



Raymund L Fernandez

MALIPAYONG KAMATAYON

A HAPPY DEATH



MALIPAYONG KAMATAYON: A HAPPY DEATH

Recent Sculptures & Installations

Prof. Raymund L Fernandez

FEATURING: Linya, Estela Ocampo Fernandez, and Roylu

In collaboration with: Fidel Laurence Ricafranca and Mark Argel Simacon

Curated by: TKG

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Raymund L Fernandez

This show is a collection of my latest works. For this show I am joined by my daughter, Linya, and Estela Ocampo Fernandez, to whom I am married. Joining also is Roylu who now lives in Canada. This show presents as well collaborations with Fidel Laurence Ricafranca and Mark Argel Simacon.

This was a difficult show to make. Nobody thinks about death unless and until it becomes absolutely necessary. This could be difficult for you to see as well. A bit of courage would be required. For my part, I draw courage from the memory of all whom I loved who have passed away. I have come to an age when they have become too many to put into a list. All that I know of life and death I owe to them. It is for them that this exhibit is staged.

I imagine a place where they might sit around in spirit just to take in the environment, the wood carvings, the paintings, the urns, the signs. Each piece is a particular discussion of thoughts related to the fact of death and the gift of time. This discussion does not intend to preach or even resolve what questions might come in the course of viewing these works. Questions related to the existence or non-existence of God, the afterlife, are to be expected. And you might even come to ask: But what does this have to do with a happy death? This show will not answer those questions. And you must be forewarned that should you pose these questions to the artists you might find their answer more confusing than clarifying.

Life and death are mysteries. And it is the nature of mysteries to enchant when it does not infuriate, to confuse some more what was not clear in the



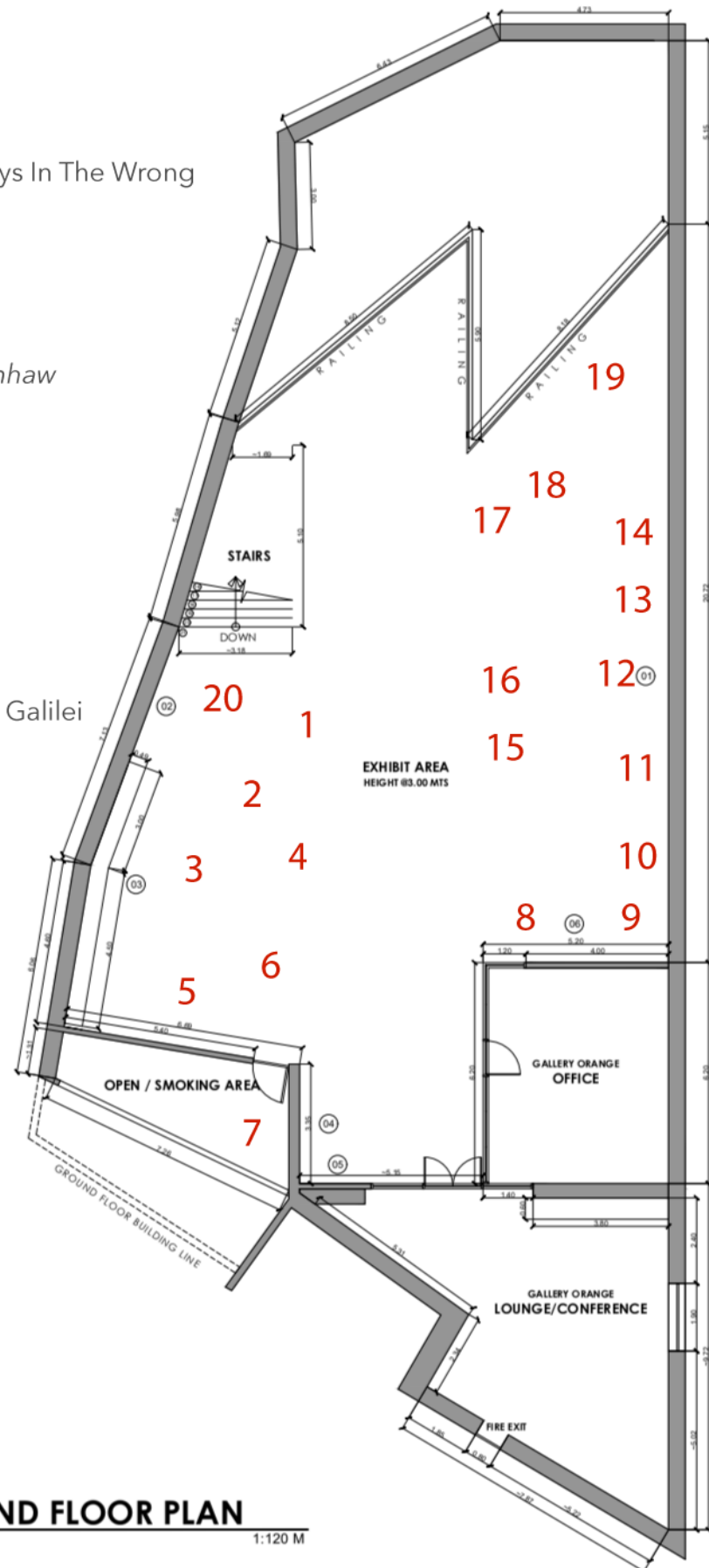
first place, to touch the skin of what we cannot know. How close to this edge can we come?

Imagine a sacred place that is not a church. Imagine a holy place not owned by not any one god.

