

THE
WEIGHT
OF
WORDS



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An Alphabet of **HUMAN RIGHTS**

THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

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An Alphabet of **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Reflections on human rights from 12 Filipino artists and graphic designers

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Recommended entry:

THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

An Alphabet of HUMAN RIGHTS

The good news is that, human rights is again, in the eyes the vast majority, relevant, not that it ever was not.

The bad news is that many, especially among those in positions of great power, see it as an inconvenience, a frivolity, and a hindrance to progress, order, and the elimination of criminality.

Maybe this betrays a general lack of understanding or appreciation of human rights. Or perhaps it reveals a chasm that separates the values and realities of the poor, the middle class and the rich. Human rights, after all, have to be balanced against other interests such as security, economic progress, and governance.

The irony is that these interests are not mutually exclusive. Lost in the rhetoric and rage that permeates all sides is this fact: *the assault on human rights is an assault on the poor*. It is the poor's fortunes that ultimately defines how safe and secure our communities are, how inclusive economic growth is, and how effectively and genuinely our leaders are able to serve and govern.

To value human rights is to uphold every person's life and right to live with dignity. This includes the right of children to education, shelter, and care. It includes women and the

members of the LGBTQ community's right to not be discriminated on the basis of their gender; their right to participate in politics, civil service, or the private sector; and ultimately, to self-determination. To value human rights is to believe in the sanctity of life and stand up for our freedoms: to speak, to assemble, to be free from abuse, even and especially from the State.

Human rights define our humanity, and maybe the challenge of moving forward on this issue must begin by a return to the basics.

The alphabet is one of the very first things that we learn as children. It is the foundation of reading, writing and communication.

"The Weight of Words: An Alphabet of Human Rights", then, is a call to reflect on the basics, and to again contemplate on the meaning and value of human rights.

This book brings together professionals in the visual arts and graphic design industry, each of them choosing a letter or two to connect to a concept in human rights.

The hope is that, through these letters, words and art, the universal truths about human rights can again be revealed, shared, and reflected upon to ultimately reaffirm that human rights is not the cause of the chasm – *it is the bridge that unites*.



ACTIVISM

A

“ACTIVISM,

a firm and strong commitment backed by **ACTION**

in pursuit of a cause... *(continue to letter 'I')*

– Wesley Valenzuela



Barricade



“BARBED WIRE

symbolizes human captivity, degradation, and torture. It is a tool of division. It can separate or confine. It can also protect those within, or exclude those outside.”

– John Ed De Vera

CREATED EQUAL

“This piece was inspired by an abandoned playground I pass by in Quezon City. I tried to capture what may have been a place of fun with kids laughing and running around, now lying rusty and deserted. It made me wonder if the parents of the

CHILDREN

that used to play in that area became afraid for their security because of the recent killings happening in our society.”

— Kevin Roque





“D is for

DEMOCRACY

Can the elected elite truly serve the people? Or will they only act for personal gain, whether deliberately or unconsciously?

Can the people ever truly elect one of their own to govern?

Despite our rights, how easy is it for those in power to silence those who defy or oppose, justifying their actions as taken for the greater good?”

– Keith Dador

DETENTION

EMPATHY

“I chose to present the idea of **EMPATHY** by creating an artwork that was laser printed on multiple layers of clear acrylic sheets. The sheets were stacked and positioned in a way that required the viewer to stand at a specific location in order to see the ideal image. That particular and exact spot represents the viewpoint of another person.

People who make the time and effort to seek these spots when dealing with others, are more accepting of the differences and diversity that exist among all of us. A person with empathy is innately more respectful, and is unlikely to do anything that will hinder another person from enjoying his or her inherent rights.”

– Jom Masolabe





is for **FREEDOM.**

Every living person has the right to be born **FREE** and equal with others.

It is about **FAIRNESS** in the rewards that we work for, to **FIGHT** for what is right, and to **FLOURISH** in what one chooses to live by.

It is for **FEMINISM** where women stand equal with men.”

– Palma Tayona

“Mahatma **Gandhi** was the leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule. He was a lawyer who lived a humble life. We chose him because of his political and scholarly analysis of his principles, practices, and beliefs.

