



FRAGMENTS OF MEMORIES

Arturo Sanchez Jr.'s work exudes tension and angst that draw the viewer in—a consistent trait in his body of work and recent series.

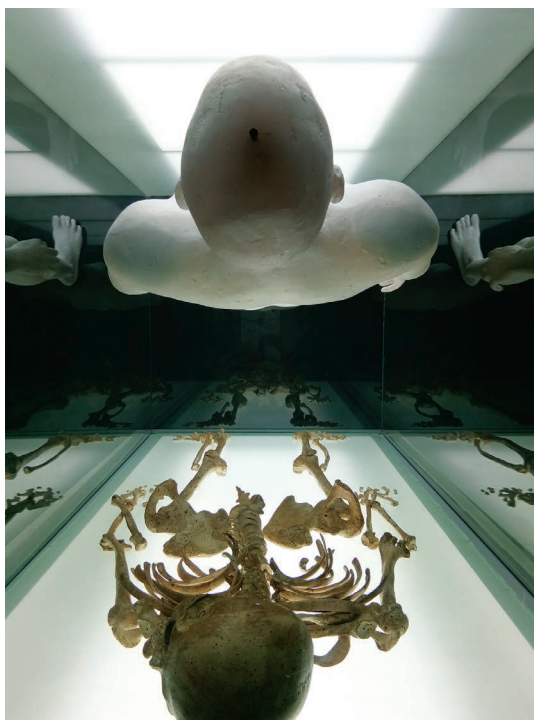
BY ELIZABETH RUTH DEYRO

Angono has long been lauded for its vibrant local art scene, so much so that it is known, albeit unofficially, as the Art Capital of the Philippines. Expectations for the town are predicated on being home to two National Artists, painter Botong Francisco and musician Lucio San Pedro, but Angono also lives up to its reputation due to its rich culture and tradition which has consistently given birth to generations of artists. It simply does not run out of talent to sustain its legacy.

Today, several contemporary artists, both established and emerging, have been born and bred in Angono. This is something Arturo Sanchez Jr. takes pride in as well. The multi-media artist credits his hometown for shaping him into the artist he is today.

An Architecture degree holder from the Technological Institute of the Philippines, Sanchez opted to follow his passion for the arts, specifically painting, which he notes was first awakened by seeing and experiencing art exhibitions mounted by senior artists who lived in Angono. Given

IMAGES COURTESY OF ARTURO SANCHEZ JR.



LIFE AND DEATH.
 (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT)
 "Faith, Fake, Fade", 2020, (in 3D)
 installation, fiber glass resin;
 "Until There is Almost Nothing
 Left to Kill", (Collaboration with
 Mael De Guzman), 2018, fiber
 glass resin, LED light, dirt and
 plaster of Paris; Installation views
 of "Stray Bullets" sculptures, 2016.
 (OPPOSITE PAGE) Installation
 view of *Phenomenal Field*.

his background, had he not pursued a career in the arts, he thinks he would have gotten into woodworking or furniture design.

As most traditions are best learned by immersing in community, Sanchez, much like his contemporaries, studied art through workshops with the Angono Artist Association—a network of home-grown artists who sought to democratize art education. To newcomers, the Angono artists were their idols turned mentors.

Sanchez's education in architecture did not go untapped. This allowed him flexibility to experiment with his craft,

equipping him with the technical skills and know-how to design and execute installation projects. This affair with experimentation grew into a habit and then a brand: Sanchez is often in the process of acquainting himself with new materials to incorporate into his style, which has gone through a number of changes through the years.

Sanchez got his foot in the door through painting, winning the Grand Prize at the 2006 Art Petron in the oil and acrylic painting category. While making studies for his works years ago, he shared that he gathered cut-out images from

books and magazines, amassing many until he came up with a plan to "preserve" the cut-outs by reusing them as collages on mirrors. This became a staple in his series and came to be a part of his individual style, having "evolved into variant styles after years of using the technique."