Imagine "Malipayong Kamatayon: A Happy Death."

show layout guide

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1 SECOND FLOOR PLAN
A SCALE: 1:120 M

MAY 9-JUNE 28, 2024

ORANGE PROJECT

art district, Mandalagan Bacolod City



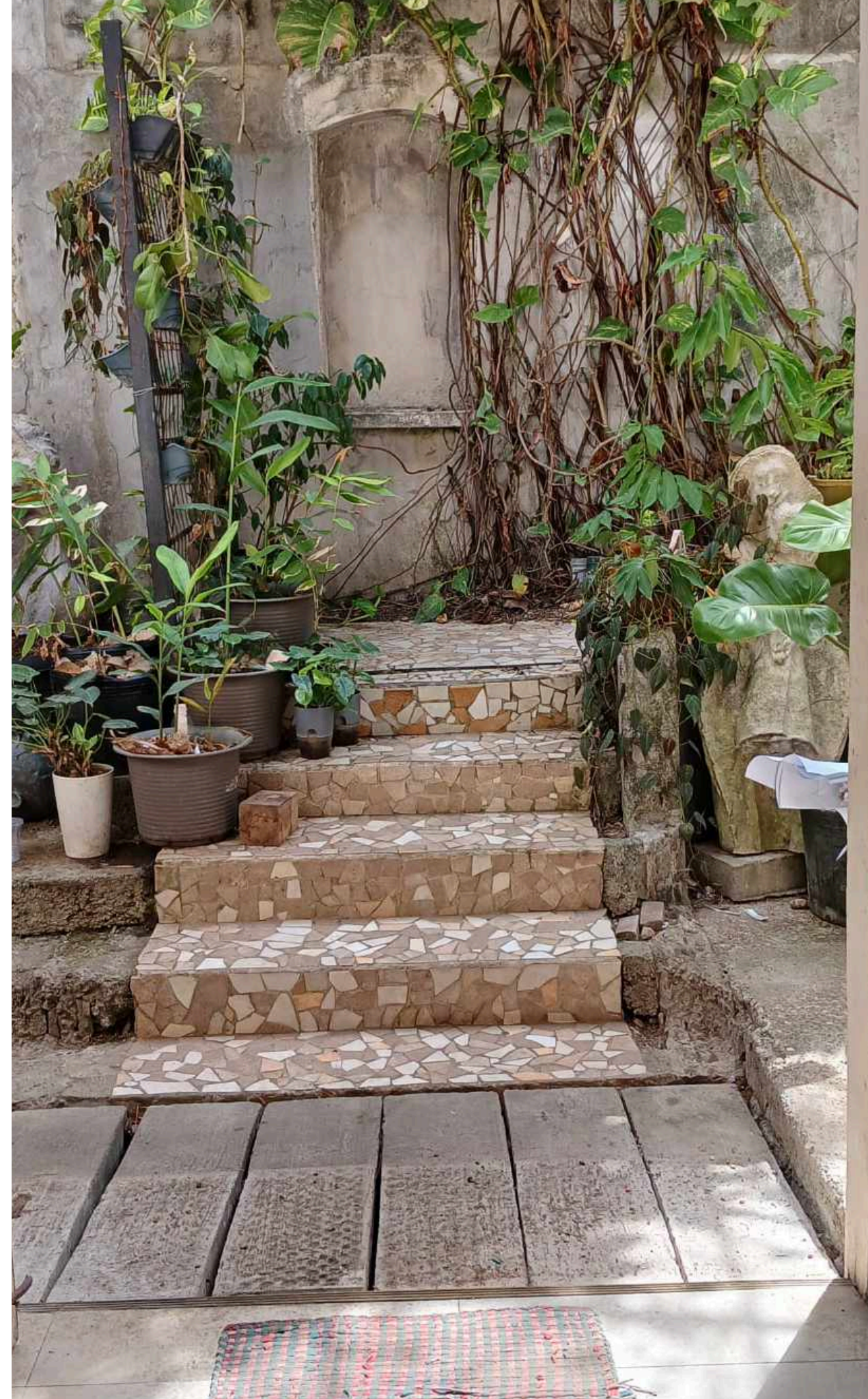
MALIPAYONG KAMATAYON

What is a happy death?

It depends on what you believe in. If you are a Catholic, a happy death is entering heaven. If you are Muslim, then it's Jannah. If you believe in the Dharmic religions, a happy death to you would be the liberation from the rebirth cycle. If you're Jewish, it depends on your sect.

A bit of a disclaimer – I'm no expert on religions and most of what I've mentioned have been written after a quick search on Google. But I do know this for sure: if you're an atheist (like me, most of the time), then a happy death doesn't exist.

It can't because when you die, then you're dead. There is no happiness. There is no sadness. There is just nothing – at least from your perspective. When we die, then we're dead and we're dead forever. This doesn't have to be a negative thing. It can be liberating. And this has been what I've believed in since maybe eleven.



And so, about a year ago when the invitation to this exhibit was given, I aimed to turn these beliefs into art. But months passed and no artmaking happened.

I woke up one morning to the sound of my mom's phone ringing. On the other side was Mamita. "Namatay imong Tito Junior," she said. "Okay ma," my mother replied. The phone closes. Silence.

Then, life moved forward as usual. (Or at least that's how I remember it).

Tito Junior was a deadbeat alcoholic. His death was a surreal experience – fraught with small town wholesome strangeness.

One man cried for Tito Junior. His drinking buddy, Juriel. Nobody from the family knew who he was, until he showed

up at Tito Junior's wake crying his heart out in front of Tito Junior's dead body. It was very dramatic. It was, and I say with some guilt, kind of funny. It was also sad, of course. Juriel showed up every night in Tito Junior's wake. He showed up more than me, and more than Tito Junior's own kids.

