ANTON MALLARI

Kasalanan
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RICHARD KOH
FINE ART

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Anton was born in 1986 in Baguio City, Philippines and studied Fine Arts at the University of the Philippines in Baguio, obtaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Since graduation from art school, he has actively participated in the art scene. His early paintings use wide-ranging references from popular culture to art history to make commentaries on contemporary society, were well received. His artworks are clearly influenced by the tradition of Western classical painting, from the Italian Renaissance to German Expressionism. The artist admires the technical mastery of European masters' paintings and the sense of enigma conjured by the paintings moody images. Artists that he was particularly inspired by are Edvard Munch, Salvador Dali and Raphael and have recycled images from these artists' masterpieces in his previous works.

The current seven paintings in *Kasalanan (Sins)*, each depicting a sin, are his personal interpretations on the classic list and make commentary on the social conditions in the Philippines. They are embedded with a host of visual clues and symbols and are layered with meaning. They also make reference to the Western hierarchy of genre, a popular ranking system used during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century that formalizes positions of different genres depending on the subject matter. In this series, Anton focuses on two of the genres, portrait (the second highest in the ranking) and still life (the lowest).

The seven deadly sins, also known as capital vices are a grouping of vices classified by traditional orthodox Christianity and especially held to, and taught by, the Roman Catholic Church since the early Middle Ages. The sins contrast the seven virtues. Protestants would agree that the seven vices on the list are sins, but do not make a distinction between mortal and venial sins as the Catholics. The traditional seven deadly sins are Lust (*Luxuria*), Gluttony (*Gula*), Greed (*Avaritia*), Sloth (*Tristitial/ Acedia*), Wrath (*Ira*), Envy (*Invidia*) and Pride (*Superbia*). In *Kasalanan (Sins)*, Anton has reinterpreted the sins into seven distinct paintings depicting his personal interpretations on the conventional subjects. They are *Kurakot (Anger)* (2015), *Nakaupo (Sloth)* (2016), *Namamabango (Pride)* (2016), *Taong Talangka (Envy)* (2016), *Retokado (Lust)* (2016), *Puesto (Greed)* (2015) and *Onslaught (Gluttony)* (2016).

Kurakot (Anger) or wrath is a portrait of an unknown male figure dressed in Filipino's national attire, purportedly stated by the artist to embody corrupt officials. Officials at formal functions would usually dress in the traditional clothing. Sitting in a defensive posture, with arms crossed, the figure's face is obscured by energetic splatters and splashes of gold paint, concealing his identity. Through a somewhat destructive and aggressive gesture of hailing paint and smearing an image, commonly seen in acts of protest, the artist makes his personal viewpoint regarding the state of politics in his country visible. The gold paint alludes to the extravagance and excesses of politics.

In *Onslaught (Gluttony)*, the artist painted a scene representing a recent incident he had witnessed in which a group of tourists visiting the Philippines has distastefully hoarded food from a hotel buffet and left a large amount of unfinished food on their table. Gluttony is aptly illustrated in a form of a traditional still life with leftover food and eating utensils. The picture is dramatically composed, almost like a landscape, with stacks of shrimp-loaded plates on top of each other in one corner and five empty glasses towering theatrically in the background. The tableware in the image is distinctively mass-produced, typical hotel cutlery while the red-prawns and shellfish, still appear fresh and untouched. Through the image, the artist attempts to make commentary on the wasteful nature of human society and the desire to consume beyond immediate needs.

The sin of greed is illustrated in *Puesto (Greed)* in which the artist painted a beautiful floral still life composed of tropical flowers resting in an antique Chinese vase. The piece, the second still life in this body of work,

is layered with meaning. The bouquet, though appears beautiful at first impression, is actually a site of bad behavior. Bees and wasps are usually found as details in traditional European still life flower paintings, and in the natural kingdom, both insects aid in the pollination of flowers and thus are usually common sight in lush gardens. In Anton's *Puesto* (*Greed*), the bee, which according to the artist represents hard-working and good-natured citizens, is found dead on the table's surface while the wasp, representing opportunistic politicians, is larger than life and hovers victoriously over the blossoming bouquet. The wasp, interestingly casts no shadow on the flowers, which metaphorically allude to the detachment of local officials from their designated responsibilities.

In *Namamabango* (*Pride*), an anonymous beautiful woman is depicted in a hazy warm light surrounded by other traditional symbols of beauty such as blossoming daisies, a pastel colored rose and a large monarch butterfly. The imaginary light, coming from the left side of the picture plane highlights the woman's soft facial features and bathes her in a warm glow. The artist painted a beautiful figure to represent in general a group of people he thinks celebrates the adoration from admirers due their physical attractiveness but deep down is insecure and "ugly". A tiny fly on the woman's graceful hand, almost like a fashion accessory, hints at the woman's inner being. Skillfully painted, it symbolizes the ugliness" hidden behind a beautiful façade.

Retokado (*Lust*) similarly makes commentary on beauty and how the ideals of today's beauty are imposed to the mass by the persuasive media through idealized images. Again, physical beauty is valued over good character. The unknown figure in the paintings is holding a mask made out of an editorial page plucked out of a glossy beauty magazine. Even with seductive red lips and piercing eyes, her flawless skin is made to age by the wrinkled magazine page. Moreover on closer inspection, the hands holding the paper appear to be of a darker skinned person, possibly from the Southern Hemisphere while the face depicted in the magazine page is clearly of a Caucasian model. The work points out at the commercialization of the idea of beauty and how the media is able to have a globalized grip and influence the way we see ourselves in the mirror.

