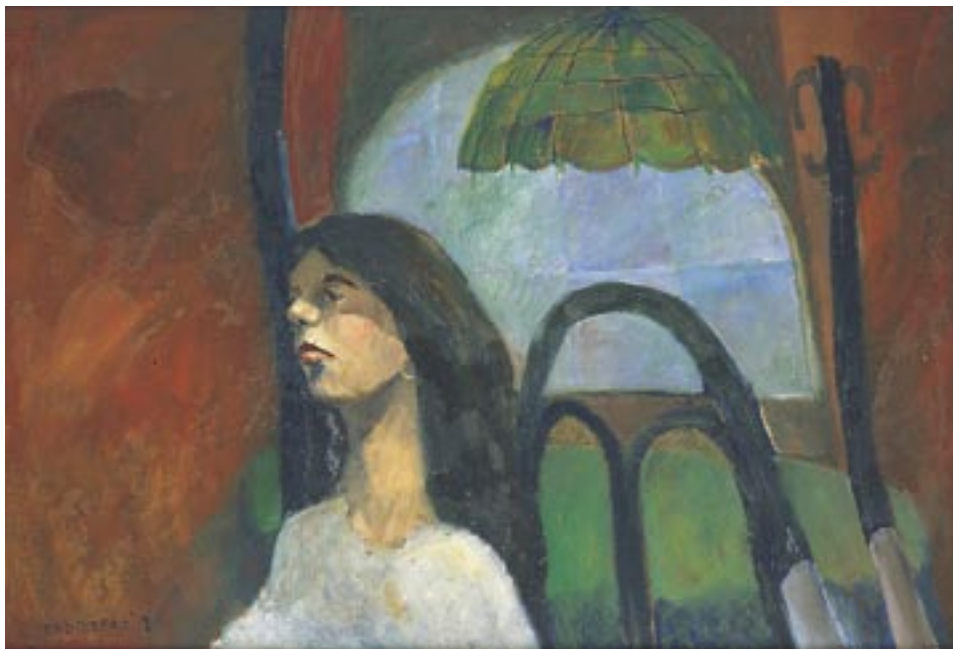
This trend later led to installations or groupings of art objects, usually of indigenous or vernacular materials, interacting with space. A new interest in the cultural communities stemmed from a sympathy for the causes that they fought for, such as the Cordillera protest against the building of Chico Dam which would submerge their ancestral lands. These were reflected in the art of Santiago Bose and promoted the formation of a group of Baguio artists, the Baguio Arts Guild, which drew members locally and internationally.

In the Sixties, a new generation of Manila artists appeared, such as Onib Olmedo, Danny Dalena, and Ang Kiukok.

Olmedo came out with his first show, “Singkong Suka”, and his earliest paintings of women came from this series. *Tiffany* shows a solitary woman in what seems to be a night bar, her face partly in shadow, anxiously waiting. Here, the woman, desperate in her desire to eke out a living in the urban jungle, compromises her virtue.

*Mother and Child* shows a woman and her child; here, however, the artist begins to use distortion to lend them a particular character, a mixture of pathos and dignity. The child is ensconced in the large body of his protective mother.

Olmedo was the first artist to convey mood, such as melancholy and unease; and he introduced the value of psychological insight in Philippine visual art. For this he used distortion to convey inner emotion. He exaggerated form to convey feeling. He turned away from pretty, smiling faces and was unflinching in his preference for intensity and psychological truth. He later did a series on musicians, wherein he sought to evoke the ambience of night joints and the sound of blues music. Sometimes he used checkerboard patterns to communicate the rhythm as rooms and windows seemed to sway in a drunken stupor.



ONIB OLMEDO, *Tiffany*, 1972, Oil on canvas, 59.5 x 89 cm

Olmedo was the first artist to convey mood, such as melancholy and unease.

He introduced the value of psychological insight in Philippine visual art.

In the late 1960s, Danny Dalena began as an illustrator for the *Free Press* and was later editorial cartoonist for the *Asia-Philippines Leader*. By this time, Ferdinand Marcos was already in power and had declared martial law in 1972. Dalena made numerous spoofs of Marcos and his wife Imelda and their subservient relationship to the United States. His leading role in the graphic arts of the period was firmly established.

Dalena was also the first artist who brought out the seamy, desperate side of Philippine society in the two series, *Jai Alai* and *Alibangbang*. In the first, he brought out the propensity of Philippine society for gambling and other games of chance, pastimes which take the place of reality under bleak conditions. Using the cavernous building of the *jai-alai*, now torn down, as a setting, he showed large masses of humanity roiling in a Dante's inferno, as well as individual characterizations of lumpen folk in typical predator-and-victim, loser-and-winner poses as in *Enero Nueve*.

In the second series, Dalena depicted the habitués of a nightclub: steaming bodies of men and women dancing and making propositions in the dim light. It was certainly not the beautiful and edifying art for the bourgeois, but a truthful, gut-wrenching art that told of the desperation of the Filipino masses betrayed by their elite leaders. Later, in his *Quiapo* series, he painted formidable crowds at the Nazarene procession caught up in feverish, macho writhing. In the *Pakil* series, he did brighter scenes of folk theater, the colorful *komedya*, which showed actors and audiences in anecdotal situations.

Ang Kiukok was also an artist from the 1970s who successfully conveyed the mood of the period. There were his frenzied dogfights and bristling cockfights in which the antagonists tore and clawed at each other. There were the junkheaps: discarded arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, on the day after the apocalypse with no one in sight but the silent moon above. Even



**DANILO DALENA**

*Waitress*, 1981, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 60 cm

Dalena brought out the seamy, desperate side of Philippine society.





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**ANG KIUKOK, *Window*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 99 x 88.5 cm**  
Ang Kiukok's earlier series thrived on contrasts of red and black.



ANTIPAS DELOTAVO, *Dambuhala*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 121 x 113 cm

Delotavo often projected the image of the machine as conveyance for oppression. The machine or industry can swallow up a worker, robbing him of his humanity, and giving him little in exchange.



his plants were spiky and menacing. When they stood by an open window, they expressed the hostility and tension in the air, as in a society riven by conflict. Men, women, and children were screaming, caught in surging red flames.

But Ang Kiukok had another series entirely different in tone, that of the solitary desperate man at the end of his tether and nearing death. While the earlier series thrived on contrasts of red and black, the second was mournful in black and gray, the colors of the abyss. Often, the man was reduced to a bony frame, white against black. He also had his Crucifixes, all broken bone against the wood of the Cross. With the restoration of hope, Ang Kiukok did genre paintings of fishermen showing men hauling nets from the water into their boats or upon the shore, a memory of his childhood days in Davao.

Other talented artists also appeared during this period such as Bencab and Jaime de Guzman. Bencab is known for his long *Sabel* series, his folio of portraits done in a particular style consisting of a montage of images. De Guzman drew inspiration from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Propaganda Movement and later from the mystique of Mount Banahaw.

A younger generation of artists, more popularly known as the social realists, likewise attracted public attention: Renato Habulan, Antipas Delotavo, Edgar Fernandez, and Pablo Baens Santos. These artists upheld their roles as witnesses to the times, a period of protest against the Marcos regime. The artists recorded the seamy side of Martial Law rule: the human rights violations, salvagings, disappearances, as well as other forms of military abuse. The streets resounded with the steps of marchers in big rallies and demonstrations. Some in the elite wanted an end to the dictatorship, which had left them out of the state bureaucracy; while others simply called for a change of the system.

Habulan's *Sakada* shows a group of farm workers listening to a woman of the *ilustrado* class playing the harp, a musical instrument requiring consummate refinement. In other works, he painted *sakadas* carrying bundles of cane before *ilustrado* women in their exquisite costumes. These were images, which revealed the huge discrepancy between the social situation of the farm workers in the sugar plantations and the landlords who employed and exploited them. The landowners, usually represented by women in their finery as they were depicted in 19<sup>th</sup> century portraits, are shown enjoying all the amenities of life and the refinements of culture, whereas the workers only lived from day to day on a pittance.

In the same period, Delotavo often projected the image of the machine as conveyance for oppression, as in the painting *Dambuhala* (Giant). The machine or industry can swallow up a worker, robbing him of his humanity, and giving him little in exchange. But this does not necessarily project a negative attitude towards machinery, or industrialization as a whole. Clearly, it is not the machine *per se* that is being blamed for the oppression and exploitation of the workers. The machine, in this case, may also refer to the gigantic state bureaucracy and all its institutions, which are blind to the needs of the people. It is also the system in which the viewer lives: inhuman, inequitable, and offering a false sense of values and priorities. The worker turns his back to the machine and seeks to be free from it. But there are no immediate answers and his problem remains unsolved.

Fernandez proffers the tall iconic image of a mother cradling her child in her arms in *Bagong Umaga*. It is *Inang Bayan*, the symbol of nationhood and of nationalism now threatened by widespread globalization. But a bladed weapon is stuck at the ground beside her feet where a skull also lies, symbolizing all who have fallen in the fight for freedom. The bladed weapon signifies a

pledge or *panata* that the struggle will not be abandoned. In the sky above is a blaze of glory in the future when freedom is finally achieved.

Later, the same subjects appear, albeit with new approaches. Early landscapes told of abundant harvests, and of finding harmony in the bosom of nature. Still life paintings, too, of tropical fruits in an open field, conveyed a sense of unending abundance. But later landscapes would give a closer view of tropical vegetation, as in the work of Manuel “Boy” Rodriguez, Jr. He would pin photographs and letters on the trunks of trees to convey his nostalgia for the Philippines while living abroad. Likewise, landscapes would also be linked to ecological concerns, engendering an awareness of the beauty of the environment and the resolve to protect it from degradation.

The ethnic/indigenous theme also comes to the fore in the works of such artists as Imelda Cajipe-Endaya and Santiago Bose. They utilized the earliest visual references to the country in maps, artifacts, and the *alibata* to energize symbols that people could identify with. Later, these were linked to the contemporary themes of migrant labor and the Filipino diaspora. It was as though Filipinos had to seek their identity abroad in order to find themselves. With this came the use of indigenous materials in later artists, with Junyee, Paz Abad Santos and Rey Contreras being among the pioneers in this trend. For a while, it became a challenge for artists to turn away from imported and expensive materials and create art out of materials from the environment in recognition of their semiotic potential.

Likewise, art making techniques exclusively associated with women such as stitching and *trapunto* entered the mainstream as in the work of Pacita Abad. For her part, Cajipe-Endaya created a collage of cloth and vestments in her work, and included a host of objects that bore strong cultural references, such as *sawali* sidings to establish her milieu.

Since the late 1960s, women artists have struggled against their marginalization in art in the same way that they have sought to improve their working conditions. At present, feminist concerns express themselves in many artistic forms such as installations and soft sculpture, becoming a new form of advocacy associated with non-government organizations associated with women’s and children’s welfare.

Also notable is the increasing role of technology in Philippine contemporary art. From mixed media, artists have gone to multimedia and digital imaging. The computer and video have been central tools in these transformations. The latest forms of art combine performances, installations, and film to convey their message in a globalized world.

While it can be said that all these art forms are able to exist together, it is interesting to note how young artists today are availing of other means, often technological, to bring home their point. Indeed, trying times bring out a keen awareness, not to mention untold opportunities, on the part of artists who seek a cutting edge to their art.

Philippine art today is not just two or three-dimensional; it is also “sensurround” as the movies convey. And art with its vital meanings becomes part of everyday life, interactive as it now is, seeking people who will welcome it as part of themselves. 🌿

EDGAR TALUSAN FERNANDEZ, *Bagong Umaga*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 114 x 91.5 cm  
Fernandez proffers the tall iconic image of a mother cradling her child in her arms in *Inang Bayan*, the symbol of nationhood and of nationalism now threatened by widespread globalization.









Installation view of an exhibition of paintings from the BSP collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila.









*Binhi*, by Jose Joya adds color to a sitting area in the hallway of the Executive Business Center.



*diwà*

BRUSH WITH SPIRITUALITY

by Cid Reyes





ANONYMOUS, *Virgen del Carmen*, Late 18th Century, Oil on panel, 43 x 33 cm



*From the cave paintings* at Lascaux and Altamira to the *Manunggul* funerary jar; from the unknown Bohol artist's *Stations of the Cross* in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) collection to the recent *succèses de scandale* in Western art: Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, a photograph of a crucifix sunk in a vessel of the artist's own fluids; and Chris Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary*, a parody of a Renaissance Madonna strewn with collages of the female genitalia on linen smeared with elephant dung, the process of art making has always been informed by a sense of spiritual awareness and, in turns, the worship and desecration of an acknowledged Higher Power, or Divine Essence.

Through the centuries, the arts of all religions — Hindu, Islam, Buddhist, Christian — have been spiritual in intent, if not always in image. In the case of Islam, where the making of images is forbidden, the artists instead created a lacework ornamentation of patterns and forms known as the arabesque. Later sects were less strict and allowed the illustration of human figures, but only in histories and fables unrelated to religion. The influence of Buddhism on Chinese art can be seen in the meditative renditions of nature in the spirit of reverence. Landscapes on silk scrolls were kept in valuable containers only to be unrolled for quiet moments of contemplation.

In the Christian world, art was created in medieval times for teaching the doctrines of the Church. Like visual sermons, the paintings illustrated events in the life of the Virgin and of Christ for the edification of the faithful.

Through the centuries, the arts of all religions — Hindu, Islam, Buddhist, Christian — have been spiritual in intent, if not always in image.

## The Baroque: Century of Spirituality

“Baroque” is a term used to describe art in Western Europe - roughly from 1550 to the end of the 1600s, which is “based on intellectual preconceptions rather than direct visual perceptions.” Diverging, yet at the same time overlapping with the Mannerist style that came before it – exemplified by human figures given pictorial emphasis by means of distortion, elongation, and exaggeration of poses and physiognomy - the word “baroque” was used both as a stylistic term and a word of abuse. It is believed that the word was derived from the Portuguese *barroco*, a rough or imperfectly shaped pearl. Naturalism is a principle of the Baroque, but its utmost compelling impetus was “the passion of the soul.” The baroque radicalized the concept of space, time and light, which are all manifestations of the Copernican Evolution and brought about a consciousness of infinity.

Thus space in Baroque painting tried to dissolve the real space of the observer and the fictive space of the painting achieved through the use of *trompe l’oeil* (literally, “to fool the eye”). Evoking a sense of time as well as space is the strong suggestion of movement, captured through gestures, glances, the changing of the seasons.

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Baroque art is the use of light. The Italian artist Caravaggio, for example, utilized light and not line, to shape form. Imbuing his paintings with a profound religious atmosphere through the visual effect of having pools of radiance emerge from his dark canvasses, Caravaggio treated light as being both physical and supernatural. He also initiated a return to reality, depicting sacred subjects in terms of contemporary low life set amidst quotidian surroundings. His influence can be seen in the works of Rembrandt van Rijn, the greatest religious artist of Protestant northern Europe, whose paintings dealt with Old Testament stories. Like Caravaggio, Rembrandt rendered the scenes with a naturalism imbued with dignity and truth, plunged in shadows and bathed in golden light.

The Caravaggesque influence would be felt in Spain in the works of Francisco de Zurbarán, and in France in the works of Georges de la Tour.

Naturalism is a principle of the Baroque,  
but its utmost compelling impetus was  
“the passion of the soul.”



## Still Life: *Vanitas Vanitatum*

*“Most of the time, images intended only to amuse the senses, but some of them contain admonishments to the spirit behind their appearances.”*

Johan de Brune

The history of still life can be traced back to the ancient world. In Egypt, still life is found in the tomb paintings on the Nile River. Because of the belief in life after death, images of food and libations were painted on the walls of the funerary chapels. Offered to the dead were depictions of breads and cakes, butchered meats, fowl, fruits, preserves, beverages such as milk, wine and beer. These were the “still lifes” of the ancient Egyptians.

The ravages of time and climate left no paintings or fresco fragments from Ancient Greece, but good fortune allowed for the abundance of painted pottery. These few depict banquet scenes, a pomegranate, and a loaf of bread.

There exist, however, Roman copies of Greek works, such as the famous mosaic by Heraklitus (after Sosos of Pergamum) from the second century A.D. The work has come to us by the title *The Unswept Floor*, which depicts a litter of left-overs of a meal.



**PAZ PATERNO**, *Bodegones Still Life with Jackfruit, Macopa*, Undated, Oil on canvas, 58 x 80 cm

Among the treasures of the painting collection of the BSP are the still lifes of Paz Paterno.

Philippine still lifes are known as *bodegones* or “kitchen pictures”.



**PAZ PATERNO**, *Bodegones Still Life with Cashewnuts, Macopa*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 58 x 80 cm

Paterno's bodegones are a sweet plenitude of tropical fruits: *langka*, *pakwan*, *macopa*, *santol*, *atis*, *granada*, *duhat*, *singkamas*, *kamatis*, *dalanghita*, *mais*.



Still life painting, however, remained in the low rung of importance. In his *Natural History*, Pliny classified painting into genres. The noble genres included gods and mythological subjects, while the minor genres consisted of paintings of humble reality, animal paintings and representations of food.

But the real Roman treasures come from such sites as Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Preserved by ash for centuries, then excavated by archaeologists, the country villas of the Roman patricians revealed a profusion of wall paintings, mosaics, and decorated friezes. From these abound a breathtaking assembly of still lifes: dishes of apples and grapes and peaches, bursting pomegranates and dried figs, eggs, fish, shells, octopuses, chickens, rabbits and partridges. In contrast to the Egyptian food offerings to the dead, the Roman still lifes were a celebration of their hedonistic life.

Among the treasures of the painting collection of the BSP are the still lifes of Paz Paterno. Philippine still lifes are known as *bodegones* or “kitchen pictures,” after the austere form of Spanish still life, of which the works of Juan Sanchez Cotán have become the classic examples. Compared to the austerities of Cotán’s cabbage, melon and cucumber lined against a wall of darkness, Paterno’s *bodegones* are a sweet plenitude of tropical fruits: *langka*, *pakwan*, *macopa*, *santol*, *atis*, *granada*, *duhat*, *singkamas*, *kamatis*, *dalanghita*, *mais*. Not for Paterno is the cold store *canterero* (cooking space) as theatrical stage; for these Filipino *bodegones* only the rich earth, from whence this bounty sprung, would suffice. Whether spilling from baskets or upon the brown soil, these fruits - bursting ripe, casually strewn, and sliced wide open - are images of a dreamy freshness. A charming fillip is a bird swooping down on these fruits, only for us to realize that it had built a nest for its chirping young, surreptitiously perched atop the root crops.

How should we regard Paterno’s idyllic *bodegones*? As *vanitas*, Latin for “truth” (after *Ecclesiastes: Vanitas Vanitatum*), these still lifes of fruits can suggest the transience of life, the fate of fruits being to rot and dry up. Or, indeed, along a more Philippine sensibility, they are a source of immediate nourishment, some fruits already peeled and sliced, which suggest a human touch and presence. Certainly, the still lifes suggest a countryside picnic. They are truly spectacles of pleasure.

Whether spilling from baskets or upon the brown soil, these fruits - bursting ripe, casually strewn, and sliced wide open - are images of a dreamy freshness.

## Sagrado: Philippine Religious Imagery

Oil painting came into existence in the country in the eighteenth century when the Spanish friars put art in the service of the Church. In the previous centuries, the medium was engraving, of which the images, as with oil paintings, were based on European prayer books. Binondo and Santa Cruz were the sites of a burgeoning artistic trade, where painters, sculptors and jewelers were to be found. Most of these artists and artisans were Chinese *mestizos*. Thus the earliest known paintings in the Philippines are, from all indications, the creation of Chinese painters. These were the *Nuestra Señora del Pronto Socorro* (Our Lady of Prompt Succor) dated 1580, and the *Chinese Storming the Intramuros in 1603 Driven Back by an Apparition of Saint Francis*, circa 1687. According to art historian Santiago Pilar: “No icon prior to 1800s is signed, in large part due to the respect of the limner for his sacred subject. Therefore, actual names could only be discovered in historical records and so far only one has come down to us.” The records were written by the Dominican historian Father Diego de Duarte.

Certainly a distinction lies between spirituality and religiosity. The latter refers to a manifestation of a faithful devotion to the service and worship of God, or a deity, or an institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices. In Spanish Philippines, however, where religion was the fulcrum of daily life, with the Spanish friars being both the religious and secular administrators, spirituality and religion could only be adjudged as an emanation of the other. Indeed, our religiosity is considered as a Filipino trait, a scrupulous and conscious adherence to the rituals of our faith.



ANONYMOUS, *Nuestra Señora De La Consolacion*  
Early 19th Century, Oil on panel, 57 x 41.5 cm

Oil painting came into existence in the country in the eighteenth century when the Spanish friars put art in the service of the Church.





ANONYMOUS, *Holy Trinity*, Late 18th Century, Oil on molave, 57 x 39.5 cm

The BSP collection can proudly boast of some of the finest extant specimens of early icons, in particular the work of the unknown Bohol artist who painted the *Holy Trinity*.



ANONYMOUS, *Santissima Trinidad*, Early 20th century, Oil on canvas, 70 x 55 cm





ANONYMOUS, *Holy Trinity*, Turn of the century, Oil on linen, 49 x 37.5 cm



**DAMIAN DOMINGO**, *The Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 1819, Oil on panel, 85 x 65.5 cm

Damian Domingo was the director of the first art school in the country, founded in 1821 by the *Sociedad Económico de los Amigos del País*.



The BSP collection can proudly boast of some of the finest extant specimens of these early icons, in particular the works of the unknown Bohol artists, such as the *Stations of the Cross*, *San Antonio Abad*, and the *Blessed Trinity*. Damian Domingo, who was director of the first art school in the country, founded in 1821 by the *Sociedad Economica de los Amigos del Pais*, painted *The Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Another Domingo religious painting is *Our Lady of the Rosary with St. Dominic and St. Francis*, now with the Intramuros Administration.

*Our Lady of the Rosary* was also depicted, an attribution to Mariano Asuncion and Antonio Melantic. Asuncion was a member of a lay brotherhood, the Venerable Third Order of St. Francis; of Melantic, almost nothing is known of this fashionable portrait painter. Also in the BSP collection is *The Virgin of Antipolo* by Justiniano Asuncion, younger sibling of Mariano.

Religious imagery of the Blessed Virgin and the saints were also the subject of *miniaturismo*, which was the art of the miniature locket, whose size was no bigger than a thumbnail. A well-known miniaturist was Domingo Gomez whose only surviving work is *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*.

With the emergence of a thriving class of Filipino merchants in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, came the demand for an art that would reflect their new-found prosperity and elevated social status. In the commissioned portraits of the country's *ilustrados* (enlightened middle-class) can be gleaned an inventory of objects and items that undoubtedly signal religiosity as the reflection of Filipino spirituality. It should be added, however, that only the female of the species is so accoutered by such pious objects of religiosity.

Our religiosity  
is considered as  
a Filipino trait,  
a scrupulous  
and conscious  
adherence to the  
rituals of our faith.



VICENTE VILLASEÑOR, *La Paloma*, Circa 1890s  
Oil on panel, 61.5 x 45 cm



JUAN SENSON, *The Holy Family*, Circa 1880-1890, Oil on linen, 59.5 x 50 cm





NICOLAS LUIS, *Sta. Leogarda de Jesus*, Circa 1860, Oil on linen, 50 x 40 cm



ANONYMOUS, *San Mauricio Martir*, Undated, Oil on board, 46 x 30 cm





ANONYMOUS, *San Anacleto*, Circa 1880s, Oil on canvas, 35.5 x 28.5 cm

Beyond the meticulous rendition of finery — the *baro't saya*, the *pañuelo* — ladies in the portraits posed with a rosary clasped in hand or a *virriña*, the glass-encased Blessed Virgin, on a side table, often with a stack of prayer books beside it.

Spirituality is also reflected in the Filipino woman's behavior and bearing. Esteemed are the values of modesty, chastity, proper decorum and impeccable breeding — the *urbanidad* and *delicadeza* of our social behavior. Three paintings in the BSP collection exemplify these traits: Antonio Garcia Llamas' *Religiosa*, Ricarte Purugganan's *Portrait of a Lady*, and *Seated Woman Holding a Cross* by an unknown artist.

Even without the external trappings of rosary and prayerbook (she holds instead a rose), Renato Habulan's *Dalaga* is a portrait of elegant refinement and modesty, and betokens a soul in composure. Against a vast cosmic space as background — this could simply be a painted *telon* in an Escolta studio — this Filipino maiden seems merged with the Divine Mind or the cosmos.

Philippine religious imagery encompasses as well depictions of contemplatives who have offered their lives to God. One such work is Ireneo Miranda's *Procession* — a painting steeped in the silence of the scene: a row of veiled nuns, entering a light-filled church. The scene recalls Jacob waking from dreaming of the ladder to heaven, crying out: "Truly Yahweh is in this place and I never knew it!" Then he was afraid and said: "How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than a house of God, this is the gate of heaven!"



VICENTE VILLASEÑOR, *Nuestra Señora De La Porteria De Avila*,  
Late 18th Century, Oil on panel, 92 x 62 cm

Spirituality is also reflected in the Filipino woman's behavior and bearing. Esteemed are the values of modesty, chastity, proper decorum and impeccable breeding.





**ANONYMOUS**, *Seated Woman Holding a Cross*, Undated, Oil on canvas, 83 x 52 cm  
This painting by an unknown artist exemplifies the much admired traits of modesty and chastity.



**ANTONIO GARCIA LLAMAS**, *Religiosa*, Circa 1930s, Oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cm

One of several paintings in the BSP collection that present an idealized vision of the Filipino woman's spirituality.





**RENATO HABULAN**, *Ang Dalaga*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 120.5 x 121 cm

Even without the external trappings of rosary and prayerbook, (she holds instead a rose), Renato Habulan's *Dalaga* is a portrait of elegant refinement and modesty, and betokens a soul in composure.





**IRENEO MIRANDA,**

*Procession*, 1955

Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 85 cm

Philippine religious imagery encompasses as well depictions of contemplatives who have offered their lives to God. One such work is Ireneo Miranda's *Procession* — a painting steeped in the silence of the scene: a row of veiled nuns entering a light-filled church.





## Landscape Sublime

In 1757, the British philosopher Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. Its central point of view is that man has an “irrational” attraction to fear, pain, ugliness, loss, hatred and death (all of which comprise the notion of the sublime) on the one hand, and to beauty, pleasure, joy and love on the other. Artists and writers of the time subscribed to the vision of the sublime and merged it with the declared Romantic aim of a “return to nature.” Thus the landscape became the focus of Romanticism, charged by the various moods of nature. In Germany, the greatest Romantic artist was Caspar David Friedrich, who produced poetic landscapes that centered on the individual’s insignificance in the face of nature. England brought the Romantic landscape to its peak with the works of John Constable, and Joseph Mallord William Turner. While both were in the thrall of a Romantic mood, their approaches to art were in marked contrast to the other. Constable imparted a calm and clear solidity to the pastoral landscape. Turner brought his landscapes and seascapes to a state of dissolution, with his sweeping and luminous handling of pigment.

By the nineteenth century, Romanticism swept over America, influencing art and literature. Landscapes were its face, by turns, peaceful and turbulent, in the monumental canvases of rugged mountains and vast wilderness, thunderstorms and torrential rains. A landscape movement emerged, known as the Hudson River School. Its most prominent member was Thomas Cole, who articulated the spiritual substance of the American landscape, proclaiming that the “wilderness is yet a fitting place to speak of God.”

To some Filipino artists, the landscape loomed like an apparition of an earthly paradise. This vision of land, sea, and sky became the subject of an emotional attachment and an awareness of a subject that is a perfect vehicle for their art, capable of embracing the human drama of their earthly existence. Whether lyrical or theatrical in mood, the artists imbued the landscape with the sacredness of place. If ever there was a metaphor for the Supreme Being, the artists found it in the mysteries of nature: vast lands against a limitless space of skies, with the puny human figure shaded by a grove of trees. This striking image of man against an infinite universe filled artists with awe and wonder; but by embracing the splendor of nature, man acknowledged his sheer dependence on his Creator. Indeed, the sight of those frail, makeshift *nipa* shanties would make the viewer wonder if these structures could endure the forces of nature.

Suffice it then to say that the landscape is a well beloved subject of Filipino painters. In *The Art of the Landscape*, Kenneth Clark wrote: “Facts become art by means of love, which unifies them and raises them to a higher plane of reality; and in landscape this love which embraces everything is expressed by light.”

The artist’s intense attachment to landscape paintings speaks of an emotional experience that has been described as sublime. Though Filipino artists worked independently, largely unaware of their American and European ancestors, they nevertheless instinctively felt the spiritual stirrings of a sublime experience. Among the paintings in the BSP collection that evoke the feelings of an encounter with the sublime are Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco’s *Valley*, Gabriel Custodio’s *Habagat*, Rafael Pacheco’s *Rainbow’s End*, and Galo Ocampo’s *Ricefield*.

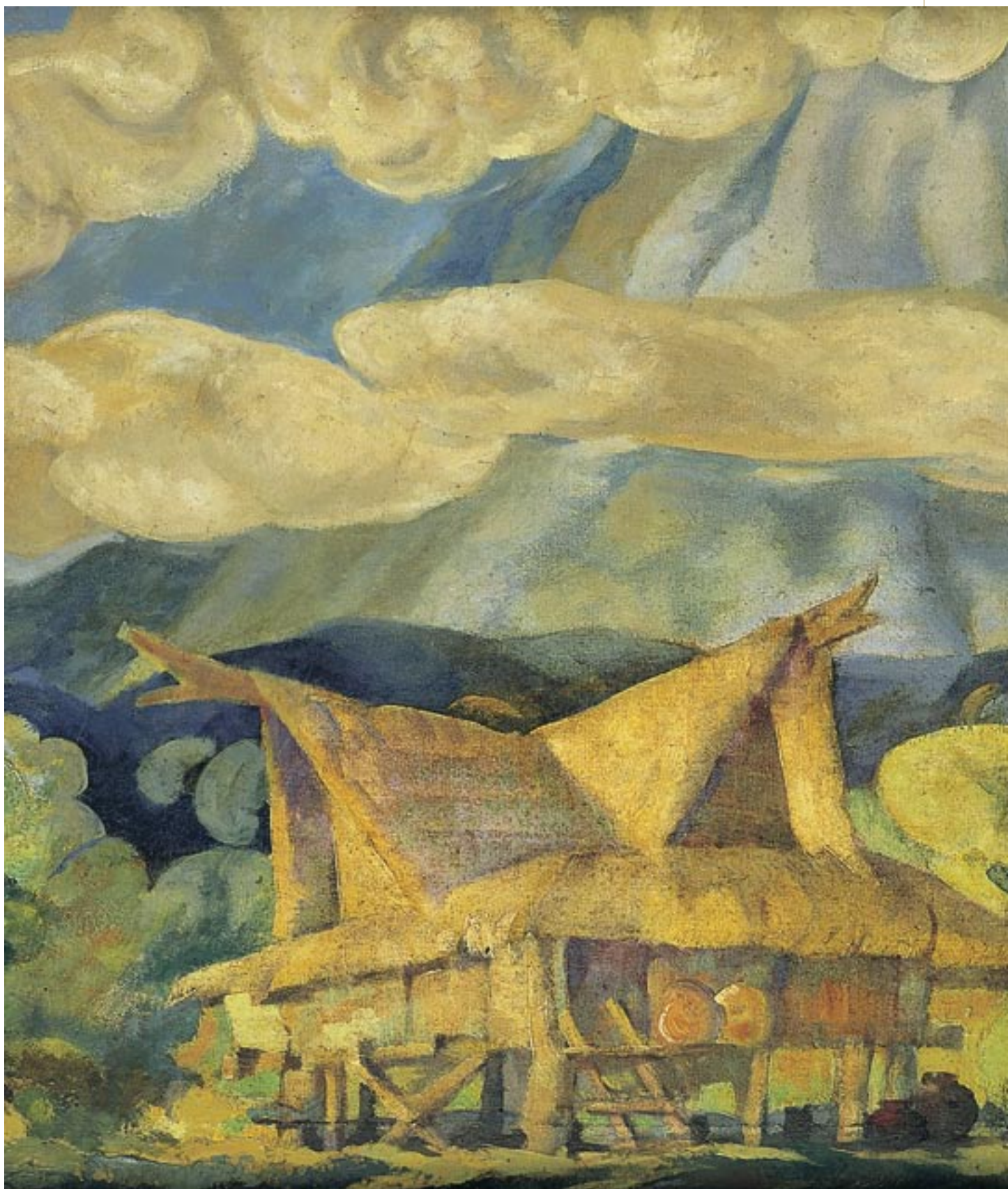


If ever there was a metaphor for the Supreme Being, the artists found it in the mysteries of nature; Vast lands against a limitless space of skies, with the puny human figure shaded by a grove of trees.



GABRIEL CUSTODIO, *Habagat (Tanza)*, 1962, Oil on canvas, 89 x 89 cm

To some Filipino artists, the landscape loomed like an apparition of an earthly paradise.







**CARLOS V. FRANCISCO**

*Valley*, 1948, Oil on canvas, 47 x 71 cm

The artist's intense attachment to landscape paintings speaks of an emotional experience that has been described as "sublime."