Most people would probably agree that Tito Junior didn't live a life well lived. Still, a few hidden chuckles were shared between me and my little cousins through his funeral. We made happy memories - stayed late at the chapel and looked at the stars, and we sang a lot of songs.

Was this a happy death? Maybe? But still, minus a few badly written paragraphs in a Google Docs, no artmaking happened.

Batcat died. I cried. Wrote a melodramatic entry on my happy journal about his life as a cat. Still, no artmaking happened.

And time passed and kept passing.

I have some pretty kooky beliefs about art. It involves listening to an inner voice and following it. And sure, I listened, and art was made. But nothing was even remotely related to a happy death.

The closer it got to the deadline, the higher the pressure was to go on and make some art, but no artmaking happened - until one day, I concluded in my mind that I don't know what a happy death is.

All I know is that I really don't want to die. I don't want people to cry for me. I don't want anyone I love to die, and

I don't want to have to cry for them. I just want us all to be alive and be happy.

I don't remember how old I was when I asked my dad why he believed in God, but I remember his answer: he wanted to think that one day he'd be able to see his mom again. I still don't believe in God, but especially since then, I don't believe in judging people when they do.

So, what's a happy death? If I could choose, then a happy death is to die and wake up in an afterlife. Death meets me and shows me around. We cross a river, a beach, a sea filled with corals. We walk by golden fields.

Death tells me how the human story ends. It's a nice story. It has a good ending. The sun is almost setting when Death leads me to a place where I get to see the people that I

love one last time. I find them happy. I know with certainty they'll be alright.

So, I walk back to my afterlife, to my forever bed - a bed beside the sea under a sky full of stars, the same ones I looked at with my little cousins at Tito Junior's funeral. I tell Death good night, close my eyes and die my happy death.



DAWATA, AYAW'G KAHADLOK:

Accept Do not Fear

The show is entered through a door, which by design ought make us ask as the philosopher, Plato, would have: What is the door-ness of a door? Doors would lead us somewhere to a place that must be entered. Though some doors admittedly serve to keep people out. This is not that sort of door. It would do everything a door can do except this - keep us out.

The back side of this door shows it had been something to hold the business-end of a sugar cane press. It is a very old piece of wood pickled in sugar throughout most of its functional life. It is part of a machine that has by now become obsolete starting from around the beginning of the Second World War. But still, it is beautiful. It invites us to a contemplation of age. Not age in theory but our own age. What we have become?

wood, 2024
Raymund L Fernandez





The top part of this wood contains a fine relief that draws out the images of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Joseph is shown here at the moment of passing. The image is done with great respect for the wood. But the more so for the belief system that tells this narrative.

This is obviously the Holy Family of the Christian faith but they could also be any of us. They could be all of us in some ways. The son holds his father's head on his shoulder and rests his head over his even as the mother rests her head on her son's. (I remember holding my father's hand when he died.)

The human condition makes us choose which pain is worse: To see the death of all whom we love, or to precede all these by dying first? Death is inevitable. And the best we can hope for is not to die happy for that might be too high a hill to climb. But that we might understand death enough so we are happy to die. In the same manner of Socrates, by Plato's account. (Apologia)

The account of Saint Joseph's death is not included in the "official" Bible. It might be apocryphal; but even so, it is a sacred story. Not by virtue of any religion. But because of the





profound humanity of death itself. What it means to each of us who must deal with it in our own most personal way. But Saint Joseph's death is exactly a most poetic way to put it so we would find all these and death itself easier to understand. For isn't this what faith ought to be?

MALIPAYONG KAMATAYON:

A Happy Death

wood. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez



ANG PAGTUDLO SA ANAK:

The Child's Teaching

This wood shows the father teaching the child how to carve. For many of us, the act of teaching is the arc of life itself. In this image, it is almost as if the carpenter and the child are cutting themselves into shape.