Envy is illustrated in *Taong Talangka* (*Envy*) again with a picture of an ideally beautiful female with a facial expression that clearly shows that she is unsatisfied. The person is unspecified and is said to be an envious person by the artist. Again, like in Nagmamabango (Pride), Anton displays his sensitive handling of lights and darks through the creation of an artificial light source coming from the right side of the picture plane.

The final piece in *Kasalanan* (*Sins*) is a *Nakaupo* (*Sloth*), a painting again that makes commentary on the Philippine's political landscape. The painting's focus is to point out the prevalence of political dynasties in the Philippines' history in which the artist sees as acts of desperation in attempts to hold on to power. He would also state that these individuals would do anything to hold on to power that is already concentrated within a small circle of individuals. The artist sees the lives of the heirs in these political dynasties as privileged thus are unable to see the harsh reality and living conditions of the ordinary. The figure in the picture confidently seated and wearing the traditional attire is decorated with two larger than life moths, implying to a gradual state of decay.

Each of the painting in *Kasalanan* (*Sins*) possesses a moral narrative while also making visible the artist's stance towards different issues that is affecting contemporary Filipino society. By re-contextualizing an already exhausted set of images by focusing on his immediate context, he is able to revitalize the interpretations of "sins" as well as bring to light social concerns that he feels dearly to through his skilled brushworks and handling of paint.

Haffendi Anuar
2016

Artworks

Kurakot (Anger)

2015

Oil and acrylic on canvas

152.5 x 122 cm

Onslaught (Gluttony)

2016

Oil on canvas

122 x 152.5 cm

Puesto (Greed)

2015

Oil on canvas

152.5 x 213.5 cm

Namamabango (Pride)

2016

Oil and acrylic on canvas

152.5 x 122 cm

Retokado (Lust)

2016

Oil on canvas

152.5 x 122 cm

Taong Talangka (Envy)

2016

Oil on canvas

152.5 x 122 cm

Nakaupo (Sloth)

2016

Oil on canvas

152.5 x 122 cm

Anton Mallari

Anton Mallari (b.1986, Philippines) is a young realist painter based in Baguio, Philippines. He was trained at University of the Philippines and exhibited widely in Philippines.

Education

Bachelor of Fine Art, University of the Philippines, Baguio City, Philippines

Solo Exhibitions

2015 *Back:Track*, Blanc Gallery, Katipinan, Philippines

2014 *Things Done*, Blanc Gallery, Katipunan, Philippines

Group Exhibitions

2015 *Art Fair Philippines 2015, Makati*, Philippines

SHIFT >, Manifesto Gallery, Philippines

2011 *Roaring 20 and More*, Altromondo Gallery, Makati, Philippines

Pain, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

Self Portraits, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

2010 *Mother and Child*, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

Bungo, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

When I Grow Up, Rockwell, Makati

Art Singapore 2010, Singapore

Manila Art 2010, Manila, Philippines

Stories and Portraits, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

Escapism, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

6'oclock Habit, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

Art on Violin Exhibition, SM Art Center, Philippines

AMEN, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

2009 *Red Paintings*, SM Cubao, Philippines

Dos Por Dos, Big & Small Art Gallery, Philippines

Philippines Drawing Society, Pasay City, Philippines

Metrobank Art and Design Excellence, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City, Philippines

2008 *Sampung Pahid*, Big & Small Art Gallery, Manila, Philippine

Sining Awards (Faber Castel), GSIS Museum, Manila, Philippines

Metrobank Art and Design Excellence, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City, Philippines

Konseho Ng Sining Baguio Art Exhibit, Cathedral, Baguio City, Philippines

Mahal na Araw, Malcolm Square, Baguio City, Philippines

Grab B.A.G., Baguio Country Club, Philippines

2007 *Panagsasabat (Panagbenga Festival)*, Baguio Centennial Gallery, Philippines

Cordillera, The Manor Hotel, Baguio City, Philippines

Baguio's 98th Charter Day, Cordillera Coffe, Baguio City, Philippines

Mother and Child, Greenhouse Effect Gallery, Baguio City, Philippines

2006 *Behold - A Lenten Exhibit*, Gallery Nine, Philippines

Sirip, TGreenhouse Effect Gallery, Baguio City, Philippines

The Best of B.A.G., Baguio Convention Center, Baguio City, Philippines

The Best of B.A.G., Baguio City Hall, Baguio City, Philippines

Di Lang Isa, V.O.C.A.S., Baguio City, Philippines

Wow Philippines, Delphic Festival, Cordilleras Best Art Exhibit, Baguio City, Philippines

2005 ART, Galleria Cordillera, Baguio City, Philippines

Ayuyang, Ayuyang Gallery, Baguio City, Philippines

Richard Koh Fine Art has been in operation since 2005 and is regarded as a pioneer for introducing Southeast Asian contemporary art to Malaysia and the region. Promoting an adventurous roster of emerging and established Southeast Asian artists, the gallery regularly mounts exhibitions locally and abroad with a commitment to emerging practices and challenging media.

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Essay - Haffendi Anuar

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RICHARD KOH FINE ART

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229 Jalan Maarof
Bukit Bandaraya, Bangsar
59100 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

T +60 (03) 2095 3300
@ info@rkfineart.com

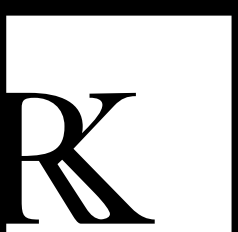
BVII

Lot No. 2F-3, Level 2 Bangsar Village II
Jalan Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru
59100 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

T +60 (03) 2283 3677
F +60 (03) 2283 4677

SINGAPORE OFFICE

10 Ubi Crescent
#04-99 Ubi Techpark
Lobby E Singapore
408564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