## Juvenal Sansó: Landscapes of the Sacred

*“Tell me the landscape in which you live and I will tell you who you are.”*

Jose Ortega y Gasset

In Belden C. Lane’s *Landscapes of the Sacred* the author identifies the axioms that give a spiritual meaning to a place, where the encounter between the individual and the landscape assumes the significance of a meeting destined to happen. Such a luminous encounter is a gift from the Higher Power. To some, a view may serve simply as a tourist’s perfunctory observation of a place, worthy of nothing more than a background to a photograph quickly snapped by disposable camera. But to another more sensitively attuned to the spiritual vibrations of a place, an epiphany will take place. Although Lane was speaking strictly of places and the original foundation site of religious groups, the axioms for sacredness of place seem to have been addressed to artists thus:

*A sacred place is not chosen, it chooses. To an artist, a site or a view, is perceived as a place that has sought him out. God chooses to reveal himself only where He wills.*

*A second axiom asserts that a sacred place is an ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary. A ritual of regular visitation to a specific spot, though unremarkable to others, sanctifies the site in memory.*

*A third axiom would insist that a sacred place can be tread upon without being entered. The identification of a sacred place is thus ultimately related to states of consciousness.*

*A final axiom suggests that the impulse of a sacred place is both centripetal and centrifugal, local and universal. One is recurrently driven to a quest for centeredness—a focus on the particular place of divine encounter — and then at other times driven out from that center with an awareness that God is never confined to a single locale.*

The painter whose art most exemplifies this discovery of landscape as a spiritual place is Juvenal Sansó, now Paris-based. Indeed, not one, but two distinct places, situated at opposite ends of the world, have intensely possessed him. The first is San Dionisio, in old Parañaque, which, as always with the depredation of urban encroachment, still exists, but is best remembered in memory. In numerous paintings, Sansó limned the clusters of bamboo fish traps (*baklad*), and the *barong-barongs* of this town. Clumps of *baklad* soar high like cathedrals against a ghostly twilight, in a desolate, dreamy world.

Sansó reminisces:

*“Manila happens to be one of the most thoroughly destroyed cities during World War II and what was left of the charred remains, the inhabitants picked up and started to build shanties of ghost-towns, horrible beauty. Disregarding the human side of this apocalyptic domain, one cannot help being moved by the strange beauty of rust and rot, the galvanized iron slowly disintegrating into ochres, siennas and earth greens, and wood and bamboo decaying into fibers and sponginess. Swampy, dark, muddy, garbage-strewn water may reflect the most dazzling skies in sunset flare-ups. As these dwellings are innumerable scales tied together as a carcass, they catch light with the hypnotic vibrations of sequins, dangling elements shifting in the breeze.”*



This was a view which Sansó first beheld, aboard the descending plane on his return home in 1957 after art studies in Europe. In 1934, at the age of four, the Catalan-born artist came over to the Philippines with his parents and sisters.

The other place that is persistently present in his art is Brittany, in northern France. As though by divine fiat, Sansó's discovery of Brittany came through his friendship with Yves le Dantec and his wife, who happened to be the youngest daughter of the French expressionist Georges Roualt.

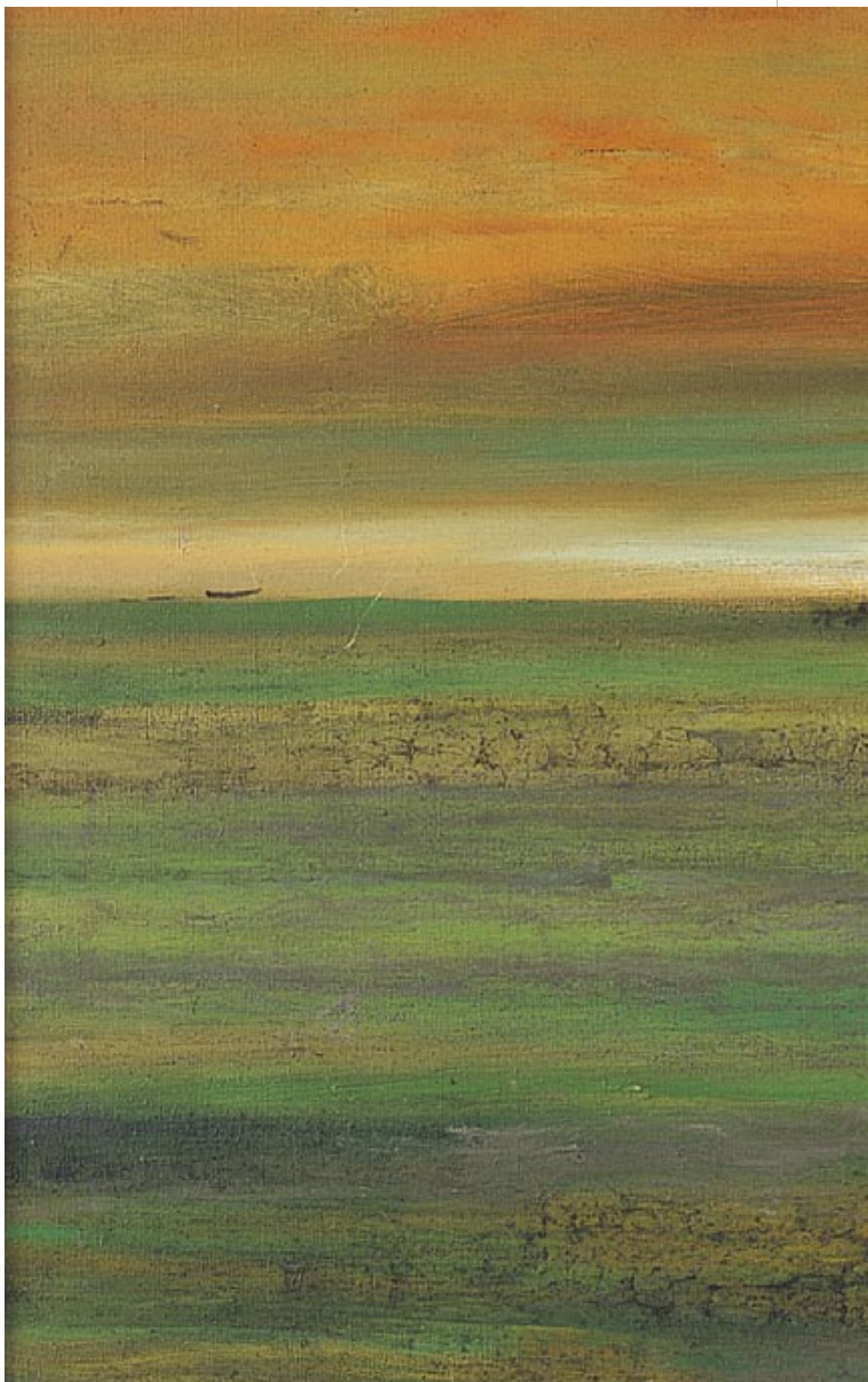
Invited by the le Dantec couple to their country home in Brittany, Sansó was enthralled by a "landscape...so beautiful that I must have felt I did not deserve it. I had no language to express it then." But so overwhelmed was the artist by the breathtaking view that, confiding to one interviewer, it took a couple of years "of just staring at the sea, the tides, and the rose, if not ochre, granite rocks" before he could paint. Since then, for over two decades, Sansó was a constant visitor to the Brittany coast. In another interview with this writer, Sansó exclaimed with a joyous enthusiasm that clearly showed the enchantment with his sacred place had not palled: "The coast is superb! There are huge granites...piled one on top of another! The sea is blinding turquoise! Waves and rocks and seas and fantastic vegetation! Alas, the only problem is that it often rains!" Whether done on the spot or finished back in his Paris studio, countless canvases issued from the inexhaustible Sansó, shimmering landscapes in the incandescent shades of oranges or luminous blues and turquoises. Of one particular work in the BSP collection, *Day Vibration*, the critic Emmanuel Torres described it as: "haunted by the solitude of spiritual search or stoic persistence, like that of stone itself."



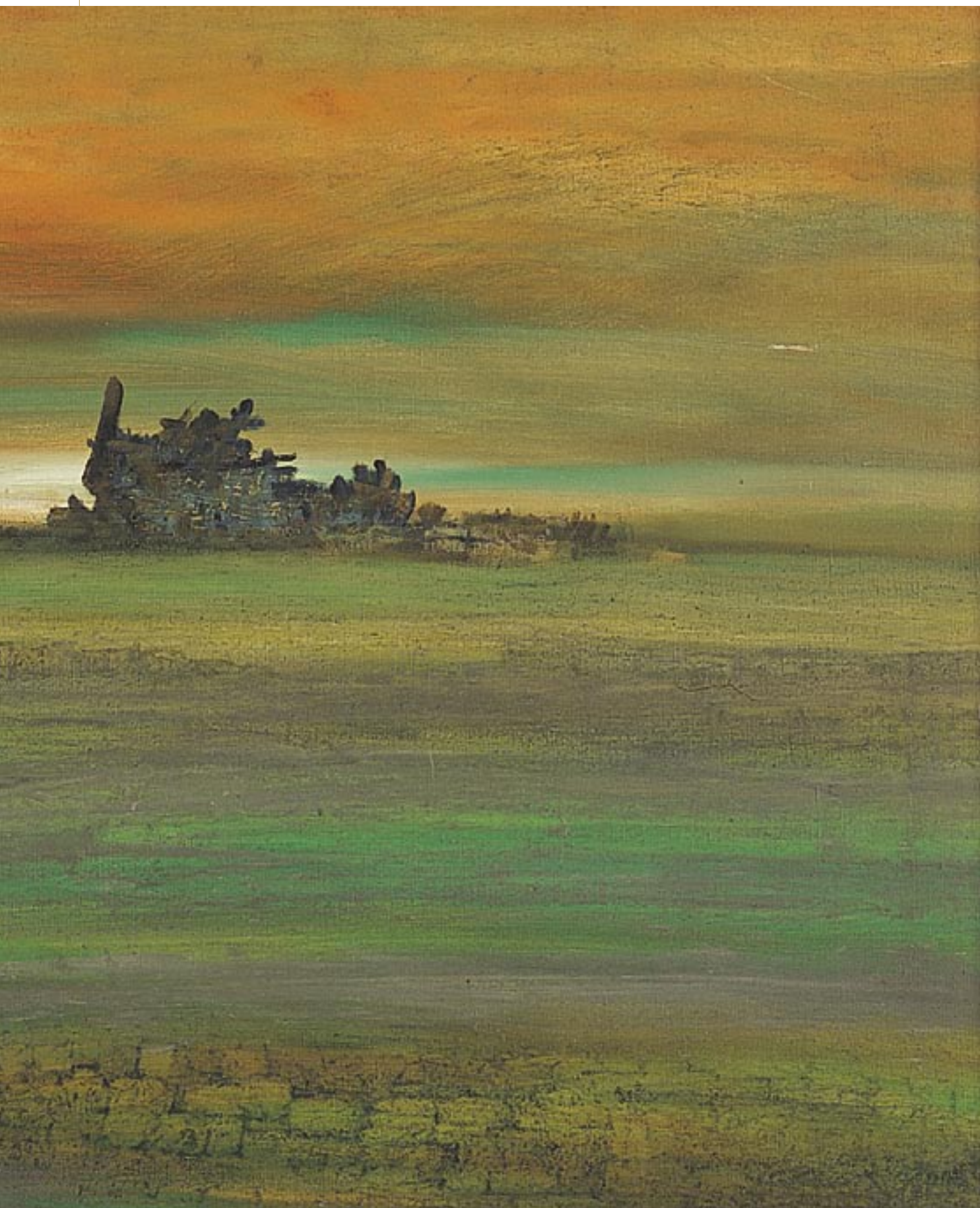
JUVENAL SANSÓ, *Day Vibration*, 1970, Acrylic on canvas, 81 x 116 cm

Juvenal Sansó's art best exemplifies discovery of landscape as a spiritual place.

**JUVENAL SANSÓ.**  
*Watery Distance*, Circa 1970s  
Oil on canvas, 58.5 x 77 cm  
Whether done on the spot or finished  
back in his Paris studio, countless  
canvases issued from the inexhaustible  
Sansó, such as shimmering landscapes in  
the incandescent shades of oranges or  
luminous blues and turquoises.







## Kindred Spirits

The art of the twentieth century, according to the critic Harold Rosenberg, in his *Metaphysical Feelings in Modern Art*, is either indifferent to religion or actively opposed to it. Excepting artists devoted to biblical subjects — Chagall, Roualt, for instance — ideas on art are instigated or motivated by discoveries in science and technology. Indeed the Impressionist vision was impelled by the idea that the visible world has no definite fixed form or color. Proceeding from Paul Cezanne's belief that all forms in nature are based on the cone, the sphere, and the cylinder, Picasso sought to present a multi-dimensional view of reality, giving birth to Cubism. The short-lived Futurist movement in Italy was aligned with the dynamics of modern life: speed, construction, rationality, power. Constructivism, principally a Russian movement, was essentially an aesthetic of the machine. But, contends Rosenberg: "...for all the modernist passion for denuding things of their mystery, art has been unable to relinquish its affinity with man's most mysterious power, and his most precious one: I mean the power of creation. To this mystery, art — regardless of how it is defined or how removed it is from definition — is forever bound."

In *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth Century Art*, Roger Lipsey necessarily anchored his exploration on the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky, whose famous treatise written in 1910, *On the Spiritual in Art*, was based on the premise of the elimination of external reality. In 1910, Kandinsky created his first deliberate abstract work. His central thesis was that art should act directly on the soul in the same manner as music does. Kandinsky wrote: "Musical sound acts directly on the soul [and] finds an echo there because... music is innate in man. To achieve this, the artist must use the two weapons at his disposal: color and form. Thus: It is evident therefore that color harmony must rest only on a corresponding vibration in the human soul; and this is one of the guiding principles of the inner need." The phrase "inner need," or as sometimes translated, "interior necessity," is the impulse felt by the artist for spiritual expression. Kandinsky called his colored shapes "symbols of energy."

He believed that colors affect the mind and soul with their vibration, and each color carried a different resonance: yellow, energy; white, harmony; black, silence or death; blue, depth or calmness; and he noted: "Vermilion has the charm of flame, which has always attracted people." Aspiring towards visual music, he entitled his abstractions "compositions" and "improvisations."

While much of Kandinsky's writings today sound like incantations, there is no denying the fact that he has identified a new art as a legitimate language of the spirit. Of his fellow artists, Kandinsky evinced an amazingly accurate, and prophetic perception. Even before the two greatest masters of twentieth century art came into prominence, Kandinsky declared: "Matisse — color. Picasso — form. Two great signposts toward a great end."

Like Kandinsky, another artist, the Frenchman Robert Delaunay came into abstraction through Cubism, eliminating objects "that came to break and corrupt the colored work." Delaunay restored color, which Picasso and Braque had renounced in their Cubist works. The poet-critic Guillaume invented the word "Orphism" to describe these.

Also like Kandinsky in his involvement with the world of spirit was the Dutchman Piet Mondrian. He was a member of the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 in New York City by Helena P. Blavatsky. "Theosophy" is a seventeenth-century word coined from Greek roots meaning "Godly wisdom" or "divine wisdom."

HERNANDO OCAMPO, *Song for Summer*, 1973, Oil on canvas, 81.5 x 61.5 cm

Colors affect the mind and soul with their vibration, and each color carries a different resonance.





H.R. Ocampo  
73





**JOSE JOYA**, *Gates of Happiness*, 1979, Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 78.5 cm  
Joya uses two weapons at his disposal: color and form.





**FERNANDO ZOBEL**, *Jardin III*, 1956, Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 153.5 cm  
"Inner need" is the impulse felt by the artist for spiritual expression.

## Cosmic Blues

*“Blue gives other colors their vibration. “*

Paul Cezanne

Christian symbolism has designated blue as the color of the Holy Spirit – the Divine Light. Representations of the Virgin Mary also depicted her in blue paint, but not just any blue. In Renaissance paintings, her holy robe was painted with ultramarine, the most expensive pigment next to gold.

In Hindu India, blue is revered as a lucky color — blue being the color of the god Krishna. Egyptian wall paintings reveal pharaohs robed in blue.

Pablo Picasso is famous for his so-called “Blue Period” during which he depicted spiritual derelicts — beggars, alcoholics, and prostitutes. Even Henri Matisse was enamored with blue, as witness his *Lady in Blue* and several nudes all in blue.

*Der Blaue Reiter* or *The Blue Rider* was the title of a painting by Kandinsky, from which was derived the name of the Expressionist group which included, aside from Kandinsky, August Macke, Franz Mark, and Paul Klee. The *Blue Rider* is the horseman who is “the champion of anti-naturalism but also the symbol of deeper reality.” Kandinsky felt that blue was “deep and centripetal.”

For Mondrian, there were only three colors: yellow, red, and blue, since all other colors were derived from them. Because blue was opposite to yellow, Mondrian characterized it as “soft, supple and retiring, horizontal like the firmament.”

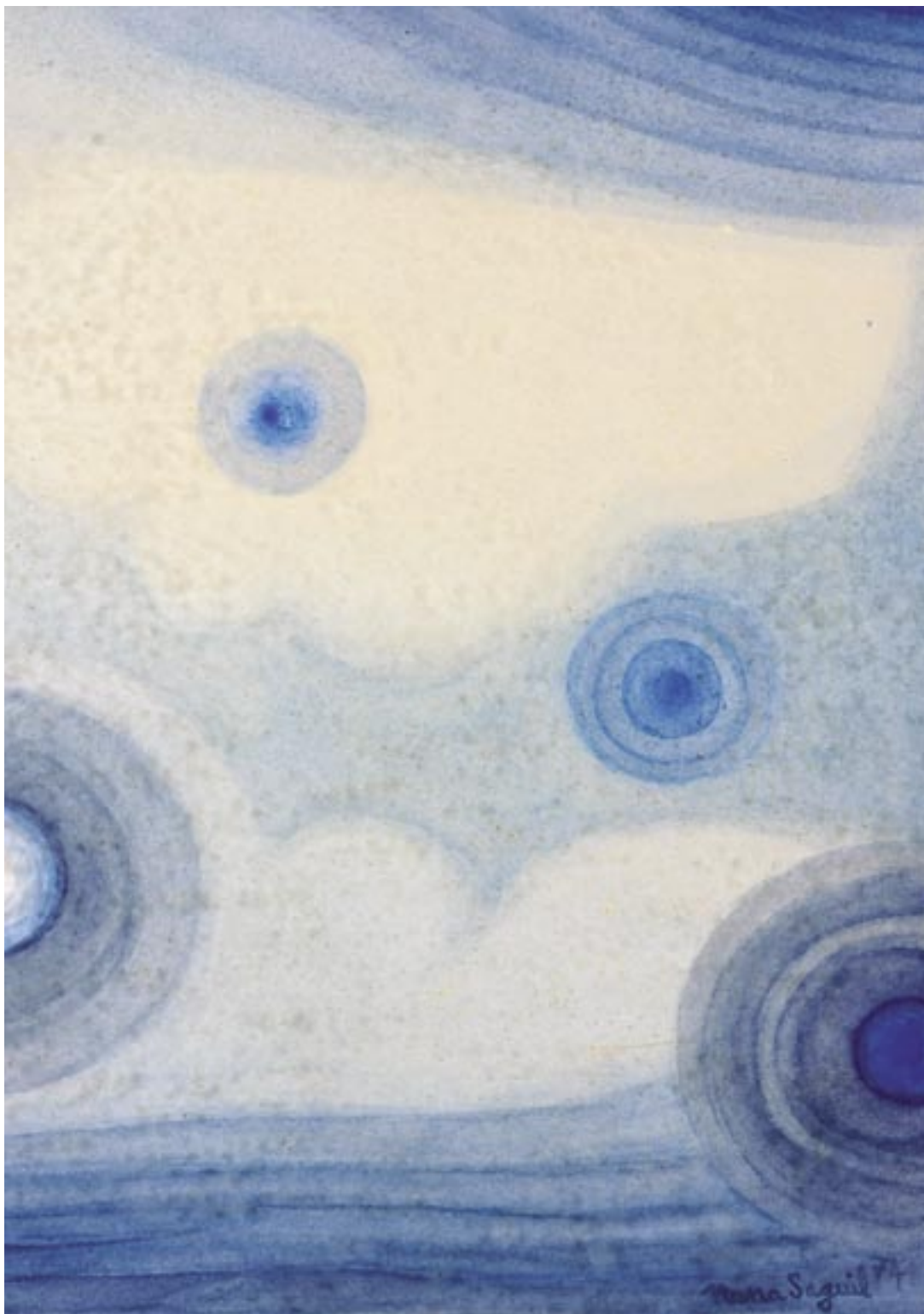
Down to more contemporary times, the color blue continued to cast its spell on artists. Jackson Pollock’s painting, acquired by the National Gallery of Australia, is entitled *Blue Poles*. Another member of the first generation of the New York School, Robert Motherwell, sought the essence of the color blue in his long-standing *Open* series. One particular work is entitled *Blueness of Blue*.

The most famous of the “blue” paintings are those of the French artist Yves Klein, who believed that “blue possessed a metaphysical quality of immateriality and was thus imbued with meaning.” He once declared that “Blue has no dimension, it is beyond dimensions whereas the other colors are not... All colors arouse specific associated ideas, psychologically material or tangible, while blue suggests at most the sea and sky, and they, after all, are in actual, visible nature what is most abstract.” Klein often referred to the first man in space who proclaimed that “the world is blue.”

The two Filipino artists who have worked obsessively with the color blue are Nena Saguil and Edwin Wilwayco. Their painterly voyages into the mystical color have produced works that conspire to evoke awe and wonder at the boundlessness of the human spirit. The genesis of Saguil’s obsession with blue can be traced to a work as early as 1954 entitled *Blue Banana*. The painting is a quasi-abstract image, with its striated fan-like leaves. In his annotation of this work, critic Emmanuel Torres noted “the stipples which texture the otherwise bare areas of the painting, stipples soon to evolve into a pervasive element in her art: the multiple round spots.”

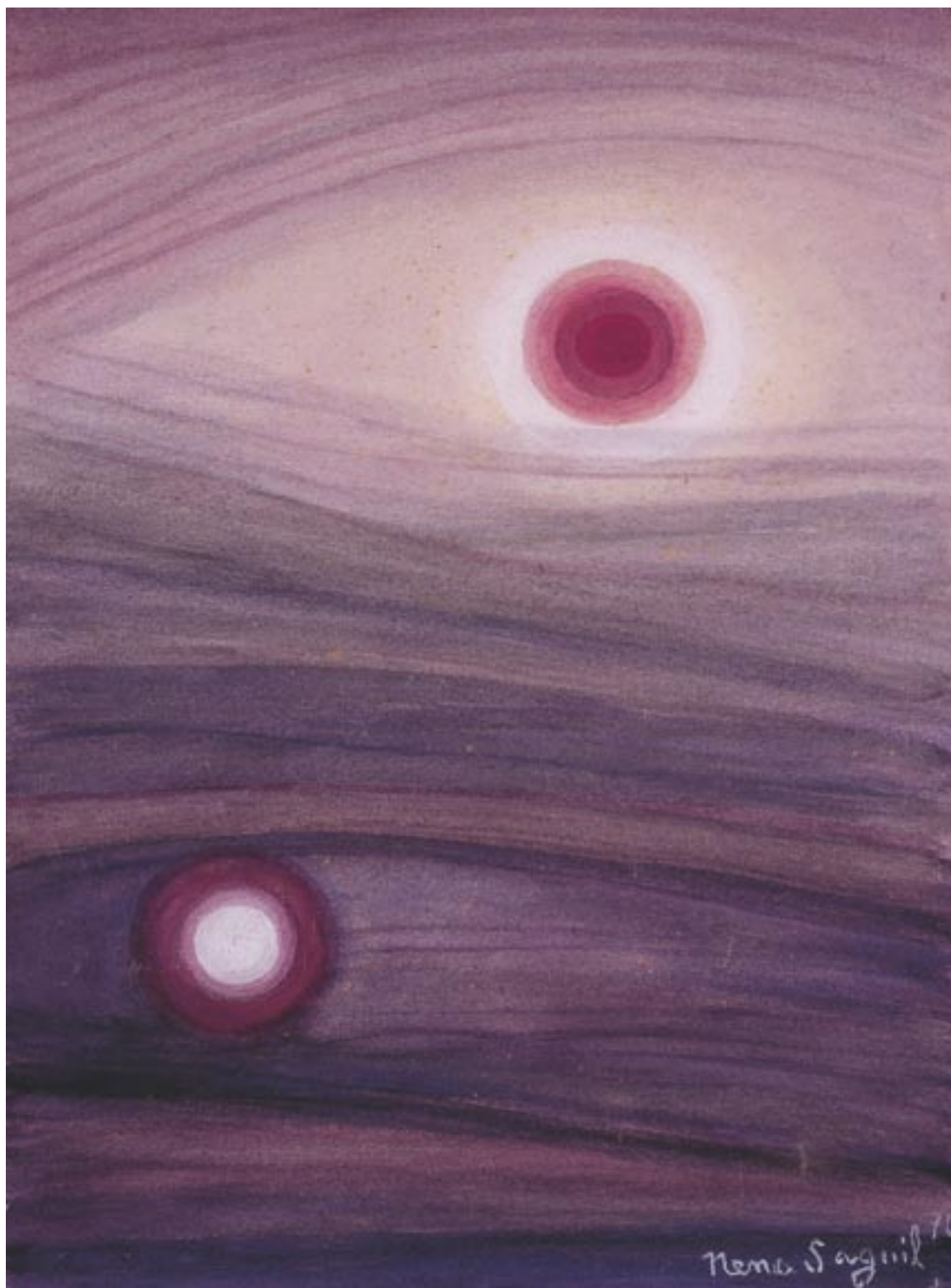
Blue – not black - is the color of darkness,  
the color of mystery.





**NENA SAGUIL**, *Untitled*, 1974, Watercolor; 34.5 x 26 cm

Painterly voyages into the mystical color blue have produced works that conspire to evoke awe and wonder at the boundlessness of the human spirit.



**NENA SAGUIL**, *Untitled*, 1974, Watercolor, 34.5 x 26 cm  
"Stillness and nightness are key concepts to Saguil's private world, her escape."



Written by Torres, the monograph on the art of Nena Saguil carries the title *Landscapes and Inscapes: From the Material World to the Spiritual*. Indeed, the art of Saguil subscribed religiously to Kandinsky's philosophy of "inner necessity".

Saguil's earliest subjects were those of typical Philippine rural scenes which were popularized by Fernando Amorsolo. These were picturesque images of peasant folk enjoying a countryside picnic, or hard at work in the field. While the subjects are innately charming, the rendition of the figurines — plump and pudgy — does not court the graceful delineation that was Amorsolo's trademark. It is in the artist's depiction of young ladies, however, where Saguil displays an entrancing élan, in particular, her *Tatlong Maria* paintings, and in an uncharacteristic flirty mood, the work entitled *Vanity*, a portrait of a seductively attired and heavily mascaraed lady engrossed in her beauty ritual.

Settled in Paris in 1956, Saguil painted a series of nocturnal scenes, of which one such work is *Paris at Night*. Torres cites fellow critic Leonidas Benesa who, in his essay on Saguil, "Aesthete of Solitude", commented: "'stillness' and 'nightness' are key concepts to her private world, her inscape."

In tracing the lifework of Saguil, Torres observed that, by the mid-sixties, "she had started to reject the material world and exalt the spiritual instead." A 1967 work, *Blue Cosmos*, is a somber world of oscillating blue spheres. Simultaneous with Saguil's blue paintings were her numerous pen-and-ink works, with their dense, multitudinous repetition of circular forms, to which the artist ascribed such associative titles as *Landscapes of the Mind*, *Cosmic Signs*, *Illumination*, *The Twilight of God*.

Torres: "The material landscape is only what the naked eye sees; but there is a life force, an élan vital within it that arouses the spiritual in each of us, if only we would see it with what Eastern mystics refer to as the "Third Eye," the imagination or intuition honed by transcendental meditation. What Saguil's art enjoins us to see is that there is nothing static about the natural landscape. As the physical sciences tell us, nothing in matter is ever still or inert; it is potent with atoms of energy. The Romantic imagination would prefer to revive the classical Greek philosophers' 'music of the spheres,' the spirit which accounts for all unity and harmony in the universe."

Of the evolution of her color sense, critic Leo Benesa wrote:

"Her shift from this warm color — through an intermediate green — to the cool and contemplative blue of her latest creations is more than just a change from one physical property of the spectrum to another. It is a psychological transition into her own individual and lonely style, in which technique has totally become a means to an aesthetic end: the revelation of the artist's own vision of the real and the ideal.

"Here in this blue vision of reality as sensed or intuited by Nena Saguil, a new cosmos, a universe with its own laws of gravity and gravitation, has emerged, suggestive of the inner fluxes and motions of the blood and the passage of wind-and-rain in the valleys and mountains of the unconscious, as well as the other fluxes with which we are all familiar: stream and river, moon, sun, planet system, and galaxy."

On the other hand, Wilwayco's decision to concentrate his pictorial powers on a single color should not be construed as an act of arrogance, but rather as one of self-effacement. For it is in mortifying his art of the hedonistic pleasures of color that Wilwayco needed to relate to the most intimate aspects of his art. Very wisely, too, the artist has evaded the allure of the black-grey-white monochromes so emphatically favored by Filipino artists working in the minimalist vein. Having assumed a mythic elegance, the black and white fashion began to disport just the slightest air of exhaustion.

But why blue? For Wilwayco, the reasons are both celebratory and aesthetic. A growing awareness of spirituality, as a force that directs the artist's sensibility, and the need to reflect his own psychological state, emboldened Wilwayco to explore the emotive power of the color blue. Inevitably, of course, such a decision would reflect an obsessiveness that can, if left unchecked, diminish the work, engendering a kind of visual lassitude.

Wilwayco's collective body of works, the *Blues* series, should not be confused with the work of another Filipino artist, the late Pacita Abad, who had also produced an impressive oeuvre under the title *Endless Blues*. Aside from the different temperaments of these two Filipino artists, Abad's blues refer to the American jazz type of music characterized by melancholy lyrics. Blues also refers to a state of emotion — feeling low as against feeling high. Although by the most brilliant of ironies, reflective of the artist's vivacity of spirit, Abad transcended despondency and transformed a personal crisis into an art of exhilaration.

In Wilwayco's case, it is intriguing to discover that his one main color, blue, never overwhelms the eye, as it would in, say, heroically-sized minimalist paintings. The effect of his blues is not intrusive, at least not arrogantly so. True to the color's connotation of spirituality, not to mention its explicit allusion to the vast open skies, blue animates the canvases of Wilwayco to the extent of whipping up a whirlpool of emotions. Pictorially, the paintings suggest a spiritual maelstrom, with the viewer caught between a tension of forces: turmoil and stillness.

Recall that blue — not black — is the color of darkness, the color of mystery. In Van Gogh's canvases of wheat fields and starry nights, the skies roil in perpetual movement. Shades of deepest blues, streaked with black, swirl and thrust out into pigmented relief, asserting a sensation akin to a spirit in turmoil or in transport. Wilwayco's application of paint is emulative of the brushwork in the works of the English painter Turner — in particular, the snowstorm paintings. Of these works, it is said that the artist tied himself to a ship's mast during a storm in order to feel nature's immense fury.

Nothing quite so dramatic as Turner's gesture attended the inception of Wilwayco's *Blues* works. Indeed the evolution of the artist's iconography is a study in gentle patience, likened to that of a gardener tending his plants. That the *Blues* works suggest the organic structural syntax of vegetative and floral forms was not by happenstance.