wood. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez







Raymund L Fernandez



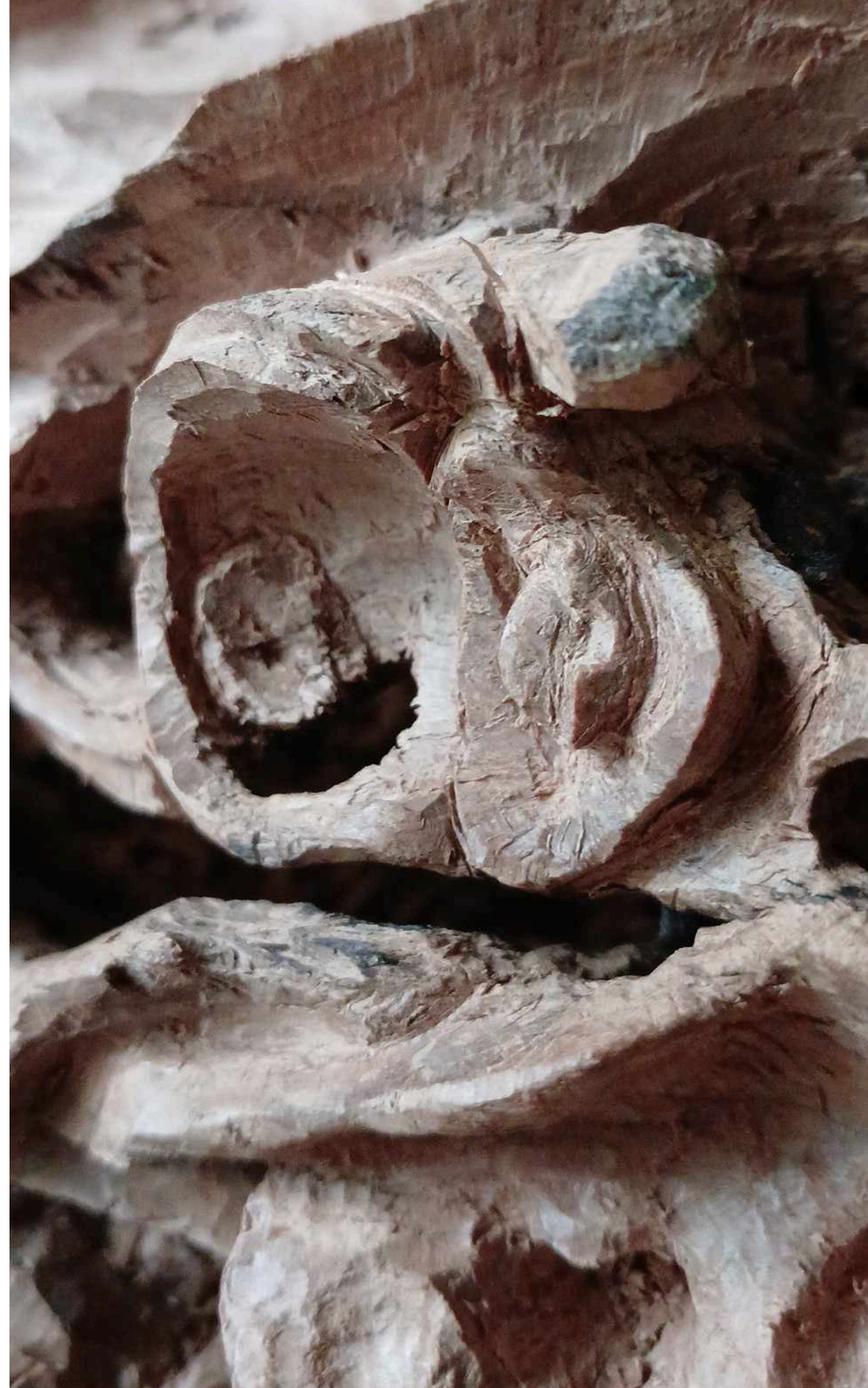
PANAHON:

Time

Panahon is a carved rendition of time in its abstract form. It invites a contemplation of the transitory nature of everything. Entropy is all about us even as we feel inside us a gnawing fear of the unknown - of that which is yet to happen. Even though this thing about to happen is who and what we are. What life consists of. Experience undulating forward in the quanta of momentary time. This wood could be placed atop a stand-up piano as if to say that music might be the good way to feel time's passing. And then point to how all these might end and then continue at a point we cannot yet even imagine.

wood, steel, stone. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez





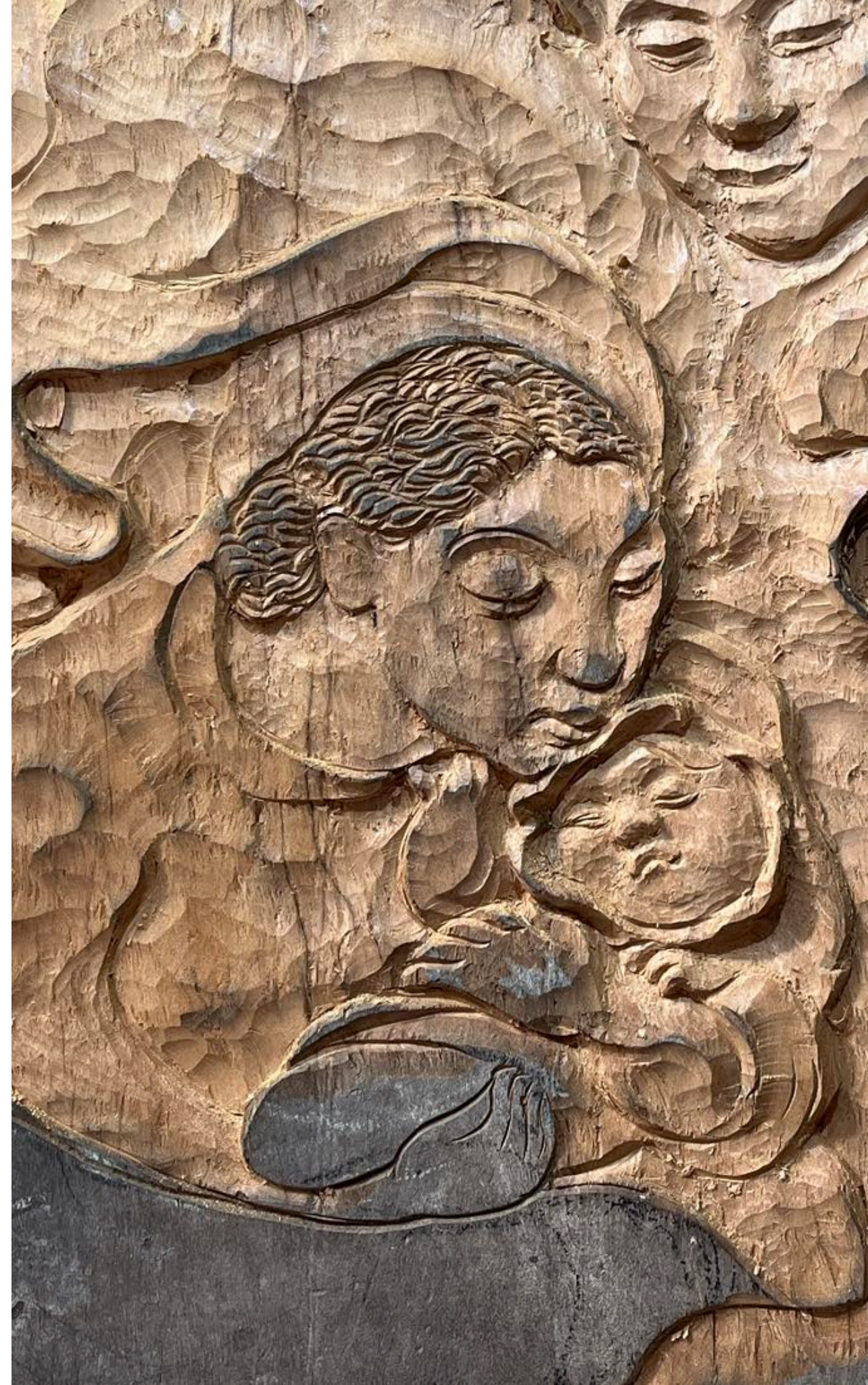
KAGIW:

