

1
MINSAN, AKO AY PEDRO
Oil on rubber panel
243.8 x 121.9 cm
2011

2
REPORMA
Oil on rubber panel
243.8 x 121.9 cm
2011

3
LIWANAG
Oil on rubber panel
61 x 101.6 cm
2011

ALFREDO ESQUILLO JR.
b. 1972

1993 ■ Bachelor of Fine Arts Major in Painting, University of Sto. Tomas, Quezon City

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 ■ KALOOBAN NARRATIVES, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati
- 2010 ■ EXODUS, VWFA Singapore, Singapore
- 2008 ■ RECLAMATION PROJECT, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati
- 2007 ■ BAHAY-BAHAYAN, West Gallery, Manila
- 2006 ■ ENERO NUEVE, Boston Gallery, Manila
- 2005 ■ AUTOTHEATER, West Gallery, Manila
- 2004 ■ THIRD WORLD, Nineveh Art Space, Laguna
- 2003 ■ TRAGIKOMEDY, West Gallery, Manila
- 2001 ■ BANIG ICONS, West Gallery, Manila
- 1999 ■ RECENT WORKS, Red Mill Gallery, Vermont Studio Center, Vermont, U.S.A.
- 1997 ■ MASA KULTURA, Hiraya Gallery, Manila

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 ■ BEYOND THE SELF, National Portrait Gallery, Australia
- 2010 ■ EL GUERNICA: DECONSTRUCCIÓN, Ayala Museum, Makati City, Philippines
- 2009 ■ POST-TSUNAMI ART SOUTH EAST B(L)OOMING, Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy
- 2006 ■ TIPON, Metropolitan Art Museum of Manila, Manila City, Philippines
- 2005 ■ INCARNATION, DISARMING FIGURATIONS IN PHILIPPINE ART, National Museum, Manila City, Philippines
- 2003 ■ THE AMERICAN EFFECT: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE UNITED STATES 1990-2003, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, U.S.A.
- 2002 ■ UNDER CONSTRUCTION: NEW DIMENSIONS OF ASIAN ART", Japan Foundation Forum/Tokyo Opera City Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
- 2001 ■ WHO OWNS WOMEN'S BODIES, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila City, Philippines
- 1999 ■ 1ST FUKUOKA ASIAN ART TRIENNALE, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan
- 1998 ■ AT HOME AND ABROAD: 20 CONTEMPORARY FILIPINO ARTISTS, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, California, U.S.A.



REPORMA (detail)



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

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

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ALFREDO ESQUILLO JR.

KALOOBAN NARRATIVES



9 DECEMBER 2011 - 6 JANUARY 2012

HABEAS CORPUS

BY PATRICK D. FLORES

The artist taps into the vein of the interior, an inner-ness that is most of the time betrayed by appearance, or the external, the outer-ness that is for others and not necessarily for the self. The relationship between self and other inheres in this tension, and so the “inclination outward” is without doubt fraught because it tries to transcend what is perceived to be “nature,” or native to the self, which happens to be actually hewn in light of the other. And so, the belief in the self and the suspicion of what lies beyond it create a possibility of encounter: a chance, a risk to cross the channel between them. After all, there is finitude in both: that the self could only last so long and the other could only extend so far.

Alfredo Esquillo in this suite of paintings extends his reflection on the term *loob*, which has been contemplated by scholars of Philippine cultural life as exemplifying an ethical entitlement of the Filipino self. It is an expression of a universal and fundamental faith in goodness; but it is also a material condition, a sentiment (*salobin*) and that it is not alien to play or ruse (*palabas*). However it spins, it is a form of defense, a sphere of critical autonomy so that when it is infringed (*nilooban*), it is violated, and when it is granted sympathy, it is seemingly forever indebted (*utang na loob*).