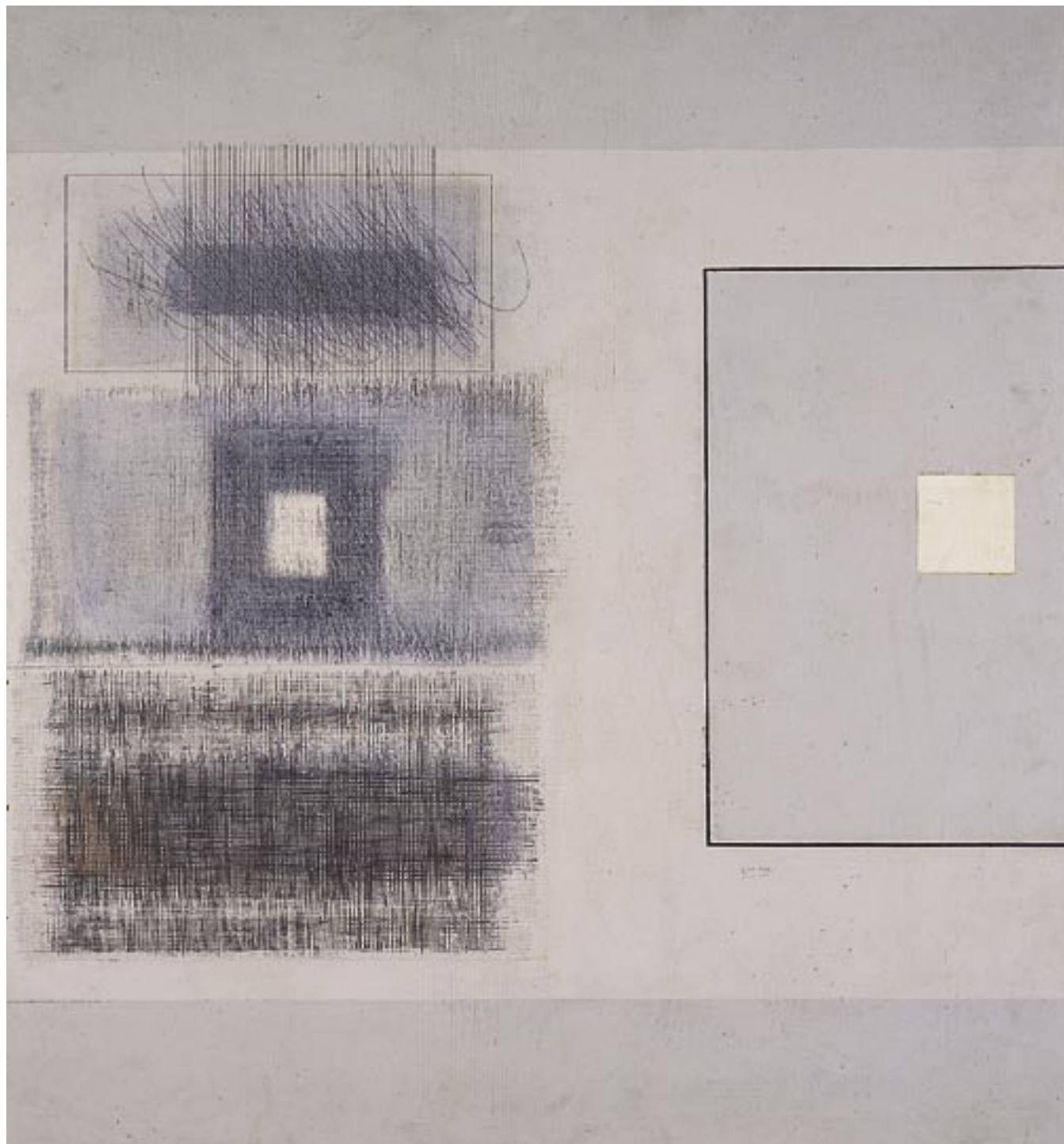


Down to more contemporary times,  
the color blue continued to cast its  
spell on artists.



**EDWIN WILWAYCO**, *Blue Empire*, 1976, Acrylic on ply, 37 x 49.5 cm

A growing awareness of spirituality – as a force that directs the artist's sensibility, and the need to reflect his own psychological state – emboldened Wilwayco to explore the emotive power of the color blue.



**LAO LIANBEN**, *Homage to Mu-Chi*, 1980, Acrylic on canvas mounted on board, 132.1 x 122.3 cm

"Only when the mind is purified and stilled, gripped by the mesmeric silence of Lao's paintings, does it attain self-illumination."



## Lao Lianben: “My Art is About Silence”

The visionary realm of Lao Lianben's art is formulated on the purity of material. With the very limited means of black and white and subtle gradations of gray, he proceeds with the complex task of articulating states and essences. His primary involvement is not in the superficial sensuousness of his material or in the easy gratifications of visual harmonies. His is an art of clarity, devoted to the liberation of mind and spirit. His paintings have an insistent crudeness like a bone stripped clean. The power of a Lao Lianben painting works its way into the viewer's emotions insidiously. Its energy has a way of seeping through, insinuating itself in one's consciousness. It discloses nothing, and yet, in its suspended state, reveals everything. The questioning mind, with its restlessness and insatiable appetite for knowledge, finds no answer. Only when the mind is purified and stilled, gripped by the mesmeric silence of his paintings, does it attain self-illumination.



LAO LIANBEN, *White Zen*, 1974, Mixed media on plywood, 70 x 62 cm  
With the very limited means of black and white and subtle gradations of gray,  
Lao proceeds with the complex task of articulating states and essences.

## Gus Albor: Terrain in Mist and Shadows

“One way of looking at the history of abstract art is to view it as a series of audacious attempts to achieve the maximum aesthetic results from the smallest possible artistic means”. Thus wrote the critic Hilton Kramer of the non-objective idiom the language of which one Filipino painter, Augusto Albor, has labored to master through the years, and triumphed to produce a consistent body of work remarkable for their ruthless intelligence and formal elegance.

In Albor’s estimation, space is an endless acreage upon which he may create illusionistic cycloramas of light. The expressive impenetrability of layered and aggressive brushstrokes, sweeping across geographic directions of a mysterious light source, conveys incalculable depth. Possibly the artist himself will be the first to deny any evocative reading of an external world. The composite tracking of pigment wiped and encrusted to reveal unexpected and inferential color passages, engulfing a “metaphysical” space, suggests the conscious programming of an enigmatic vision.

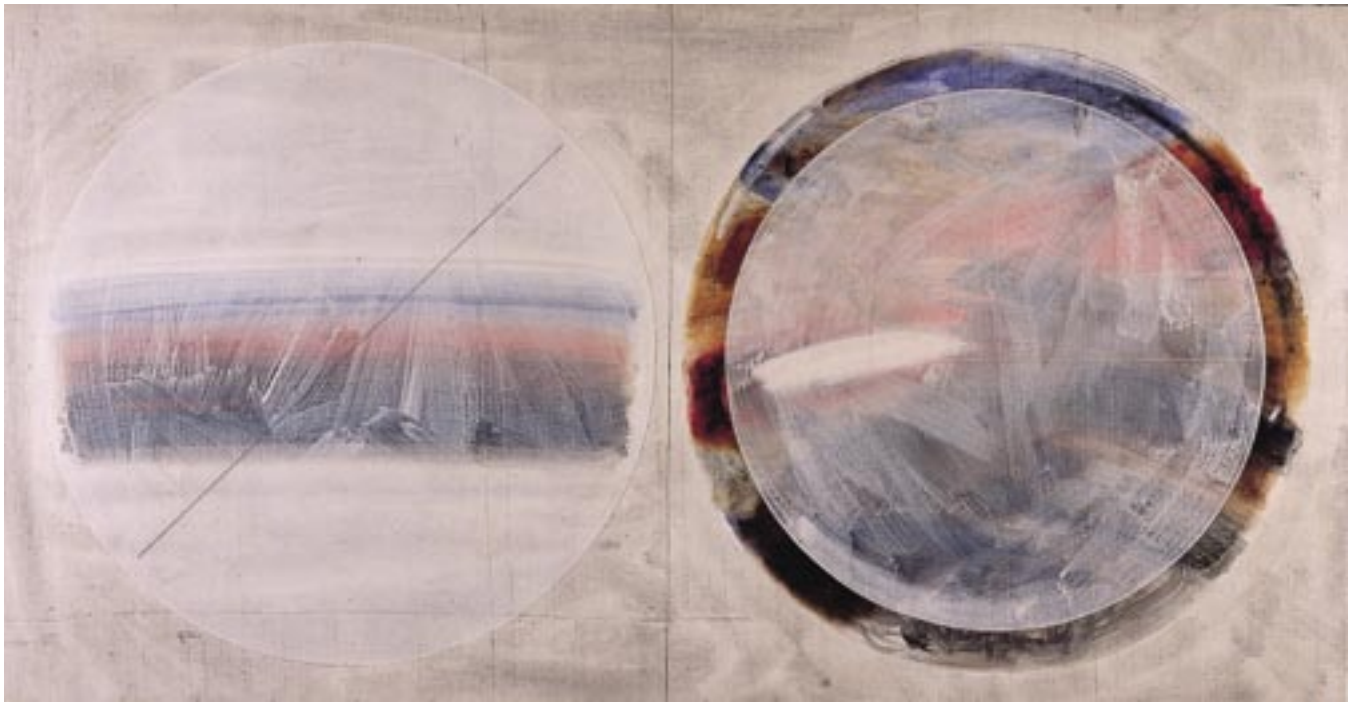
Vaporous exhalations, cavernous chambers shrouded in mist and shadows, perspectives without horizons – an intense brooding radiance calibrated to pursue the shapelessness of space. One may even consider these paintings as “unfinished” in the sense that these color-passages seem to remain in flux, constantly re-arranging their boundaries, drifting in various directions, like a rolling fog. Albor conveys the impression of spatial dislocation since the space that he inhabits is a bewildering ethereal haze.

Seductive surface textures – smudged, smeared and troweled across a vast expanse of canvas – characterize his paintings. The observed details of this mysterious terrain, lifting certain pigmented areas into three-dimensional modulations, reveal a sprawling restlessness of material surface. They are referential only to their very “thingness” – not as metaphor for any phenomenal changes, but as a thorough fleshing-out of the processes of art-making. Through these works, Albor coaxes the intelligence to submit to questions of non-traditional art – the impermeability of illusionistic surface, the volumetric “shaping” of space, relationships between figure and ground, the materialization of light and darkness.

Transparency of surface has played the predominant role in Albor’s investigation of space. Luminous layers of watery pigment, reduced to some frantic and crudely spontaneous strokes, are condensed into diaphanous veils of galactic radiance. The wonder of Albor’s gestural sobriety relates him closer to, say, Rothko’s glowing slabs of color than to Pollock’s neurotic skeins of widely flung dribbles of paint. By virtue of this association alone, Albor’s insistence on the magical capacity of painting to aspire to the sublime is more than justified. His cryptic statement, on the need to reach, in his own words, “a higher level of consciousness” thus translates into a literal and lyrical exploration of the nature of spirituality, the obsession to penetrate through the silence of “the elements of nature that weave and form the universe.” This polyphony of transparencies effectively communicates the artist’s overreaching intention to rid the act of painting of its traditional representational role. The expressive ambitiousness of his role as a painter masks the genuine humility he feels before the vast mysteries of nature and the universe.



The sprawling directions, which the art of Albor has taken, can be gleaned from his insistent thematic handling of visual preoccupations. His formal concerns are not reflected serially in his artistic production since his paintings do not depend on an implied “organic” growth of one visual idea. Each painting is self-sufficient and does not need to allude to one another to seek the position of a visual “statement” as in, for instance, Albers’ *Homage to the Square*, the haystacks and cathedrals of Monet, nor for that matter, the *Mutant Series* of Hernando Ocampo.



AUGUSTO ALBOR, *Terminus 94*, 1981, Acrylic, 92 x 183 cm

The expressive ambitiousness of his role as a painter masks the genuine humility Albor feels before the vast mysteries of nature and the universe.

Vaporous exhalations, cavernous chambers shrouded in mist and shadows, perspectives without horizons – an intense brooding radiance calibrated to pursue the shapelessness of space.







## Transforming the Ordinary

*If the doors of perception were cleaned everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.*

William Blake

*Care of the Soul* was a New York Times bestseller written by Thomas Moore, a former monk in a Catholic religious order, in which the author introduced the idea that the soul is an ingredient of life. The book struck a nerve and jolted its readers to a renewed appreciation of spirituality. Writes Moore: “It’s impossible to define what the soul is. Definition is an intellectual enterprise anyway; the soul has to do with genuineness and depth, as when we say certain music has soul or a remarkable person is soulful. When you look closely at the image of soulfulness, you see that it is tied to life in all its particulars — good food, satisfying conversation, genuine friends, and experiences that stay in the memory and touch the heart. Soul is revealed in attachment, love, and community, as well as in retreat on behalf of inner communing and intimacy.”

From his introductory lines must have come the idea for another book, which Moore entitled *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*. In this book, the author focused on such specific aspects of daily life as clothing, food, furniture, architecture, ecology, language, politics, and of course, objects of art. Moore states: “In my view, all art has magical power that may be infused into a work by the artist and enjoyed by the beholder. Art can be merely aesthetically pleasing, philosophically meaningful, and personally expressive, or it can have the special power to evoke and transmit a particular spirit to those who come in contact with it. Many traditions teach that our lives could be enriched, made spiritually alive, and even healed through the magical power of art.”

The enchantment with the ordinary becomes an intense focus for an art that seeks to discover the spiritual strength to be sourced from the seemingly insignificant objects of daily life. When an artist concentrates on a single object, it leaves such a deep impression that the sheer isolation of the object itself becomes a metaphor for solitude.

Under the strong influence of the American artist Andrew Wyeth, Stevesantos explores the ordinary world of daily life. Awash with an intensely romantic and meticulous approach to art, the artist, at a young age, exalted mundane images such as those of a door, a window, a gate, a room, a light bulb, a clothesline, a pail of water, or a solitary tree. While his paintings may impress the spirit of alienation upon the viewer, they communicate an appreciation and a glimpse of the eternal by their silence. As such, paintings that induce spiritual sensations are seen as vehicles for transformative experiences. In his “magic realist” paintings, Stevesantos discovers the miraculous in the mundane.

Also in the BSP collection are other depictions of ordinary objects that resonate of the spiritual. *Tuloy Po Kayo* by Carvajal Kiamko is a spare and stark image of an old iron door handle. Circular in shape, the image is itself a symbol of eternity. The age-old, stained, weather-beaten wood panels, with their three rusted nails — a triune symbol of the Supreme Being? — evoke a mood of transcendent time. Another work also by Kiamko is *Pintuan*, which is symbolic of a threshold, a passageway into another dimension. The regularity of measured wooden slats seems like luminous rays presaging the viewer’s immersion into a higher level of reality.

**B. CARVAJAL KIAMKO**, *Pintuan*, 1975, Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 49 cm

Kiamko’s *Pintuan* is symbolic of a threshold — a passageway into another dimension.

## The Soul of Community

*The important determinant of any culture is after all—the spirit of place.*

Lawrence Durrell

Through the power and magnificence of his art, the great Filipino muralist Carlos “Botong” Francisco transformed the lakeside town of Angono into a near-mythical place. Of Botong’s sacred place, Manuel Duldulao remarks: “It is difficult to imagine Angono as the setting of the ‘Small Town Scene’ in Philippine art... But that’s only because we have missed what Carlos V. Francisco saw. The hardy huts of farmers’ small boys tending to carabaos in pasture; people celebrating with childlike glee the feast day of San Isidro, the farmer’s patron saint, and wetting their Sunday best in river festivals; farmers clearing a hill for planting; sun-bronzed fishermen fishing for trout in Laguna de Bay; and the many other things in the world, one of which is the fine, happy spirit with which the simple low townsfolk imbued the chores and pastimes of their daily lives.”

Indeed, all these images, both landscape and people, were immortalized in the canvases of Francisco, spurred by the spiritual energies of Angono. This town is an example of a sacred place which, in the words of Belden Lane, “takes root in that which may form the substance of our daily lives, but is transformed by the imagination to that which is awe-inspiring and grand.” An essay on the artist by Ino Manalo says “Francisco’s immersion in the lives of the people of Angono allowed him to better understanding [sic] the many provinces of his heart.”



LINO SEVERINO, *Angono 301*, 1976, Watercolor, 32 x 48.5 cm

Many artists like Severino were spiritually bound to their favored places.





LINO SEVERINO, *Angono 326*, 1976, Watercolor, 48 x 64.5 cm

Many other artists were spiritually bound to their favored places. Thus: “Saturdays and Sundays are not days for any appointment with Vicente Manansala. They are days when a *paisano* takes to the fields and works with watercolors on landscape after landscape. He leaves before daybreak: the place could be Taytay, Angono, Binangonan, Mandaluyong...” (Rodolfo Paras-Perez, *Manansala: Pictures with Life*, 1974). Another was Juan Arellano who in the Fifties actively painted the landscapes of San Juan: “Many of these were painted with a romanticist élan, using a great deal of oranges and reds, often in swirling, nervous patterns and designs that contrasted sharply with the quiet Apollonian classicism of his early years. This is quite remarkable, this blazing-sunset finish, but should not really be surprising to those who knew him as a man of great physical energy in whom the Dionysian spirit had always been very strong. (Leonidas Benesa, *Juan Arellano: Blazing Sunset Finish*, 1977).

Belonging to an earlier generation, Fabian de la Rosa painted the bucolic landscapes of Santa Ana in the 1900s. “The river bank is marshy and verdant with vegetation and Spanish houses are faintly seen in the background. Although De la Rosa was a true-blue realist, this painting is impressionistic in method and style. However, glints of realism are still sufficiently recognizable in his use of color—the deep green of the shady trees and the violet of the twilight clouds.” (Santiago Pilar, *Sunlit Canvas, Filipino Heritage*, Vol. 9).

## Expressionism: The Embattled Spirit

While the art movements such as Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism and Surrealism were self-proclaimed labels or derisive tags given by critics, Expressionism is truly a permanent tendency in art, not usually associated with Mediterranean art in general (France, Italy, Spain). Indeed, the idea of an art impelled by emotional force has been manifested through the centuries. In the context of modern times, the art of Vincent van Gogh is upheld as an example and progenitor of modern Expressionism. In France, its influence can be seen in Fauvism, a movement with a brief history, characterized by violent distortions and riotous colors. Grouped around the leadership of Matisse were artists such as Derain, Vlaminck, Dufy, and Van Dongen. For Matisse, expression went only so far: “The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The placement of figures or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions. Expression does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face.”

Van Gogh would find his authentic descendants in the Nordic and German artists. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch brought Expressionism even further than Van Gogh. His most famous painting, *The Scream*, which is drawn like a death mask, is intense expressionism at a shrill, screaming pitch. In Germany, two of the principal groups were the *Brücke* (The Bridge) and the *Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). The first group consisted of E.L. Kirchner, K. Schmidt Rottluff, Erich Heckel, and F. Bleyl. This group revived the expressive possibilities of the woodcut. To the *Blaue Reiter* group, belonged Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and August Macke.

Expressionism generally comes to the fore in times of social stress or spiritual disturbance. Munch had a profoundly neurasthenic personality. Picasso’s masterpiece, *Guernica*, was provoked by the civil war in Spain. The aftermath of the Second World War engendered many Expressionist works. Other countries developed their own national forms of Expressionism. In Mexico, the well-known practitioners were Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Siqueiros and Rufino Tamayo. In the Philippines, leading Expressionists include Ang Kiukok, Onib Olmedo, Danilo Dalena, and Bencab.

Expressionism generally comes to the fore in times of social stress or spiritual disturbance.





**ANG KIUKOK**, *Man on Fire*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 102 x 89 cm

Ang Kiukok was also an artist from the 1970s who successfully conveyed the mood of the period.

## Ang Kiukok: The Man on the Cross

Writing on Ang Kiukok, the critic Alfredo Roces surmised on the artist's personal spirituality in a piece entitled "Kiukok's prayer":

*"Although baptized a Catholic, Ang Kiukok is not the church going kind. In the context of his pessimistic view of sinful, unchristian humanity, devotion to religious ritual smacks to him only of hypocrisy. The brutalized Christ in his paintings does not attest to His divinity as much as to suffering Mankind. Crucifixions and Christ-figures portray Homo Sapiens' lack of Christianity to his own species... The dead Christ portraying Man's cruelty to his own kind, Kiukok accuses the viewer: "How could you?"*

Written some years before Mel Gibson's controversial *The Passion*, these lines reveal remarkable prescience. The extremely inhuman brutalization of the Christ, rendering the Biblical description with terrifying and unflinching accuracy, prepares the viewer for what the critic Alice Guillermo declared: "Brush becomes a scalpel with a sharp cutting edge that dissects quivering muscle and tender tissue."

To be sure, the Crucifixion is a subject rendered immemorially by Western artists since Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, decided to make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Mosaics, mural paintings, and illustrated manuscripts were covered with scenes from the Scriptures. Early Christian art rarely portrayed the Crucifixion. In the few instances, as in the 11<sup>th</sup> century mosaic in Daphne, Greece, the Crucifixion is rendered with dignified pathos, emphasizing the Christ as a divinity rather than as a sacrificial death.

It was in the succeeding century, in particular during the Gothic period, when images of the Crucifixion began to manifest the tortured agony of the Christ as human rather than as divine. Down through the pre-Renaissance (Cimabue, Giotto) and the Late Gothic (Hubert and Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden) and the Renaissance (Masaccio's *The Holy Trinity with the Virgin and St. John*; Titian's *Christ Crowned with Thorns*) the Crucified Christ is mortal man and willing victim. Regarded as the most impressive and impactful of these paintings is *The Crucifixion* of Matthias Grunewald, which is found in the Isenheim Altarpiece, created between 1509 and 1515, for the monastery church of the Order of St. Anthony in Alsace. It has been described, thus: "The pitiful body on the cross, with its twisted limbs, its countless lacerations, its rivulets of blood is on a heroic scale that raises it beyond merely human, and thus reveals the true nature of Christ."

This brief historical background allows us to better appreciate the significance of the Crucifixion as a subject of Kiukok's art. Indeed, it is the central image that has dominated his work, an icon that has persisted through the decades when the artist began to extend his time, attention and energies to such themes as dogfights, junkyards, clowns, mothers and child, and lovers.





ANG KIUKOK, *The Brown Window*, 1975, Oil on canvas, 101.5 x 88 cm

"When Ang Kiukok's plants stood by an open window, they expressed hostility and tension in the air, as in a society riven by conflict."





**ANG KIUKOK.** *Still Life*, 1974, Oil on canvas, 95.5 x 172.5 cm  
Even Ang Kiukok's plants were spiky and menacing.





## Onib Olmedo: De-spirit

Looking at the works of Onib Olmedo, one is reminded of one of Van Gogh's letters relating to his manner of doing a portrait. After having done a proper likeness of the sitter, he then proceeds:

*"I exaggerate the fair color of hair, I take orange, chrome, lemon color, and behind the head. I do not paint the trivial wall of the room but the Infinite. I make a simple background out of the most intense and richest blue the palette will yield. The blond luminous head stands out against this strong blue background mysteriously like a star in the azure. Alas, my dear friend, the public will see nothing but caricature in this exaggeration, but what does that matter to us?"*

Though the works of Olmedo do not share the same obsession with color, they share a common quality in the need to intensify – or exaggerate – the plastic elements: color in Van Gogh's case, form in Olmedo's - in particular, the physiognomic form that delineates visage, torso and extremities. By his own admission, he had come upon the works of the Norwegian Edvard Munch, long after he had started to distort the human visage. This alone is a significant point, which proves the fact that his expressionist sensibility sprung from natural instinct rather than from the pedantry of art history. Interestingly, the tortured human visage has its archetype in Munch's *The Scream*. Indeed this ironic Expressionist painting owes its origin to a most graphic hallucination:

*"I was walking along the road with two friends. The sun was setting and I began to be affected with a sense of melancholy. Suddenly the sky became blood-red. I stopped and leaned against a fence, feeling dead-tired, and stared at the flaming clouds that hung, like blood and a sword, over the blue-black fjord and the city. My friends walked on. I stood riveted, trembling with fright. And I heard a loud, unending scream piercing nature."*



ONIB OLMEDO, *Billiard Player*, 1971, Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 90.5 cm

Olmedo often depicted ordinary people as the subjects of his paintings.

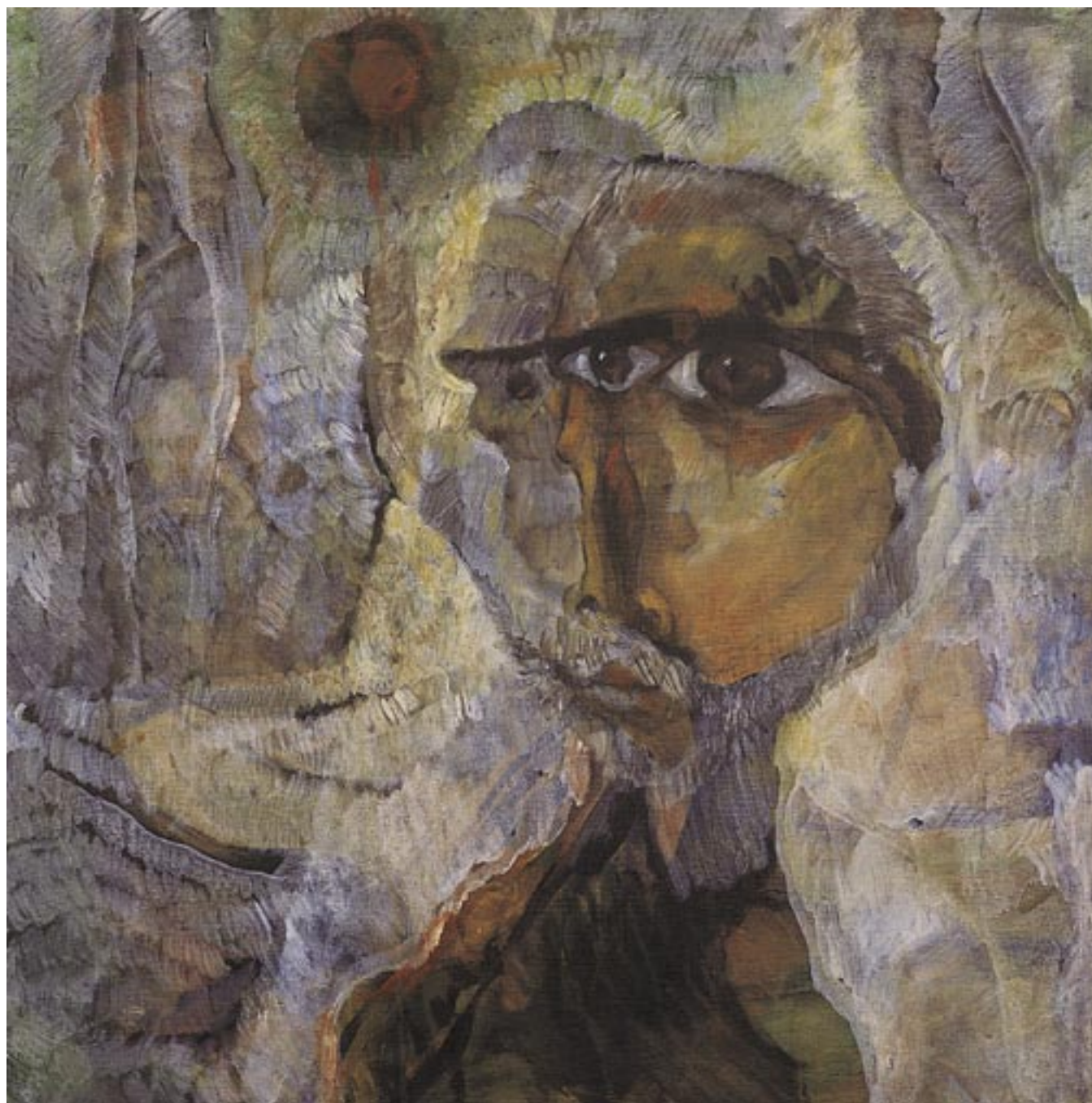




ONIB OLMEDO, *Plantsadora*, 1976, Ink wash on paper, 75.5 x 50 cm

Olmedo deliberately avoided the pursuit of beauty, but found it instead in the truths of reality.





ONIB OLMEDO, *Homage to Van Gogh*, 1981, Oil on canvas, 76 x 76 cm

The wrenching of lines – the dilation of the eyes, the enlargement of the skull, the dislocation of the mouth — caught the particularities of anguish and suffering.



By all indication, Olmedo himself was not a man unduly burdened by neurosis. Indeed, in one interview he remarked: "In fact, some fellow-artists call me 'the happy artist,' maybe because I've always been happy - even when I was a hungry artist. A part of my nature is happy. It's the nature that I use in dealing with the world. The unpleasant, I keep to myself."

Nonetheless, by whichever aspect of his personality engendered the private universe of his art, Olmedo was possessed of a vision that illuminated the dark underside of life. The arena upon which the artist poured all his psychological insights and formal expressionist invention is the human face. It is fertile ground for Olmedo's gift for manipulation of the lineaments of the visage. From this human face Olmedo exacts all possible dark emotions that can be expressed: poverty and deprivation, pain and suffering, both physical and psychic; grief and anguish, torture and loneliness; ennui and lassitude, and the specter of the cardinal sins: greed, sloth, lust. It was the particular talent of Olmedo to put a nativistic face to those universal frailties and failings. Of profound impact on the artist's subjects are the social and economic condition of the times. And while these images may be fictive, they seem harrowed from actual places, resonant of the dungeons of Quiapo, Ermita, Pasay, and Sampaloc. In fact, these are the familiar destinations of Olmedo's sojourns into the netherworld. Imagination and sensibility conspired to present to his audience a sympathetic stance and when, in the early Seventies, he felt assured that he had found his idiom, he started to research on the works of the English painter Francis Bacon (to whom his friends had early on compared his works), and the German Expressionists like Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erick Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff who, like Olmedo, abandoned architecture for art.

It was in the late Sixties, however, that the sight of the deprived and the dispossessed in his own urban environment awakened Olmedo's interest in the human condition. The neighborhood sari-sari store and *carinderia* gave milieu and shape to his series entitled *Singkong Suka*. His subjects were the common people purchasing their basic needs, who signified to the artist the resiliency of the human spirit in the face of want and adversity. Olmedo needed not the verisimilitude of his subject but rather used it as a vehicle for the spiritual expression of emotions. In this he deliberately avoided the pursuit of beauty but found beauty instead in the truths of reality. Through the distortion of facial forms, Olmedo found the equivalence of emotion. The wrenching of lines – the dilation of the eyes, the enlargement of the skull, the dislocation of the mouth — caught the particularities of anguish and suffering. His favored medium, ink wash, with its stark but subtle modulations of black and white, imparted a deeper haunting quality to his work.

Filtering the works through a spiritual sieve, we have been able to journey across the cosmos of the Filipino psyche.

## Danilo Dalena: *De Profundis*

Spiritual desolation is damnably etched in Danilo Dalena's archetypal series, the *Jai-Alai* and the *Alibangbang* paintings.

In the *Jai-Alai* works the scene is dominated by a throng of bettors whose pursuit of elusive dreams compels them to flock together like a mindless, dispirited herd. Bodies swarm together, delineated in a featureless, nebulous physiognomy, as if each body merged with the other, as a multitude of anonymity. Faceless and nameless, they evince the squalor of an absence of spirit. Dalena's work entitled *Simbahan* is a searing indictment of a society that has been rendered numb to the core. The artist renders the scene as though it were a place of worship, with a swarming multitude mesmerized by the game. Viewed from the ground, the viewer's sight rises to the rafters, which allude to a church dome, crowded with a heavenly choir. A people gripped by vice, desperate for a better life, seeks salvation not through faith, but through instant fortune.

In the *Alibangbang* series, named after a honky-tonk beerhouse along EDSA, Dalena presents another scene of spiritual dereliction, impelled by desire and lust. Seduction here is a bleak apparition of bar-girls waiting for customers, couples dancing in desperate embrace, backstage scenes of female dancers in various stages of undress, whores reduced to peddled flesh, ogled by sweaty lechers and drunks. As an Expressionist, Dalena resorts not to extreme distortion of physiognomy but through a condensation of bodies and limbs, modeled as a softly melting fluidity of light and dark. Dalena's figures seem to ooze into each other in an osmotic process; skin-to-skin, the malaise of spirit is transmitted as though it were some contagious disease of the soul.

From the *Jai-Alai* and *Alibangbang* works, Dalena shifted gears and focused on another obsessive subject. Like a native returning to his roots, the artist resorted to his hometown of *Pakil* as source of another compelling set of imagery. This he found in the town's processions. After the spiritual despondence of the previous series, Dalena decided to portray the spirituality of his townsfolk. A work now destroyed by fire is an exemplar of Filipino spirituality. Entitled *Turumba sa Pakil*, the painting is again a frenzy of bodies, devotees of the town's patroness, Our Lady of Turumba. There is a kind of mass hysteria, similar to that witnessed at the Quiapo Nazarene procession. A few of Dalena's church paintings are tinged with an amused sense of profanity. Even in such a sacred place, the artist interjects a biting commentary in the presence of the many dogs allowed to loiter inside the church. One work entitled *Asong Gala* (Stray Dog) portrays a canine poking its nose into a kneeling devotee's rear.

## Bencab: Human Diminishment

Benedicto Cabrera, better known as Bencab, made his reputation on his *Larawan* paintings, so-called because they were based on Philippine colonial photographs. With superb draftsmanship, he limned a series of images that depicted the many guises and conditions of Filipinos caught at the threshold of a critical state in their history. Many were tender images of a people trapped between two colonial masters, the Spaniards and the Americans. Gifted with a documentarist's eye, Bencab lavished attention on his subjects' physical appearance: women in their voluminous skirts and long-sleeved transparent blouses, billowing with butterfly sleeves; men in their loose collarless shirts and





**DANNY DALENA**, *Enero Nuwebe*, 1982, Oil on canvas, 91 x 91 cm

As an expressionist, Dalena resorts not to extreme distortion of physiognomy but through a condensation of bodies and limbs, modeled as a softly melting fluidity of light and dark. Dalena's figures seem to ooze into each other in an osmotic process; skin-to-skin, the malaise of spirit is transmitted as though it were some contagious disease of the soul.

wide trousers. But beyond a nostalgic fascination for a vanished time lies the artist's deeply introspective investigation of the faces of our ancestors on whose visages are wrought the anxieties and sorrows of a vanquished race. As the camera was regarded as an instrument that could capture their mirrored likeness, did our forefathers think that this mysterious instrument had come to steal their souls?

But years before Bencab tapped into this wealth of colonial images that reflected upon contemporary realities, the artist was a confirmed Expressionist, both in sensibility and technique. His early works depicting mothers with their children, street laborers, jeepney passengers, city derelicts - all executed in the dark, hazy earthen colors now associated with the artist - showed the variety of influences that were subsumed under his own emerging style. Undeniable are the subtle echoes of the emotive German artist Kathe Kollwitz in Bencab's *Mother and Child* works. The grim atmospheric touches, affected through brisk sponging and wiping of dark pigments, recall those of the Spanish painter Francisco Goya and the British painter Francis Bacon. From these prototypical images evolved what came to be known as the *Scavenger* series of which the essential characteristic image became that of a mad woman roaming the streets of Manila, draped in plastic sheets. Bencab named this scavenger *Sabel*, after a real-life scavenger figure that the artist once espied with his camera. As a singular image of spiritual desolation, Sabel became a stark metaphor for death-in-life, upon whose haunted visage and ghostly carriage the artist invested all the gradations of human diminishment: horror and hunger, poverty and madness, anguish and misery and, finally, dissolution.

