

RV Basco

RV Basco graduated with a degree in Industrial Design at the University of Santo Tomas in 1995. One might therefore expect that this industrial designer-slash-artist brings into his aesthetic sensibilities a unique level of consciousness when it comes to creating works. After all, industrial design demands both beauty and practicality. As would a designer whose vision for a most effective product is dependent on its look and feel, the artist considers the work of art's expressivity with its material qualities, as well as its operative functionality: to record a moment, to present an opinion or position, to narrate an experience, or to share the artist's imaginations. When asked, Basco shares that if anything, it is his sophisticated hand—a careful attention to detail in making his paintings—that he has endearingly brought from that experience, into his new life and work.

It was 2016 when Basco made a conscious decision to being a full-time artist. Initially trying his hand in photography and exploring principles of composition, framing, and capturing ephemeral events with a photojournalistic framework, the artist has since developed a style of figurative painting unique to his creative investments. In his recent series of works, for example, he shows a preference for a whimsical figuration of subjects—human, plant, animal and fantastic creatures are depicted in playful manifestations. Choices of scale, color, textures, and tone defy realism and opt instead for unconventional manifestations. Not to mention the artist's deliberate contextual choices of extraordinary entities in magical worlds where the laws of the physical universe are transcended: inanimate objects carry a life of their own, surreal beings are no different from their human counterparts, and adults and children alike live in liminal dreams where reality and fantasy become one and the same.

Quite interestingly, Basco had also explored the principles of social realism in his earlier works when the artist lived in Malate, a historical district in Manila. While his recent works exhibit an adventurous imagination, his early works tended to portray the lives and issues of the common folk in the contexts of their individual and social struggles. In both cases, the sophisticated hand and creative eye do not falter—the artist keeps his subjects as emotive figures within a fantastic world—characters of a grand story—where the bizarre and uncanny present as allegories to an otherwise quotidian reality.

For this collection, Basco recalls his childhood memories of experiencing the life and energy of local barrio fiestas. As a young boy looking up at colorful banderitas, the magic of colors almost covering the whole sky becomes an ingrained memory that he now associates with nostalgia for the country's traditions. He also recalls the abundance of *aratiles* trees in the rural country, which has now unfortunately been replaced by metropolitan buildings and concrete roads. Basco shares, "I don't think people will ever experience what I experienced then as a child. I think it's a way of really reminding everyone that this is how it was before." In *Simula ng Piyesta* (2023) and *Punong Aratiles* (2023) a young girl plays by her lonesome in an empty landscape. We only see elements that give insight to what her story is and what has transpired in her little world: a tree that once bloomed grand is now a mere stump, and avian creatures like birds,

origami angels, and winged candles offer her some comfort, like empathetic guardians consoling the youth's imagination amidst the rapidly changing world. "When I paint, I just trust the subconscious. It just comes out. So I learned to trust that process."

When asked about what concerns his art confronts, Basco confesses, "what is important for me is that they are moved by it." As the artist brings life to fantasy, allegory, and myth in his narratives of transcendental worlds, may we not forget the role of imagination in manifesting reality.

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