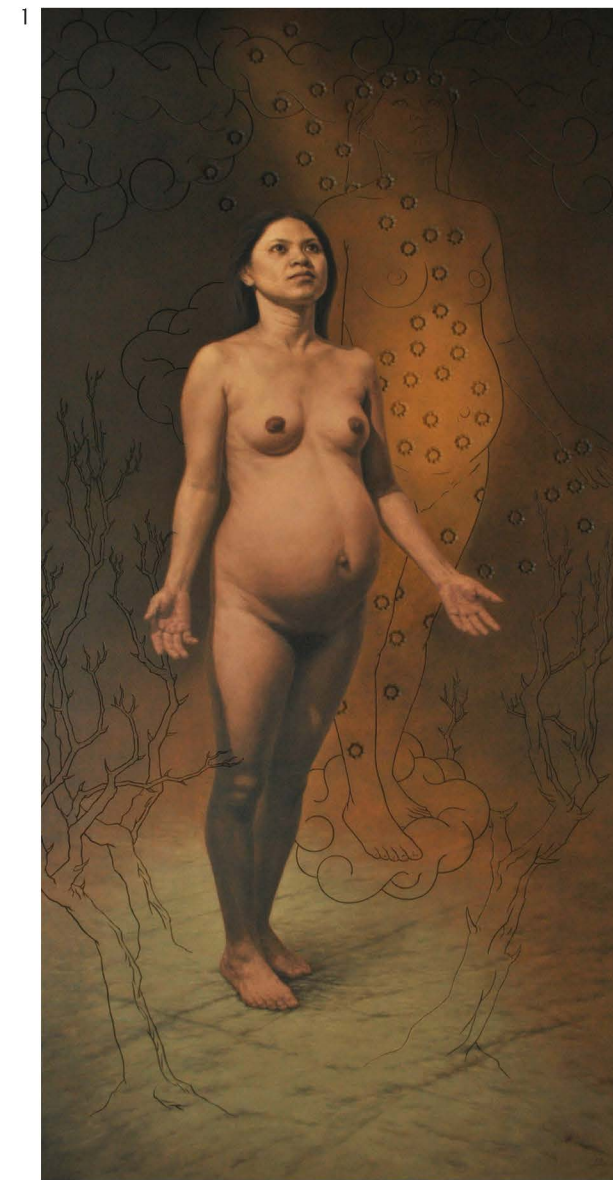
Still, the artist regards loob as demanding a mutual gesture because it is a gift (*kaloob*), a privilege to be a steward of grace. At a point in his life when he is rearing a family, this evokes a personal resonance: the bearing of the child nurtured in the body of his wife is a kaloob in many ways, a chance to share the responsibility to life and a life of caring. This cherishing of the gift suffuses the entire being, inside out, the *kalooban*, a mapping of the internal and the innate, the habitus of what it means to be human.

In this situation, Esquillo’s earlier ruminations on a devotional self inflect this current affection. When before it would be the suffering, sacrificial, penitential self that opens itself up to grief and sorrow, here it is the renewing, birthing self that faces and braves the elements, wading in the water with the image of his wife permeating a masculine womb, bowing to the gospel, and then hands outstretched as if in submission. The “expectant” Esquillo is an incongruous, provocative image that signifies a disclosure and a dissemination of the burden of life giving and raising another generation. At the same time, it tends to blunt the edge of the skepticism over authority and the assimilation into a feminized order.

What is interesting to point out in this series is the strong sense of an omniscient presence pervading the ambience. We see the hand of an Almighty pointing to salient places, or rays of light from the heavens raining on a chastened mortal being. How could these elements mediate the disposition of Esquillo to intimate a more reciprocal relationship between the government of the spirit and the constituency of the self? There might be a shift to be discerned by way of this scheme to more vertical ties between spirit and human, a departure from previous efforts in which a horizontal orientation sets the liaison or colloquy between the gods and those who entreat. And so, this bears watching: how the artist from this moment moves on to reconsider the “essence” of the loob and the historical materiality of social commitments. This is an intriguing prospect: how the artist and his art have changed in light of a change in his personal universe, the hubris of the artistic giving way to the generosity of an everyday person, of a husband and a father who must find a different talent to raise a different project. But are the two basically opposed? Or does the preserve of the artistic, in fact, turn out to be the only space for the everyday to find redemption from the commodity and media of the time?

