

SMOOTH SEAS DON'T MAKE GOOD SAILORS

WYNDELLE REMONDE



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

Rainbows are Simply Happy Things, Aren't They?

A motley cast of characters dominate Wyndelle Remonde's canvases. Either that, or a multitude of objects that wouldn't be out of place in a still life. But the very reason that these images come together is that they are all actually Remonde, or an extension of himself. That vibrant, active painting is the artist in motion, in transit, or his being in flux.

Not only is there variety in imagery, but also in technique and medium. Of course he can paint, and having grown up with a father who was a painter by profession, Remonde can easily paint realistic subjects, indicating a solid foundation. But his explorations of self and environment cannot be simply expressed through hyperrealism. Serigraphy and assemblage, combined with a background in graphic design and street art, there is a veritable complexity in the works that clue us in on his experience thus far.

In the titular work, "Smooth Seas Don't Make Good Sailors," the cast of characters appear all on board. Guy with a shirt mask, skeleton with eyes popping out, melting man, purple man, realistic heart, and cute cartoon — are all comfy chaotic on a bangka out on a Red Hokusai-an Sea, waves and all. Anyone who's seen hard-toiling Filipinos out in the sun would be familiar with the shirt wrapped around the head, with the hole for the neck transformed into visors to see the world under the vicious sun. Nothing screams labor more than this. The composition somehow brings to mind Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo's "La barca de Aqueronte," although it's merely a happy accident. Yet its stirring waters does make you think about smooth seas, or its lack thereof.

The lone canvas with a solitary character, "Grade 5 Section Bayabas," actually stands for more than the one image in it. Grade 5 is a landmark point in life, as Remonde sees it. It's the age when we, as children, would feel our most confident. No longer tiny kids, instead we are given a promotion not only in school but in life in general. We are at our most courageous and adventurous. Sometimes we fail, and in the local parlance, "bayabas" has taken on the metaphor — akin to "kamote" in Tagalog — of screwing up or lacking; but that gives us the chance to learn from experience. We were all in Grade 5 Section Bayabas.

Learning from experience is painted all over the canvasses. In "Solo Mission," Remonde depicts himself walking amidst seemingly unrelated signs and symbols. These all attest to his journey as an artist. A flaming skull with eyeballs popping out harks back to his first encounter with the work of graphic artist Jim Phillips, to which he realized: "pwede pala 'yon!" You can do anything in art. One can spot a cartoony wing and a bird so defined it could fly straight out of the pages of National Geographic. The two act as a check and balance to each other — the real and the imaginary. Growing up he developed the skill by imitating his old man, hoping that one day he'd be told "you did great" as opposed to "why do you keep drawing cartoons?" The Great Wave reappears in this image, but it has less to do with a Japanese influence, as it is a manifestation of the great blue sea beside which the artist's studio is situated. On the lower left, there is a patch of canvas with a checkerboard.

Given his background in graphic design, one might think that “ah, it’s PNG!” In reality, it’s a more somber reference, as the church floor during his mother’s funeral had black and white tiling. Like the flames in his paintings, this image has burned itself into his mind like a waking dream, and frequently manifests in his works. Going back to the walking pose, it’s a synthesis of all the times when Remonde would plan with friends or other people to go somewhere, to travel, but many eventually flake or back out. Experience taught him that he can traverse the world with his own strength, symbolized by a makeshift wooden sword, the choice of weapon of young boys growing up in a complicated world.

A relatively small work contains a chockful of graphic references. The image of a boy with his face buried in his arms on a table is the central figure in “Rest Easy.” Again drawing from past (literally, as this is from a very old study) and future influences, the piece also bears a historical implication, as many objects in it: a plant, a blank canvas face down, a bench, are all found in the studio. It’s almost like a timestamp through time and space. Of note is what can be thought of as a painting within a painting, that of orange clouds against a blue sky. When you stop trying too hard, things start to fall into place. Blam.

While the title “Smooth Seas Don’t Make Good Sailors” seems to refer to a circumstantial reasoning aka good luck (you were just lucky the seas were calm), it might be interesting instead to think of a continuation to the line: “You are a good sailor because of your hard work.” Drawing and painting as a kid, working years in graphic design, going to art school, then overcoming numerous challenges in an adult world (such as a studio fire or a super typhoon), Wyndelle Remonde’s seas were not smooth, but he has what it takes to cross it.

Lxx, March 2024

Wyndelle Remonde’s exposure to art began at home, where his father would illustrate cartoons for magazines. This became an immediate model in developing his personal art style, which eventually landed him a career in the animation and apparel design industry. This technique grew with him naturally; it was automatic like an involuntary muscle. Through the years, Remonde’s art has been influenced by pop, low brow, street and graffiti art. It was in college when his urge to record events in his life that these techniques gave birth to autobiographical artworks. After earning a Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Arts Major in Studio Arts from the University of the Philippines Cebu, he then began creating a combination of colourful and exaggerated, strange, humorous and satirical characters of various sizes and extremities. It is through his art that he aims to express his thoughts in autobiographical pop-surrealistic approach. Currently, Remonde works as a visual artist and run a small art gallery in Argao, Cebu.





Smooth Seas Don't Make Good Sailors

Acrylic on Canvas

122 x 91.4 cm | 48 x 36 in | 4 x 3 ft

2024



Grade 5 Section Bayabas

Acrylic & Enamel on Canvas

122.3 x 91.4 cm | 48 x 36 in | 4 x 3 ft

2024



Padulong Kalamposan (*Towards Success*)

Acrylic, Textile Paint, Aerosol and Pastel on Canvas

121.9 x 243.8 cm | 48 x 96 in | 4 x 8 ft

2024



Solo Mission

Acrylic, Enamel, Aerosol and Textile Paint on Canvas
122 x 182 cm | 48 x 72 in | 4 x 6 ft
2024



Rest Easy

Acrylic, Aerosol and Textile Paint on Canvas
45.8 x 61.1 cm | 18 x 24 in | 1.5 x 2 ft (unframed)
47.7 x 63.2 cm | 19 x 25 in | 1.5 x 2 ft (framed)
2024



Siklista (Cyclist)

Acrylic and Textile Paint on Canvas
30.5 x 30.5 cm | 12 x 12 in (unframed)
32.6 x 32.3 | 13 x 13 in (framed)
2024



Azrael

Acrylic on Canvas
30.5 x 30.5 cm | 12 x 12 in (unframed)
32.6 x 32.3 | 13 x 13 in (framed)
2024



Juan (John)

Acrylic and Textile Paint on Canvas
30.5 x 30.5 cm | 12 x 12 in (unframed)
32.6 x 32.3 | 13 x 13 in (framed)
2024



Juan Kugihan (Hardworking John)

Acrylic and Aerosol on Resin
61.5 x 27.5 x 21.5 cm
24.2 x 10.8 x 8.4 in
2024

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