Refugees

The Christian Holy Family were refugees escaping into Egypt to escape Herod who sent out his soldiers to kill every first-born in his kingdom. The Magi had told him that the Messiah was born. Biblical accounts tell how an angel helped them flee. They were refugees much like many in our day in age where bombing population centers and keeping whole populations poor and starving have become the language of politics and war.

wood. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez



AGAINST GOD, WE ARE ALWAYS IN THE WRONG

Installation

The traffic sign is a quote from the existentialist, Soren Kierkegaard. "Against God We are always in the Wrong." This line is taken from the short essay, "Either/Or." This essay and many critiques of it are available online (search Michael Sugrue or the original essay in audio). If you do. You may discover yourself coming to a crossing in your life. "Either/Or" is an essay, very short, sculpted like a coin having two sides. To believe in God or to believe in Reason, Choose! The telling is asymmetrical. The voice has chosen the side of God. Against God no reasoning is required or even acceptable. There is only the required leap of faith. This leap would be based more on love than reason, as if reason inevitably ends in a universe having no God. I am myself too chickenshit to absorb these this. But from time to time, I find myself alone as if waiting. And then these thoughts play inside my mind once again, time becoming non-existent.

Aluminum, wood. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez



"AGAINST GOD"

AIR 2024 HANGIN

Installation

There is a coffee table and stools close by. The table and stools are barrels with labels that read: "Air 2024 Hangin." The barrels are sealed. Are they empty? They are a loaded metaphor. Or else, just another rendering of the Uncertainty Principle. But this is also the best vantage point to view the cross "Gaza."