In this regard, there is another aspect that might be worth probing. And this has something to do with a variation in the density of the pictorial space. We notice that there is less ornamentation here and the constitution of the figure is lighter, less worked out to a certain degree, thus the feeling of general sparseness or lack of gravitas, a diminution of intertextuality so prevalent in the artist’s corpus. The chromatic climate has also been muted, confined to earth tones and their gradations. Is this weakening of the sensuous armature of painting a stripping away, too, of the layers of anxieties of a post-colonial critique? Or is this a signal of a reconstructed personal obligation to faith through art, without the impedimenta of colonial perturbation? What is the relationship between visual weight and the affect of levity in the broader discourse of salvation?

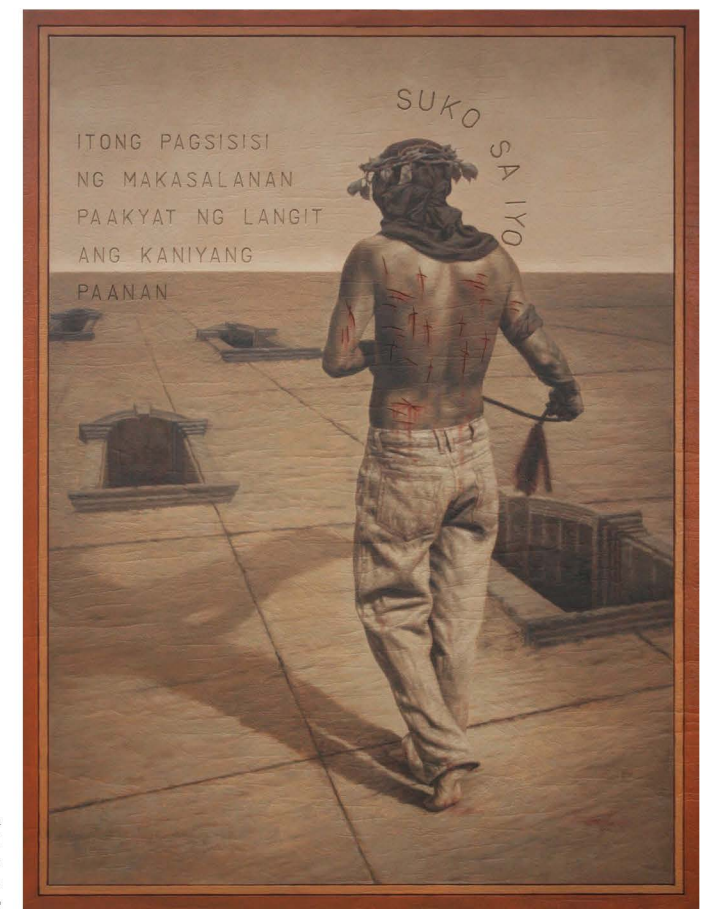
This is why Esquillo’s oeuvre is salient and it must be intuited from a long view. It offers lessons in how this passion of the human and its imitation of Christ-like ideals are carried through in a rather turbulent age and in the multiple cycles of a person’s mutating life. In the artist’s fragile universe, between earth and firmament, there is exceptional humility to be learned, a resignation to the forces, and the will to finally cast the lot and let go of the flesh. ©



1
HARDIN
Oil on rubber panel
243.8 x 121.9 cm
2011

2
FRUIT OF THY WOMB
Oil on rubber panel
121.9 x 274.3 cm (triptych)
2011

3
REVELATION
Oil on rubber panel
91.4 x 61 cm
2011



PENITENSYA
Oil on rubber panel
121.9 x 91.4 cm
2010
Collection of Mr. Hogi Hyun