



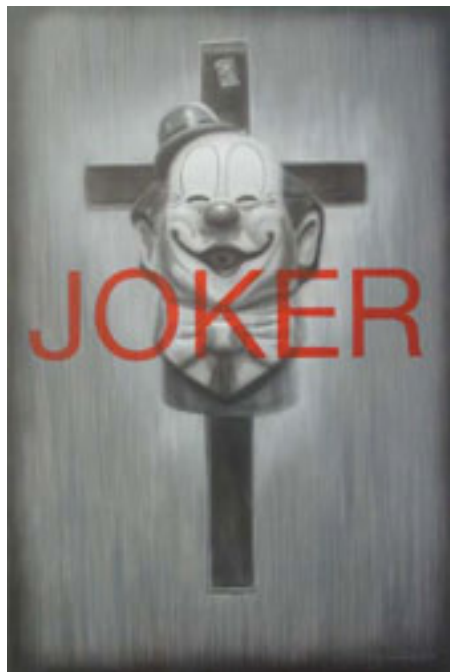
FAITH
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009



HOLLOW POINT
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009



THE COLLECTOR
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 48 inches
2009



JOKER
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009



BOBBLEHEAD BRO
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009



THE COLLECTOR (detail)



FATE
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009



SACRED HEART
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 24 inches
2009

make over

EJ CABANGON

SOLO EXHIBIT

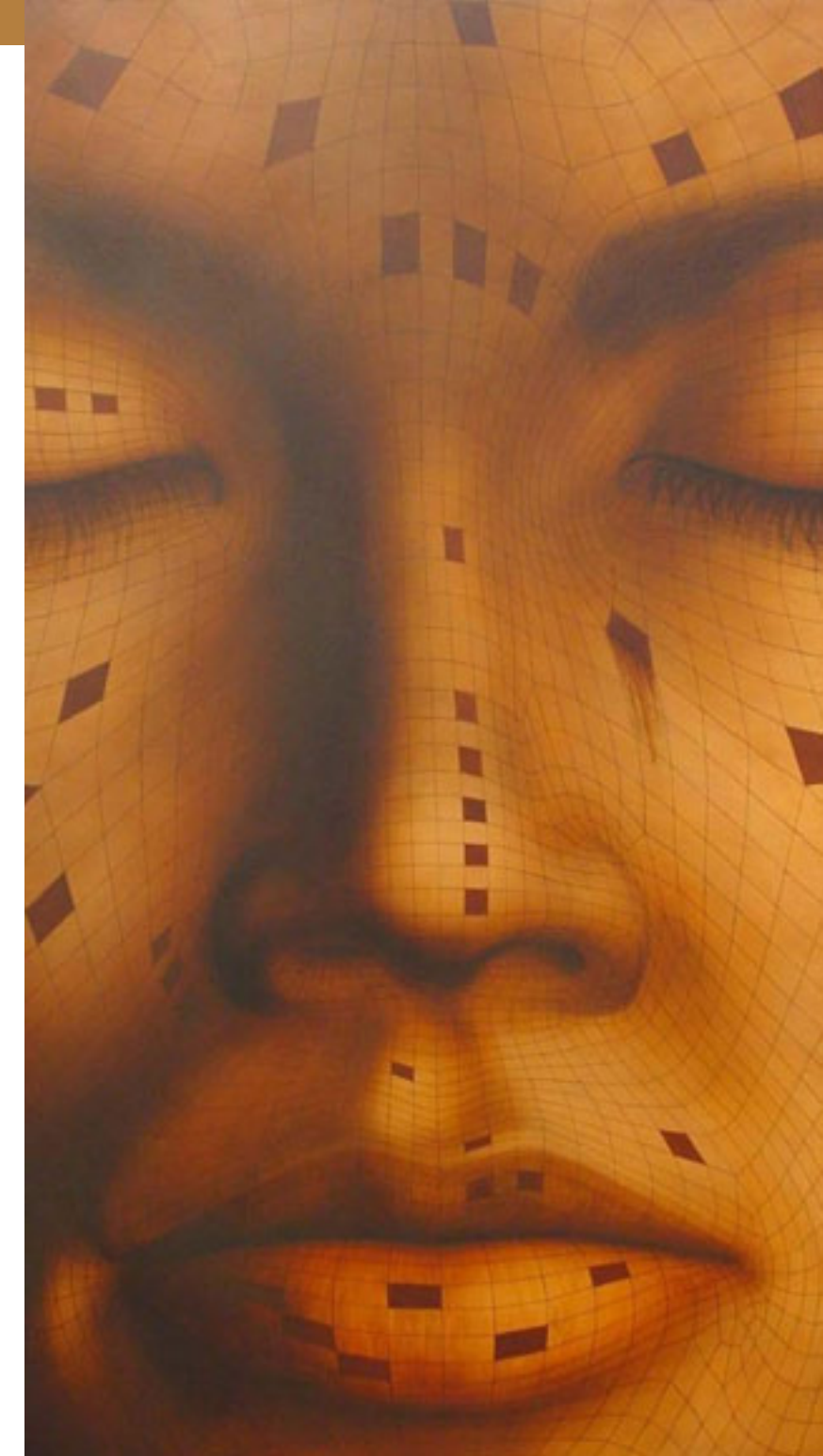


Upper G/F, Somerset Olympia Makati
Makati Ave, corner Sto. Tomas St.
Makati City

GALLERY HOURS
Monday - Saturday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

CONTACT
+632 892 7522

www.tin-aw.com



make over

EJ CABANGON

SOLO EXHIBIT



NOVEMBER 20 – DECEMBER 4, 2009

CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE

BY PATRICK D. FLORES

In E. J. Cabangon's world, the inauthentic reigns. What intrigues is the way he builds up the case for the visual argument: he resorts to a ruse himself, a kind of dissembling through realism. It is a realism that is hyper, reminiscent of trompe l'oeil in a much earlier era, and alluring as property through which he expresses his critique of how society has invested so greatly in appearances, in surfaces taken for the real deal. The media becomes the primal channel of this visibility, and it is the mediation that is obscured.

