

Pinoy abstractionists shine in Singapore show

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The Philippine STAR 10/25/2004

The prestigious Art Forum of Marjorie Chu in Singapore presents a precedent-setting exhibition featuring four Filipino abstractionists starting on Saturday, Oct. 30. The four artists are Gus Albor, Lito Carating, Roy Veneración and Nestor Olarte Vinluan. Entitled *Forum for Four*, it is an exhibition of paintings from the Philippines and will run until Nov. 20.

Organizing the show for the Singapore gallery is Tessie Fajardo, a well-known connoisseur of Philippine contemporary art.

Each of the four artists is represented by four canvas paintings and an album of works on paper. Except for Albor who works with oil, all three – Carating, Veneración and Vinluan – are into acrylic.

The exhibit is the first time that the four abstractionists are showing together.

While in the past they have joined international delegations as part of the Philippine contingent in various festivals, symposia and biennales, the four, who have been friends for over three decades now, have not really come together for an exhibition.

The Singapore outing therefore gives them the rare chance to prove that abstract art in the Philippines is not moribund. The handsome exhibition also provides the international market in Singapore a glimpse of how abstract art in the Philippines is currently pursued.

The works in the collection are elegant yet compelling pieces, and ably present why abstract art is very alive, well and kicking in the Philippines.

Albor is known for his experimentation with techniques, oftentimes combining organic and inorganic materials to foreground diverse textural contrasts in his highly sophisticated works. His colors are always toned down to a limited palette, thus producing works with soothing qualities.

Carating's works are what the late art critic Leo Benesa once described as "mood paintings, tone poems in another discipline but in a light rather than serious vein." There is always a lyrical quality in the works of Carating, that he is oftentimes categorized by critics as more impressionist than an expressionist.

Veneración favors the abstract expressionist idiom, reflecting in his works the importance of the subconscious in art. A feeling of randomness, even of chance and free play, informs the works of Veneración, thus equipping his forms with allegorical meanings in constant revolution in the cosmos.

Vinluan, former Dean of the UP College of Fine Arts, is known for his highly meditative works. An acknowledged colorist, his works have an iridescent natural glow. His mode of applying pigments onto his canvas reveal a mastery of technique. This is even reflected in his distillation of images that are derived from sheer geometry of shapes and lines.

All four artists were recipients of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Thirteen Artists Awards. Vinluan received his in 1974, Albor in 1976, Carating and Veneración in 1990. Now referred to as Philippine art's F4, the four have widely

exhibited their works here and abroad, and have at several instances, represented the country in many art festivals all over the world. Marjorie Chu has just come out with her book entitled *Understanding Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*. It features contemporary southeast Asian art works she has collected since 1971 when she opened her first gallery in Singapore. Of the four artists, only Veneración is included in the book. Chu's collection focuses on paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists of the five original founding member countries of Asean – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. After many years of collecting art, Chu realized that it was important to document her collection so others might be able to understand its scope and meaning. The Art Forum is located on 82 Cairnhill Road, Singapore City.