## Exaltation

*As I see it, painting and religious experience are the same thing and what we are all searching for is the understanding and realization of infinity – an idea which is complete, with no beginning no end, and therefore giving to all things for all time.*

*Ben Nicholson*

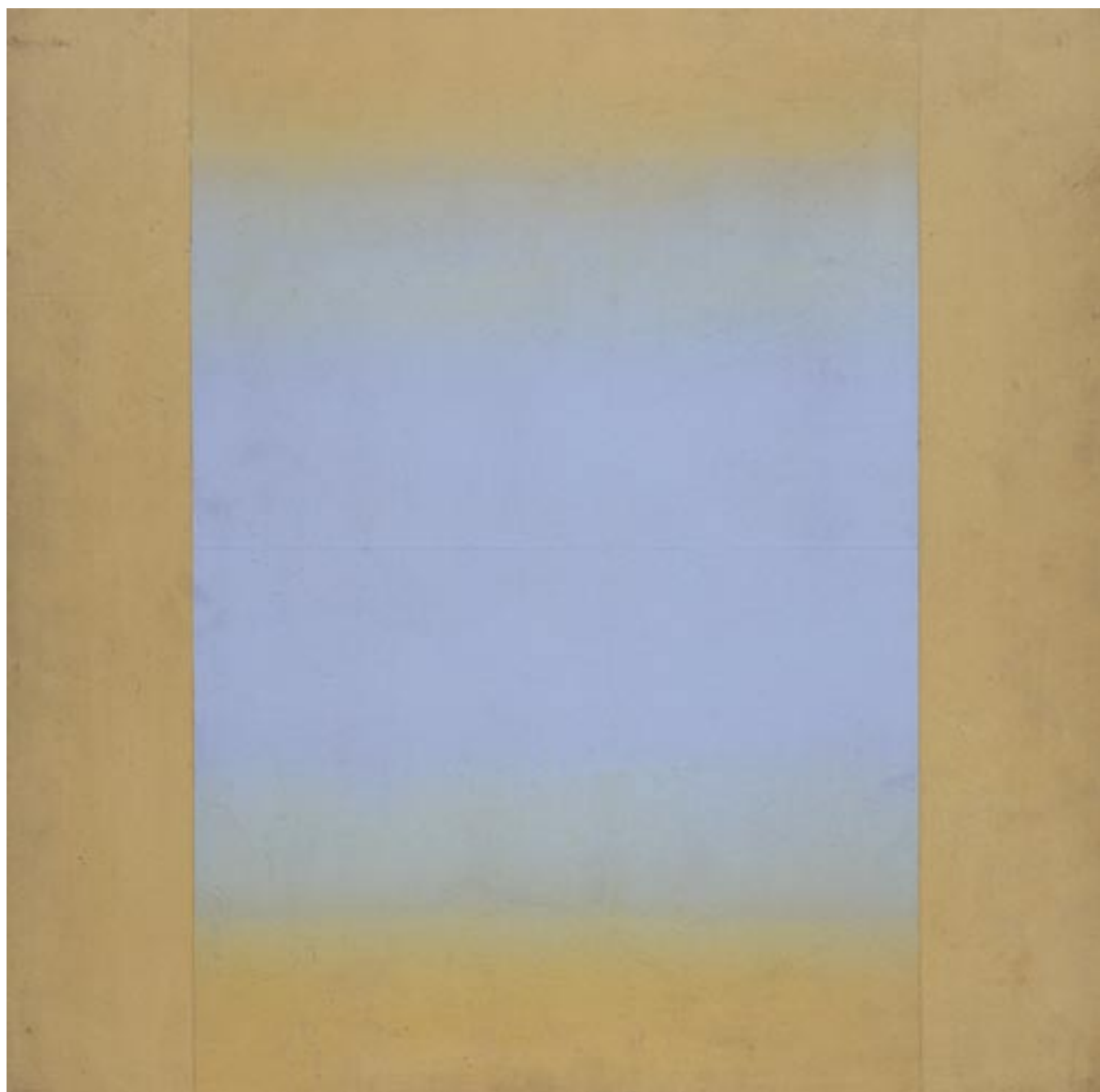
In his highly evocative essay, "The Abstract Sublime," the critic Robert Rosenblum started by quoting an exclamation: *"It's like a religious experience!"* The remark was provoked by one viewer's reaction to the immense canvases of the abstract expressionist Clyfford Still. In these works, the critic saw allusions to cataclysmic forces, veils of light that transformed brooding radiance into suggestions of supernatural presence and, most ambitious of all, a vast expanse of uninflected surface as a metaphor for genesis and eternity.

While this passage was made in reference to non-objective art, we cannot discount the possibility that the same perspective can also be applied to figurative works. As windows thrown open by artists to provide not just glimpses, but also panoramas of human experience, the BSP Painting Collection can rightfully claim to provide a number of contemplative vistas.

Filtering the works through a spiritual sieve, we have been able to journey across the cosmos of the Filipino psyche. More than this, we have been given the unparalleled opportunity to richly experience the force that radiates through every aspect of our lives.

And while it is a force that has become the source of many of our fears and conflicts - revealing a Filipino spirit that is burdened by the guilt of concupiscence but sustained by the hope of salvation - the appreciation of our art brings with it joyful recognition that though life on earth is purgation, it is also one that is centered in a transcendent power that both fills and sustains. 🌿





**LEE AGUINALDO**, *Brown Circulation #3*, 1975, Acrylic (aquatec), 61 x 61 cm

"Windows" thrown open by artists provide not just glimpses, but also panoramas of human experience.







Cesar Legaspi's *Terra Incognita* dominates the hallway leading to function rooms at the Executive floor:



Jose Joya's *Sangley Point* adds color to a setting of Philippine antique furniture at the BSP.



*ganáp*

THE MATERIAL NATURE OF IMAGES  
AND COLLECTIONS

by Ma. Victoria T. Herrera





JOAQUIN MA. HERRER, *In the Artist's Studio*, Circa 1920s, Oil on canvas, 45 x 32 cm



## Images play

an important part in human existence. Each day we encounter them in different formats and scales – from digitally printed billboards to paper money and stamps. These have enabled people and communities to engage with each other and define diverse relationships. Often though, we overlook how objects acquire significance and take for granted the physical and formal details that are integral to how meanings are made. It is this relationship that enhances the significance of the image, its formal qualities and its physical and symbolic contexts.

Why do we hang pictures on our walls? Whether in churches, at home or in the office, the images mounted within the spaces we inhabit or frequent have a purpose – personal or institutional. It is much like having the books we read on bookshelves, or compact discs for listening to music. One possible reason is its ability to connect us with the minds that created the object. In another context, it captures the essence of the faithful and the concept of a divine being or an individual's own world. On a practical level, "pictures on the wall are intended to serve as a reminder, a souvenir and to rival the book, a source of knowledge."

The proceeding essay will look into the material nature of paintings, both as images and as objects. We put emphasis on the material form as source of meanings. Based on Marshal MacLuhan's notion, media or the vehicle of representation may be viewed as extensions of the maker. This perception situates the form as an important factor to understand the content of objects. Related to this is the idea that the medium can represent properties of the work process itself.

The material significance of objects will be discussed from three perspectives. First, we look at the process of production, particularly, the institutions that train and guide artists. This will also deal with the source of art patronage. Taken together, these entities can significantly influence choices regarding the nature of images and the manner in which these are represented.

Themes expressed in images reveal another view of materiality. It is a perception of reality as revealed by the objects that surround us. In recognizing that we are material beings, we position ourselves with other material and tangible things. The choices made by visual artists, especially in figurative compositions, also reveal an aspect of how his or her contemporary society experiences and encounters the world. Objects depicted in painted and printed images also served as codes, especially in religious works. The orb, a red rose, or a white lily is part of a set of Christian symbols

linking spiritual and saintly personages to the earthly world. At the same time, they also work within the system of religious symbolism by representing values or personal attributes. Similarly, with non-figurative expressions, we will look into how the artist engages with the physical and material qualities of the medium.

The third section of this essay looks at the BSP Painting Collection as an “object,” and collecting as a process of creating and producing meanings. This accumulation of painted images was acquired as a collection of a corporate entity and of the state. It is this distinct blending of roles that saw the BSP assume the role of one of the major players in the art market during what has been described as the art boom in the late 1970s to the mid 1980s.

## Art Training and the Production of Images

The training of artists is important in the process of artistic production. It is one way by which conventional knowledge can be distributed or changed. However, it does not only involve formal institutions of training. Also crucial are the venues where images have been produced and distributed, and how artists have been supported. This is largely a product of our colonial history and changes in the systems of art patronage and the art market.

Spanish colonizers introduced western techniques of painting mainly as a tool to spread Christianity. Except for the local elite that rose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the local population was not given basic knowledge of the Spanish and Latin languages used in religious writings. Teachings of Church and biblical narratives were eventually communicated through visual texts. These were especially crucial in the early period of colonial rule when religious texts had not yet been translated into the local language.

The focus on pictorial representation related to the Catholic faith was given a priority in medieval Europe. Pope Gregory the Great, who reigned from 590 - 604 AD, formalized the didactic role of images when he encouraged to “teach those who cannot read, but only see, so that even the ignorant can learn from pictures whom they should follow... pictures enable the illiterate to read.” By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the papal office had allowed religious orders to give indulgences and privileges to the laity. This appealed to them so as to ensure their families’ and their own salvation. Indirectly, the laws and statutes from the highest authority of the Catholic Church encouraged the patronage of religious art.

In looking at the early examples of printed and painted images, it is clear that art production was under the support and control of the Church. Artworks produced were all religious in theme. Formats of paintings were defined by the different spaces pictures were intended for. In the interior of churches, large-scale paintings were made for side altars and chapels. Images depicting the Stations of the Cross were medium in scale, meant for hanging along the walls of the church. Full figure portraits of saints and religious personages, for example, a pope or a bishop, were commissioned by the congregation to decorate the hallways of a monastery or seminary. Small format paintings were also produced for homes. A distinct format called the *urna* was introduced that combined painting and sculpture. It is a construction that resembles a small stage with moving panels that open to view a religious icon.





HILARION ASUNCIÓN, *The Portrait of Fr. Martin de San Nicolás de Zaragoza*, Circa 1870s, Oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm

In looking at the early examples of printed and painted images, it is clear that art production was under the support and control of the Church.

For portraits of martyred priests and church officials, inscriptions are important components of the image.



**HILARION ASUNCION**, *Scenes from the Life of St. Norbert*, 1881, Oil on canvas, 72 x 67 cm  
Although in a single canvas, Asunción used the altarpiece format composed of multiple panels as a narrative tool.



In the Philippine context, friars first sought the services of the Chinese craftsmen who had settled in the country. It was, perhaps, an advantage that these artisans already had the basic skills required to paint images on a surface, or to cut wood and copper plates for printing. It was just a matter of learning the rules of iconography and symbolism to make the visual representation of biblical personages effective.

Art classes were held at the ground floor of convents. From the students, the priest-painters took on local artisans as apprentices after they had shown some degree of talent. Apprentices were allowed to render decorative elements and then gradually advanced to paint figures. Drawing from life was not allowed and so students had to make do with the few sculptures and paintings brought from Spain and Mexico. Other printed images from books and *estampas* were also used as reference. These were printed in black and white; and so the intense colors seen on images from these periods can be considered to be the local painters' contributions.

When dealing with artworks from this period, authorship is a problem. Local artists had not yet realized the value of identifying their creations. What was more important was whether the painted and carved images served the faithful. Thus, art historians resort to attribution when authorship is not definitive. Although many paintings and even sculptures were left unsigned, artists have given us clues of their identities. Those of Chinese heritage incorporated Oriental facial features in the images they created. Figures with almond-shaped eyes and decorative motifs like stylized clouds and scrolls were typical of this early period of colonial art.

Spanish colonizers introduced western techniques of painting mainly as a tool to spread Christianity.



ANONYMOUS

*Nuestra Señora Dela Merced with Adam & Eve*  
1880s, Oil on canvas panel, 46 x 30 cm

For sculptors engaged in the early years of colonial rule, Luciano Santiago cites one crucial problem – “how to translate the illustrations on paper into the three-dimensional.” For painters, the test was how to adopt their skills in painting with water-based pigments or ink to oil paint. Also, Oriental painting techniques favor a linear approach to a more painterly style. Early examples of painted images, before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, have been described as “statue-paintings,” possessing folk qualities. Figures drawn on wood give more emphasis on lines to define form rather than on the interplay of light and shadow. This technique is closer to traditional calligraphy and to the painting techniques of the Chinese.

Images painted before or in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, like their counterpart *santos*, also have a naïve quality similar to folk art forms. We see these qualities in the painting of the *Holy Family*. The formal rendition of the body is simplified. Jesus is rendered clearly as a child, and not as a small male adult like one would see in medieval icons from Europe. Mary and Joseph are depicted with warmth as caring parents and as a couple. Also one can sense that the artist made an effort to capture the soft forms and graceful movement. The figures, however, appear flat and linear. Like other painted images from this period, the pictorial quality suggests a direct application of pigment in opaque layers. *San Tiago de Galicia* has the same naïve and folk attributes. His swift movement appears light and smooth only because of his flowing cape. Here, the painter avoided foreshortened forms; the horse’s head and front legs are facing front; and the bodies below lie perpendicular or parallel to the ground, to avoid an oblique pose. The vast landscape in the background is also visualized as overlapping planes, rising instead of receding, to create an illusion of depth.



When dealing with artworks from this period, authorship is a problem.

ANONYMOUS, *San Emigdio y Obispo*  
Late 18th Century, Oil on panel, 106 x 80 cm





ANONYMOUS, *Holy Family*, Circa 1800-1850, Oil on molave panel, 48 x 37 cm

Images painted before or in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, like their counterpart *santos*, also have a naïve quality similar to folk art forms.







*San Juan Nepomuceno* projects a combination of Oriental and western qualities. He is fair skinned with almond-shaped eyes. The clouds are also rendered in the stylized manner found in Chinese scroll paintings. The decorative borders at the bottom recall the curvilinear fern motifs of Malay art. However, the painter already shows confidence in applying pigment in glazes or in thin layers to achieve a modeling and three-dimensional effect. The drapery has a flimsy, translucent, and layered texture with the bottom edge decorated with intricate embroidery. Already we find early application of the miniaturist technique that was very popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The reign of Charles III of Spain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century redefined economic life as well as artistic production in the Philippines. In 1781, a progressive group of Spanish and Filipino government and church officials founded the *Real Sociedad Economica de Amigos del Pais* (Royal Economic Society of the Friends of the Country). Its programs contributed to the country's economic progress and to cultural development. The Sociedad supported art training and promoted the adoption of secular art subjects. In 1785, Charles III also passed a decree allowing native artists to paint without supervision. This freedom from the direction of Spanish priests, together with the acquired confidence to tackle the painted medium, were vital factors that led to gradual changes in training and artistic production in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the significant pieces in the BSP Painting Collection are the *14 Stations of the Cross*. The complete series is attributed to an artist from Bohol and one panel is inscribed with the year 1830. Each scene is painted on molave wood, some composed of two vertical panels. The series shows a more advanced knowledge in rendering linear perspective, human anatomy, as well as emotions through facial expressions. Figures may appear stereotypical – e.g., Roman soldiers are bearded with long hooked noses – yet, upon closer examination, we see that the painter had taken more time to depict their individuality. They have distinct facial features and varying expressions throughout the narrative. Naturalism is also seen in the depiction of the terrain, particularly the round hills in the background – the Chocolate Hills of Bohol. The structures in the distance may be western in style, but the artist confirms a local setting.

The *Stations of the Cross* from Bohol is also distinct because of its rich red hues. Previous historical accounts refer to the use of painting materials acquired locally such as natural dyes and minerals. A recent study by a Melbourne-based paintings conservator, Nicole Tse, provides us with more information to consider. Her study involved analyzing pigment samples taken from two panel paintings from Bohol dated 1854 by an artist from Manila, Liberato Gatchalian. Test results confirmed data from archival sources and evidences that some painters were combining local with imported materials. This created richer hues, which could not be achieved with the use of local materials alone. Although the series was made twenty years earlier than the Gatchalian paintings, it is worth considering given the brilliant hues on the fourteen panels. This study also gives us an idea of how painters responded to increase the visual quality of their works. Perhaps too, we can surmise that as they gained more skill in handling the oil medium, local painters started to look for high quality materials, a development that may have led to the growth in demand for imported art materials in the following century.

ANONYMOUS, *Sto. Domingo*, Undated, Oil on molave board, 101 x 62 cm

The orb, a red rose, or a white lily is part of a set of Christian symbols linking spiritual and saintly personages to the earthly world.

The generation of Filipino painters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw the expansion of art patronage that until then belonged only to the church and to a small elite group. The growing *ilustrado* class also required the services of painters for their portraits. Like in the rendering of religious icons, artists painstakingly depicted the rich elaborate clothing and jewelry of their wealthy patrons. Secular portraits varied in scale from small to medium sizes. These sizes were more portable to carry around while looking for a client whose head was to be rendered on “an elaborately-painted clothing on stately-posed bodies minus the head.” More painters can be identified by name through signatures, maybe as a way to market their skills and craftsmanship to the secular patrons.

The earliest artists to be identified by name include Faustino Quiotan, Damian Domingo, and Juan Arceo. The extant works of these three artists demonstrate a more studied technique in depicting the human body with volume and depth, and ease in handling the oil medium. A painting of *San Saturnino* is attributed to Quiotan, who was the teacher of Domingo. This small-scale full-figure portrait was carefully rendered to achieve different textures and decorative details and contrasts with the hazy landscape in the background. *St. Joseph and the child Jesus* is attributed to Juan Arceo. The use of gold in both paintings heightens the intricate details of their subjects. For Arceo, it still retains a symbolic meaning representing the heavenly and the divine. Applied in fine thread-like strokes, gold assumed not only the idea of spirituality but of affluence. In the coming decades, this technique of using gold and the miniaturist details would captivate the eyes of private art patrons.



JUSTINIANO ASUNCION SCHOOL

*Coronation of the Blessed Virgin,*

Circa 1880s, Oil on tin, 62 x 47.5 cm





FAUSTINO QUIOTAN (ATTRIB.), *San Saturnino*, Early 19th Century, Oil on canvas, 36.5 x 28.5 cm

By the 19th century, artists demonstrated a more studied technique in depicting the human body and ease in handling the oil medium.





JUAN ARCEO, *St. Joseph and the Child Jesus*, Undated, Oil on panel, 50 x 44.3 cm  
Gold retains its symbolic meaning, representing the heavenly and the divine.



In 1821, Damian Domingo, a Spanish *mestizo*, initiated the establishment of an art school. He started offering private art lessons in his house in Tondo. In 1823, the *Sociedad* established the *Academia de Dibujo*. In 1826, Domingo's efforts were officially recognized when he was invited to teach, and later, in 1828, was promoted to Director of the *Academia*. He laid down the groundwork for the teaching of painting and drawing in the country; although Paras-Perez cites that even with the art school, the attitude towards art did not change much. "The school functioned as no more than a trade training guild." Among the skills Domingo taught to students was the mastery of the *miniaturismo* technique.

It is not certain whether the brothers Mariano and Justiniano Asuncion studied in the *Academia* under Domingo. However, their works show a strong affiliation to *miniaturismo*. Several religious images in the BSP Painting Collection are attributed to Mariano Asuncion – these include images of the *Nuestra Señora del Rosario* and two full-figure portraits of saints. The medium scale of these images suggests that they were painted for private altars. His intricately detailed images appealed to private patrons also because it reflected prosperity. His younger brother, Justiniano (also known as Capitan Ting), painted the image of the *Virgen de Antipolo*. Here he showed his skill in capturing detailed finery described as illusionist. Justiniano, however, was more known as a portrait painter. Many of his extant works in private collections have this same ornate but finely executed qualities in terms of accessories and drapery.

The *Academia* closed in 1834 due to lack of funds. But this was later revived in 1850 as the *Academia de Dibujo, Pintura y Grabado* (later to be known as the Manila Art Academy). Enrique Nieto, a Spaniard trained in San Fernando, Madrid served as director. Students were given easy access to copies of religious paintings by major Spanish and other European artists. Bartolome Esteban Murillo's rendition of the Immaculate Conception may have been one of the archetypes for the painted image of Mary. New methods in training also enabled students to create more complex techniques in perspective and in the shading and modeling of forms. In 1858, another Spanish painter, Agustin Saez served as director of the *Academia*. He introduced drawing from life as part of the art curriculum.

The *Academia* introduced the canons and standards of western classical painting that had been in place since the Renaissance. This system established a hierarchy in subject matter. It favored figurative works depicting scenes that were religious, historical, mythological or derived from antiquity. Portraits and genre scenes followed this. At the bottom of the list were landscapes and still lifes. In the Philippines, this hierarchy was enforced strictly within the confines of the art school.

The generation of Filipino painters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw the expansion of art patronage that until then, belonged only to the church and to a small elite group.

There was a continued market for religious images but portraiture was also in high demand. Simon Flores' work *Baptism of Christ* becomes more significant in this context. The scene is reminiscent of a rendition of the same scene by the early Renaissance painter, Andrea del Verrochio. The image shows Flores' familiarity with iconography and the historical context of the scene. Throughout his career as a painter, Flores mostly produced religious paintings and portraits, although he is noted for painting two genre paintings, the earliest examples of this subject in Philippine painting.

Historical and classical themes relatively had a limited market, except from institutions that required murals or large-scale paintings. One reason is that there were not many large public spaces that required paintings of this size. The market for secular themes was confined to the *ilustrados* whose preferences leaned more towards portraiture. Also, it may have been because of the absence of art competitions, like the *salons* of Europe, which were venues for art schools to show their best students, and where clients came to be informed of new and promising artists.



**SIMON FLORES**

*San Roque*, 1873

Oil on panel, 41.5 x 30.5 cm

There was a continued market for religious images but portraiture was also in high demand.





**SIMON FLORES**, *St. John Baptizes Jesus*, Circa 1870s, Oil on canvas, 74.5 x 59 cm

Throughout his career as a painter, Flores produced religious paintings and portraits.

This image demonstrates his familiarity with early Renaissance style and religious iconography.

Luna and Hidalgo, both products of the *Academia*, produced works that depicted historical, classical and allegorical themes only when they pursued studies in Europe. By doing so, they were able to compete on almost equal footing with their peers, thus the major awards both received in the Madrid Exposition of 1884. Hidalgo's two paintings (noted as copies by the artist himself of the first versions he made in Spain for the *Exposición*) – *Las Cristianas Virgenes Expuestas al Populacho* and *La Barca de Aqueronte* belong to this tradition. Although not grand in scale, Hidalgo's paintings reveal a process that not only required skills in drawing and painting but also a deep knowledge of Western history and classical literature. The artist, in this sense, is also a respected academic and intellectual. But it was not for long that this hierarchy collapsed. When Luna and Hidalgo were studying in Europe, the Impressionist movement in France had successfully questioned the canons of academic painting. Both artists also produced several works that showed strong influences of this style, particularly in their landscapes and casual portraits.

In the local art scene, young Filipino painters favored working on other subjects. They painted scenes from their immediate surroundings – landscapes and people going about their daily activities. Felix Martinez's *Recuerdos de Antipolo* combines genre and landscape, creating an animated view. A closer look at this painting will reveal how the artist captured different individuals who belong to the same community, without necessarily idealizing the scene.

The change in colonial administration in 1898 eventually led to the closure of the *Academia*. It took almost ten years, in 1908, for another state-owned art school to be formally opened. This time it was incorporated within the system of public education which the American colonial administration introduced. The University of the Philippines opened in 1908 and the School of Fine Arts was one of the first units that accepted enrollees. Its founding faculty members included former teachers and graduates of the *Academia*. Rafael Enriquez was its main proponent and served as Director until 1926.

The system of instruction in the U.P. School of Fine Arts was largely based on that of the *Academia*. However, it also reflected changes in artistic standards as well as in art patronage. Fabian de la Rosa began his teaching career in UP in 1910 as instructor in decorative art. Even as students of the *Academia*, De la Rosa and most of his Filipino colleagues resented the thematic hierarchy that had been established. Thus, they concentrated on those considered secondary and "minor" – portraits, landscapes and genre – for which he became known. De la Rosa held the position of Director from 1926 to 1938. As part of an art training institution and given his position, de la Rosa and his contemporaries like Jorge Pineda and Ramon Peralta continued to promote the value of works that reflected images closer to Philippine sensibilities, departing from classical and academic standards. The quality of genre paintings that these artists produced portrayed scenes of everyday life realistically.

Two portraits by De la Rosa in the collection portray female subjects – *La Bordadora* and *La Pintora*. Both works are small in scale, and intimate and candid in mood. The women are caught in the act of moving – pushing a needle into fabric and mixing paint on a palette – yet their attention is also somewhere else. Like his subjects in motion, De la Rosa's technique in painting is already distinct from the fine modeling taught in school. Peralta's *Courtship in an Azotea* is unusual because of its asymmetrical composition. The scene includes two figures at the balcony positioned almost at the top right corner.

FABIAN DELA ROSA, *Bordadora*, Circa 1920s, Oil on canvas, 45 x 31.5 cm  
De la Rosa subjects for painting concentrated on those considered secondary and "minor" – portraits, landscapes and genre – for which he became known.









**RAMON PERALTA.** *Courtship in an Azotea*, 1905, Oil on board, 75 x 36 cm

This painting is unusual because of its asymmetrical composition.



Jorge Pineda combines genre with portraiture. Like De la Rosa, his subjects are not merely in a still pose but are casually caught in the middle of an activity. His two works depict subjects in everyday clothes playing local games – *Panguingue*, *Sungkaan* and *Bantilan*. The figures are not idealized stereotypes of Filipinos. Their physical attributes give us a sense that they are real people whom the artist knew.

By the 1920s, the UP School of Fine Arts was already identified with a style that was preoccupied with depicting idyllic scenes and images of contentment. Artists had “learned the tricks of chiaroscuro, mastered principles of composition, and most of all, learned how to ‘copy faces.’” Fernando Amorsolo’s works best represented this phase of the School. His studies overseas at the Royal Academy of San Fernando in Madrid introduced him to the then popular style of Impressionism. He combined the technique of breaking up pigments with the classic tonal values taught by his uncle, De la Rosa. Also, his use of bright colors contrasted his works from those of the senior painters.



**JORGE PINEDA**, *Panguingue*, 1933, Oil on canvas, 48 x 66.5 cm

Jorge Pineda's subjects are not merely in a still pose, but are casually caught in the middle of an activity.

The BSP collection includes several paintings by Amorsolo. There is an ample sampling of the different genre scenes that he had depicted throughout his career. These include a festive scene held by a church and a harvest scene. *Dalagang Bukid with Jar* is his quintessential representation of the ideal Filipina; it is not a portrait but an allegorical representation of her chaste virtue. The clay jar she holds in her hands symbolizes her virginity. (The song *Nabasag ang Banga* in the zarzuela *Dalagang Bukid* would refer to the opposite.) Her facial features are almost always present in Amorsolo's paintings, even those with historical themes. Another typical scene is that of women bathing and washing clothes. Although they do not seem aware of a viewer in their midst, Amorsolo depicts them as self-conscious through the positioning of the drapery. Note the clay jar at the foreground.

Filipino artists had started painting outdoors. They took trips to the countryside and did sketches on site as studies for final compositions. The camera's accessibility also changed the approach to painting. Amorsolo and his contemporaries took photographs of the landscape to complement quick sketches. At times, they would take models to pose with the natural environment. Even for portraiture, it was easier to work on commissioned portraits with a printed image to prepare the under drawing.



**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Harvest Scene - Dalagang Bukid*, 1944, Oil on masonite, 65 x 41 cm  
Amorsolo and his contemporaries took photographs of the landscape to complement quick sketches.





**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**, *Lavanderas*, 1936, Oil on canvas, 48.5 × 65.5 cm

Another typical scene is that of women bathing and washing clothes.









**FERNANDO AMORSOLO.**

*Women Bathers*, 1933

Oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm

The women do not seem aware of a viewer in their midst but Amorsolo depicts them as self-conscious through the positioning of the drapery.

The stature of the UP School of Fine Arts as the premier art school remained unchallenged until 1928. This was the year Victorio Edades returned from his studies in the United States. He mounted an exhibition at the Philippine Columbian Association that featured works influenced by the realism of the Ash Can School. His works underscored modernist ideas that had already taken root in the west. He emphasized the expressive quality of visual form to portray what was “real” rather than what was “ideal.” Edades questioned the relevance of the Amorsolo school to the social realities then.

One of the works included in the 1928 exhibition was a medium-sized painting entitled *Market Scene*. Similar to his approach to *The Builders* (CCP collection), Edades focused on depicting the human anatomy to express the physical hardships of manual labor. This became the rationale for the distortion of form, the rough, limited color palette, and the uneven application of pigment. Another figure carrying a load on his head occupies the bottom right corner, creating a feeling of unease.

Juan Arellano, one of the proponents of modernism in Philippine architecture is also known for his modernist paintings. *Deposition of Jesus* has a similar composition to Edades’ market scene. The tall timber crosses are cropped except for one at the far left side. The figure of the dead Christ is unusually long, enhancing the heaviness in weight. Pigment is already applied in thick daubs. His choice of color, however, has more contrast, adding to the emotional tension.



**VICTORIO EDADES,**

*Montalban Woods*, 1980

Oil on canvas, 76 x 61 cm

Edades focused on depicting the human anatomy to express the physical hardships of manual labor.





**VICTORIO EDADES**, *Market Scene*, 1928, Oil on board, 61 x 85 cm

Victorio Edades emphasized the expressive quality of visual form to portray what was "real" rather than what was "ideal."

**JUAN ARELLANO**  
*Deposition of Jesus*, Undated  
Oil on plywood, 62.5 x 83 cm  
The figure of the dead Christ is unusually long, enhancing the heaviness in weight. Pigment is already applied in thick daubs. His choice of color, however, has more contrast, adding to the emotional tension.













In 1930, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) opened its fine arts and architecture program. With Edades as one of its planners and teachers, modernism found its own base. His first converts joined him at the UST faculty, namely Galo Ocampo and Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco. In the 1930s they completed several mural projects in private homes and public spaces. Together, the press referred to them as the Triumvirate. Edades also invited Diosdado Lorenzo to join the UST faculty, after returning from his studies in Spain and Italy. He and Edades also established the Atelier of Modern Art in Manila. Most of their enrollees were women, among them Anita Magsaysay.

Other faculty members who followed the modernist ideals were Vicente Manansala, Cesar Legaspi, and Bonifacio Cristobal. Jose Pardo, one of the early graduates of the UST program and a good friend of Edades, taught architecture. It is worth noting that Francisco, Ocampo, Manansala and Legaspi were at some point affiliated to the University of the Philippines, either as students, graduates or as faculty members. Before the Second World War, Edades compiled a list of artists whose individual styles had strong modernist tendencies. These so-called “13 Moderns” included his colleagues and students at UST.

The UST program may have followed a curriculum similar to that of UP. The difference was in the framework that governed the approach to teaching. For one, students were encouraged to experiment in the handling of medium and the representation of images. Although the subject matter remained conventional – portraits, landscapes, and rural scenes – their formal qualities changed. For example, the decorative and flat qualities of space were enhanced. Gradual building up of paint layers was replaced by quick and almost gestural brush strokes. Direct application of pigment, a technique used by early Filipino painters, was found to be more attuned to the ideas of modernism. In his *Market Scene*, Edades used the natural finish of the brown surface to shape the figures. This technique is also encountered in works by Diosdado Lorenzo and in Romeo Tabuena’s *Carabaos*. Vicente Manansala’s *Two Fishermen* recalls the massive figures in *The Builders*. The pastoral and scenic fishing scenes portrayed by Amorsolo are replaced by the laborious task of pulling the boat to shore.

#### DIOSDADO LORENZO

*Rural Landscape*, 1973

Oil on canvas, 75 x 104 cm

Gradual building up of paint layers was replaced by quick and almost gestural brush strokes. Direct application of pigment, was found to be more attuned to the ideas of modernism.



#### ROMEO V. TABUENA, *Carabaos*, 1951, Oil on plywood, 91 x 70.2 cm

Art students were encouraged to experiment in the handling of medium and the representation of images.

By the post-war years, the UST came to be known as the stronghold of this new visual idiom. The many artists who graduated there have acknowledged the influence Edades and his peers had in their respective artistic careers. Among them are Cenon Rivera, Antonio Austria, Roberto Chabet, Ang Kiukok, Danilo Dalena, Norma Belleza, Angelito Antonio, Prudencio Lamarroza, Virgilio Aviado, and Raul Isidro.

