



ONION KIDS

HOMECOMING

Hersley-Ven
Casero

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MUGNA GALLERY

Uypitching Building
KM 8 Dumaguete - Valencia Highway
Bong-ao, Valencia Negros Oriental
Philippines

 **MUGNA**
www.mugnagallery.com

Onion Kids – Homecoming

In February 2023, Art Fair Philippines made a triumphant return to its physical venue, The Link Carpark in Makati, after two years of virtual and socially distanced fairs.

From this moment – a symbolic return to a pre pandemic state – visual artist and photographer Hersley Casero took his cue and presented a set of three photographs from his archive that straddled consistent truths amid everchanging times.

The number three was no accident, with the colors: a yellow light, the blue sea, and red onions being a reference to the country's flag. Perhaps an ode to a nation that survived the grips of a global crisis, or perhaps testament to a will that has no other goal but to overcome any and every challenge faced.

Nothing is more captivating than the sea and its mysteries, and for most of existence, it is a force to be feared. However in *"Free Falling,"* an award-winning vignette of pandemic life in Dumaguete, Casero shows his flair for capturing the spontaneity of children vis-a-vis nature. Unbothered by matters of consequence, the only thing on their mind is a better dive or a more spectacular splash into the waters off Bantayan Beach. Playing around is a habit.

The titular piece *"Onion Kids,"* made quite a stir as it was shown hot on the heels of the so-called onion crisis in the country, when the cost per kilo went up to as much as 1,000 pesos. The abundance of the produce in the image juxtaposed with the innocence of the children playing around it was another marker of our time in the pandemic. Maybe it is also a reminder of a collective naivete where we take the resources and blessings we have for granted. Appreciating the small things in life is a choice.

Going back a bit further to 2015 is the cleverly christened *"Paligid,"* which for Filipino speakers immediately translates to *"environment."* In the Negros vernacular, it is *"to roll,"* derived from *"ligid"* which means *"wheel"* or *"tire."* When one chances upon this photograph, with its sublime interaction of light and dust, of shadow and movement – a poignant environment unfolds – and with a longer gaze, the figures of children playing, rolling tires, emerge. Pursuit of the good image is a tradition.

What sets Casero apart from the plethora of street photographers is his somewhat unique predisposition in catching a scene that is largely dictated by framing and composition. This is thoroughly explored in a series of smaller photographs entitled *"Catch a Moment."* He goes on consistent photowalks, which allows access to certain snippets in time. This is evident in his photographs from Bantayan Beach, a frequent hangout of local kids. One pandemic day around lunchtime, and while other photographers left to eat, Casero stayed, knowing that a shot was waiting. This was when *"Onion Kids"* was taken. *"Paligid"* was a scene not far from his house, but he had set out that morning, with a sense of foreseen randomness.

Two months after the fair in Manila, Mugna Gallery restages the exhibition to extend its viewership and influence. Interestingly, what makes these photographs resonate well is that while they are the Onion Kids; we, the viewers, are the same. Life imitates art, and whether happy or sad, Onion Kids are always crying.

By Koki Lxx



Free Falling, 2020

Artist's Proof

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Photograph: 105.5 X 156 cm | 41.33 X 61.41 in

Framed: 125 x 176 cm | 49.2 x 69.3 in

FREE FALLING

"Midday, mid September, continuing to document the effects of the pandemic on Dumaguete City, and on a photowalk in a location I often return to, knowing the energy and dynamism of the diverse characters that share and frequent the space. On this particular day like many others, a group of young friends find relief from the biting midday sun by leaping off the sea wall and diving into the ocean, each jump challenged by the creativity and impressiveness of the last."

This photograph has won international awards and placed in various photography contests. It has been featured nationally and internationally in various publications and exhibitions, physical and online. Free Falling also features as the front cover of the artist's first photography book, All in Good Time.



PALIGID

"December 31st, early in the morning, while fulfilling my annual tradition of catching the last moments of the year on camera, I wandered just outside of my house in a small village on the outskirts of Dumaguete City. This morning, like every other, my neighbours had been up very early to sweep the leaves in the surrounding area and burn them in a small pit, hoping to drive away mosquitoes with the smoke. Their kids, already full of energy, race down a pathway through trees and shrubbery playing a native game called 'Paligid' meaning to 'roll', from the root word 'ligid'; 'wheel' or 'tire'."

Paligid, 2015

Artist's Proof

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Photograph: 105.5 X 156 cm | 41.33 X 61.41 in

Framed: 125 x 176 cm | 49.2 x 69.3 in



Onion Kids, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Photograph: 105.5 X 156 cm | 41.33 X 61.41 in

Framed: 125 x 176 cm | 49.2 x 69.3 in

ONION KIDS

"Labor Day, almost noon, in my small village on the outskirts of Dumaguete City. I came across this scene happening right outside my home as I was arriving back for lunch after a morning of documenting the effects of the pandemic around town. I had recently volunteered myself as a documenter for Dumaguete City as we were entering into global lockdown and beginning to realise the severity of the looming threat of Covid 19. These kids clearly had no concern however, and I watched for a while, with camera in hand, as adults unloaded a truckload of purple produce, and the kids frolicked in innocent bliss, climbing, leaping and playing pretend among the potent piles."

This photograph was recently featured on the front page of a local newspaper accompanying an article about the current state of onion affairs.



Catch a Moment - 01, 2015

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 02, 2013

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 03, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 04, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 05, 2012

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 06, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 07, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 08, 2021

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 09, 2015

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 10, 2022

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 11, 2020

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in



Catch a Moment - 12, 2016

Artist's Proof & Edition of 3

Pigmented ink on Smooth Cotton Rag

Unframed: 30.6 x 45.5 cm | 12 x 18 in

Framed: 46.4 x 61.3 cm | 18.27 x 24.13 in

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