Industrial steel drums. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez



GAZA

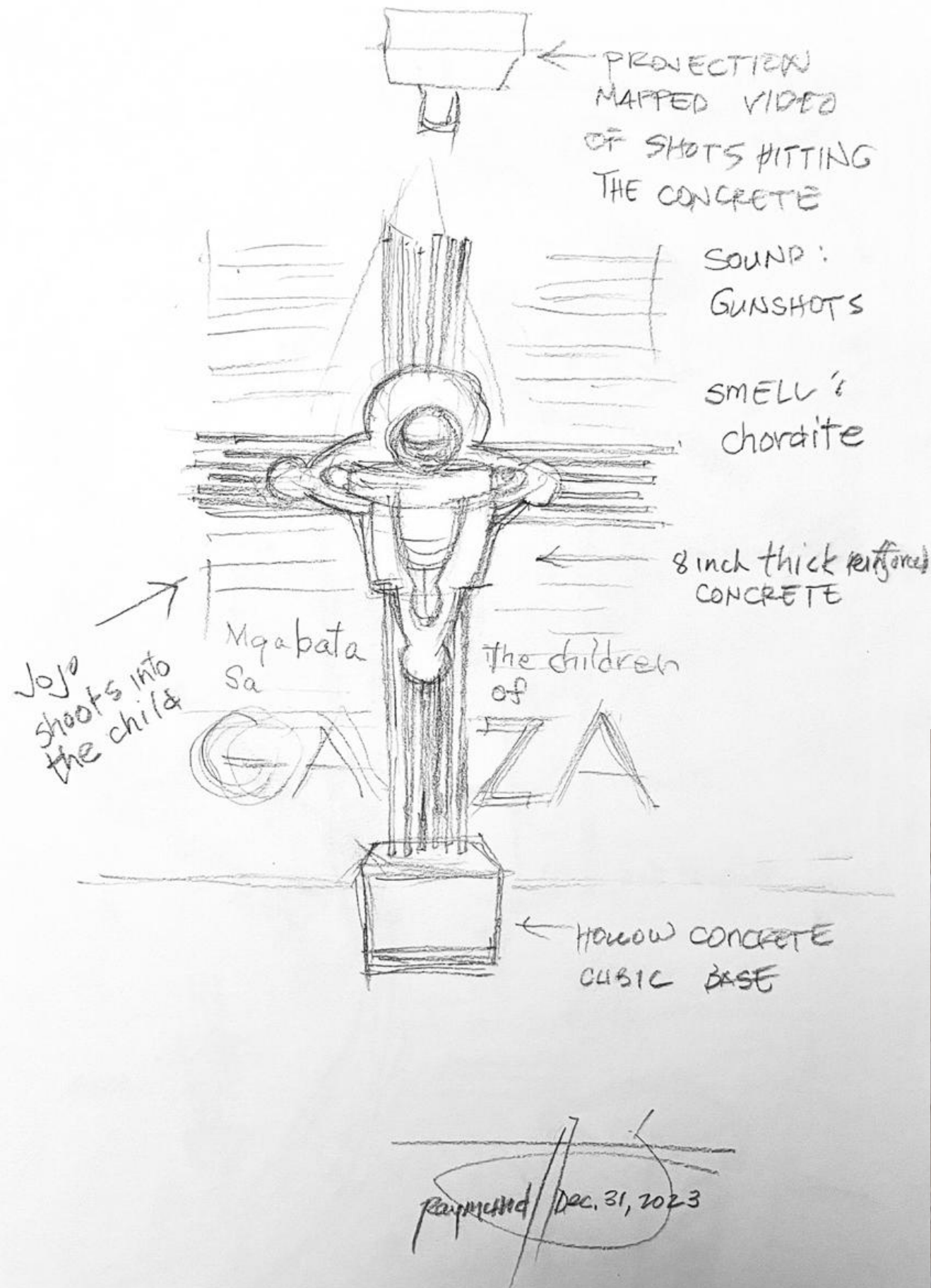
Installation

Here is the piece which asks a simple question: Why do we still Bomb civilian populations in this day and age? How can we allow the bodies of dead children be the language of war? What God can would tolerate that?

concrete, steel, projector mapping. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez

video projection by Fidel Laurence Ricafranca









COFFEE TABLE

Installation

wood, glass. 2024
Raymund L Fernandez

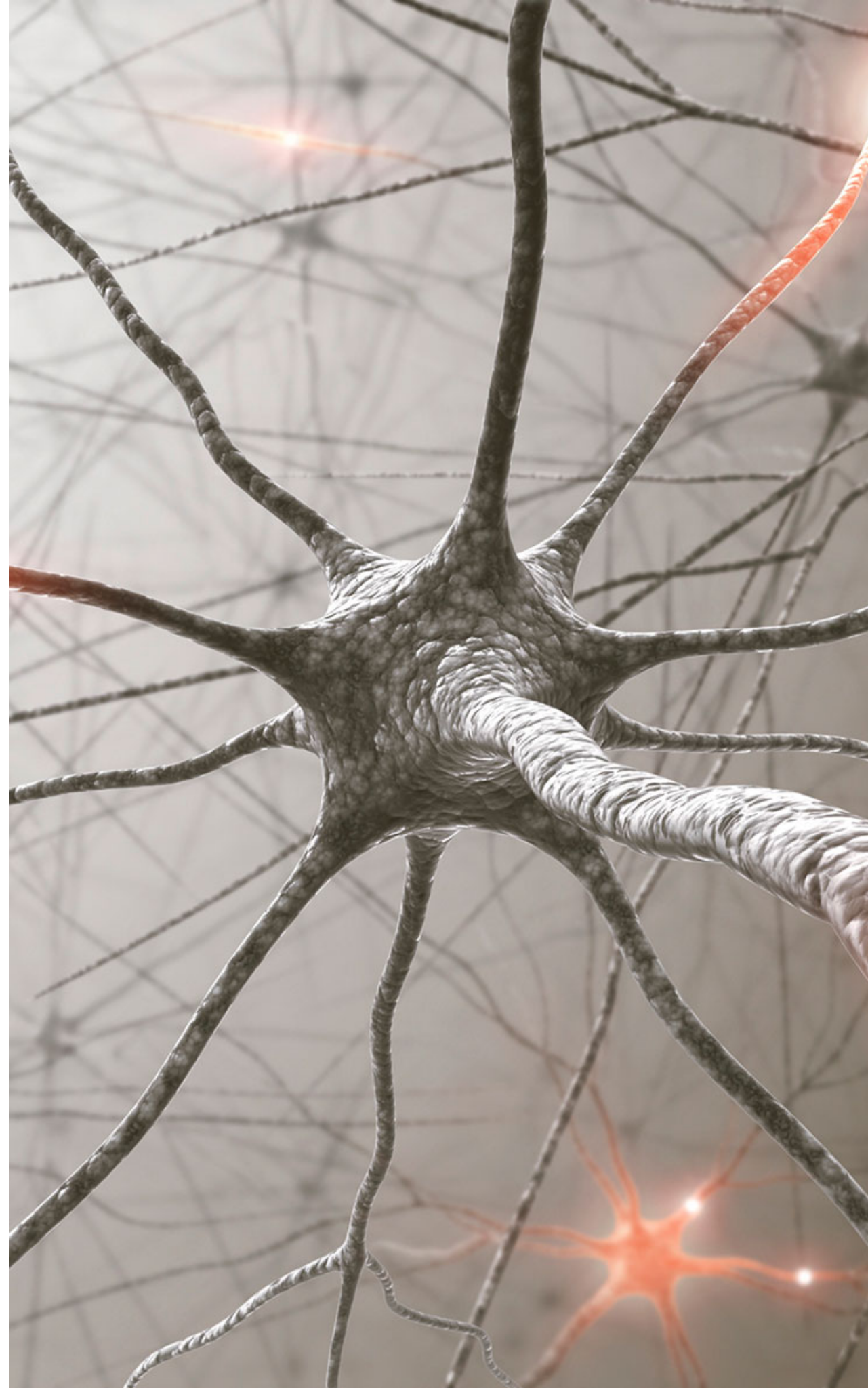


AND YET IT MOVES

Galileo Galilei

aluminum, stone. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez





UMA:

CULTIVATE YOUR OWN GARDEN

Installation

This is an installation of casket like planters finished in paper maché. These will contain flowers and plants and seed sprouts.

The idea is to create a living and growing installation of plants and flowers in these “caskets”.

Nothing is permanent, certainly not life. And so we strive to make sense of our limited time on this earth. To me, a happy death is equal to a meaningful life.

