



**A Solo Exhibition by
Rey Labarento**

Opening Reception
12/16 6:00 pm

12/16/2023 - 01/14/2024

MUGNA GALLERY

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

 **MUGNA**
www.mugnagallery.com

What We See, What We Don't

Rey Labarento is an observer, taking notes of people wherever he goes. In his paintings, he juxtaposes familiar yet blurred backgrounds with white silhouettes of people animated by colourful lines via canvas string. Creative as it already is, his bag of tricks is not limited to these paintings, as he is also — and actually foremost — eager to draw.

With a sketchbook as a constant companion, he approaches this task in a distinct order: draw an outline — a negative space if you will — then proceed to detail the human inside it.

In a way, we can view this as core to Labarento's body of work, where as naive or innocent his depictions may be, they are all products of a highly observant practice and a keen eye for subtle nuances. The first step of setting outer lines echoes the human tendency to first judge from the outside: the proverbial cover of the book. We tend to shape people according to our own expectations. And then he subverts this as he proceeds to illustrate the humanity that he sees. Their features, limbs, and clothes adapt and adjust to whatever the initial shape is. Certainly there is still conjecture and assumption at this point, but those go hand in hand in our daily encounters with strangers, and perhaps even with those we have already known for a while. The end product is a concise, and often humorous vignette of the daily lives of Dumaguete people (and sometimes from elsewhere).

This brings us to the backdrop of Labarento's mise-en-scène: Valencia Plaza. Cozily nested outside the hustle and bustle that is Dumaguete City proper, it is laid out in the typical colonial plaza plan: with the municipal hall, church, school, and various establishments that benefit from proximity to the centre of the town; and of course, right smack in the middle of it all is the open field that includes a playground, basketball court, and quite significantly, home to a flock of pigeons that are local attractions in their own right. This is all within the same area where the weekly Paunay Sunday market is held, and where there is a Christmas Tree that serves as a beacon to all those who look forward to "Valencia and chill."

For the exhibition "In & Out," Labarento gives us a glimpse into his process that tackles what he sees inside and outside people, and these works are installed in a simulacra of the plaza, placing the subjects both "inside" their comfort zones yet still "outside" their locales. Even the framing extends the notion of being in or out.

When all is said and done, humans are much more complex than we take for granted. Rey Labarento's continued explorations of his beloved hometown and its people serve as a reminder — in all its innocence and simplicity — to look beyond the surface and see others the way we would like to be seen ourselves.

Koki Lxx, December 2023



PAGE 1

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41 x 34 cm | 16.1 x 13.4 in (framed)



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In & Out

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About Mugna

Mugna Art Gallery is an innovative hub dedicated to bringing out the riches of local culture that defy common perception. The gallery supports emerging and undiscovered artists, providing painters, poets, filmmakers, sculptors, and other creative practitioners with the space that mediates between their ideas, the local community, and wider audiences. "Mugna", is the Visayan word for "create", embodies its name by engaging with artists and audiences, bringing together intellectual resources and materials to establish sustainable, satisfying, and meaningful sensory experiences.

Mugna was founded by Vincent Lopez and George Kuhn, art enthusiasts and patrons who have settled in Valencia on Negros Island. They developed this space as a platform for featuring a broad range of inspiring artwork from varied genres originating in the Philippines, with an emphasis on Negros Island and the Visayas.



For Inquiries:

Mugna Gallery



+63 949 356 1711



+1 212 874 3050



vince.lopez@mugnagallery.com



www.mugnagallery.com