More fine arts programs were set up in other universities. These included the Philippine Women's University, the Far Eastern University, and the University of the East. Graduates of UP and UST later served as faculty members and directors or deans at these schools. The younger generation then had more options to choose from. Moreover, program offerings were more diverse, many offering training in advertising and graphic design. This was a growing profession particularly during the post-war years with the country's economic and commercial development. Modernist stalwarts like Manansala, Hernando R. Ocampo, Cesar Legaspi, Mauro Malang Santos, and Romulo Olazo started their careers in the graphic design profession. Then and now, the field of commercial art and design has provided visual artists with a stable source of income.

There were also more opportunities for local artists to study overseas. Aside from Spain and France, private foundations in the United States offered support for young artists to gain advanced training. Among those who benefited from these programs were Manuel Rodriguez, Sr., Rod Paras-Perez, Napoleon Abueva, Arturo Luz, Cesar Legaspi, Roberto Chabet, and Jose Joya. This gave local artists wider exposure to the international art scene.

On the level of educational policy, government required a compulsory course in art appreciation as part of all tertiary curricula. Thus, developments in the educational infrastructure led to the gradual growth of young artists as well as a new generation of art collectors. From the 1960s, the diversity of styles and market preferences had become more apparent.

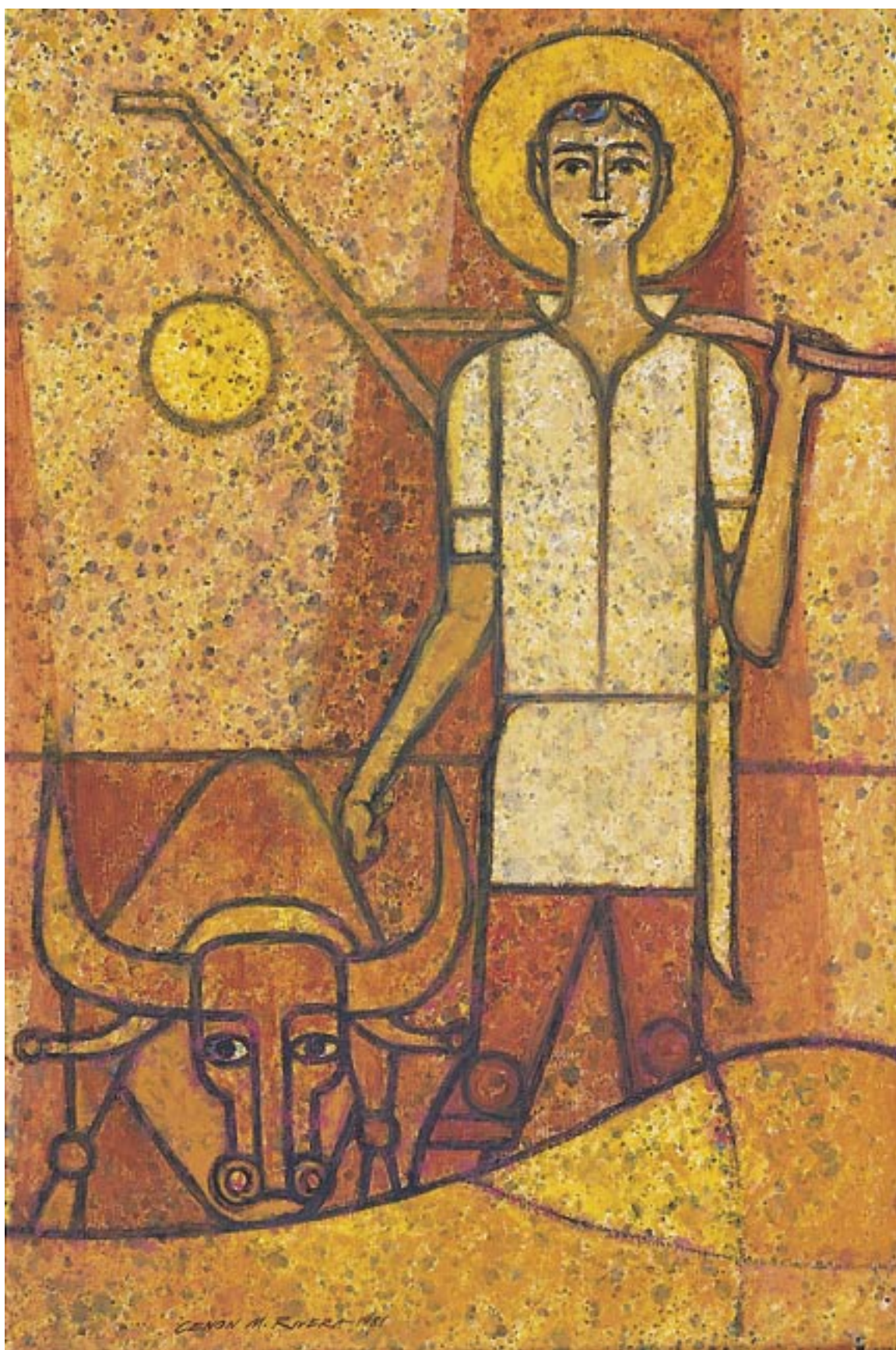


**ANGELITO ANTONIO,**

*Antipolo*, 1972 Oil on canvas  
112 x 122 cm

Antonio, who graduated from the UST, acknowledged the influence of Edades in his artistic career.





CENON M. RIVERA, *Tao at Kalabaw I*, 1981, Oil on canvas, 117 x 77 cm  
Although the subject matter remained conventional, their formal qualities changed.









**CESAR LEGASPI,**

*Terra Incognita*, 1979

Oil on canvas, 167.5 x 244.5 cm

Modernist stalwarts like Cesar Legaspi started their careers in the graphic design profession and also trained abroad to gain a wider exposure to the international art scene.

## Representation of the material and the invisible as objects of possession

“We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice... We never look at just one thing, we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.”

- John Berger

Picture production is a process of recreating what is seen. But seeing is not a neutral act; nor is the act of acquiring what is depicted in a painted image.

An image should also be seen as “an actor on the historical stage.” It is a participant to the stories we tell of ourselves. Some may impart it in a direct way; others may resort to complex symbolisms. A visual expression becomes effective through an artful planting of clues. In figurative works, this may be in the choice of recognizable objects, the materials, and the use of colors and other visual elements that give it form.



**JUSTIN NUYDA**

*Search*, 1974, Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 63.8 cm

Abstract works have the ability to become effective symbols.





**FERNANDO ZOBEL**, *Painting #21*, 1971, Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 46 cm

Non-figurative works give us a new kind of experience – that of experimentation and invention.

Abstract works also have this ability to become effective symbols. Although at first glance, they may seem to have escaped from the realm of representation. For example, abstract expressionist painting is described as a “painted word ... the colored daubs and streaks on the canvas become statements about the nature of space, perception, and representation.” Moreover, non-figurative works give us a new kind of experience – that of experimentation and invention. The process is not just passive observation. It is a willingness to let “reason...affirm what sensible experience seemed to contradict.”

A cursory view of the BSP Collection leads us to an interesting selection of paintings – figurative and abstract – that present different views of the material and the invisible world.

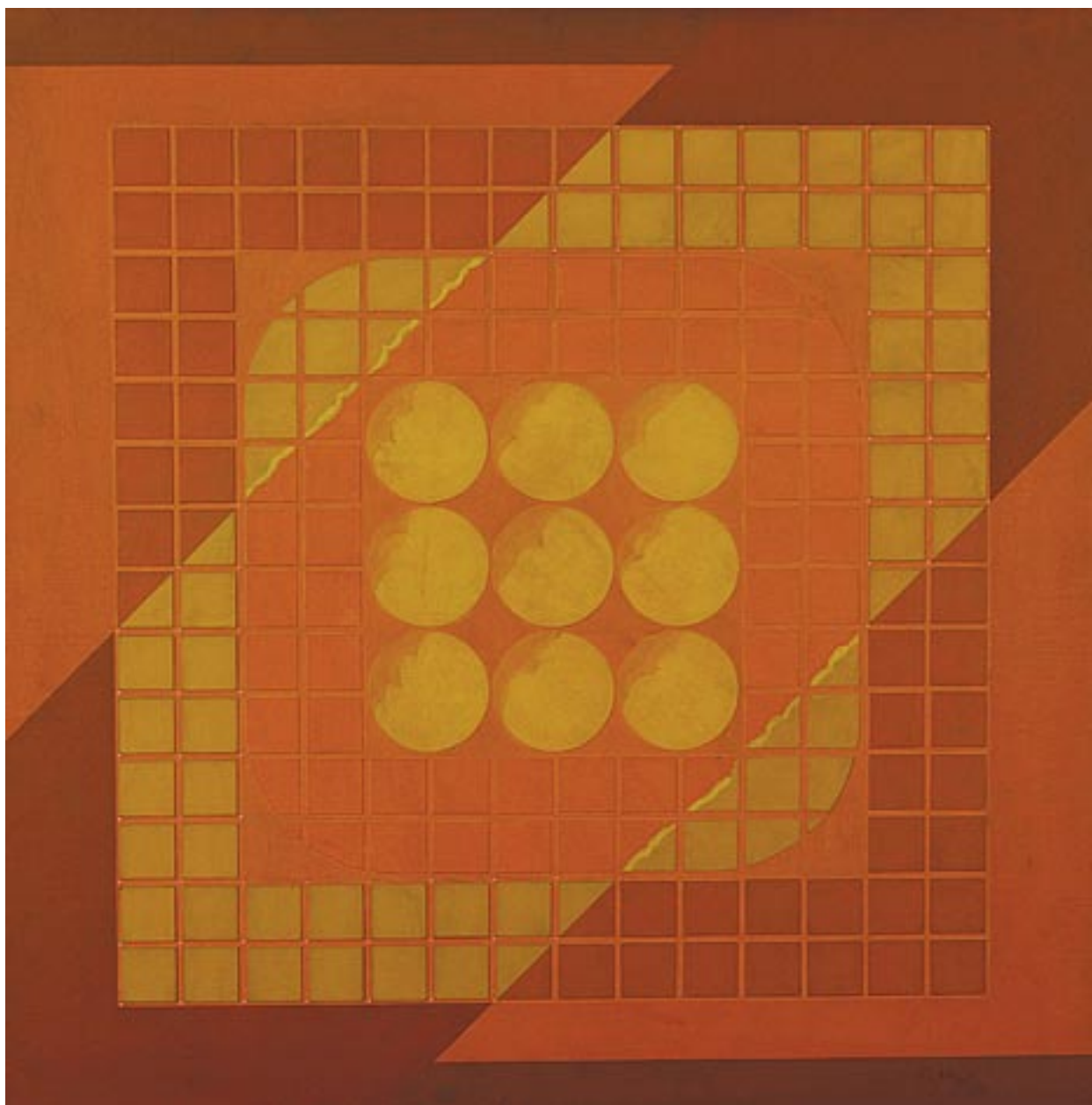


ROBERTO CHABET, *Bag Series*, 1976, Mixed media, 27 x 10.5 cm





ROMULO OLAZO, *Diaphanous B- XLIX*, 1981, Oil on canvas, 125.5 x 122 cm



**RAUL LEBAJÓ**, *Park Series I 34*, 1976, Acrylic on canvas mounted on plywood, 91.44 x 91.44 cm





RAUL ISIDRO, *Festival 82*, 1982, Acrylic, 88.5 x 89 cm

In religious images, objects have been used extensively in a symbolic manner. To understand their meanings requires knowledge of the origins of these conventions and symbolisms, which have been formalized through time by the Church, and communicated to the makers and users of these icons. Objects are not taken literally. They are used as material expressions of the personage's earthly and spiritual identities.

Common objects we encounter in religious icons include the rose and the lily. With the Virgin Mary, both flowers represent her purity – “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” St. Joseph is also depicted with the white lily flower to relate to his spirituality; his human attributes represented by a green garment and, at times, his carpentry tools.

Other attributions are not as common or easily discernible. For example, the image of *La Consolación* does not only represent the virtues of the Virgin Mary but also part of the life story of St. Augustine. The painting relates the vision of St. Monica, Augustine's mother, of the Virgin and her Son. “Mary is dressed in black and cinctured at the waist. The sash she is holding down to both figures symbolizes the solace she extends to Monica, despairing of her son's conversion.”

The figure of *San Antonio Abad* is surrounded by objects and figures relating to the evils of temptation, Christ's Passion and Death, and man's mortality. One detail, however, does not seem to fit – the pig by his feet. He is considered to be responsible for the well-being of pigs though it had nothing to do with him directly. “The saint's followers were known to set up hostels for pilgrims and sick people. To augment their income, the Antonine friars tended pigs, which the town mayor allowed to forage around town. Bells were fastened, round their necks to indicate ownership.”



**BOHOL MASTER,**

*San Antonio Abad*, Circa 1840

Oil on canvas, 101.5 x 76.5 cm

In religious images, objects have been used extensively in a symbolic manner. They are used as material expressions of the personage's earthly and spiritual identities.





ANONYMOUS, *Nuestra Señora Dela Correa*, Early 20th Century, Oil on canvas, 152 x 196 cm





The *Pieta* does not only depict the scene of the sorrowful Mother with the body of the dead Christ. The various objects that surround the figures are instruments of the Passion. Symbolically, they narrate specific episodes from the betrayal of Christ by Judas until his burial.

Miniaturist tendencies were already evident in works from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century especially in medium-scale works. This involved the inclusion of words as part of the composition. *Last Supper* by Francisco Tomás contains an unusual amount of text in such a small composition. It may have been used as an instructional material in catechism to teach the last hours of Christ with His disciples.

The material and technique used to render images affects the recreation of views as well as the production of values and the representation of the social status of the patron and owner. The popularity of *miniaturismo* in 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings not only signified a higher degree of technical skill on the part of the artist. For the owner, especially a private individual, it signified his capability to possess the same painted fineries. The medium of oil was instrumental in developing this sense of ownership. John Berger aptly describes this idea:

*“Oil paintings often depict things. Things which in reality are buyable. To have a thing painted and put on a canvas is not unlike buying it and putting it in your house. If you buy a painting you buy also the look of the thing it represents.”*

The material and technique used to render images affects the recreation of views as well as the production of values and the representation of the social status of the patron and owner.

ANONYMOUS, *Pieta*, Undated, Oil on panel, 71.5 × 3.8 cm

The *Pieta* does not only depict the scene of the sorrowful Mother with the body of the dead Christ. The various objects that surround the figures are instruments of the Passion.

Still life paintings represent these same ideas. “It confirms the owner’s wealth and habitual style of living.” Paintings of inanimate objects also serve to represent values and human attributes. This view of paintings reached its height in Northern Europe and Spain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; its popularity represented the rise of the new middle class particularly in the Dutch territories.

In the context of the Academy, painting still life was still seen as a means to practice skills in drawing and composition. But they are by no means of lesser quality. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the few women painters was Paz Paterno. She is known for her landscape and still life paintings. The limited range of subjects she depicted reflects the limited access given to her within the male-dominated system of the art academy. Paterno was not able to study in the *Academia* like her male contemporaries, but she had the privilege of studying under Lorenzo Guerrero, Teodoro Buenaventura, and Felix Martinez.

Her two still life compositions – also called *bodegones* in Spanish – bear a close resemblance to early Dutch paintings. Both scenes are set indoors and have a very informal mood. The point of view is higher to allow us to see the assortment of forms and colors. The basket overflows with tropical fruits rendered in vivid colors. Her miniaturist technique heightens the distinct textures and even the tastes of each type of fruit. The other composition appears more random, as if the fruits were freshly harvested. The background, however, relates to expensive finishings for homes – in particular, the painted wall and French windows. The presence of insects, like the fly, represents decay. In both paintings, Paterno also included a fruit on a plate and in the process of being eaten. Like their Dutch counterparts, this visual detail not only adds variety to the composition, but also suggests human presence. It is as if it had just been touched by someone who is close by. The transitory quality of the scene also suggests the passage of time.



**NORMA BELLEZA**, *Still Life*, 1982, Oil on canvas, 76 x 91.53 cm

Belleza's compositions bring together a variety of material types – from clay pots, woven fibers and plastic baskets, to glass and ceramic bottles and goods wrapped in plastic.





**PAZ PATERNO**, *Bodegones / Still Life with Atis, Macopa*, 1884, Oil on canvas, 58 x 80 cm

Still life paintings represent value and human attributes. "It confirms the owner's wealth and habitual style of living."







Another Paterno still life, and one by Emilio Alvero, *Still life with Basket*, bring the compositions outdoors. The lush environment in the background further enhances the abundant array of fruits in the foreground. In Paterno's composition, the middle of the heap of fruits is a nest resting on turnips. Inside are newly hatched birds waiting to be fed. The stillness of the composition is negated by the presence of the birds. Amorsolo's *Still Life* appears formal. The fruits are posed against red drapery. The focus is on the luscious sampling of tropical fruits and less attention is given to the background.

Contemporary renderings of the still life have similar qualities to the traditional style, although with a more modern approach to composition and figuration. Examples are works by Manansala, Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, Lyd Arguilla, Ang Kiukok, and Belleza, where the viewer is placed at a much higher vantage point and the artists are no longer concerned with arriving at a logically organized space. Manansala's composition, for one, is simple but is enriched by the transparent and faceted surfaces throughout the painting. Lydia Arguilla's caladium enhances the plant's vibrant quality, not only in color but in shape, imbuing the subject with a dreamlike quality.

Belleza's works are modernist in color and form but are also guided by traditional still life painting. Her compositions bring together a variety of material types – from clay pots, woven fibers and plastic baskets, to glass and ceramic bottles and goods wrapped in plastic. Many of the artist's paintings of women and family scenes are drawn from her own milieu. Indeed, a visit to the home that Belleza shares with her husband, the painter Angelito Antonio, shows how she has transformed the kitchen into her own studio.

Similarly, Kiukok's still life gives us a glimpse of his workspace. Objects on the table, especially the containers of paint, relate to the painting itself. It appears as if we are looking at the pile of materials the artist had used to complete this canvas.

Interior scenes are not exactly of the same category but, like still life compositions, they are also a gathering of objects, this time situated in a room. Often they are made to appear casual and even cluttered, revealing personal notes about the individual who inhabits the space. Three paintings in this collection provide us with good examples.

*Galeria Ongpin* by Augusto Fuster gives us a glimpse inside *El Arte*, the art gallery owned by Alfonso Ongpin. He was part owner of *El 82*, the earliest known commercial establishment that sold imported art materials and books. According to Lisa Ongpin-Periquet, *El Arte* was Alfonso Ongpin's own business venture, a commercial art gallery and frame shop, hence, the several paintings that line the wall. There seems to be some order in the way they were hung – portraits, landscapes and genre scenes. Two portraits are probably by Juan Luna – portraits of Pedro Paterno and of a bearded man. The large framed canvas at the center appears to be Hidalgo's *Virgenes* (also in this collection). Ongpin was also known to have dabbled in art restoration which he did within this same space. He would inscribe at the back of each work "*Restorado por A. Ongpin.*" To date works documented with such inscription include paintings by Juan Luna and Simon Flores.

*Knick knacks in an Artist's Studio* was painted by Joaquin Ma. Herrero, a Spaniard who taught at the *Academia*. He remained in Manila even after the end of the Spanish colonial regime. He taught at the UP School of Fine Arts and handled courses in landscape and drawing from life. He later taught at UST and San Beda College. The artist chose to crop the view

**LYDIA ARGUILLA**, *Still Life: Caladium Bicolor*, 1950, Oil on board, 59.5 x 49 cm

Lydia Arguilla's caladium enhances the plant's vibrant quality, not only in color but also in shape, imbuing the subject with a dreamlike quality.

and focus on an assemblage of objects used as props. The two small-scale portraits may be studies for a larger piece as suggested by its scale, or they may be works-in-progress. (The UST Museum has three small-scale portraits by Herrer in its collection.) The fabrics, possibly used as props for models, offer a variety of colors and textures – one with intricate embroidery, the other with long tassels like a mantilla. A fencing sword rests on the pile of drapes, recognized only by its handle. At the top center hangs a skull. In traditional iconography, it reminds one of death and is symbolic of man's mortality. Or it may simply be just one of the many props Herrer used for composition and anatomy instruction.

*Nude in Artist's Studio* by Federico Aguilar Alcuaz has a cosmopolitan setting. It is the interior of the artist's hotel room in Manila. The painting incorporates within a narrow span of space some of the subjects Alcuaz has been known for. Apart from the interior scene that is repeated by the framed painting on the right, these include portraits of women he refers to as part of the *Tres Mariás* series, the cityscapes of Manila viewed through the window, and paintings of nude women. On another level, the nude figure may also be taken as an allegory for the artist's muse, for she does not seem to be the subject of the painting in progress.



FEDERICO AGUILAR ALCUAZ, *Nude in Artist's Studio*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 74 x 90 cm

Interior scenes are not exactly of the same category but, like still life compositions, are also a gathering of objects, this time situated in a room.





**AUGUSTO FUSTER**, *Interior de la Galeria Ongpin*, year not legible, Oil on canvas, 65.5 x 48.5 cm

*El Arte* was Alfonso Ongpin's own business venture, a commercial art gallery and frame shop; hence, the several paintings that line the wall. There seems to be some order in the way they were hung – portraits, landscapes and genre scenes.



MAURO MALANG SANTOS, *House Series III*, 1981, Tempera, 76 x 76 cm



From the interior, artists moved outside to take a closer look at structures – the house, the building or the materials that comprise it – some of which have withstood the test of time. The *bahay kubo*, *barung-barong*, old churches and *bahay-na-bato* came to be one of the common subjects in paintings of this period.

The *bahay kubo* relates to pastoral scenery as popularized by Amorsolo and his contemporaries. The popularity of the *barung-barong*, however, can be somewhat puzzling. During those times – in the 1960s and 1970s – when the Philippine economy was booming, its image would be the last that one would think of hanging in one's house or office. For Malang and Manuel Baldemor, the *barung-barong* and the houses that surround a town church were used as a means towards abstraction. The folk and festive life is captured in vignettes that add life to the townscape. For some artists, like Hugo Yonzon, this improvised shelter is a means to portray the harshness of urban development and industrialization.

The spirit of romantic nostalgia is also evident in the paintings of Rodolfo Ragodon and Lino Severino. Ragodon is known for his painting of church façades set against a white background. These works helped document our colonial churches. He was able to capture the distinct form, and structural and decorative elements of each church, confirming that he had traveled to see them and compiled photographs of these. It was around this time that the government started to take notice of the country's vanishing built heritage. He did not attempt to beautify the old and graying structures: the wear and tear brought about by time and neglect created distinct qualities on his façade paintings.



RODOLFO RAGODON, *Church of Bayombong, Isabela*, 1978, Watercolor on Paper; 38.5 x 50.5 cm

The spirit of romantic nostalgia is also evident in the paintings of Rodolfo Ragodon. Ragodon is known for his painting of church façades set against a white background. These works helped document our colonial churches.

In the same vein, Lino Severino's *Vanishing Scene* gives an almost abstract image of old structures. Without the roof and the street level visible, he focuses our attention to the worn out concrete surface and the old *capiz* sliding windows. Severino continued his *Vanishing Scene* series until his demise in 2004. Coming from Silay, Negros Occidental, concern for the dilapidated state of many old houses was very real to him. In his later series, Severino may have painted the same houses but they were rendered more up close, making them appear almost like abstract compositions.

The introduction of modernism prompted visual artists to rethink their modes of representation as well as to explore the expressive qualities and capabilities of their material. Among the first generation of modernist artists, Diosdado Lorenzo revealed his concern for the medium. Aside from adopting a painterly technique, he deliberately exposed the natural quality of the surface – wood, masonite, or jute sack – as part of the figure.

In the 1960s, abstract painters started to move towards the same path but this time leaving out the figure as an object. The material became the object – harnessing its innate qualities and potentials.

Early works by Jose Joya resemble painted etching plates. He spread pigment on the surface then etched linear figures as if he were burrowing through the surface of a metal plate. Patterns and shapes are arranged in a grid-like framework but they appear random and spontaneous. These etched linear forms would be absent from his later works; instead he began to manipulate the pigment with gestural strokes. Lao Lianben followed the same path. Although *Homage to Mu Chi* is not expressionist in temperament, one sees that the surface is actually covered with gestural markings. The serene and minimalist quality of the work is achieved by the scrapes and abrasion marks on the wood surface which “took a lot of punishment.”



LINO SEVERINO, *Vanishing Scene #52*, 1975, Acrylic, 60 x 80 cm

Coming from Silay, Negros Occidental, concern for the dilapidated state of many old houses was very real to Lino. The artist may have painted the same houses, but they were rendered more up close, making them appear almost like abstract compositions in his later series.

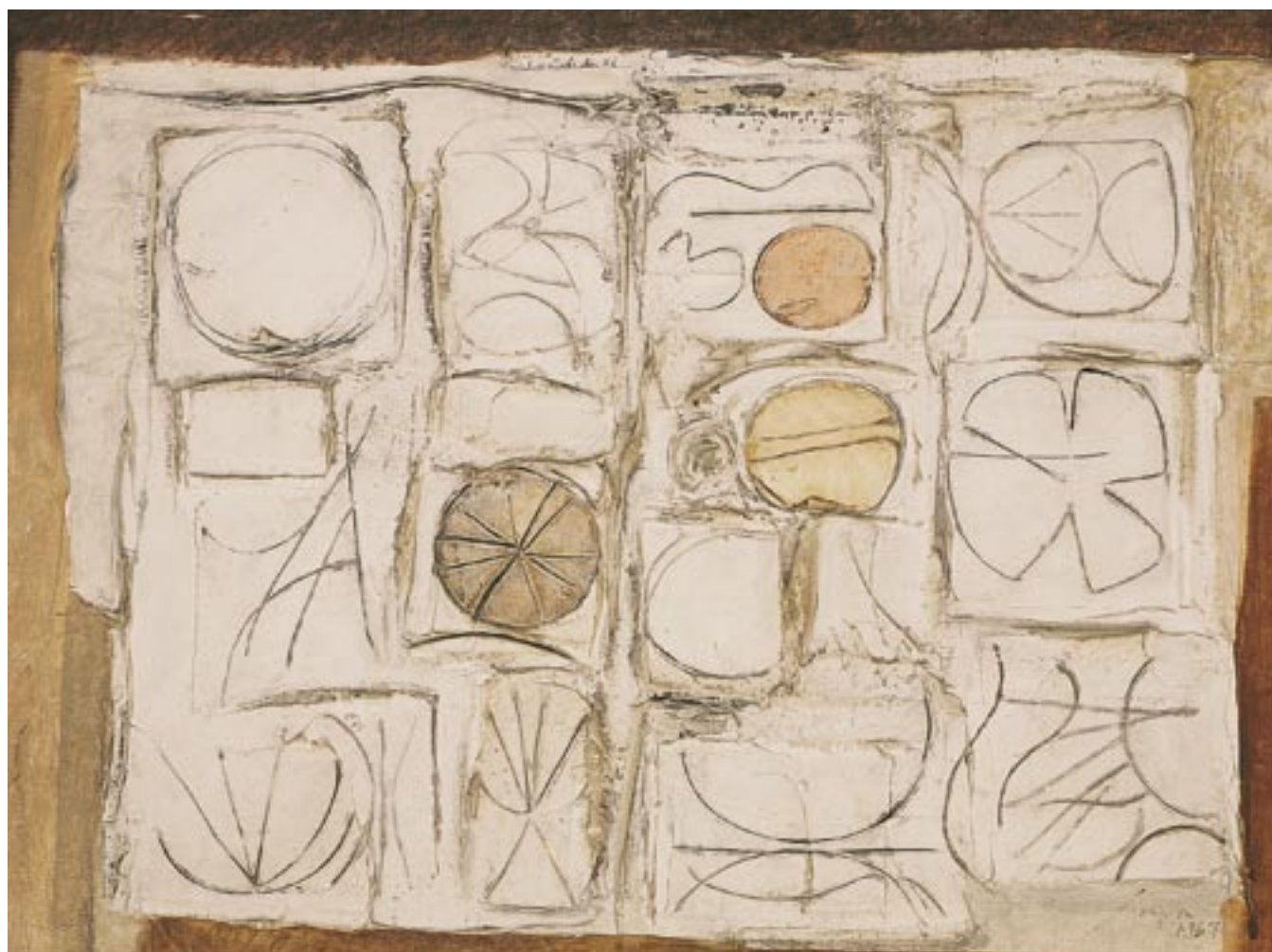
DIOSDADO LORENZO, *Rubber Trees*, Undated, Oil on panel, 71.5 x 53 cm

Among the first generation of modernist artists, Diosdado Lorenzo revealed his concern for the medium.









**JOSE JOYA**, *Shooting Gallery*, 1967, Oil on panel, 60 x 80 cm

Early works by Jose Joya resemble painted etching plates. He spread pigment on the surface then etched linear figures as if he were burrowing through the surface of a metal plate.





JOSE JOYA, "Binhi" Seed, 1971, Oil on canvas, 121 x 121 cm  
Joya manipulated the pigments with gestural strokes.

Arturo Luz works with different media, and brings forth unexpected results. Apart from painting, he worked with a variety of materials like jute sack, and made collages out of found objects. *Homage to Maholy-Nagy* belongs to this series where he composed a collage with the rough woven fibers of jute. Instead of cutting them smoothly, the edges are uneven, complementing the rough and textured surface. In the 1980s, other artists like Paz Abad Santos explored new and indigenous materials and arrived at large-scale tapestries made out of natural fibers.

The black and white mural by Luz at the PICC represents his more linear style of abstraction. Like the one at the CCP Little Theater Lobby, it creates maximum effect with the smooth and polished finish of the surface. It further enhances the flat forms with streamlined boundaries. To arrive at this effect, Luz employed the graphic technique of masking to produce clean and clear-edged patterns.

Minimalist tendencies in abstract painting tend to focus on the different material and tonal qualities of the medium. Roberto Chabet's *Window* is unified by a textured surface while depth is suggested by distinct levels rendered in white, black and gray.

Lee Aguinaldo, like Luz, had phases of linear and painterly approaches in abstraction. In the 1950s, he was known for his series of drippings that echoed the action paintings of Jackson Pollock. *Linear No. 6* belongs to the former, a series that he began in the 1960s. By this time, painters were introduced to the new medium of acrylic a synthetic, water-based pigment. Since its introduction in the market, artists employed it in different ways to achieve a variety of visual and pictorial effects. Acrylic was also more affordable and offered a wider variety of colors. Aguinaldo took advantage of the flat and opaque properties of acrylic as well as the bright and rich colors that it could achieve.

Minimalist tendencies in abstract painting tend to focus on the different material and tonal qualities of the medium.





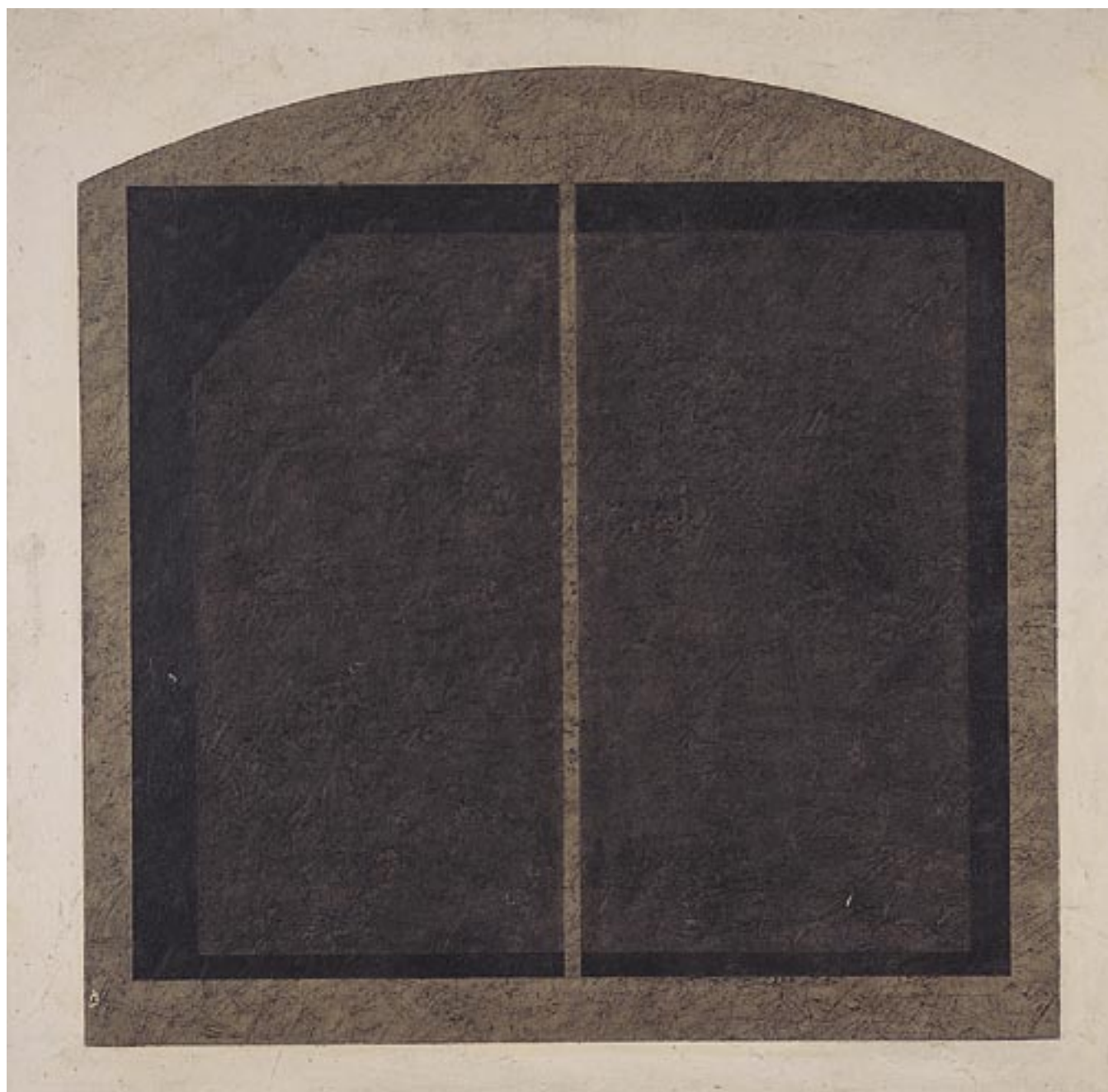
**LEE AGUINALDO**, *Linear #6*, 1965, Acrylic on canvas, 153 x 153 cm  
Lee Aguinaldo had phases of linear and painterly approaches in abstraction.