It will be great to pass knowing I contributed to the growth of others, including a forest garden.

Paper maché on plywood. 2024

Estela Ocampo Fernandez





akongturnoakongurno

Installation

"when raymund invited me to design an urn for this exhibit i thought what a perfect opportunity to design what could end up being where i could end up.

indeed my testament stipulates a situation where an urn could be called for.

so my urn is a beer mug. i like beer. often more than is good for me. but this mug is frothing over not with beer but with paint. a stand-in for art best suited in a mug.

art or doing art does not always make me happy. but it always make me feel accomplished. in the face of death that is what i would rather be. and surrounded by the verities : *buhi, patay, lipay, tagay!*"

corrugated board, 800ml glass beer mug, acrylic paint. 2024

roylu



HALUK

wood. 2024

Raymund L Fernandez



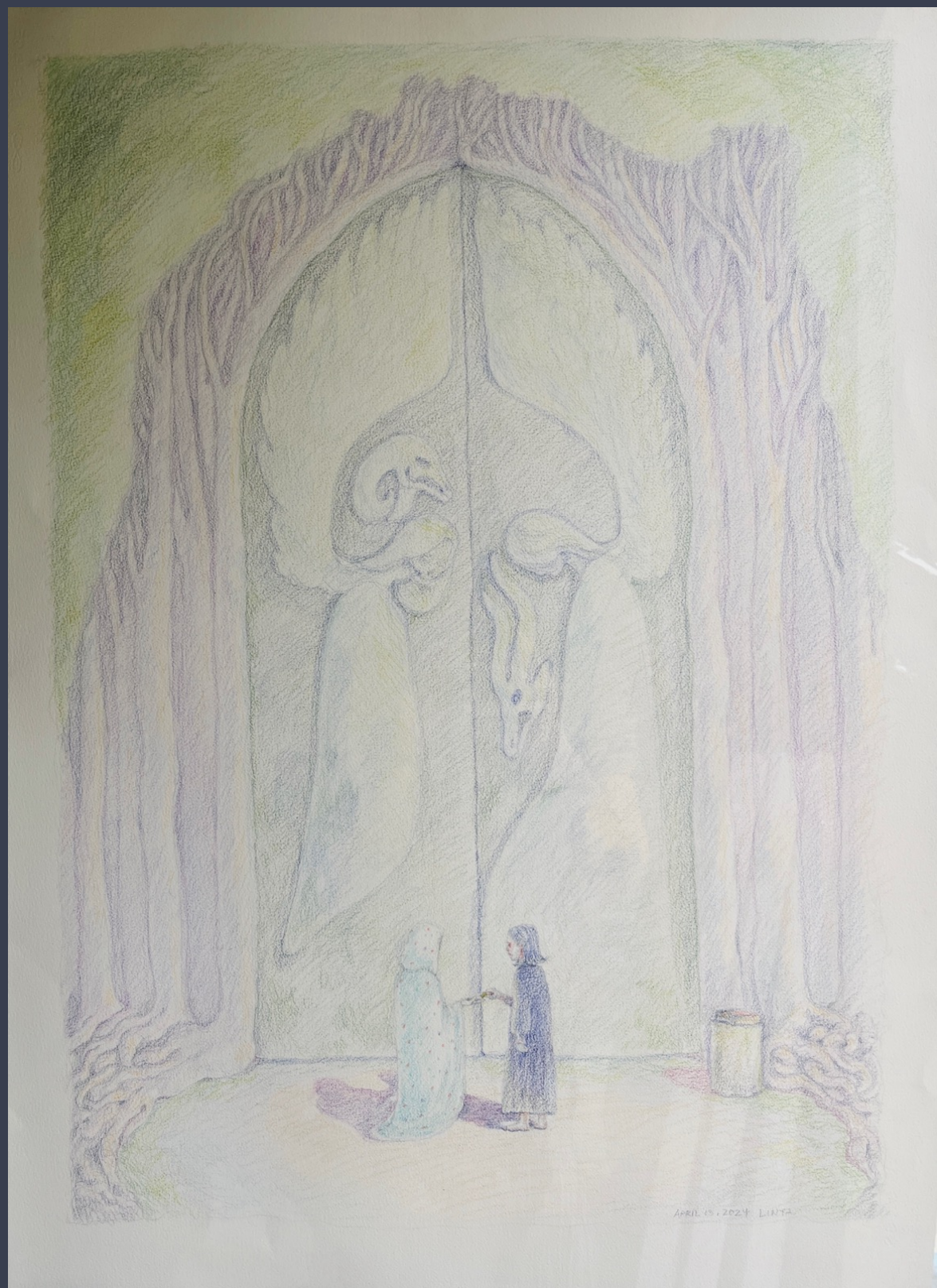


MALIPAYONG KAMATAYON

Drawings

colored pencils. 2024
Linya Fernandez

malipayong kamatayon 1



malipayong kamatayon 2



malipayong kamatayon 3





2004 LINTA

UNDERSTANDING RAYMUND

Curator's Notes

TKG 5/9/24

This is the fourth show I've "curated" for Prof. Raymund Fernandez, and I still feel like an impostor, having absolutely no background or qualification in the arts. But apparently no one seems to mind since all the shows we've worked on together have been well-received by the art community. My only formal "art" training was when I enrolled in a drawing class for one semester over 3 decades ago at the UP Cebu College of Fine Arts. Clearly I was not a "gifted" artist, but I enjoyed the semester, even though I never felt my homework was any good because my teacher, Estela Ocampo - later married to Raymund, was very sparing in her praise and checked my submissions with just a quick glance. Still, I must have made some impression because she did not object to me hanging around to help her and Raymund set up their shows in later years. And after doing several shows together I was glad they now trusted me enough to "curate" this show, arguably the most important one in Raymund's career.