His first solo exhibition, *When Fear Is Your Only God* (2013) at West Gallery, featured large-scale works using oil on canvas and collage on broken mirror, for which he reportedly took inspiration from his 2010 piece where mirrors were used to symbolize the reflection of "fragments of the memories of what used to be there."





A greater feat was *Phenomenal Field* (2014), which Blanc Gallery described as “ambitious in scale and intent,” as each work occupied most of the gallery’s interior, with embedded convex mirrors framed as “paths to empathy” in an experiential

series that robs viewers of the privilege to keep the visuals of catastrophe away from their field of view.

On Sacred Ground (2016) was the first exhibition where he used clear-cast polyurethane resin on his collage work as well

as sculptures—a jump from his previous works on canvas and mirror. The much-celebrated exhibition introduced a new take on the signature Sanchez style, giving heightened dimension as the art moved past the restrictions of canvas. Fascinated by “the illusion of depth that the clear-cast resin produces,” the artist considers creating this kind of art to be a “complicated process” that involves many crucial factors that demand precision: “the ratio of the mixed chemical, the temperature of the working area, and the thickness of the final surface” are some of the things Sanchez has to keep in mind when crafting a project. Sanding and polishing the final piece is an equally laborious step, with the artist comparing it to a car paint job.

Due to the nature of the medium, Sanchez needs to work one layer at a time, waiting for the previous layer to dry completely before he proceeds to the next. “It takes a lot of time to finish a certain work,” he says. Proper handling of each element sandwiched in between several layers, from the collage and paint, to the resin itself, is of utmost priority in order to fully achieve the effect the artist aims for. “There’s a lot of trial and error, a lot of frustration before I finally get to control the medium,” he adds. While the pay-off from doing this time-intensive process can be earned by

TROUBLED SOULS.

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) “Where We Find Ourselves in Now 1”, 2020, 48 x 42 inches, acrylic and collage in clear cast resin; “Flesh and Soul 1”, 2018, 12 x 9 inches, acrylic and collage in clear cast resin; “Mass Hysteria 2”, 2020, 42 x 54 inches, acrylic and collage in clear cast resin.





CHAOS THEORY.

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) "Detritus 5", 12 x 10 inches, collage in clear cast polymer resin; "Order and Chaos 7", 2020, 18 x 18 inches, acrylic and collage in clear cast resin; "Order and Chaos 4", 2020, 18 x 18 inches, acrylic and collage in clear cast resin.

the highly rigorous and dedicated, Sanchez proves it is not impossible to master. Since this first foray, he has been using the same medium.

Order and Chaos (2021), his latest series for West Gallery's *Grayscale* group exhibition, takes on the same style. Often eerie and unsettling, the aesthetic value of *Order and Chaos* captivates the viewer be-

yond mere intrigue. The title explains the series: each featured piece portrays chaos, but also balance and coherence, inviting closer inspection. Sanchez shares that the series was made with collected off-cuts from his previous collage projects.

"The initial idea was to create an abstract work using the silhouette or the reserve side of the page from where the

outline of the cut-out [was] taken from," he says. "I was thinking of a blackout work layered by a black tinted resin. I imagine it as a black framed canvas when viewed at a distance, but at closer look, one would see a flood of images in a dynamic composition."

A good portion of Sanchez's oeuvre, past and present, evokes an abstract quality that lends the opportunity to have a dialogue with the art—and this is particularly true for *Order and Chaos*. While planning the series, Sanchez's initial thought was to offer an open-ended story with no concrete structure, featuring pieces that were as abstract as he pleased—"only play with the images, go with the flow of the process." During production, the series "transformed into a work with an intentional shift of narratives, leading to the title *Order and Chaos*." The artist adds, "The series may represent the idea of us humans taking the decay and disorder of this world, and out of it, we make order. We make sense of it, writing our own story in our time and place."

Sanchez's work exudes tension and angst that draw the viewer in—a consistent trait in his body of work and recent series. When asked why he gravitates towards darker tones, both literally and figuratively, he answers: "I think it only reflects the issues that surround me. The response to the scenarios that I have encountered and images that have left a mark on my existence." 