**ARTURO LUZ**, *Abstract Mural*, 1986, Acrylic on canvas, 224 x 914 cm  
This black and white mural by Luz at the PICC represents his more linear style of abstraction.







**ROBERTO CHABET.** *Window*, 1964, Oil on canvas, 91 x 91 cm  
Roberto Chabet's *Window* is unified by a textured surface while depth is suggested by distinct levels rendered in white, black and gray.



On the other hand, Gus Albor explored the transparency that can be achieved with acrylic in *Terminus 94*. The white translucent layer creates a gauzy film that mutes the colors underneath. In *Paglalakbay*, Albor retains the rawness of wood with its peeling layers, in much the same way that Luz used jute fibers.

Other abstractionists also used this medium to explore their individual experimentation in composition. Raul Lebajo, Raul Isidro, and Prudencio Lamarroza were contemporaries who developed their individual styles in non-figurative painting while employing geometric forms. Ben Maramag created minimalist compositions with tones in careful gradation. Nestor Vinluan combines oil and acrylic in his paintings and worked on its opposing qualities to achieve different textures. Olazo continued to work on oil as medium even in his large-scale abstract *Diaphanous* paintings. His familiarity with this medium dates back to his years as a printmaker.

In both figurative and non-figurative expressions, the material attributes of medium and form have continued to challenge artists. These explorations, however, could not only be attributed to the artists' creativity and talent. Between the 1960s to the 1980s there were more opportunities and venues for artists to exhibit their works. These ranged from commercial gallery spaces that sprang up in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the art boom. There were also large museum halls like those at the CCP and the now defunct Museum of Philippine Art. The boom in the art market saw the growth of private and corporate collections. Several building projects, especially for hotels, also created a demand for paintings that could easily blend with hotel rooms, with more affordable prices to match. This created a niche for medium to small-scale works.

Moreover, government agencies, even those not concerned with culture, actively acquired artworks. Under the Marcos Administration, government offices and corporations were encouraged to spend part of their budget to acquire artworks for their office spaces. Some treated it as mere decoration, while others had a more cohesive and well thought out policy. The GSIS and the the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas were two of the government entities that built a valuable collection of Philippine art. The former has since opened its own museum within its premises, while the BSP has been exhibiting its collection in a gallery allotted for them at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila and in the Money Museum within its premises.

Several building projects, especially for hotels, also created a demand for paintings that could easily blend with hotel rooms, with more affordable prices to match.

## A Corporate and State Art Collection

The BSP is recognized as having one of the most comprehensive collections of Philippine paintings. Its scope represents historical highlights, and movements, and includes works by individuals who have contributed to the nation's artistic development. The collection is also an embodiment of significant government art support especially coming from a non-cultural organization.

Collecting as a cultural practice reflects the emphasis of the Renaissance on both the importance of the individual, and the development of early capitalism; the individual here referring not only to the identity of the art makers but also of those who had directed the course of their acquisition. The significance of collecting also raises the status of art as economic good and as investment. But beyond this, art collecting especially for corporations, and for a non-cultural institution like the BSP, demonstrates the “humanist project and offers a means to fulfill the social demands of prestige and display.”

Banking institutions today are often known for their art collections. These entities have made important contributions to support artistic production through direct purchases. The reasons for acquiring art collections can vary from decorating office spaces, “enhancing the working environment... and [as] a form of investment.” For some companies, reasons may later advance to something noble like supporting the art community and cultural development. What makes one collection distinct from another would be the specific reasons that influence decisions, and the personalities who make these decisions. And just like any creative process, the formation of an art collection – whether by an individual or a corporate entity – is also influenced by external factors.

Martial rule under Ferdinand Marcos was a turbulent period in Philippine history. Ironically, development policies and other programs generated an environment that fed the art market with a growth in demand and production. The construction boom in the 1970s was prompted partly by the growth in the tourism industry. Government also encouraged the entry of foreign investments and businesses. Manila then was promoted as the “Convention City.”

After the inauguration of the CCP in 1969, the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) was inaugurated in 1976 to host the IMF-World Bank conference. Part of the preparation for its opening involved purchasing and commissioning works of art for its premises. The choice of commissioning abstract works by Joya and Luz for public areas not only complemented the building's interiors; it also aimed to communicate to the international community at least a semblance of artistic freedom amidst the precarious political atmosphere. .

The prestige of owning a collection  
comes with a major responsibility.



The motivation to form a collection often comes from the personal commitment of a top-level executive. In the case of the BSP, it was then Central Bank Governor Gregorio Licaros, who started to acquire art works in the 1970s. This was in line with the transfer of the bank's office to the present complex along Roxas Boulevard. During the term of Governor Jaime Laya, the collection expanded to what it is today. Between 1981 and 1984, the BSP built up its collection of paintings. Laya's prior position as head of the Intramuros Administration and his private interests as a collector were an advantage to the bank's acquisition program. Although like any government and corporate entity, purchases could only be made upon the approval of the Monetary Board.

Laya's many personal accounts of fulfilling this task provide valuable information related to the provenance of specific objects; moreover, it reflects aspects of the art market then. The BSP's acquisitions took place after several years of experiencing a boom in the market. The art scene was already characterized by a diversity of styles spanning figurative and abstract modes. The collection policy was defined by what other state cultural organizations already had then – namely those of the National Museum, the CCP and the MOPA. One of the acquisition thrusts was to include works from the Spanish colonial period. This encouraged private collectors to let go of their personal possessions or consider it as an option to raise emergency funds. According to Laya:

*“With a few exceptions, most of the paintings offered [to the BSP] for consideration came from art galleries and dealers who in turn got them from a variety of frequently confidential sources, including people who had inherited things that they knew little about, or descendants of families with possessions accumulated over several generations.”*

The bank was also able to acquire works of art simply by carrying out its official tasks. Tracing the provenance of some pieces in the collection, Laya recalls how his first week in office (January 1981) was highlighted by the disappearance of businessman Dewey Dee. This left Bancom Development Corporation, then the largest investment house, in debt. The BSP agreed to accept paintings as collateral and eventually ended up owning works by Manansala, Felix Martinez, and Alcuaz.

The transfer of ownership embodies a change in its meaning. What once used to be part of churches or private homes are now encountered along the hallways of a corporate space or inside executive offices. What used to be displayed in “splendid remoteness” as “icons of spiritual life” now are placed in secular spaces, although not all are devoid of religious significance. The *Stations of the Cross* together with a few icons still serve as devotional images to the bank employees, a typical set-up one encounters in many corporate offices.

Regular exhibitions of the BSP Painting Collection in the bank's Money Museum and in the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila enrich their historical and social contexts. Within these spaces, the artistic and aesthetic meanings of these artworks are enhanced. The collection has been a source of pride for the BSP and its officials especially when hosting visits of members of the international banking community.

The prestige of owning a collection comes with a major responsibility. With the decision to acquire an art collection of this magnitude and scale, the BSP has assumed another role outside of financial policy-making. It has been the caretaker of part of our country's cultural patrimony; and it is in this context that future programs for the care and management of its art collection must be envisioned and pursued. 🌿



The second floor gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila shows works from the BSP collection.







Juan Luna's *The Beach at Scheveningen*  
greets visitors to the Executive meeting room.



# *tanáw*

SEEING AND SHAPING THE WORLD  
IN THE PHILIPPINE LANDSCAPE

by Fatima J. Lasay





**JUAN LUNA**, *Houses by a Narrow Road*, 1896-1897, Oil on panel, 46 x 32 cm

When one says “*magandá ang tánawin*”, the concept “*gandá*” is used as an orientation referring to physical and abstract beauty.



## The Filipino word

*“tanáw”* means “visible from afar” or “seen from a distance.” The word also means “scene”, “view”, “panorama” or “landscape.” One can also say *“tanáw”* to mean “an expectation of satisfaction or advantage in the future.” In the aesthetic dimension, *“tanáw”* and *“tánawin”* are often associated with *“gandá”* or the concept of desirability. When one says *“magandá ang tánawin”*, the concept *“gandá”* is used as an orientation referring to physical and abstract beauty.

The English term “landscape” refers to a portion of land or territory and all the objects it contains which the eye can comprehend in a single view. In the pictorial aspect, a landscape is a picture representing actual or fancied scenery, the chief subject of which is the general aspect of nature. The Germanic term *“landschaft”* first came into use in the fifteenth century to refer to an area of land and to a way of seeing. The Italian *paese* was used at around the same period to refer specifically to paintings. The Spanish *paisajes* or representation of scenery came to the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. So, while landscape is primarily a visual term used in painting, it has also historically become instrumental to the practical appropriation of land and to the expected appropriation of the natural or cultivated fruits of the land.

As a genre of painting, landscape is said to have occupied the lowest position, along with still life painting, in the hierarchy of classical Western art. In Western painting, the idea of working primarily or exclusively in landscape, or the idea of landscape as a genre of painting, is said to be relatively new in art historical terms. Only in the nineteenth to early twentieth century did landscape painting begin to emerge from its place as a minor genre within the Western tradition: from landscape as setting to landscape as symbol in the grand tradition of the Sublime.

In the Eastern tradition, particularly in China, landscape painting was much earlier established as a major genre placing second only to calligraphy in the hierarchy of the most important artistic visual expressions. At the start of the Five Dynasties Period in the tenth century, landscape painting became an independent genre as a result of the social turmoil that followed the end of the Tang Dynasty. As social stratification shifted, two desires from the imagination assured the primacy of landscape painting in the cultural tradition: the cultivated garden as metaphor for the ordered state; and the natural world as safe retreat from the collapse of dynastic order.

However, the concept of composing landscapes because they were part of the *historia* (epic and historic events) or figures in secular and religious art was also an important aspect of painting in the history of Western art. The popularity of landscape painting particularly in the Golden Age of Spain may be propounded from several treatises on painting in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In “Arte de la Pintura”, Francisco Pacheco wrote that landscape painting “is much used nowadays, and many have been pleased to work with it.” He added that the Flemings especially have been much inclined to landscape painting, “using tempera and oil for the disposition of the sky and the land with its fields, gardens and rivers.” Pacheco concluded that “landscape is a part of painting that ought not to be deprecated.”

In Pacheco’s esteem for landscape painting, the tradition already drew distinctions between two kinds: “... some in which the landscape is subject to the figures (*historia*), and others in which the figures are subject to the landscape.” If landscape painting’s movement from inconsequential setting to sublime is said to have marked an important shift from its low to high position in the hierarchy of the arts, this probably also signified the bourgeois individualist beginning to exercise power over land and property.

The idea that the depiction of landscapes in the East was wholly cosmic while those in the West were realistic could be deceptive. There were traditions in early landscape painting in the East where artists depicted sceneries especially for representing actual landscapes seen in the course of their journeys. The tradition of the “true view” or “true scenery,” known as *zhenjing* in China in the tenth and eleventh century, flourished into genres of topographical and travel painting. In the eighteenth century, the tradition came to Korea and was referred to as *chin’gyòng*. This reached Japan as *shinkei* probably by way of the Korean embassies.

In the Philippines, the tradition of Western painting was introduced by Spain during the colonial period. In the early part of this era, much inspiration was drawn from the import of religious art from Spain and her territories, and most of the arts were directed towards religious purposes. The earliest depictions of landscapes may be found as backgrounds of saints in panel and wall paintings for churches and in paintings of the Passion and Death of Christ. The earliest drawings of Philippine landscapes may also be found in the corners of maps and in tiny illuminated letters found in historical records of the tenure of bishops and archbishops.

With Manila prospering with the presence of the Spanish community, the Chinese also began to take advantage of the principal city’s early linkages with global capitalism. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Parian was a thriving Chinese community in the suburbs around the walled Spanish fortification known as Intramuros. The Chinese and the Chinese *mestizos*’ role as intermediaries between the economies of the West and of the colony spurred significant social and cultural transformations as greater liberalization of commerce continued to take place from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Many Chinese artisans also settled in Manila and other flourishing cities in the archipelago.

In the growth and organization of cities, landscape as a way of seeing and as appropriation of land was an urban invention brought to the Philippines through Spanish laws on town planning. Towns were erected on elevated ground along the coast in consideration of sea trade and they all had a plaza whose length should be one and a half times more than its width “because that [would] just be right for the horse shows during fiestas.” In this grid town plan, the church is placed on one side with the municipal hall across it; adjacent would be the school building, and across would be the lots for houses of the town’s most prominent residents. Within the colonial framework, such planning was not simply



There were traditions in early landscape painting in the East where artists depicted sceneries especially for representing actual landscapes seen in the course of their journeys.



**ANONYMOUS**, *River View*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 61 x 92 cm

In the growth and organization of cities, landscape as a way of seeing and as appropriation of land was an urban invention brought to the Philippines through Spanish laws on town planning. Towns were erected on elevated ground along the coast in consideration of sea trade

intended for the efficient use and organization of space but primarily for the organization of social roles. In this aspect, landscape is constructed and bound into physical and social appropriation, and their earliest depictions in painting were a reassuring reminder of an ordered and civilized state.

Of course, that there was a market for art during the colonial period is also an important consideration. Earlier, the demands of friar supremacy restricted the painting of scenes within the ambit of religion. However, by the eighteenth century, Spain made new economic policies because of the radical transformations taking place in Europe at the time, especially that the English were penetrating the Spanish colonies. Direct trade opened between the Philippines and Spain and the flood of European travelers incited the demand for scenic depictions of the colony. Up through the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand by European travelers for the *tipos del país*, or the depiction of everyday scenes, directed Filipino artistic sensibilities toward their own environment – an aesthetic that previously had more to do with surviving nature than supplying a market demand.



M.APOSTOL, *Wooden Bridge*, 1954, Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 51 cm

Only in the nineteenth to early twentieth century did landscape painting begin to emerge from its place as a minor genre within the Western tradition: from landscape as setting to landscape as symbol in the grand tradition of the Sublime.



## Landscape is constructed and bound into physical and social appropriation, and their earliest depictions in painting were a reassuring reminder of an ordered and civilized state.

The *ilustrado* class also stimulated interest in art forms that related in some way to the development of landscape as a painting genre: i.e., *tipos del pais*, *letras y figuras*, *miniaturismo*. It is within the demands of the social, economic and cultural conditions in the Spanish colonial period that landscape painting, beginning with the tradition of religious art and later the secular “true view” or “true scenery,” may be said to have flourished.

While it was Spanish colonization that brought the tradition of Western painting and the imperial regulation of space to the Philippines, one might also take into consideration that in the pre-Spanish era, the organization and expression of space and the representation of the external world was carried out through the country’s indigenous traditions of sculpture, pottery, weaving and gold work, and through the interactions between mountain villages and riverine settlements.

Also, one might consider that the Philippines is a country whose environment is one of tremors and typhoons. In these conditions, where churches and monuments constructed of stone could be wiped out in a few seconds, the making of cognitive maps of the environment based on the angles formed by the position of mountains across lakes and fields were important cultural dimensions of orientation and space perception. Underlying these practices are important worldviews that must have significant impact on how the Filipino artist conceptualized and represented space within the colonial and postcolonial framework. In the Philippine colonial landscape, East and West flowed into each other and gave birth to new social and economic relations that profoundly shaped the idea of landscape as way of seeing and as appropriation of land.

So in defining and discussing landscape, it is useful to ask questions that challenge and expand our understanding of it as a painting tradition with implications on symbolism and perception. We may expand the domain of landscape to the concepts of property and ownership. A picture of the land makes land possession imaginable, and other devices such as *títulos reales* and ecclesiastical rights make the possession formal and real. Landscape connotes the mechanism of power and money to enforce the imperialism of the eye.

Landscape can also be described as a space where objects establish themselves in relation to each other. These objects – rivers, mountains, hills, trees and cultivated hedges –ascertain the confines of landscape. A stake in the ground, the cutting of branches from a tree or swiddening techniques can establish a claim of ownership of the objects produced through cultivation of a portion of the land. Other objects such as houses and dams can also serve as markers of land ownership. Here landscape conjures the aspect of nature and man-made objects, and the forces that result from that interaction. As the term “landscape” itself is equated with a good view of an area of the countryside, the objects in the landscape, often more fancied than real, soon become imbued with universal significance. These may be objects in nature such as trees, rivers and mountains, or the products of cultivation and domestication such as rice fields, orchards and cattle. Other objects become signifiers of human activity such as the *nipa* hut, the bridge and the church. Within the landscape, these objects assert their origins and significance; it is also here where nature and culture dialectics arise.

In these inquiries and expositions, we will define the concept of landscape through three elements: the horizon, ground distances, and the dialectic between nature and culture. Underlying these three elements are three principles: space and illusion governing the mechanism of vision and perception; picture grammars governing the different systems of representation; and philosophical balance, which governs a culture’s worldview and imagination of the universe.

Utilizing these three elements, we may come to expand our understanding of landscape as social and cultural construction, define it in both conceptual and visual terms, and ultimately differentiate and value the relationships between notions of intellectual and visual realism in the landscape. We begin our analysis with the phenomenon called “the horizon.”



**GABRIEL CUSTODIO**, *Pinagbiyakan River Tanza Cavite*, 1980, Oil on canvas, 81 x 154.5 cm

Landscape can also be described as a space where objects establish themselves in relation to each other. These objects – rivers, mountains, hills, trees and cultivated hedges –ascertain the confines of landscape.





**ELIAS LAXA**, *Shell Pickers*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 41 cm

As the term "landscape" itself is equated with a good view of an area of the countryside, the objects in the landscape, often more fancied than real, soon become imbued with universal significance.



**FABIAN DELA ROSA**, *By the Sea*, 1933, Oil on board, 47 x 58 cm

In Fabian dela Rosa's *By the Sea*, we catch a glimpse of the distance to a sea horizon that is mostly hidden by a row of houses in the middle distance.



## Where the sky meets the earth

*“In the skies, the horizon will be massicot and white, or very light sinoper and white, then light blue, smoothly joined, as though born of the horizon; this blue is followed by another darker one that rises smoothly from the first. The clouds will be of white darkened with purple. This is the most common sky coloring. Now it remains for the artist to paint the clouds and all the rest as best seems to him.”*

- Felipe Nunes, “How to paint the landscape and distances of the picture” in *“Arte poetica, e da pintura e symetria, com principios da perspectiva,”* 1615

*Guhit-tagpuan*, the horizon, is commonly defined as the line where the sky appears to meet the earth. In this case it is known as the apparent or sensible horizon. The sea horizon is the apparent horizon formed by the sea. From the astronomical perspective, the horizon is a direction in space. The astronomical horizon is the intersection of a horizontal plane through the eye with the celestial sphere – in other words, it is a plane perpendicular to the earth’s radius. But the astronomical horizon is not visible; it is a conceptual feature of the sky. What we are capable of seeing is the geodetic horizon where the cone with vertex at the observer’s eye and touching the surface of the Earth’s gravity field meets the celestial sphere. Sometimes the geodetic horizon is taken to be the tangent line of this cone with the Earth’s surface.

However, a phenomenon called terrestrial refraction actually allows us to see *beyond* the geodetic horizon. Because air is densest near the surface of the earth, rays of light are concave towards the surface and allow a curved line of sight towards the horizon – so the line of sight between the observer and the horizon is not straight but curved. Thus, the refracted apparent horizon is actually farther than the apparent horizon without refraction.

When we speak of the presence of a horizon as a way of seeing in landscapes, we refer to the imaginary line on which is projected our point of sight. In pictorial terms, the horizon enforces a station point for the viewer. In both terms we also refer to the objects that determine the observer’s apparent horizon. These objects may be trees, hills, mountains, houses and buildings found on the land. And although these objects conceal and reveal the observer’s apparent or sensible horizon, they actually hide the geodetic or sea horizon.

In *Landscape* by Dominador Castañeda, the distance towards the horizon is defined by trees and huts painted to diminution. Masses of white clouds rise behind this physical boundary against the rich blue cast of the upper atmosphere. In Fabian dela Rosa’s *By the Sea*, we catch a glimpse of the distance to a sea horizon that is mostly hidden by a row of houses in the middle distance.

In these paintings, the apparent horizon is either partly visible or completely hidden. In the latter case, it is discernible from the position of the objects in the scene indicating that the true horizon is within the picture plane or the two-dimensional surface on which the artist works. But the artist can also establish the horizon outside the picture plane.

In *Landscape in Batangas (Series II)* by Ibarra dela Rosa, trees and terrain are rendered in variegated colors reminding of the rich colors of mango trees in its various seasons in the province. Here, even if the horizon does not appear in the landscape it can be located outside, above the picture plane, in order to describe the observer's position. Likewise, the horizon is beyond Jose Joya's *Bacolod from the Air* which conceptualizes the landscape as a topology, but it is suggested in the artist's *Hill Top* which describes the observer's position away from the depicted and abstracted feature of the land.

The sea horizon in Juan Luna's *The Beach at Scheveningen* is partially concealed by the *karavaan*, the *visservolk*, and the masts of fishing fleet. Since the thirteenth-century, the beach community of Den Haag in the Netherlands has been known as a thriving fishing village. By the end of the nineteenth-century, it turned into a fashionable European resort when the prestigious Kurhaus Hotel opened. The depiction of longshoremen and women pronounce the reality of labor necessary for a fishing village, with the sky cast in an inhospitably pale purple mood – even the sea horizon shows turbulence.

In contrast, a colorful lakeshore community in the nineteenth-century is depicted in Juan Senson's *Vista Parcial del Pueblo de Angono y Laguna de Bay*, with cultivated terrain in the foreground and a row of boats curiously placed along the lake horizon. Because of its size and the abundance of its aquatic lake, Laguna de Bay is one of the most important fishing lakes in the Philippines, its generations of fisherfolk intimately acquainted with their lake world. Half of the horizon is hidden by huts, trees and bamboo, and in the far distance to the horizon can be seen the *pulô* or small island near the center of the lake where it touches the shoulders of *Dalawang Buro* (twin hills) or possibly Mt. Makiling which is just nearby. If this geography is accurate then it is a point of reference to the rich fishing ground shown where the boats are collected. In Laguna de Bay, fisherfolk interpret low flying swallows as a sign of an approaching storm.

Fisherfolk and seafarers view the contours of the horizon as markers for navigation and fishing. Important coastal ports and fishing villages can be found in the southwestern parts of Samar. The island itself is known as a "splendor between mountain and sea." With winds from the Pacific, Samar is no stranger to inclement weather. The rugged shore, the abandoned fishing boat, and the tumultuous clouds contrasting with the soft slope of the mountains and the calm of the sea horizon depicted in José Maria Asuncion's *Samar Seas* all seem to attest to this. We are given the impression of a storm that has just passed the fishing village.

The Filipino word for horizon, "*guhit-tagpuan*," literally means "line" (*guhit*) and "trysting place" (*tagpuan*). In sacred art, the presence of a horizon can be interpreted as reference to the lives of saints spent on earth; when their feet touch the plane beneath the horizon, it is an indication of an intimacy with the earth. Here, landscape painting largely serves a symbolic function to the religious narrative. This is evident in the depiction of the lives of the saints that use landscapes not only to contribute to the mood of the painting, but also, and more importantly, to reinforce the attributes of the figure in the painting. In the anonymous artist's painting of *Sto. Domingo* we can see a horizon line marked by a congregation of buildings that look more like churches rather than the façades of houses and buildings of an actual town. As symbolic backdrop to the saint figure, the horizon may be interpreted to depict the miraculous growth of the Dominican order founded by St. Dominic in 1215.

JOSE JOYA, *Hill Top*, 1971, Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 58.5

This painting describes the observer's position away from the depicted and abstracted feature of the land.













JUAN LUNA, *The Beach at Scheveningen*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 58 x 108 cm

The sea horizon in Juan Luna's *The Beach at Scheveningen* is partially concealed by the *karavaan*, the *visservolk*, and the masts of fishing fleet.





ANONYMOUS, *Sta. Barbara VYM Ora Pro Nobis*, Undated, Oil on panel, 118 x 72.5 cm

In images of St. Barbara, is shown with her attributes – the lightning which struck down her persecutors and the tower built by her father to imprison her.



In the painting of *San Antonio Abad* by The Bohol Master, the horizon is hidden by a mound within which the saint is seated. The rendition of the landscape conveys an intimacy with the natural world, an attitude requisite in the depiction of saints whose lives were a spiritual rapport with nature. *San Antonio Abad*, acknowledged as patron saint of domestic animals, lived in complete solitude in the desert where he was tempted many times by the devil. After establishing the great monastic tradition of the Christian Church, he left his monastery and continued his hermit life, living exclusively on gardening.

Another saint likewise associated with gardening and the earth is St. Barbara, the Patroness of Geology and protector from thunderstorms and fires. In images of St. Barbara, is shown with her attributes – the lightning which struck down her persecutors and the tower built by her father to imprison her. These attributes must be rendered in the landscape. The anonymous artist's painting of *Santa Barbara* not only renders these attributes in the landscape but also portrays the story of her martyrdom. In the distance on the hill, she is shown kneeling with two uniformed soldiers and another person, possibly her father, who instructed her martyrdom. Below the hill, the three persecutors are shown being struck down by lightning. In the foreground she is shown holding the martyr's palm and the sword of her persecutors.

If the development of landscape painting in sacred art flourished out of the narrative order, which functioned at two levels – time and space – the painting of *Santa Barbara* collapsed them. Generally, artists have used cycles or a sequence of paintings to depict the life of Christ or a saint as separate events. The different episodes may be presented in a grid layout or as floating narratives in the sky. In the telling of St. Barbara's story, the episodes were coordinated on land in a single picture plane.

However, there are narratives that call for a physical separation of the episodes. The *Stations of the Cross* requires a way of seeing that demands the observer to walk through each "Station." Here, the rendering of landscapes can provide a conceptual map of the continuity of the narrative. The horizon is key to this line of continuity, describing the passage of linear time. Spatial innovations involving the horizon in the narrative function are linked with how artists explored the concept of time. The use of a single landscape in a series of nineteenth-century paintings by an anonymous artist depicting the *Stations of the Cross* is evident in the constancy of the height of the horizon in nearly all of the paintings. The landscape shows the same dry ground with patches of weeds and what appear to be the hills of Bohol in the horizon. In the long tortuous journey to Golgotha, the level of the horizon line remains the same – from the *Third Station*, where Christ falls for the first time, to the *Eleventh Station*, where he is nailed to the cross – serving as cinematic sequence to the religious Christian drama.

In the mechanism of vision, the horizon may also be explained in terms of optical occlusion and edge – or the hiding or covering of one thing by another. Because of the movement of the earth, of objects on the ground, the clouds in the sky, or a change in the position of the observer, the manifestation of occlusion is said to be kinetic or moving. An interpretation of Fernando Zóbel's *Painting No. 21* as a minimal landscape of ground, sky and sun is based on the perception of the breaks in the optical texture of the painting, which visually settle into minimum configurations corresponding to the simplest possible concept – in this case, the horizon. The presence of the bluish haze on the left side of the painting across both the occluding ground and the occluded background adds visual interest because it seems to test the rule that observable contour belongs to the figure and not to the ground.



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station I: Jesus Condemned*  
Oil on panel 91 x 66.5 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station II: Jesus Carries Cross*,  
Oil on panel, 93 x 66



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station III: Jesus Falls First*  
Oil on panel 90 x 66.5 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station IV: Jesus Meets Mother*  
Oil on panel 90.5 x 66 cm

ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER  
*Station V: Simon Helps Jesus*, Oil on panel, 93 x 67 cm













ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station VII: Jesus Falls Second Time*,  
Oil on panel, 90 x 67.5cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station VIII: Jesus Consoles Women of Jerusalem*, Oil on panel 93.5 x 66.5 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station IX: Jesus Falls Third Time*  
Oil on panel, 94 x 67 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station X: Disposal of Garments*  
Oil on panel, 93.5 x 67.5 cm

ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER  
*Station VI: Veronica Wipes Face*, Oil on panel 92.5 x 67.5 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station XI: Jesus Nailed to the Cross*  
Oil on panel, 90.5 x 66.5 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station XII: Jesus Dies: The Crucifixion*  
Oil on panel, 92 x 67 cm



ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER, *Station XIII: Jesus Taken Down*  
Oil on panel, 90 x 66.5 cm

The use of a single landscape in a series of nineteenth-century paintings by an anonymous artist depicting the *Stations of the Cross* is evident in the constancy of the height of the horizon in nearly all of the paintings.

ANONYMOUS BOHOL MASTER  
*Station XIV: Jesus Laid in Sepulchre*, Oil on panel, 94 x 67.5 cm





Año del Señor de 1830



*Hating Gabi* #3 by Norberto Carating represents movement of a kinetic optic array (such as time of day) into the frozen pictorial array (such as pigments on the canvas) by playing with the principles of optical occlusion. The moon is partly hidden in the horizon and partly revealed through an aperture (an inverse horizon) in the foreground at the bottom of the picture plane. In these works by Zóbel and Carating, although the use of tone and color suggests spatial recession towards a horizon, both works also emphasize the flatness of the picture surface – the presence of the horizontal and vertical lines near the bottom of the picture plane in *Painting No. 21* and the dark oblique line near the top of the picture plane in *Hating Gabi*.

Defining the horizon in landscapes can be accomplished in a variety of ways. In astronomical terms, the distance (d) of the observer to the horizon may be explained in relation to the earth's radius (r) and the height of the observer (h) by the Pythagorean Theorem:  $(r + h)^2 = r^2 + d^2$ . The distance to the horizon may also be visualized in the techniques of painting through the diminution of form and tonal contrast with distance. In linear perspective, the horizon is established as the horizontal line that passes through the center of vision.

In anthropological terms, the horizon may be defined as imbued with significance for fishing and navigation, for example the identification of a point of reference through the angle formed by the meeting of two landmarks. *Dahil kay pusa* (because of a cat) is known to fisherfolk of San Antonio in Laguna de Bay as a marker and description: “*Pulô* (small island) meets the point of Talim Island. *Ulilang Kawayan* (lone bamboo) meets *Butukan*. This place is sandy. The first time a fisherman dropped his net here, he had but a meager catch. As if that was not enough the cat beat him to it when he reached home. The next day, however, when he went back to the same place, he caught plenty of catfish. The catch has been good since then.”

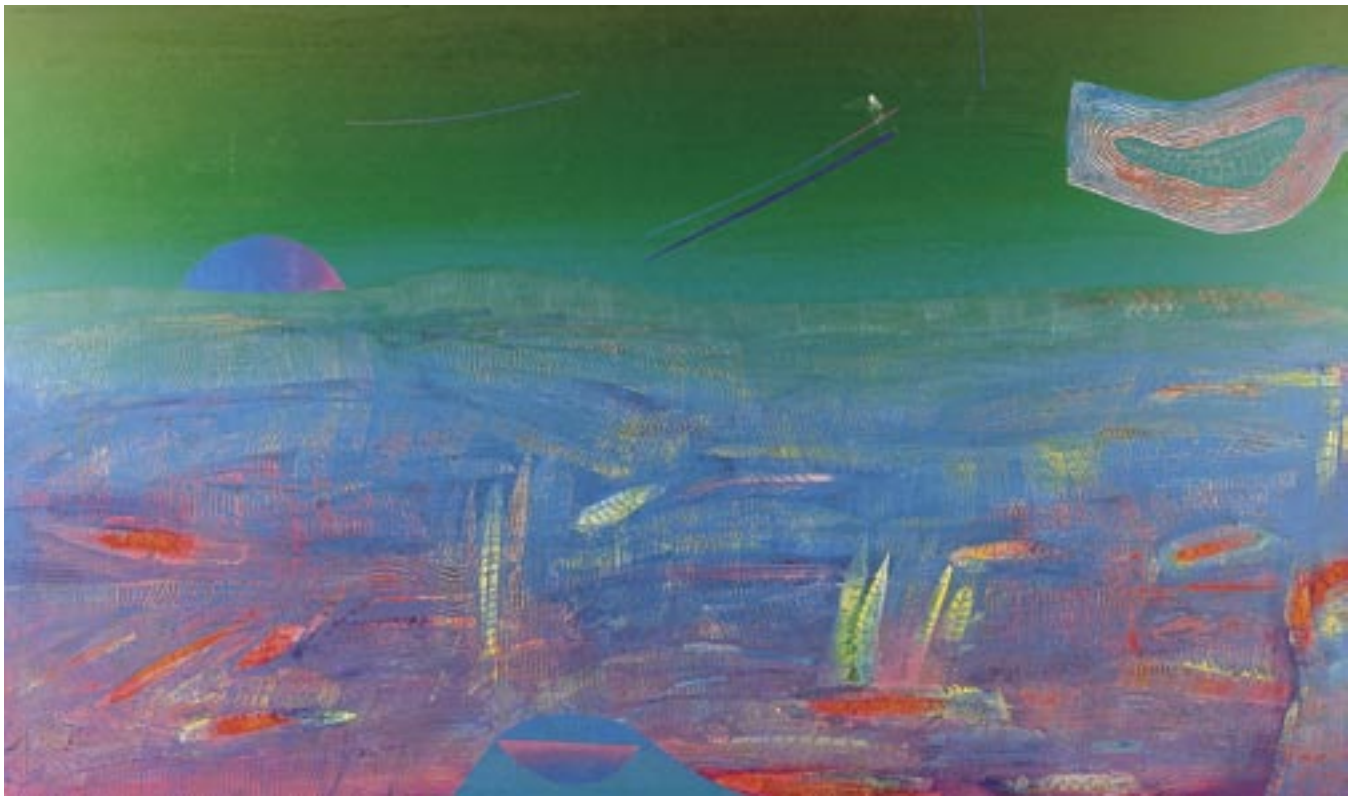
In computer modeling, the horizon can be constructed in a navigable virtual reality world through code such as:

```
# scenery.wld
loadpath scenery      # location of external object files
flymode 1              # limits of your movement
                      # not parallel to the ground
groundcolor 93         # yellow ground
skycolor 173           # light blue sky
yon 1000000            # how far away you can move the viewpoint
```

But the paradox of the horizon in depictions of landscape is that the true astronomical horizon is never visible – it is a conceptual horizon. What we see is not even the geodetic horizon but the apparent horizon, a mirage, made visible by terrestrial refraction. By suggesting a horizon, we create the illusion, and oblige a point of view of how the real world should be represented. By suggesting none of it or many of it at the same time, we question the illusion and open other views of the world. Painting is a visible language whose conventions we can break in order to understand the language itself and acquire the wisdom to discern the numerous illusions of our constructed realities.



