



NOONTIDE HAGONoy

RENZ BALUYOT
MAY 16 - JUNE 6, 2020

ART CUBE GALLERY

NOONTIDE HAGONoy

The fishing municipality of Hagonoy in Bulacan sits on land that consists of archipelagic marsh and river tributaries where at noon, the water from the sea evaporates, humidity filling the air. The place has become the center of probe in Renz Baluyot's "Noontide Hagonoy" where sites are re-evaluated as with the artist's attachment to it. Here is where he is no more than an observer and yet, where he might have come from. Living in metropolitan Manila, his family would drive north at every chance they could get. Hagonoy has always been home.

For decades, Baluyot has been a hovering resident of the town where both his parents had lived before migrating into the capital as with the rest of the population looking for economic relief. Internal migration has always been a solution to many Filipinos caught without opportunities in their hometown. The phrase "Taga-saan ka?" is a casual question asked to acquaintances that heavily inquires on the origin of one's family; of one's regional identity. Those who had been born and had lived in the city would scramble to answer such inquiry. How does one get to be from a place?

From slowly biking around town under the sweltering heat of the sun, the artist finds undiscovered tales while immersing himself in alleys and roads where corroded roofs of ancestral homes stood and where the cracked paint from the facades of old mansions bore witness to the Past. In another district, an elevated water tank built during the American colonial era remains partially plastered with the logo of a familiar soda brand. These scenes are then carried on to the canvas along with the weight of understanding oneself on account of making sense of the present through the past. Beneath the illustrated solitary monumental structures, blue horizons display patches of radiant clouds on a bright sunny day.

Perhaps, these are the same images his ancestors have looked at. In re-tracing the steps of his people, Baluyot is confronted with perplexing nostalgia meant for a time and a place where he was mostly absent from but deeply attached through affinity. What he knows about this town is mostly through the lens of an occasional visitor and through second-hand stories told by uncles and aunts in family buffets.

In 2017, Baluyot dared to confront himself with an exhibition (*By Sword and Fire*, Vargas Museum) that highlights the atrocities of the second world war and gauged on a generational dilemma of claiming fragments of history in a time that he has never lived through. "Noontide Hagonoy" is a similar but an inward assessment of a personal history arrested inside a town; chronicled through visible and invisible markers found around streets and avenues. The meaning of a place is mired with knowing who are its people. How we attach ourselves to a place perhaps can define our claims to our identity. If we have not come from a place, how else should we become?

— Gwen Bautista



Water District Tower
Oil on Canvas

36 x 45.87 inches
2020



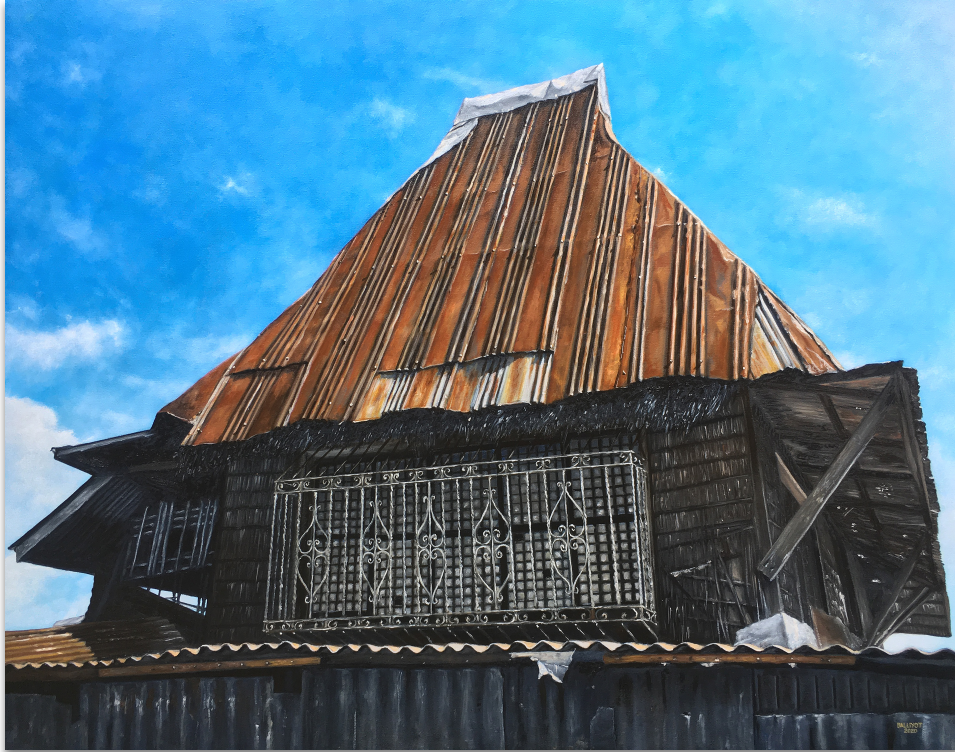
Pangkabuhayan
Oil on Canvas

36 x 45.87 inches
2020



Water District Tower
Oil on Canvas

36 x 45.87 inches
2020



San Sebastian I
Oil on Canvas

36 x 45.87 inches
2020



San Sebastian II
Oil on Canvas

36 x 45.87 inches
2020



Santa Monica
Oil on Canvas

36 x 48 inches
2020



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