Shortly before his previous show, "Koan Tum Ba Lud," at the QUBE Contemporary closed last year, Raymund got a personal invitation from Charlie Co, founder of the the ART District in Bacolod and owner of the prestigious Orange Project Art Gallery, to mount his next show there.

Raymund is not a prolific artist and most of his works are one-off. He doesn't like repeating himself. Or to be more specific, Raymund is really not interested in creating "trendy" art, and his works often deal with difficult subjects, or are of a scale that limit the spaces they can be displayed in, and thus, his works don't really sell well. Consequently, Raymund does not get invitations to do shows in major galleries very often. Thus the personal invitation from Charlie was a very gracious offer because it was an opportunity for Raymund to show his art to a wider and perhaps more sophisticated audience .

As in the previous shows we did together, the idea for this show "Malipayong Kamatayon: a Happy Death" came

during one of the many conversations we had, over wine, at my house in Mandaue where Raymund frequently hangs out with Estela and our friends. Raymund and I have known each other since way back because he was my younger brother Danny's best friend in college and he would occasionally hang out in our house in Mandaue and we in turn visited him in his house in Private.

As a student of the maestro Martino Abellana, Raymund was trained in painting. But unlike many successful local artists who prefer paintings because of the steady market, Raymund instead gravitated to sculpture as his medium of choice. And as a sculptor he was inevitably drawn to wood even though he demonstrated his mastery of various media including steel, copper, terracotta, clay, concrete and even fiberglass.

Raymund looks at odd pieces of wood very differently from the rest of us. He is especially enamored with old wood and he seeks them out like a miner would search for

gold. He shows tremendous respect, even reverence for the wood he chooses to work on and deliberately leaves much of the original material untouched, revealing the hidden image with only the least amount of cutting. He doesn't mind that some viewers say they look unfinished. Once the subject is clear to him, he stops and allows the rest of the wood to reveal their inherent beauty. There are many examples of these in the current show.

In particular, the first sculpture one sees upon entering this show is a wooden part of a traditional sugar cane press, an object familiar to many in the sugar-growing regions of the country. Raymund describes the wood as "...a very old piece of wood pickled in sugar throughout most of its functional life. It is part of a machine that has by now become obsolete ... But still, it is beautiful."

Spend some time examining the sculpture closely and appreciate how Raymund used the grain and the imperfections of the wood as part of this sculpture of

someone handing you a present..."*Dawata/Accept*". Then look behind it and you realize this piece of wood has led a hard life...several decades of hard labor...pressing the juice from out of tons of sugar cane. The wretchedly marked backside contrasts with the unnatural smoothness of the front from where the outline of the ghostly face emerges. Now, it is a thing of beauty, this old piece of wood that spent its life extracting the sweetness of the earth, was finally now happy in death.

There are other works in this show that share this unique characteristic of being both familiar and yet strange at the same time, and only reveal after careful viewing the "meaning" behind the objects they see before them. Raymund is unafraid to tackle subjects that can trigger unease, even disgust, and he does it in a manner that resolutely avoids sentimentality and oversimplification, choosing instead to trust the instincts of his audience to see beyond the object, to contemplate deep questions about

their faith and to challenge strongly held beliefs and prejudices. This is especially true of the last piece in the show, entitled "GAZA".

Because he refuses to bow to popular tastes or to give in to the temptations of fame and fortune, Raymund is a difficult artist to understand. It doesn't help that he's particularly enamored with philosophy and science and tries to create works that embody abstract concepts while wrestling with various materials to draw out their deeper essence, often leaving his audience completely confused or unsure as to how to react to the unfamiliar/familiar qualities of his best works. Case in point are the steel drums allegedly filled with air from 2024 and the street sign with a quote from Soren Kierkegaard's existentialist essay "either/or."

By now Raymund is used to being misunderstood and even dismissed as trying too hard. In a world of short attention spans and AI-generated and enhanced

imagery, Raymund chooses to speak to the future by pushing the boundaries of the Bisaya and leaving an artistic legacy clearly touched and created by human hands.

It helps to remember that Raymund's shows always have a deeply embedded narrative linking all the works together. Although he denies it (see Intro) Raymund is a deeply spiritual artist and many of his best works are imbued with the "Sacred" and can really only be displayed in altars and Chapels and, as many are, objects of reverence and devotion. His sculpture of the "Kagiw/refugees" in this show exemplifies this.

In his essay "With doubt comes faith" Raymund writes, "Consider: Every artwork, every piece of writing is a dual statement of faith and doubt. Every great art piece should lead us to question: Is it good or bad? If it doesn't, the artwork is probably just only good. Great art is essentially an acceptance of the uncertainties of the

human condition. It can only be a statement of the validity of human doubt. But with doubt comes also its shadow: Nevertheless, we believe, even when we have no reason to. Faith."

Ranging from the sacred to the profane, to the celebration of Form and the beauty of a line and the art of common objects, Raymund's art is consistently profound, original and uncompromising, though not easy to understand. Perhaps Raymund is one of those artists who will remain largely unappreciated during their lifetime but I have no doubt that his collective body of work, including his writings and his books will ultimately be seen as among the most compelling artifacts of our generation and that his legacy will be long-lasting.

As a friend, admirer and collector, this show in some way helped me "understand" Raymund, and myself, better. My hope is that with this show his art will become more widely known and appreciated during his lifetime because, God knows, he deserves it.

Then we both can die happy.