We were particularly enamored by the ‘Mahatma’ title which was bestowed upon him by his people which translates to ‘Great Soul.’ It serendipitously fits the ‘G’ theme of the whole artwork including the word

‘Gentle’ from one of his famous quotes. We then juxtaposed a portrait of Gandhi along with these ‘G’ letters and the iconic ‘salt march’ scene in the background.”

GENOCIDE

– Ang Gerilya





“**HUMAN RIGHTS** for me is a never ending fight from the moment we are born until we die.

We all have human rights, and children have the same general human rights as adults. The child walking a tightrope symbolizes the struggle to balance our rights. Above the child are clouds with some of the basic human rights. Despite the protection of our rights in the law, we still suffer from poverty, homelessness, abuse, neglect, and unequal access to education.”

– June Digan



INFORMATION

...must be grounded in **INFORMATION** based on truth and the lessons from history... *(continue to letter 'O')*

– Wesley Valenzuela



“The scale is a universal symbol of **JUSTICE**.

But it also calls to mind questions of balance itself. How does one balance the desire for human rights against other goals? Are societal goals, like peace and security in the community, higher than the interests of the individual? Are these goals mutually exclusive, and does the pursuit of one justify the disregard of human rights?”

– Dan Matutina



JUDGEMENT JURISPRUDENCE

“Martin Luther **KING** was an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the civil rights movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using the tactics of non-violence and civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs and inspired by the non-violent activism of Mahatma Gandhi.

We went with a very striking banner of the word ‘KING’ to denote not just his name but also as a ‘king’ or a champion of human rights.

It was also very important to us that we put his iconic quote ‘I have a dream’ beside the black community rally to imply not only his ‘dream’ of equality in America, but the whole black community’s as well.”

– Ang Gerilya

KILLING FIELDS





Love



“My two pieces for the letters L and W are supposed to be viewed together. When I started on this project, extra judicial killings were not yet in my mind. I was just thinking of ‘Love’ and ‘War’ as polar opposites.

Now, when I view the finished pieces against the background of the government’s ongoing crusade against drugs, and how it has devastated thousands of families, deprived children of their parents, and is used to justify the casting aside of human rights, I realize that both Love and War are concepts that can occupy the same social space.”

– Lala Gallardo



M

“The piece is created by red candle drippings
and forms the face of

MARCOS

on a framed glass. Beyond the irony of the infamous
former president now encased in wax, I found the
process to be contemplative and hopeful, and a metaphor
for prayers that seek justice for victims of

MARTIAL LAW.”