Painting is a visible language whose conventions we can break in order to understand the language itself and acquire the wisdom to discern the numerous illusions of our constructed realities.



**NORBERTO CARATING**, *Hating Gabi #3*, 1981, Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 212 cm

*Hating Gabi* by Norberto Carating represents movement of a kinetic optic array (such as time of day) into the frozen pictorial array (such as pigments on the canvas) by playing with the principles of optical occlusion.

## Investigating Space, Place, Language in the Landscape

*“In the first distance, where the figure or saint is to be placed, the largest trees and rocks are made, keeping them in proportion to the figure. In the second distance, the trees and houses are made smaller, and in the third distance they are still smaller. In the fourth distance, where the ridges of land join the sky, everything is carried to the greatest degree of diminution.”*

- Francisco Pacheco, “How to compose a landscape” in *“Arte de la Pintura,”* 1649

In the articulation of distances in landscape painting, objects and their relative sizes in space are viewed in relation to one another. By dividing the picture plane into three or four distances or grounds, a systematic creation of pictorial depth is made possible. In the earlier definition of landscape in the pictorial aspect, the representation of real or fancied natural scenery is assumed as the task of the artist. This entails the development and use of constructional principles to transpose the three dimensions of natural space onto a two dimensional picture surface. However, it is also possible that even in paintings of real scenery the concern of the artist could be more symbolic than spatial; it is possible that not all landscape paintings are about places as fixed spaces but of places as fluid picture languages.

In our investigation of space, place and language in the depiction of landscapes, it is necessary that we look into their constructional principles – the systems of representation that artists use to express concepts of navigation, identity and negotiation in landscape. One of the most persuasive of these constructional principles is the principle of perspective.

Perspective is a projection system used in representing spatial extension into depth on a flat or shallow surface, utilizing such optical phenomena as the apparent diminution in size of objects. There are a few main types of perspective systems: linear perspective, isometric perspective and inversed perspective. In linear perspective, parallel lines coming from objects in the scene recede from the observer and converge in infinity at a vanishing point. In isometric perspective, the lines do not converge but remain parallel and only intersect the picture plane at oblique or right angles. In inversed perspective, the lines diverge; it is also described in terms of linear perspective in that the lines of inversed perspective meet at a vanishing point situated in front of the picture plane instead of behind the picture plane as in the case of linear perspective.

Linear perspective is a branch of applied geometry that deals with the apparent directions and dimensions of objects as seen from a certain station or observation point. The simplest form of linear perspective is parallel or one-point perspective, in which the principal lines of the picture are either parallel or perpendicular to the picture plane.

*Carabao on a Country Road* by Victor Cabisada and an anonymous artist's painting of the street of Sta. Ana demonstrate the employment of one-point perspective. Less explicit is the fluid color modeling of space in Victorio Edades' *Montalban Woods*. The narrowing of the road and the diminution of the size of trees with distance all create the illusion of pictorial depth.

*Landscape* by Vicente Alvarez Dizon is an example of space expressed in two-point perspective. Although the construction lines are not explicit, a two-point construction is implied by the position of the huts and the direction of the road leading towards the right and then to the left where it bends.



In *Valley* by Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco, two-point perspective is used not only as a constructional but also as an expressive principle. The hut is positioned at an angle to the picture plane with its two sides leading to two vanishing points; the shape of the mountain implies points in two directions emanating from a horizon line established at the ground level of the painting. This results in an upward view that emphasizes the depth of a valley created by the majestic proportion of the mountain and the low position of the clouds.

In *Maytime in Antipolo* by Fernando Amorsolo, it is the dominating majesty of the church that is expressed in what appears to be an underlying three-point perspective. Two vanishing points towards both sides of the painting are suggested by the direction of lines of the bamboo poles, the position of the caravan and the direction of shadows cast on the ground. A third vertical vanishing point is suggested by the vertical lines of the church building that gently slant inward and converge at a single point above it outside the picture plane.



VICENTE ALVAREZ DIZON, *Philippine Country Scene*, Undated, Oil on plywood, 24.5 x 35.5 cm

Dizon's painting is an example of space expressed in two-point perspective. Although the construction lines are not explicit, a two-point construction is implied by the position of the huts and the direction of the road leading towards the right and then to the left where it bends.

**FERNANDO AMORSOLO**  
*Maytime in Antipolo*, 1943  
Oil on canvas, 72 x 102.75 cm  
In *Maytime in Antipolo* by Fernando Amorsolo, it is the dominating majesty of the church that is expressed in what appears to be an underlying three-point perspective.









Through linear perspective, the canvas is transformed into an open window to the represented external world.



**RODOLFO RAGODON**, *Intramuros Circa 1700*, 1982, Watercolor on Paper, 74 x 132 cm

*Intramuros Circa 1700* by Rodolfo Ragodon uses two-point perspective in reconstructing the landmarks of the old walled city before the great earthquakes and the destruction wrought by war in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



Through linear perspective, the canvas is transformed into an open window to the represented external world. In Pablo Amorsolo's *Tobacco Harvesting*, the lines of the bamboo floor, wall and ceiling imply the direction of the vanishing point into the horizon, the continuity from interior to exterior defined by the lines found in the carabao-drawn cart, the shadows and the pathway in the tobacco field. The perspectival lines generate the illusion of depth; the lines also provide structural and narrative focus because they are used to direct the gaze of the observer from the flowers in the foreground to the cart and the mountain in the open field. A more explicit effect is made in the use of perspectival lines in Carvajal Kiamko's *Pintuan*. The wood slats of the house's interior and exterior walls establish the position of the observer and direct the gaze out into the external world. In this way, we become distant and detached observers of an ordered and controlled reality.

*Intramuros Circa 1700* by Rodolfo Ragodon uses two-point perspective in reconstructing the landmarks of the old walled city before the great earthquakes and the destruction wrought by war in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Here, the artist exploits the certainty of the geometry of linear perspective as a constructional principle of space in rendering nostalgia with historical truth.

The history of linear perspective goes back to the experience of the ancient Greeks, in particular to a scene painter for Aeschylus demonstrating a realistic depiction of depth through size reduction in the spatial layout of buildings in the fourth century BC. This passed on to the Roman Empire, who employed central vanishing points in the wall paintings of Pompeii. But it was only in the period of the High Renaissance that linear perspective was codified, starting a revolution in spatial apprehension and ways of seeing in Western art. The codification of perspective spurred the development of devices and measuring instruments that extended the scope of optics and served as drawing aids for artists. Because these artists' tools were also exploited in the verification of sight, it long remained unchallenged and unexamined that linear perspective defined no clear conceptual distinctions between ways of seeing and methods of representation; the Western visual tradition and especially the criteria for veritable vision became dominated by this single convention of space representation until the nineteenth century.

By the twentieth-century, because of the predominance of linear perspective in Western painting and the realism of the photographic image, we were conditioned to believe that drawings and paintings were necessarily derived from views. The belief also became reinforced that those pictures providing the most convincing illusion via the geometric certainty of linear perspective were better than those diverting from this ideal. Physical optics, which was first codified into perspective in the Renaissance, and finally "naturalized" in photography, became determinants for the "proper" depiction of objects in space; "natural perspective" became the dominant (Western) cultural canon, and pictorial representation could only be described in terms of possible views. In modern photography and the mechanism of the *camera obscura*, the image is created by light rays from objects in a scene and their intersections with the picture plane. It is based upon this primary geometry that perspective and the optical arrangement in a camera are said to be the same. So, what else could possibly be more natural than a picture derived from the image painted on the retina itself?

However, the analogy between linear perspective and the mechanism of vision is not this simple. As optics and perspective were concepts interchangeably used over the centuries, the visual ideology derived from the simplification of this relationship could not be easily questioned. And because optical theory cannot account for pictures whose geometries do not correspond to “natural perspective” or possible views, such pictures have been explained away as curious aberrations as a result of the artist’s lack of skill or of a particular culture, and placed in the category of naïve and folk painting.

Sometimes, those pictures that could not be explained in terms of the fixed viewpoint and converging lines of linear perspective were described by art historians as “more intuitive systems of representing spatial recession.” The use of diverging orthogonals in Orthodox Christian art, for example, was characterized as being more convincing in practice than in theory. However, it is not only the function of art to present convincing illusions of depth, and the different systems of representation used by artists should not be explained only in these terms.

So how do we explain from a single viewer-centered representation system the depiction of the *Fourteenth Station: Deposition of Christ* by an anonymous artist or the paintings of Taal Church and Caysasay Church by Pedro Salazar or the painting of Laguna de Bay and Angono by Juan Senson?

The lines superimposed on the *Deposition of Christ* (fig.1) and *Vista Parcial del Pueblo de Angono y Laguna de Bay* (fig.2) show that the projection systems used in these paintings cannot be explained in terms of the projection of light rays from objects in the scene to the eye of the observer. The possible constructional principle used in both paintings can only be explained in terms of the two-dimensional geometry of the picture plane obtained without recourse to the idea of the projection of light rays to the eye of the observer.



(fig.1)

In *Deposition of Christ*, the orthogonals of the tomb where Christ is being lowered appear to diverge indicating a form of perspective known as inversed perspective. The orthogonals of the lid of the tomb also demonstrate this construction. The same construction can also be described as orthogonals meeting at a vanishing point found at the front of the picture plane rather than behind the picture plane as is evident in linear perspective. However, the orthogonals of the tomb and its lid do not suggest a single coherent convergence point. Shrubs and weeds growing on the ground also indicate no clear progressive change in size with distance. The position of the two crosses in relation to Christ’s Cross in the center is also uncertain because of the rounding off of the ends of the horizontal beams. However, if we consider the different objects in the painting as having their own projection systems, then it becomes more understandable that the painting was composed not merely in terms of view but also in terms of the intrinsic coordinate system of each object.





(fig.2)

In the anonymous artist's painting of St. Barbara, the size of the figures in the middle distance and those farther behind are the same, although there is considerable distance between them. It appears that the figures behind the main saint figure were rendered in at least two parallel baselines to depict two different episodes in the saint's martyrdom, with St. Barbara herself placed on the main baseline in the foreground. The positioning of figures in the painting indicate a top right to bottom left reading in sequential order rather than an emphasis on the creation of the illusion of depth. A similar explanation may be made of *Deposition of Christ* where a stacked perspective exists with the one above signifying that Christ has been taken down from the cross and the one below indicating that Christ is being lowered into his tomb. In these instances, the narrative focus is more important than pictorial realism.

*Bahay Kubo* by Villadolid presents a similar case of layered perspective. It is possible to read the painting as having as many as six layers: the first and topmost is the horizon where the golden fields end into a pale green row of trees in the distance; the second is the row of figures in the fenced area; the third is the fence itself which aligns with another fenced area on the left behind the tree; the fourth is the woman, the basket, the chickens and the farmer resting on his plough; the fifth is the group of chickens feeding under the shade of the tree; and the sixth is the hut, the two figures beside it and a portion of the tree across them. These layers tell the story of life in the countryside depicted with a flatness and linearity that imparts the expressive qualities of the painting.

Another articulation of the denunciation of the perspective of the normal visual world is found in the *Third Station: Jesus Falls for the First Time*; the *Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus*; and the *Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments*. In these paintings, the normal rules of optical occlusion are denied in the interest of the narrative and it is the denial of these rules that give the paintings their expressive qualities. In the *Third Station*, the soldier on the left throws the whip towards the back of the soldier in the center rather than towards Jesus. In the

*Sixth Station*, Veronica's position in relation to Jesus in the foreground would have concealed part of her face with the Cross. In the *Tenth Station*, the basket of hammer and nails is kept from being covered by Jesus' garments, and the cross behind the figures has cut away the leg of the soldier on the left side of the painting.

The title *Vista Parcial del Pueblo de Angono y Laguna de Bay* indicates that the painting is intended to present a view of actual scenery. It is also worth noting that two partial views are depicted in the painting – that of Laguna de Bay and the town of Angono. If both views were to be considered as having their own separate observation points, then it makes sense that the horizon line is oblique rather than parallel to the picture plane. The shadows of figures in the foreground indicate a single light source, but the precise projections of these shadows are not consistent. This suggests that each group of figures in the painting have their own space and are not governed by a single frame and point fixed by the rays of a sovereign eye. It is within these constructional principles that *Vista Parcial del Pueblo de Angono y de Laguna de Bay* may be explained. To try to explain the painting in terms of linear perspective or of a projection system with a fixed observation point would mean interpreting the painting as a series of errors in linear perspective.

*Church of Caysasay* by Pedro Salazar is shown here with superimposed lines to indicate the direction of the main orthogonals, which converge as in linear perspective, but not to a single consistent vanishing point. The orthogonal line of the walled grounds of the church on the left side is drawn upwards to the right, and the orthogonal on the right side is drawn upwards to the left. The church building was drawn using the rule: "Draw the front face parallel to the picture plane so it is represented as a true shape and depict the side faces as oblique lines." Applying this rule, the portico façade of the church is represented in oblique projection; however, the extended building on the right is represented in almost pure isometric projection. The *calesa* in the foreground, the huts in the background and the goats in the middle distance all have their own internal projection systems.

The constructional principle used in *Church of Taal* also by Salazar may be explained in similar terms. The face of the church is represented as a true shape and the sides represented as parallel oblique lines sloping upwards. The roof of the convent building is also depicted as a true shape. The stairs in the foreground, however, are drawn in perspective with the orthogonals converging towards a vanishing point in the picture plane. So it appears that the church building was painted with no reference to views - and logically so, because the church could not have been viewed from such a height. The stairs, however, appear to have been derived from a view-centered description.

In both paintings by Salazar, because it is unlikely that they were entirely painted directly from a scene viewed at such a height, it is possible that various sections of the church and other surrounding objects were drawn from views and their other parts drawn using rules applied to an object-centered description. To a way of seeing conditioned by the dominance of projection systems found in realistic Western painting, photographs and video images, these paintings are often described as "naïve" or "folk." But it is also possible that the artists were rejecting the rules of linear perspective or even the limits of the human visual system for aesthetic and technical reasons, as well as for reasons of accuracy which linear perspective also attempts to achieve. In fact, the paintings of Salazar are accurate in terms of their topological properties even if the projective properties are not.



It is also possible that in the representation of space, the artist's compositional principles are driven by the economical use of the picture plane as might be assumed from the occlusion anomalies in the paintings of the *Stations of the Cross* discussed above. It is also possible that representation systems are used by artists in response to constraints encountered during the act of painting.

The setting in the painting attributed to Juan Arceo of *San Bonifacio* in soldier's uniform shows interesting problems, and the artist's response to these problems, in representing spatial depth, optical occlusion and edge. Here, the arched doorway came to be depicted as an "impossible" object because of the difficulty of ascertaining the direction and depth of the building vis-à-vis the environment. The painting can therefore be more satisfactorily explained in terms of rules applied to object-centered descriptions rather than from actual views.



**JUAN ARCEO**, *San Bonifacio*,  
1930s, Oil on panel, 44 x 33 cm  
The setting in the painting attributed to Juan Arceo of *San Bonifacio* in soldier's uniform shows interesting problems, and the artist's response to these problems, in representing spatial depth, optical occlusion and edge.



GREGORIO MONEDA, *Liliw, Laguna*, Circa 1910-1920, Oil on panel, 58.5 x 105.5 cm

In tonal modeling, shape representation is more effectively achieved through shading, or by adjusting the saturation of pigments.

Explaining paintings within the terms of realism set by view-centered descriptions such as linear perspective and photography can limit our ability to account for a large number of paintings that do not conform to these terms.



Explaining paintings within the terms of realism set by view-centered descriptions such as linear perspective and photography can limit our ability to account for a large number of paintings that do not conform to these terms. It is often assumed that the mechanism and psychology of vision is replicated and explained by the geometrical certainty of perspective, or the apparent similarity between the visual world and the images fixed on film by a camera or projected on a wall by a *camera obscura*. But all these devices are intended to overcome constancy effects in human vision – they omit the internal introspection and the experience of the visual world that takes place in human image processing. Constancy in the shape and size of objects as seen through the human visual system means that we always see things larger than they would have been presented in photographs; thus, physical optics presents to the mind less information about objects than our memories of these objects would allow. Therefore, the relationships being made between the human visual system and photography may be said to have been oversimplified.

The expressive qualities of the paintings by Gregorio Moneda may be explained in terms of a representation of the artist's experience of the visual world rather than attempts at overcoming the effects of this experience. The scale and orientation of objects in *Country Scene* correspond to the artist's experience of seeing these objects nearer to their true sizes and shapes rather than to their projected sizes and shapes. The faces of the hut, the carabao and the human figures were all drawn in their true shapes.

In *Liliw Laguna* and *Gathering Coconuts* these constancy effects were more or less overcome by the use of atmospheric perspective and tonal modeling. In tonal modeling, shape representation is more effectively achieved through shading, or by adjusting the saturation of pigments. So the saturation of green changes progressively in the light and shade areas of *Liliw Laguna* whereas in *Country Scene*, light and shade areas of the saturation of greens between the grass in the foreground and the trees in the background is less explicit. The change in hue and the diminution of tonal contrast with distance are also more explicit in *Gathering Coconuts* although objects in the painting are painted closer to their true sizes than to their projected sizes. This is exploited aesthetically because the constancy effect expresses the experience of the height of the coconut trees in the visual world and not merely in the flat visual field.

**GREGORIO MONEDA**, *Country Scene*, Circa 1890-1904, Oil on canvas, 51 x 67 cm  
The scale and orientation of objects in *Country Scene* correspond to the artist's experience of seeing these objects nearer to their true sizes and shapes rather than to their projected sizes and shapes.





**GREGORIO MONEDA**

*Gathering Coconut*, Circa 1920s

Oil on canvas mounted  
on board, 138 x 51 cm

Objects in the painting are  
depicted closer to their true sizes  
than to their projected sizes.



From the end of the nineteenth century towards the beginning of the twentieth century, modern artists started to consciously eliminate and challenge the convention of projected spaces in their paintings. Artists also investigated new methods of dealing with constancy effects without simply replicating the arrangement of light around us, or the optic array. Most of these approaches, which called attention to the flatness of the picture plane rather than attempt to create the illusion of three-dimensional space, were a response to photographic realism. Artists started to consciously assert their creativity against the pictorial accuracy of photography by questioning and investigating the nature of depiction itself.

Vicente Manansala's *Buildings, Watertank and Clouds* discard the rules of perspective and the principles of optical occlusion. Galo B. Ocampo's *Penitents (Flagelantes)* exploit our conditioning by linear perspective through the drawing of two projection lines and therefore establishing two vanishing points across an otherwise coherent projection. In an untitled painting by Nena Saguil the distance to the horizon is denied and the flatness of the picture plane is emphasized through the use of swirling lines that correspond more to the limits of the picture plane than to the rules of perspective. *Non-Objective* by Cenon Rivera diminishes the perspective effect of the road narrowing with distance through the use of the same saturated colors on the foreground and on the buildings in the background. The lack of perspectival diminution in the sizes of windows implies that the buildings are of the same depth. In *Raon, Estero, Quiapo* by Romeo Jocson, lines are used to effectively convey shape and depth through occlusion, but this is destroyed by the overlap of the *calesa* with the ground line, emphasizing their use simply as lines on the picture surface rather than as a means to create the illusion of depth. The earth in Anita Magsaysay-Ho's *Afternoon* is represented with large and obtrusive marks to draw attention to the picture surface.



VICTOR C. DIORES, *River Scene (Liliw)*, Circa 1920s, Oil on canvas, 51 x 96.5 cm

So inasmuch as we desire to be convinced about the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface, artists have used landscape painting for purposes other than this. In fact, if we look closely, even those landscape paintings that look and feel convincingly real can use pictorial devices that articulate the flatness of the picture surface.

As depictions of reflected river scenes go, *Sunrise* by Felix Resurrección Hidalgo is nearly symmetrical, aligning with the horizontal axis of the picture plane. Such a pictorial device shifts our experience of seeing the landscape as representation, and makes us aware of the picture plane's flatness. However, seeing *Sunrise* as a scene rather than as a picture surface may be difficult because the artist successfully harnesses the spatial relationships imparted by color, value, and texture, which create the illusion of depth.

The uncertainty of space in *Scenery* by Nestor Leynes is accentuated by what appears to be a road converging before it reaches an ambiguous horizon. Although the illusion of space is rendered by the blurring of trees in the background of the scene, tonal contrast in the immediate foreground does not diminish with distance as one would expect. The evocative mood of *Scenery* is due largely to its attempt to offer a glimpse of the real world while at the same time denying the illusion of it. This demonstrates that expression may be derived not only from subject matter, but also from the formal properties of the picture – i.e. landscapes that show geometries that do not correspond to possible views. *Scenery* crosses the distance between the visual world and the visual field.

When viewing actual scenery, the sizes of objects diminish with distance, and saturation and tonal differences are reduced. Color can also contribute to the illusion of space, as the mountains and hills in the distance are rendered in hues that tend toward the blue end of the color spectrum. Dominador Castaneda employs atmospheric or aerial perspective to serve as depth cues in *Lake Taal*. The distribution and rendering of landforms create a progression in space, although the physical texture of the artist's brush marks calls attention to the surface of the painting, rendering the pictorial illusion incomplete and contributing to the painting's expressive qualities.



**NESTOR LEYNES,**

*Scenery*, 1941

Oil on panel, 58 x 73.5 cm

The evocative mood of *Scenery* is due largely to its attempt to offer a glimpse of the real world while at the same time denying the illusion of it.





**FELIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO.** *Sunrise*, 1884, Oil on canvas, 43.5 x 59 cm

Seeing *Sunrise* as a scene rather than as a picture surface may be difficult because the artist successfully harnesses the spatial relationships imparted by color, value, and texture, which create the illusion of depth.



**NENA SAGUIL**, *Under the Shade*, 1949, Oil on masonite, 90 x 90 cm

In *Under the Shade* by Nena Saguil, three-dimensional shapes were created not only by varying the saturation of color but also by exploiting the fact that in the visual world, color itself, and not only its saturation, changes with distance.



Pictorial devices such as atmospheric perspective create visual effects that correspond to atmospheric conditions in actual scenes, but artists can employ such devices in ways that do not simply attempt to reproduce the visual world. Such tendencies can be interpreted as the artists' response to the technical and chemical innovations of photographic realism, which posed a threat to their creativity.

In contrast to Hidalgo's and Leynes' use of tonal modeling to create pictorial depth, Nena Saguil uses color modeling to create a similar effect in *Under the Shade*. Although three-dimensional forms can be modeled through light and shade, it can present problems when dealing with areas of different colors. In *Under the Shade*, three-dimensional shapes were created not only by varying the saturation of color but also by exploiting the fact that in the visual world, color itself, and not only its saturation, changes with distance. As a general rule, warm colors appear to come forward and cool colors recede; so although the saturation of patches of color in the painting are nearly the same, the three-dimensional effect is still realized by using different colors to model the shape and volume of objects.

Color, rather than tone, as a major determinant of pictorial space is also demonstrated in Diosdado Lorenzo's *Farm Houses*. Here, daubs of saturated color render the shapes and distances of objects convincingly without need for fine tonal detailing. The same is true in Alfredo Roces' *Bakawan Grove*, where we can see that the cool blue color makes the background appear to recede into the distance, separating itself from the warmer colors of the foreground.

A deliberate reversal of the spatial action of warm and cool colors is demonstrated in Juvenal Sanso's *Day Vibration* and *Watery Distance*. As backgrounds are rendered in warmer colors whose tonal values and saturation levels are visually closer than the cooler foreground colors, the effect is a flattening of the picture surfaces, and the creation of ambiguous spaces.

In all of these works, we see artists emphasizing the role of painting as a means of expression that does not necessarily involve the creation of an illusion that could be replicated by processes that capture light from a scene, and fix it on to a passive surface.

Artists have also responded to technological innovations in image making by representing the kinetic structure of ambient light and motions in the visual world - a process often made explicit to the observer by video technology. The use of multiple baselines in *Marshy Coast* by Juvenal Sanso and *After His Last Season* by Baltazar Magallona represent the motions and transformations that take place in our experience of the world as we move through it. *Lunar Landscape* by Ang Kiukok presents an even more powerful, psychological intent. Here, the artist asserts himself as a creative being by representing an imagined landscape - anticipating photographs of the earth which we see rising above the moon's horizon. While photographs and videos can provide convincing images of the real world, they do not serve as convincing models of the human visual system's way of processing of images. Art is a way of questioning the links being made everyday in mass media between intellectual and visual realism.

The Mabini artists may likewise be said to have taken an aesthetic response to photographic renditions of the Philippine landscape. Originating physically and conceptually from the Manila district that was struggling to overcome the demoralization of Hispanic heritage when the Americans assumed control over the colony, these self-taught artists produced paintings within commodity markets. Landscapes were among their staples.

If a painting is a representation of ideas and not merely a facsimile of nature, then the cosmetic, flamboyant colors of the Mabini artists could as well be social and aesthetic responses to the muted colors of the *academia* and the threat of photography, posters and postcards to their livelihood. Indeed, an economic incentive for art can also be considered to be an authentic expression.

In Francisco Buenaventura's *Sunset*, the sea is rendered in the fiercest of greens complete with the touristy icons of the archipelago: mountains, huts, boats, fish pens and the glimmering reflection of the setting sun on the water. In Ricardo Enriquez's *Bahay Kubo on Moonlit Night*, the greens are taken further in the sky in an idealized nocturnal scene set with sails in the horizon, lilies, and an unoccupied *banca* adrift in the middle of the water. Similar elements appear in an anonymous artist's depiction of a river scene – the water is as green as a field of grass, the sunset's yellows and oranges are now taken to the autumnal trees, and salmon tones float across the horizon. Without a revolution in terms of content or point of view, these landscapes sought a revolution in the use of color. In these landscapes, color appears to be used purely for decorative and aesthetic purposes; but their selection is not capricious because within the commodity market, the constructional principle of landscape painting is consensus and evaluation. The negotiations that take place between artists, merchants, tourists, pop culture and the local passersby make up the set of mutual appropriations and discourses that continually define the identity and iconography of a highly socialized visual tradition.

So in the representation of scenery, spatial recession is not always the purpose of the artist nor should it be our sole interpretation. Describing landscape painting in terms of object-centered and view-centered systems and the spontaneous systems that artists conjure in negotiating between object, view and social stimulus enable us to appreciate and understand landscapes as rich and dynamic articulations of space. With knowledge of space conjured in a variety of ways not limited to vision or a singular point of view, we may become more empowered in our reception of images.

Pictures that appear to be views of scenes are not necessarily derived from views, and actual scenes are not necessarily expressed in terms of view-centered representation systems such as linear perspective. Perspective is a construction and a myth, an aid to representation that has become both a practical and limiting aid to vision, altering and shaping our view of the world and of ourselves insofar as we have allowed ourselves to believe that it is a persuasive model of how we see and how we come to know.

Artists have also responded to technological innovations in image making by representing the kinetic structure of ambient light and motions in the visual world - a process often made explicit to the observer by video technology.





ANG KIUKOK, *Lunar Landscape*, 1967, Oil on canvas, 75 x 75 cm

The artist asserts himself as a creative being by representing an imagined landscape - anticipating photographs of the earth which we see rising above the moon's horizon.

## Cultivating Realities: Memory, Illusion and Change

*Tayo na sa Antipolo  
At doon maligo tayo  
Sa batis na kung tawagin  
Ay hi... hi... Hinulugang Taktak!  
At doon tayo kumain  
Ng mangga, suman, kasoy at balimbing.  
Kaya't magmadali ka  
At tayo'y tutuloy na sa Antipolo.*

- "Tayo na sa Antipolo," Philippine folk song

*Recuerdos de Antipolo* by Felix Martinez is a vivid portrayal of the various day-to-day activities of settlers around a brook. The stark contrast in the painting, the harshness of light cast directly on the ground and the crispness of distant objects imbue the remembrance of Antipolo with permanence and certainty. It is also possible that the contrasting values used in the painting is a response to early black and white photographs, especially since *Recuerdos de Antipolo* pertains to the idea of a souvenir of a visit to the place. In more historical terms, *Recuerdos de Antipolo* may be said to depict the *riós poblados* – the villages along rivers and by the seas that were later urbanized and transformed into orderly perspectival landscapes composed of the plaza, church, town hall and the school.

Sixty years later, the scene is portrayed as an idyllic pastoral picture in *Antipolo* by Fernando Amorsolo – folk dances taking the place of labor, the church taking the place of *nipa* huts and a technique of painting that conveys a greater degree of visual realism. Between this and *Recuerdos de Antipolo*, the identity of Antipolo consists of a constructed nationalism, one that appears to be defined by the actions and attitudes of its inhabitants and administrators. Both paintings of Antipolo present us with different levels of illusion and social construction, but one might ask whether there are pre-determined meanings that persist in the geography – perhaps the flood of sunlight, the cloud formation or the varieties of vegetation – that give identity to the landscape. Landscape painting is a way of seeing and remembering, just as song and poetry are instruments of memory.

Before landscape, our attitudes towards the use and value of land seemed different; human activity was carved out of the environment, and not the other way around. This is implied in rupestrine art such as the ancient petroglyphs of Angono just seven kilometers away from Antipolo. The petroglyphs are the remains of a social action related to a belief system that no longer exists. Art is all that remains of that belief system; and it asks if we remember. According to Filipino anthropologist Jesus T. Peralta:

*"The complete disappearance of making rock engravings in Angono points to a drastic change in behavioral patterns which suggests the incursion of a different and dominant culture into the area. If anything at all, the petroglyphs of Angono add the value of symbolism by way of abstraction from an internalized reality, as against direct representation of reality commonly attempted during the previous centuries."*



## Landscape painting reflects the dialectic between natural features and artifacts of human habitation and domination, isolating us from the environment in its Cartesian division of subject and object.

It seems that human domination over the environment and over one another has changed the nature of representation, inasmuch as it has transfigured our actions and beliefs. When illusion overcomes memory, most of our memory can only be shaped and subverted by illusion. What might be considered as racial memory disappears under visual sedimentation. We might attempt to recall them from their material remains. But what memories are invoked by our perception of landscape as depiction, design and appropriation of land? Are we empowered by, rather than subjected to, the world of constructed images?

In an old lithographic map showing the Philippines and what was then known as the East India Islands, the illusory power of imaging technology is demonstrated. Like the utilization of geometric certainty in linear perspective, the systematic creation of maps and the employment of coordinates formalize, if not anticipate, political control and territorial claims. Maps are crucial to expansionist propaganda and the rise of nation states, just as depictions of landscape are instrumental to ownership and control. “Discovery” is supported by accuracy, which in turn is rewarded by claims to ownership of territory.

In Reynaldo Zipagan’s mural painting of Ferdinand Marcos, the extent of the former president’s power is “inscribed in stone” so to speak, reminiscent of rupestrine art but, through a pictorial array of the landmarks of that power, as if the landmarks by themselves would not be enough. Like an expansionist map, this landscape represents a power that may not be gleaned from the physical distances in the environment. Our minds comprehend the enormous breadth of domination, and we are forced to accept the representations because they are both accurate and sublime. Like the naming of new discoveries on maps, “Marcos” is rendered in the painting, but this time in the tradition of the *letras y figuras*, which ascribes the representation’s ideology with the license of tradition.