In this relationship between simulation and necessity, we are reminded of Claude Levi-Strauss, the eminent anthropologist who recently died upon reaching a century, who was frustrated at how the filth of civilization has tainted humanity. It was he who said that the world began without the human race and will certainly end without it. Such cynicism may inform the sort of realism fleshed out by contemporary painters who ironically do well in the auction market of Southeast Asian pictures. One only has to look at the flourishing careers of Chinese Fang Lijun and Indonesian I Nyoman Masriadi to glean the potency of a kind of cynical realism in the market of imaginations in our time. It is a combination of post-authoritarian pop and mass-mediated endorsement for the culture of the loafer and the amateur.

Cabangon modestly converses with this discourse in two ways. First by drawing our attention to the objectification of the face, its transformation into a dermatological map on which coordinates are plotted out so that beauty could emerge. And second by putting up a paramount Christian symbol, the cross, and subjecting it to iconoclastic treatment; it is fundamentally questioned with texts juxtaposed with the emblem: faith, fate, and joker. On the faith panel, a shadow forming the question mark looms; on the fate section, the base of the cross morphs into a dagger; and on the joker board, a clown supplants the sacrificial visage of the Messiah. All this might be sacrilegious to some; but others will see through the intentions of the artist. He regards these symbols not as isolated artifacts confined to worship; rather, they are part of a sequence of signs within a discourse of zeal and devotion. In other words, his allegorical approach to these "things" free them from the confines of the church and parlays them into the everyday life of the faithful. Thus the alternation between the idiom of the altar and of gaming is symptomatic. The artist's imagery partakes of both sources, eliciting both drama and thrill, spectacle and titillation, conversion and makeover. Moreover, the use of text is instructive; it abstracts the image and violates its integrity. It is surely an intrusion, an inscription, a disruption of control over representation.

This form of unsettling of icons, the face of the human and the very vehicle of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, is central to the artist's thesis. He creates ties between vanity and dogma, and the politics of remaking oneself in the primitive sense of altering nature simply because the capitalist means are on hand. This may cohere with the ideals of neoliberalism in which the personal is overinvested to the point that it loses its collective obligations and ultimately degenerates into narcissism, the longing for self as solitary identity. At its best, Cabangon's project, which in itself may have its own share of superfluity of image and text, reminds us to be wary of inflated impressions in the media, to be suspicious of beauty and myth, and to spurn all those who launch their crusades for change on the idolatry of the dead, the mystification of history, and the hypocrisy of the elite that cries for change so that they could get more from it, beginning with the merchandising of so-called heroism and martyrdom as hip and en vogue but ultimately bogus. When will this great swindle end, this cosmetic surgery of hapless Philippine life?

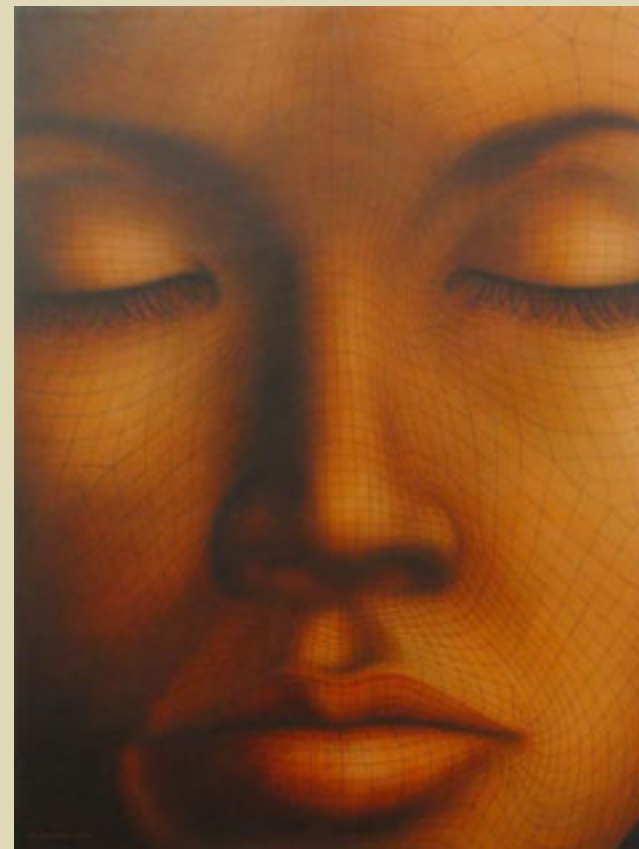
This shameless, brazen corruption perpetrated by political saviors lies at the heart of the country's defilement, alongside the nightly gossip purveyed by the vulgar kin of the same self-righteous cabal. Levi-Strauss will be proven right about the filth and the end of days. But in the meantime, we have to suffer the tyranny of the image, the commodification of hope, and the barefaced duplicity of the souvenirs of democracy. ©



BANISHED
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 36 inches
2009



UNHUMAN
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 36 inches
2009



LIFE
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 36 inches
2009



CONSTRUCT
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 36 inches
2009



DEATH
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 36 inches
2009