– Meneer Marcelo

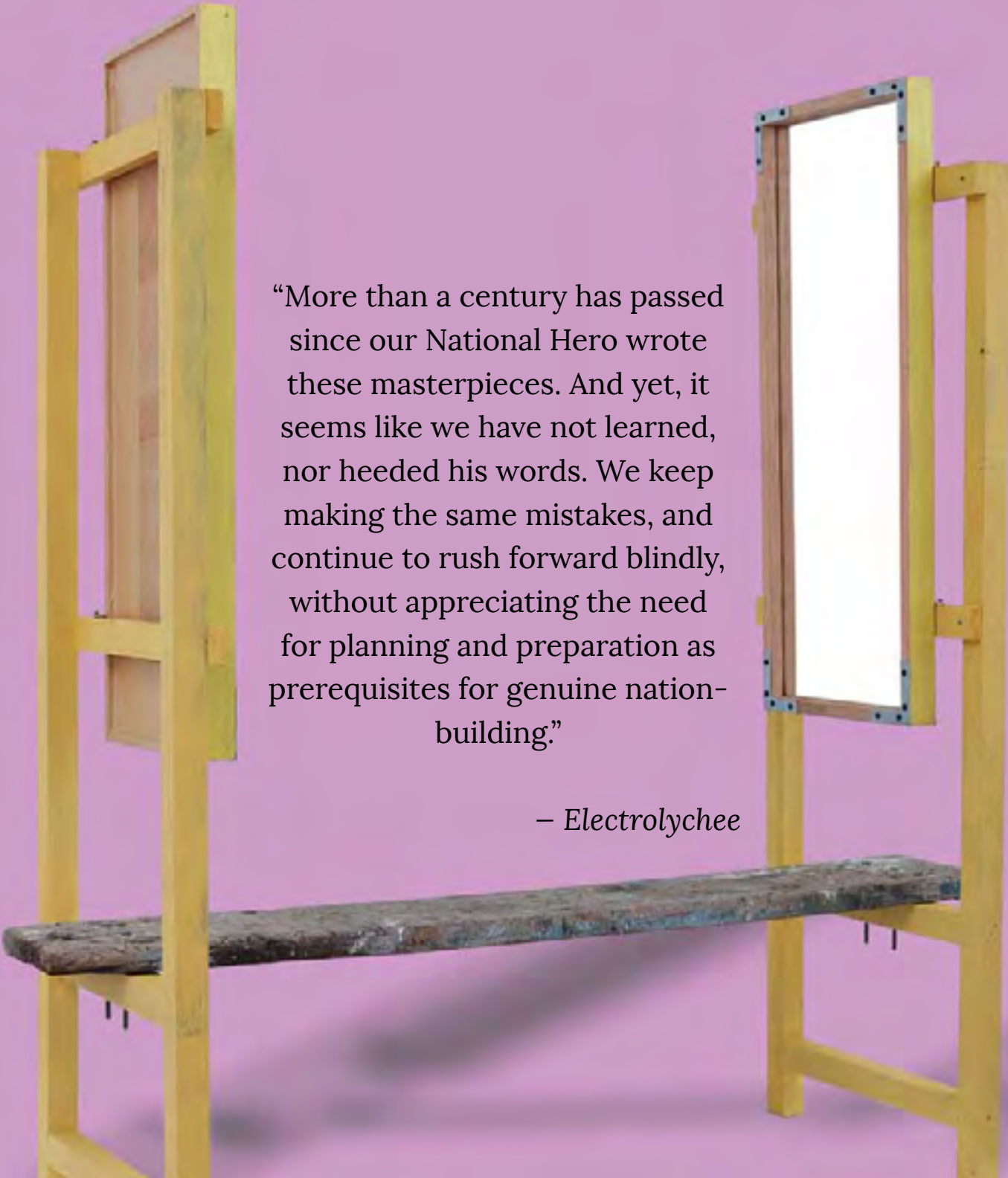




N

is for

Noli
Me Tangere
and El Filibusterimo



“More than a century has passed since our National Hero wrote these masterpieces. And yet, it seems like we have not learned, nor heeded his words. We keep making the same mistakes, and continue to rush forward blindly, without appreciating the need for planning and preparation as prerequisites for genuine nation-building.”

– *Electrolychee*



OPPRESSION

OPINION

...so as to help form a meaningful **OPINION**,
that questions as much as it enlightens.”

– Wesley Valenzuela






“Peace

is what every man,
woman, and child must
Possess.

Power comes from peace, and not might.
Prosperity grows more meaningful in peace.
A free **Press** helps inform the **People** to decide
what is right and just.”

– Palma Tayona



“Most of the time, those who are in power are the ones who bend the rules, adding more injustice to an already broken system. When an abuse of power becomes evident, it’s our right to

QUESTION

authority.”

– John Ed De Vera

QUIET



“R is for **REVISIONISM.**

It has been said, ‘History is written by the victors.’ For those who lived through the horrors of Martial Law, the creeping and sly attempts to change the past by distorting facts and trivializing the State’s systematic acts of injustice are insulting and cruel.

We must resist all attempts to place a veil over our eyes. We must always remember. And we must pass the memory to our children, and they to theirs.”