FELIX MARTINEZ  
*Recuerdos de Antipolo*, 1883  
Oil on canvas, 55 x 83 cm







Landscape painting reflects the dialectic between natural features and artifacts of human habitation and domination, isolating us from the environment in its Cartesian division of subject and object. Landscape painting segregates the gaze of the observer from the observed, the ruling elite from the working class, spiritual meditation from distracting labor. The nature/culture dialectic extends to the struggle for ideological hegemony between people and the state, and other forms of social inequality such as gender and ethnicity. Painting may be perceived as a visual manifestation of these relations and struggles.

In *Rice Fields* by Galo B. Ocampo and *Bahay Kubo* by Sapnu Melencio Jr., the depiction of scenery is painstakingly cultivated. Plant growth, overlapping mountains, valleys and hills, and the progression of sky and cloud formation are carefully manicured. In Melencio's *Bahay Kubo*, cultivation is idealized via the gently curving pathways, hedges, the grazing carabao, its domesticator, and the thatched roof of the hut. In Ocampo's *Rice Fields*, the interactions between the forces of cultivation and naturalization are rendered via bundled grain, the plowed and cultivated fields and the ubiquitous *nipa* hut in the distance. In the absence of labor itself which might intervene in spiritual meditation, the scene is pastoral, cultivated yet paradisiacal, and the presence of the divine is suggested with the opening up of the heavens.

In Jorge Pineda's *Rice Fields at the Beginning of the Rainy Season* the dependency of cultivation to the forces of nature is depicted in swidden farming that demands sensitivity to the weather. There is no view of human and animal labor in the painting, but we are presented with manifestations of it without shifting into pastoral portrayals. In *Forest Edge* by Francisco Verano the distance between nature and culture is not visually represented but is demonstrated by our gaze. Are we at the center gazing towards the edge of our civilization, or are we at the periphery unable to gaze into the interior of a life undisturbed by human incursion?



**GALO OCAMPO**, *Rice Fields*, 1977, Oil on canvas, 61 x 80 cm

In *Rice Fields* by Galo B. Ocampo, the depiction of scenery is painstakingly cultivated. Plant growth, overlapping mountains, valleys and hills, and the progression of sky and cloud formation are carefully manicured.





**JORGE PINEDA**, *Rice Fields at the Beginning of the Rainy Season*, 1929, Oil on canvas, 31 x 49.5 cm  
In Jorge Pineda's *Rice Fields at the Beginning of the Rainy Season* the dependency of cultivation to the forces of nature is depicted in swidden farming that demands sensitivity to the weather.

It seems that while landscape painting brings the outdoors indoors, the fact that we are at the same time detached from the depicted scene is being emphasized. Nature is merely one of the dimensions of a worldview that makes up culture, and an emphasis on the nature/culture binary in an understanding of landscape may render the experience static. But although this appears to be the limit of the nature/culture dialectic in the representation and interpretation of landscape, there are other conceptual devices in landscape painting that may be used to extend this view. These conceptual devices are the mountain, the church, and the bridge, which may be seen to serve three fundamental functions that have just been discussed: the function of memory represented by the mountain, the function of illusion represented by the church, and the function of change represented by the bridge. These key visual concepts may then be interpreted in relation to each other in order to make more visible the new meanings and aesthetic experiences derived from the understanding and appreciation of a wide variety of landscapes. In the extension of the nature/culture dialectic into the memory/illusion/change triad, we utilize landscape paintings as a visible language for bearing and shaping Philippine culture.

Between the mountain and the church, that is, between memory and illusion, or between *Valley* by Carlos V. Francisco and *Maytime in Antipolo* by Fernando Amorsolo, it is the mountain that portrays permanence whilst the church portrays the illusion of divine power. In *Valley*, the clouds are placed low and remind viewers of the ancient Filipino belief that mountains are stairways to the heavens. In *Antipolo*, the church replaces the spiritual memory of the mountain and depicts the illusive power of monastic supremacy. As one friar boasted:

*“If the king sends troops here, the Indians will return to the mountains and forests. But if I shut the church doors, I shall have them all at my feet in twenty-four hours.”*



ANTONIO ESCUIN, *Planting Rice*, 1976, Oil on canvas, 66 x 127 cm

*Planting Rice* by Antonio Escuin and *Marikina Landscape* by Antonio Ko, Jr. make visible the labors of agriculture with the mountains as their patient witness.





ANONYMOUS, *Intramuros*, 1968, Oil on canvas, 55.8 x 80.8 cm

In this work, institutional exploitation is implicated in the poverty and alienation that has ensued since the usurpation of native lands.

The matter of land tenancy in Philippine history has not fundamentally changed in its role of being the system underlying the struggles and hardships of the *granjero*, the *magsasaka*, the salt of the earth. *Planting Rice* by Antonio Escuin and *Marikina Landscape* by Antonio Ko, Jr. make visible the labors of agriculture with the mountains as their patient witness. A simple shift in the use of icons – from mountain to church, from memory to illusion – forever removes the innocence of the gaze. In *Afternoon in April* by Elmer Gernale and the anonymous artist's *Intramuros*, institutional exploitation is implicated in the poverty and alienation that has ensued since the usurpation of native lands. In Manuel D. Baldemor's *Church of Pila*, institutional organization is placed in the center of a vibrant life in a town where people are redeemed from the labors of agriculture because there are others who do that kind of work. In Arsenio Entienza's *Quiapo Church* the fruits of labor are efficiently peddled through the exploitation of the ensuing social organization.



**VICTOR C. DIORES**, *Coconut Harvest*, 1922, Oil on board, 96 x 65.5 cm

Victor Diores' *Coconut Harvest* becomes an enigma – labor is playfully portrayed. The smoke in the distance, the fallen coconut tree and the lone grazing carabao append a touch of mystery.



In the articulation of landscape painting as vernaculars, we are less detached from them and lose our conditioned roles as passive viewers of art. The images become incriminating evidences of our involvement in the social dimensions of their formation. Within this social context, Victor Diores' *Coconut Harvest* becomes an enigma – labor is playfully portrayed. The smoke in the distance, the fallen coconut tree and the lone grazing *carabao* append a touch of mystery. Here, the artist's imagination invokes ours, and we experience a different level of detachment - not like that of the observer to the observed or that of domestication to naturalization, but a detachment from the fixed ideologies upon which our own realities and imaginations were constructed. The harvest also takes place between two bodies of water and functions as a bridge between the viewer's reality and the artist's imagination. Compared to solid ground, a conceptual entry into the scene is made more accessible through water, raising the collective memory of sea-faring life as central to Philippine society. This entry and the realism of rendering details make it difficult to question the norm of the authored landscape not so much because the image looks so real, but because it gives so much pleasure to believe that it is real.



MANUEL D. BALDEMOR, *Church of Pila*, 1983, Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 92 cm

Institutional organization is placed in the center of a vibrant life in a town where people are redeemed from the labors of agriculture because there are others who do that kind of work.

Like the mountain, water contains collective memory. But water flows and shapes its paths. The power of water is depicted as brawn in Juvenal Sanso's *In its Crest* and as calm shaping force in Nestor Leynes' *Inukit sa Tubig*. We have learned to harness this power to sustain life in our riverine communities as depicted in Paz Paterno's *River Scene with Banca* and Augusto Fuster's *Balut Seascape*. We have also managed considerable industrial sedimentation to supplant old memories of water as evidenced in the 78-year distance between Felix Martinez's and Roberto Balajadia's painting of Pasig River. It has also become necessary to limit the flow of water or cross them with greater efficiency to accommodate the demands of civilization – from the building of warships to assert our domination over the seas in Alfredo Carmelo's *Encounter of the Nuestra Señora de Covadonga and the Centurion*, to the makeshift *Estero in Old Manila* by Jorge Pineda and *The Connection Bridge* by Gitano Abad, to the concretized and memorial *Jones Bridge (Puente de España)* by Victor Diores and *View of Manila* by Sofronio Mendoza.

It seems that in these paintings, the greater and less desirable human domination over nature becomes, the less human presence is portrayed. Perhaps this is because in the Filipino worldview, human beings are perceived as part of nature; and thus we are simply reflecting how internally unbearable and alienating our built environment has become, without implicating ourselves. The presence of bridges in these paintings may also be interpreted to portend change because bridges like the one depicted in Teodoro Buenaventura's *Banana Peddler on a Wooden Bridge*, provide connections, trade, and allow people to extend their influence over distant places. In Ramon Peralta's *Balcony Scene*, there is a bridge in the distance that connects to a location that we cannot see but is visible from the viewpoint of those in the balcony. The bridge also forms an arch through which a man in his boat is visible. As bridges are



PAZ PATERNO, *River Scene with Banca*, 1885, Oil on canvas, 32 x 52 cm

Paterno shows how we have learned to harness the power of water to sustain life in river communities.





ALFREDO CARMELO, *Encounter of the Nuestra Señora De Covadonga and the Centurion*, 1973, Oil on canvas, 72 x 114.5 cm



VICTOR C. DIORES, *Jones Bridge (Puente de España)*, 1922, Oil on canvas, 39.2 x 81.5 cm

Both work portray, the need to cross water with greater efficiency to accommodate the demands of civilization.

**FELIX MARTINEZ**  
*Pasig River Scene*, 1897  
Oil on canvas, 62 x 100 cm  
Considerable industrial  
sedimentation has supplanted  
old memories of water:











TEODORO BUENAVENTURA, *Banana Peddler on a Wooden Bridge*, Circa 1920s, Oil on canvas, 56 x 39.5 cm  
Bridges like the one depicted in Teodoro Buenaventura's *Banana Peddler on a Wooden Bridge* provide connections, trade, and allow people to extend their influence over distant places.



transformed into arches, breadth becomes depth and another view of change from here to yonder is made possible. In Leonardo Hidalgo's *Old Paco Cemetery*, we are offered a hazy view of the burial niches with the arched doorway marking the reserve between the living and the dead. Pictorially, arches create depths that can become meaningful spaces. Isidro Ancheta's *Intramuros Gate* uses this depth to portray an entry into a different time in the past, into the old walled Spanish fortress in Manila.

The arch can also transform into a window and become a frame through which we view things. In Nestor Leynes' *Batingaw*, the viewing position is reversed – it is no longer the church looking down upon us, but we looking down into the fields from the church's bell tower. The window can suggest a change in perspective – a change in space or a change in time.

In Juan Arellano's *Fiesta*, the window can suggest two levels of reality occurring simultaneously, and it is in the gloomy interior of a hut through which we witness the bright sun-drenched festivities. Likewise, in José Blanco's *Harana* we find ourselves staged with the cast of the serenade and are offered only a glimpse of time via the moonlit landscape under the *nipa* hut. Renato Habulan's *Ang Dalaga* can be interpreted to depict specific objects and to investigate the nature of depiction itself. The work presents studio portraiture, a visual phenomenon in the modern world, wherein the human subject is set against a backdrop of the outdoors within the comfort of an indoor studio. As a symbol system consisting of the "picture within a picture", *Ang Dalaga* offers a commentary on the nature of depiction and how such devices like the window may present two or more levels of reality.

NESTOR LEYNES,

*Batingaw*, 1977,

Oil on masonite, 60 x 45.5 cm

In Nestor Leynes' *Batingaw*, the viewing position is reversed – it is no longer the church looking down upon us, but we looking down into the fields from the church's bell tower.



Mountain, church and bridge can be interpreted in abstract terms to examine relationships between the cultural dimension and ourselves. Memory, illusion and change, which are represented by these visual devices, serve as powerful inter-dependent concepts found in our negotiations with the external world. In the Filipino worldview, *panahón* or “time” functions as the link between nature and man. Memory, illusion and change are all occurrences in time and space. The use of these visual devices highlights the idea of difference and discontinuity in our collective and individual constructs of reality.

Knowing that landscapes are products of our relationship with the environment, and that landscape paintings are the picture languages of that relationship, we may begin to conceive of a more dynamic and metabolic image. With playful imagination, artists have questioned the spaces of that language, as well as the conventions of its symbols. In Victor Diores’ *Nang Palitan ang Vistang May Dapio*, we see the Laguna Lake world is transformed into a “multi-reality playground.”

Philosophical balance governs a culture’s picture of the universe; it is an aesthetic concept of “disequilibrium.” Art’s ritual value is its capacity to disturb us from our comfort zones in the face of such imbalance: the *guhít-tagpuan* that is never actually visible, the *punto de vista* that is never fixed, the *panahón* that becomes tangible through art. Embedded in these ideas are the elements of the Filipino *sansinukob*, the encompassing universe. We cultivate realities in this vernacular, and new landscapes take shape through *tanáw*, an “expectation of satisfaction or advantage in the future.”

Landscapes are more than external views or picture windows on the wall. They are ways of seeing and shaping the world from within. They are reflections of the Filipino worldview of the future, and they give access to means of shaping our destinies as a nation.

Would that this serve as an inspiration for charting new prospects today. 🌿



**JUAN ARELLANO**

*Fiesta*, Undated, Oil on masonite, 45 x 51 cm

In Arellano’s *Fiesta*, the window can suggest two levels of reality occurring simultaneously, and it is in the gloomy interior of a hut through which we witness the bright sun-drenched festivities.

**VICTOR C. DIORES**, *Nang Palitan ang Vistang May Dapio*, 1922, Oil on board, 97.5 x 66 cm

The Laguna Lake world is transformed into a “multi-reality playground.”









A gallery of paintings flank one of the hallways in the Executive Business Center.





# National Artists in the BSP Collection

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Painting Collection is one of only a few public collections in the country that hold representative works of all of the National Artists of the Philippines in the field of painting.

Established under Proclamation No. 1001 dated April 27, 1972, the National Artist Award or *Gawad Pambansang Alagad Ng Sining* is the highest national recognition given to Filipino artists who have made significant contributions to the development of Philippine arts and to the cultural heritage of the country. It is aimed at recognizing Filipino artistic accomplishment at its highest level and to promote creative expression as significant to the development of a national cultural identity.

**\$ t = 1 1 t 3 ä O 3 Paintig (2072)**

The country had its first National Artist in Fernando C. Amorsolo. The official title “Grand Old Man of Philippine Art” was bestowed on Amorsolo when the Manila Hilton inaugurated its art center on January 23, 1969 with an exhibit of a selection of his works. Returning from his studies abroad in the 1920s, Amorsolo developed the backlighting technique that became his trademark where figures, a cluster of leaves, spill of hair, the swell of breast, are seen aglow on canvas. This light, Nick Joaquin opined, “is the rapture of a sensualist utterly in love with the earth, with the Philippine sun,” and is an accurate expression of Amorsolo’s own exuberance. His citation underscores all his years of creative activity which have “defined and perpetuated a distinct element of the nation’s artistic and cultural heritage”.

Among others, his major works include the following: *El Ciego* (1928), *Reclining Woman Reading* (1942), *Woman with Bandana* (Liberation) (1946), and *Baptism in Cebu* (1948).

**1 % ä - ' B Visat Arts (2001)**

Born to immigrant Chinese parents Vicente Ang and Chin Lim, Ang Kiukok is one of the most vital and dynamic figures who emerged during the 60s. As one of those who came at the heels of the pioneering modernists during that decade, Ang Kiukok blazed a formal and iconographic path of his own through expressionistic works of high visual impact and compelling meaning.

He crystallized in vivid, cubistic figures the terror and angst of the times. Shaped in the furnace of the political turmoil of those times, Ang Kiukok pursued an expression imbued with nationalist fervor and sociological agenda.

*Man on Fire* (1980) is perhaps his most memorable painting in the BSP collection.

**G' fi @ 3 = ' 3 ä fi E/Paintig (1916>**

Painting distorted human figures in rough, bold impasto strokes, and standing tall and singular in his advocacy and practice of what he believed to be creative art, Victorio C. Edades emerged as the “Father of Modern Philippine Painting”. Unlike

Amorsolo’s bright, sunny, cheerful hues, Edades’ colors were dark and somber with subject matter or themes depicting laborers, factory workers or the simple folk in all their dirt, sweat and grime. In the 1930s, Edades taught at the University of Santos Tomas and became dean of its Department of Architecture where he stayed for three full decades. It was during this time that he introduced a liberal arts program that offered subjects as art history and foreign languages that led to a Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts. This development brought about a first in Philippine education since art schools then were vocational schools.

It was also the time that Edades invited Carlos “Botong” Francisco and Galo B. Ocampo to become professor artists for the university. The three, who would later be known as the formidable “Triumvirate”, led the growth of mural painting in the country. Finally retiring from teaching at age 70, the university conferred on Edades the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, honoris causa, for being an outstanding “visionary, teacher and artist”.

The BSP counts *Market Scene* (1928) and *Lady in Red* (1970s) among his most popular works.

**fi = . 3 > ä Ö/ 3 @ 31 % Ö ä , \$ Paintigfi' > fi 3**  
(1973)

Carlos “Botong” Francisco, the poet of Angono, single-handedly revived the forgotten art of mural and remained its most distinguished practitioner for nearly three decades. In panels such as those that grace the City Hall of Manila, Francisco turned fragments of the historic past into vivid records of the legendary courage of the ancestors of his race. He was invariably linked with the “modernist” artists, forming with Victorio C. Edades and Galo Ocampo what was then known in the local art circles as “The Triumvirate”. Botong’s unerring eye for composition, the lush tropical sense of color and an abiding faith in the folk values typified by the townspeople of Angono became the hallmark of his art.

*Valley* (1948), *Harana* (1957) and *Sinigang* (1959) are counted as among his major works in the BSP collection.

**, 3 > t ä @ E/Visat Arts (2003)**

Jose Joya is a painter and multimedia artist who distinguished himself by creating an authentic Filipino abstract idiom that transcended foreign influences. Most of Joya’s paintings of harmonious colors were inspired by Philippine landscapes, such as green rice paddies and golden fields of harvest. His use of rice paper in collages placed value on transparency, a common characteristic of folk art. The curvilinear forms of his paintings often recall the colorful and multi-layered ‘kiping’ of the Pahiyas festival. His important *mandala* series was also drawn from Asian aesthetic forms and concepts.

He espoused the value of kinetic energy and spontaneity in painting which became significant artistic values in Philippine art. His paintings clearly show his mastery of ‘gestural paintings’ where paint is applied intuitively and spontaneously, in broad brush strokes, using brushes or spatula or is directly squeezed from the tube and splashed across the canvas. The choice of Joya to represent the Philippines in the 1964 Venice Biennial itself represents a high peak in the rise of modern art in the country.

Joya also led the way for younger artists in bringing out the potentials of multimedia. He designed and painted on ceramic vessels, plates and tiles, and stimulated regional workshops. He also did work in the graphic arts, particularly in printmaking.

His legacy is undeniably a large body of work of consistent excellence which has won the admiration of artists both in the local and international scene.

Among them are *Binhi* (Seed) (1971) and *Pagdiriwang* (1979).

**fi t > = ä . t V/Visat Arts' (1990)**

A pioneer “Neo-Realist” of the country, Cesar Legaspi is remembered for his singular achievement of refining cubism in the Philippine context. Legaspi belonged to the so-called “Thirteen Moderns” and later, the “Neo-realists”. His distinctive style and daring themes contributed significantly to the advent and eventual acceptance of modern art in the Philippines. Legaspi made use of the geometric fragmentation technique, weaving social comment



and juxtaposing the mythical and modern into his overlapping, interacting forms with disturbing power and intensity.

*Combanhero* (1954) and *Terra Incognita* (1979) are just some of his works that are in the collection.

**= @B = 3 ä = Visual Arts (1997)**

Arturo R. Luz, painter, sculptor, and designer for more than 40 years, created masterpieces that exemplify an ideal of sublime austerity in expression and form. From the Carnival series of the late 1950s to the recent Cyclist paintings, Luz produced works that elevated Filipino aesthetic vision to new heights of sophisticated simplicity. By establishing the Luz Gallery that professionalized the art gallery as an institution and set a prestigious influence over generations of Filipino artists, Luz inspired and developed a Filipino artistic community that nurtures impeccable designs.

Among other works, he is represented in the collection by *Abstract Mural* (1986), which is exhibited at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

**G' fi t 1 @ t ä > E ä Q Painting (1981)**

Vicente S. Manansala's paintings are described as visions of reality teetering on the edge of abstraction. As a young boy, his talent was revealed through the copies he made of the *Sagrada Familia* and his mother's portrait that he copied from a photograph. After finishing the fine arts course from the University of the Philippines, he ran away from home and later found himself at the Philippines Herald as an illustrator. It was there that Manansala developed close association with Hernando R. Ocampo, Cesar Legaspi, and Carlos Botong Francisco, the latter being the first he admired most. For Manansala, Botong was a master of the human figure. Among the masters, Manansala professed a preference for Cezanne and Picasso whom he said achieved a balance of skill and artistry.

He trained at Paris and at Otis School of Drawing in Los Angeles. Manansala believed that the beauty of art is in the process, in the moment of doing a particular painting, closely associating it with the act of making love. "The climax is just when it's really finished."

Manansala's works include *Mamimintakasi* (1954) and *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread* (1981).

**, E ä Ç, t = t O' > E ä t .', Mainting ä 1 G = = 3 (1999)**

J. (Jeremias) Elizalde Navarro was born in May 22, 1924 in Antique. He was a versatile artist, being both a proficient painter and sculptor. His devotion to the visual arts spanned 40 years of drawing, printmaking, graphic designing, painting and sculpting. His masks carved in hardwood merged the human and the animal; his paintings consisted of abstracts and figures in oil and watercolor; and his assemblages fused found objects and metal parts.

**& t = 1 1 t 3 ä = E ä, Visual Arts (1991)**

Hernando R. Ocampo, a self-taught painter, was a leading member of the pre-war Thirteen Moderns, the group that charted the course of modern art in the Philippines. His works provided an understanding and awareness of the harsh social realities in the country immediately after the Second World War and contributed significantly to the rise of the nationalist spirit in the post-war era. It was, however, his abstract works that left an indelible mark on Philippine modern art. His canvases evoked the lush Philippine landscape, its flora and fauna, under the sun and rain in fierce and bold colors.

Ocampo's acknowledged masterpiece *Genesis* (1968) served as the basis of the curtain design of the Cultural Center of the Philippines Main Theater.

One of his major works in the BSP collection is *Song for Summer* (1973).

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# Glossary

- 2 0 \$ a j c a c 2 q i a % q U a O % q U - O a q U a - O a U A z Y O d q p 2 q Y - O** – a style of painting that complexes of characteristics that give each thing its uniqueness and that differentiate it from other things,” an idea that shares much with Wordsworth’s “spots of time,” Emerson’s “moments,” and Joyce’s Epichanies” showing it to be a characteristically Romantic and post-Romantic idea. But Hopkins’ inscape is also fundamentally religious: a glimpse of this inscape of a thing shows us why God created it. “Each mortal thing does one thing and the same/ . . myself it speaks and spells/ Crying What I dó is me: for that I came.”
- Ú a a t-z a g s t y l e** – in the decorative arts which influenced design and architecture. It emerged in Europe in the 1920s and continued through the 1930s, becoming particularly popular in the USA and France. A self-consciously modern style, originally called ‘Jazz Modern,’ it is characterized by angular, geometrical patterns and bright colors, and by the use of materials such as enamel, chrome, glass and plastic.
- Ú a a 1 q i i o z O i** – in the visual arts and architecture, a decorative style from about 1890-1910, which makes marked use of sinuous lines reminiscent of unfolding tendrils, stylized flowers and foliage, and flame shapes. Art Nouveau took its name from a shop in Paris that opened in 1895; it was also known as *Jugendstil* in Germany and *Stile Liberty* in Italy, after the fashionable London department store.
- f i c e t O U q Y g i U q** – in Italian, “light-dark,” the balanced use of light and shade in painting and graphic art, particularly where contrasting luminous and opaque materials are represented. The term is also used to describe a monochromatic painting employing light and dark shades only.
- f i q 2 Y a U i g a c r o n i c i t i a n a r y** – a movement in Russian art and architecture, founded in Moscow 1917 by Vladimir Tatlin, which drew its inspiration and materials from modern industry and technology. Inspired by Cubism and Futurism, Constructivist artists sought to produce abstract forms from industrial materials. Tatlin’s early abstract pieces, for example, made of wood, metal and clear plastic, were hung on walls or suspended from ceilings.
- f i i ] c Y** – a revolutionary movement in early 20th century art, particularly painting, which pioneered abstract forms. Its founders, Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, were admirers of Paul Cezanne and were inspired by his attempt to create a highly structured visual language. In *analytical cubism* (1907-12) three-dimensional objects were split into facets and analyzed before being ‘reassembled’ as complex, two-dimensional images. In *synthetic cubism*, (after 1912), the images became simpler, the colors brighter, and collage was introduced. Its message was that a work of art exists in its own right rather than as a representation of the real world.
- f i o g c q U Q p i O a i a l** – circular representation, usually of a battle or landscape, displayed on a circular wall in imitation of natural perspective, and viewed from a central point; a circular panorama
- l c o U** – Filipino for “spirit”
- Elan vital** – in Bergsonian philosophy, the original life force, the creative linking principle in the evolution of all organisms
- \$ q i c i a 2 O Y o z** – a combination of the characteristics of two styles of art: “folk”, which features traditional decoration and functional forms specific to a culture, and “naïve” possessing an innocent, childlike or spontaneous quality tending towards bright colors, abundant detail and flat space indicative or having the appearance of a lack of formal training in the arts
- % O 2 P A** – Filipino for “complete”; as a verb “to play a part”
- % z 2 U z** – in painting, the depiction of scenes (often domestic) from everyday life
- % z q q z a c g** – referring to geodesy, that part of applied mathematics which has for its object the determination of the magnitude and figure either of the whole earth, or of a large portion of its surface, or of locating exact points on its surface
- % i 2 c a Q** – Filipino for “memory”
- Horror vacui** – Latin for “fear of space,” in art history, especially the criticism of painting, it describes the filling of every empty space in a work of art with some sort of design or image
- ‘ g q 2 q i “ U O A c e o** – in art history, significance attached to symbols that can help to identify subject matter (for example, a saint holding keys usually represents St. Peter) and place a work of art in its historical context.
- ‘ - A U z Y Y c q 2 c Y** – a movement in painting that originated in France in the 1860s and dominated European and North American painting in the late 19th century. The Impressionists wanted to depict real life, to paint straight from nature, and to capture the changing effects of light and movement created with distinct brushstrokes and fragment of color juxtaposed on the canvas rather than mixed on the palette.
- ‘ 2 “ a o O Y c e** – a thin, watery layer of ink applied with even, continuous movement of the brush.
- ‘ 2 Y g O A z** – although possessing no formal definition, this word has been coined and used by art critics to refer to the representation, often abstract, of the inner landscape of the mind (i.e. Emmauel Torres, *Nena Sagui: Landscapes and Inscapes, From the Material to the Spiritual*).
- In literature, the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins uses the concept of inscape to mean “the unified
- ‘ Y q - z a U c g** – of, indicating, or having equality of measure (i.e. isometric projection: a method of drawing figures and maps so that three dimensions are shown not in perspective but in their actual measurements. Compare this to angular or two-point perspective or oblique or three-point perspective)
- ‘ c 2 z a c g** – in physics, having to do with, producing or arising from motion
- L a n d s c h a f t** – German for “landscape”
- O O 2 z U c Y a e** – in painting, sculpture and architecture, a term used to describe a style characterized by a subtle but conscious breaking of the ‘rules’ of classical composition – for example, displaying the human body in an off-center, distorted pose, and using harsh, non-blending colors. The aim was to unsettle the viewer.
- O c 2 c O a i U z** – painting on a very small scale, notably early manuscript paintings, and later miniature portraits, sometimes set in jeweled cases
- O c 2 c O a i U c Y - q** – refers to a style in painting derived from the miniaturist’s art which pays close meticulous attention to the embroidery and textures of costumes, to fashion, accessories and jewelry and to domestic furnishings. (Source: CCP Encyclopedia)
- O q q z U 2 c Y** – Generically referring to the contemporary, as an art historical term, modern refers to a period dating from roughly the 1860s through the 1970s and is used to describe the style and ideology of art during that era, characterized by a radically new attitude toward both the past and the present based on a concern with form and the exploration of technique as opposed to content and narrative, which arose as part of Western society’s attempt to come to terms with the urban, industrial and secular society that began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century. Modern artists have challenged middle-class values by depicting new subjects in different styles.
- 1 z q i g c O a e n c g o** – describe a movement in art, architecture and design in Europe and North America about 1750-1850, characterized by a revival of classical Greek and Roman styles that was inspired both by the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum and by the theories of the



cultural studies of the German art historian JJ Winckelmann.

**1 z ŋ i Ũ z O © Ć Ÿ** – a movement in Philippine modernism in the 1950s, which emphasized the reality, not of objects or subject matter, but of relationships – the way line, color, shape, texture and space interact. Its original members, Hernando R. Ocampo, Ramon Estella, Vicente Manansala, Victor Oteyza, Cesar Legaspi and Romeo V. Tabuena regarded “plastic reality” rather than “realistic representation” of paramount importance, with the intention of creating a new reality that corresponds not to perceived reality, but rather to the artists’ inner vision of it. The group later expanded to include Nena Saguil, Manuel Rodriguez, Sr., Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Fernando Zóbel, Arturo Luz, Cenon Rivera, J. Elizalde Navarro, Jose Joya, Lee Aguinaldo and David Cortez Medalla.

**3 g g © ĭ Ÿ Ć ŋ ²** – a closure, shutting or blocking

**3 Ũ æœŋ " ŋ ² O © Ÿ** – from orthogon, a rectangular projection or one which has all its angles as right angles; this term is used to describe something that has to do with right angles (i.e. orthogonal projections, also known as orthographic projection, which in geography or architecture refers to a projection in which the projecting lines are perpendicular to the plane of projection)

**Paysage** – French for “landscape”

; **œœ Ÿ Ć ŋ " ² ŋ – Ć g** – pertaining to the practice of trying to judge character and mental qualities by observation of bodily, especially facial, features

; **ŋ Ÿ æ– ŋ q z Ũ ² Ć Ÿ** – A term used by art historians and theorists to describe a style of art which signifies an epochal shift in consciousness corresponding to momentous changes in the contemporary social and economic order. Just as modern culture was driven by the need to come to terms with the industrial age, so postmodernism has been fueled by the desire to accommodate the electronic age.

Moving away from the more reductive, prescriptive, idealistic and linear development of modern art, postmodernism is characterized by a broader, albeit darker emotional range, with elements that have been described as ‘hybrid rather than pure, compromising rather than clean, ambiguous rather than articulated.’ One distinct aspect of postmodernism is the dissolution of traditional categories between art, popular culture and even the media. In terms of theorizing about art, earlier distinctions between art criticism, sociology, anthropology and journalism have become non-existent in the works of such renowned postmodern theorists as Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson.

**= z O © Ć Ÿ** – an unadorned, naturalistic approach to subject matter. More specifically, it refers to a

movement in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century European art and literature that reacted against Romantic and Classical idealization and rejected conventional academic themes (such as mythology, history and sublime landscapes) in favor of everyday life and carefully observed social settings.

**= ĭ Å z Ÿ æ Ũ Ć ² z** – used to describe something that is found among rocks

**Succèses de scandale** - French for “success by scandal”, i.e. when (part of) a success derives from a scandal. Derived from the idea that scandal attracts attention (whether gossip or bad press or any other kind) that is sometimes the beginning of notoriety and/or other successes. Today, the often-used cynical phrase “no such thing as bad publicity” is indicative of the extent to which “success by scandal” is a part of modern culture.

**@ O ² P ô** - Filipino for “visible from afar”; also “scene,” “view”, “landscape” or “an expectation of signification or advantage in the future”

**Tipos del país** - literally, human types of the country, it describes a genre of painting popular among Filipino artists before the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wherein the colorful costumes, postures and faces of the various ethnic groups, which made up the fabric of Philippine society were rendered in watercolor on rice paper.

**Veritas** – Latin for “truth”

# Index

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He says that he got interested in art and culture as an escape from daily stress and that he writes on culture when time permits and the spirit moves. He compiled his essays on culture in *Letras y Figuras: Business in Culture, Culture in Business* and edited *Consuming Passions: Philippine Collectibles* for Anvil Publishing, Inc. Both were recognized by the Manila Critics' Circle as the Best Collection of Essays for 2001 and the Best Anthology for 2003, respectively.



**Alice G. Guillermo** studied at the Holy Ghost College, at the Université d'Aix-Marseille in France as a scholar of the French government, and at the University of the Philippines where she obtained her doctoral degree in Philippine Studies. In 1976, she won the art criticism award of the Art Association of the Philippines. She has written widely on art, culture, and politics, and has read papers in numerous local and international conferences.

In 1995-96, Dr. Guillermo did research in postmodernism in Japanese art under a Japan Foundation Fellowship. In 1999 she was awarded the distinction of Centennial Honoree for the Arts (Art Criticism) by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Among her books are *Image to Meaning* (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001), a collection of critical essays and reviews which won the Gintong Aklat Award and *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970-1990* (University of the Philippines Press, 2002), an art-historical dissertation which won the UP Chancellor's Award for Best Book.

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In 2002, he was named by the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* as one of its "People of the Year" in the field of arts administration. In 2001, the Salzburg Seminar selected him as one of sixty museum leaders from around the world, joining the heads of the Tate Gallery, London, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles and the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. in a symposium entitled "Museums in the 21st Century." This fellowship earned him a mention in the *New York Times*.

Lerma was contributing art critic of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (1997-1999), and presently writes a column, "ArtSpeak," for *The Philippine Star*. He holds an MA in Art Administration from the School of Art History and Theory, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (2001), and a BA in Humanities, *cum laude*, from the Ateneo de Manila University (1992).





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