

Angelito Antonio

Born on May 5, 1936, in Malolos Bulacan, Angelito Antonio was among the first to receive the Thirteen Artists Award in 1970. He gained early recognition by winning awards in art competitions, including the Shell National Students Art Competition for his works "The Beginning is Green" in 1958 and "Kristo" in 1963. In 1963, he earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Santo Tomas (UST).

As an emerging artist, Angelito's paintings had been featured in international group exhibitions, such as the Australian Tour of Philippine Art, the First International Art Exhibition in Saigon, and at the New York World's Fair. In 1977, he made a notable solo debut at the Luz Gallery, unveiling a collection marked by captivating monochromatic black-and-white paintings. His artistic style then was defined by a masterful use of cubist influences to delineate figures, often delving into themes rooted in Philippine culture, particularly the folk genre. Angelito's dedication for his unique cubist permutations led to future numerous one-man shows at prominent galleries, including the Luz Gallery, Galerie Bleue, and the Philippine Art Gallery from 1963 to 1977. Notably, his oil painting "Mag-anak," a family portrait of a man and his fighting rooster and a mother lulling her child to sleep from 1979, received the Grand Purchase Award at the Art Association of the Philippines.

Angelito was an instructor at the College of Architecture and Fine Arts at UST. Influenced by Manansala, and other artist-instructors that came before him including Cesar Legazpi, Victorio Edades, and Botong Francisco, he developed his own figuration of the folk genre, characterized by an approach to geometric forms with syncopated fragmentations. At the inaugural Thirteen Artists Awards exhibition in 1970, Angelito showcased five oil paintings including "Fiesta" and "Ang Pagbabalik," which captured the essence of local festive celebrations. Additionally, he presented several portraits, such as "Daughters of Isabela" and "Mga Bunso ni Kalog," alongside a more modest subject, "Ang Doll." Angelito's typical subjects continued to revolve around the simple domestic preoccupations of the local population—his art often depicted scenes of cockfights, individuals engaged in various chores or livelihoods like fishing and selling tropical fruits or basic items like candles. He also portrayed musicians and their instruments, and the rural and religious communities that were integral to the traditions of the growing metropolis, favoring using transparencies and bright, warm colors within flat planes, and utilizing shallow space with light playing among scintillating subjects and shadows.

In 2013, Galerie Joaquin revisited his 1977 Luz Gallery exhibition, featuring his monochromatic black-and-white drawings and paintings. Then, in 2020, as an octogenarian artist, Angelito Antonio presented a solo exhibition of recent works titled "The Poetry of Angelito Antonio" at the Edsa Shangri-La Plaza, the recent pieces showcasing a surprising departure from his classic Cubist-influenced genre subjects, revealing a new predilection for cooler fauvist colors, and distinct delineations in his portrayals of unique characters: a shoemaker, a man playing with paper planes, and a reverent nun, among others. Angelito's marriage to accomplished artist Norma Belleza continues to cultivate and influence contemporary artists, including their children, Marcel, Emil, and Fatima, who have since become accomplished painters in their own right.

References

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