#NeverAgain #NeverForget

– Keith Dador

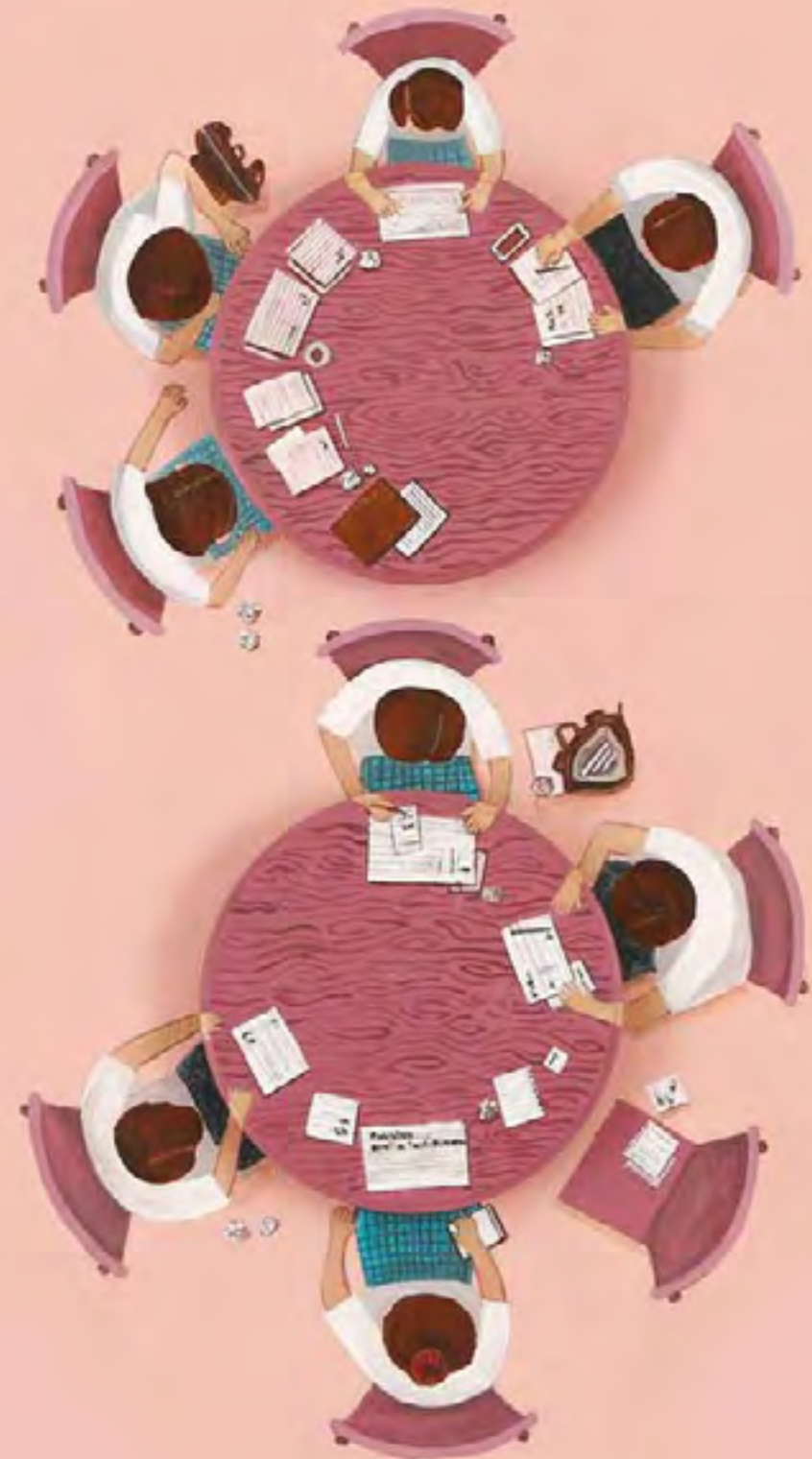
“STUDENTS

play a vital role in society and how it is shaped generation after generation. Being young, students are free to be more reckless, fearless, discontented, and hopeful. Our history shows how these attributes make the studentry, as a movement, critical to social change.

Often, as in the time of martial law, it is the students who are first to challenge authority.

This piece was inspired by students. I used two round tables to represent collaboration, which is another key to a better society.”

– June Digan



SCHOOL



TORTURE

“Man is the only creature capable of consciously and deliberately harming another for no reason whatsoever.

What does that say about us?
Who are the animals?”

– Dan Matutina

Unity

“I thought that the importance of
is best shown by how an ant colony works.

For this project, I started with a single queen and bred
fire ants for 6-8 months. I then built an ants nest by making
a U-shaped acrylic container filled with hydrated coco peat
to observe the growing colony.

It was fascinating to watch how every single ant did
their part for the good of the colony. They provided a
perfect metaphor for the challenge that faces us. We must
all recognize that the protection of human rights is a
collective mission, and one that will not be truly possible
unless we all work together.”

– Jom Masolabe



VIOLENCE

“Does the end justify the means? Does the quest for peace and security justify the State’s use of violence?”

The piece explores the idea of violence. White symbolizes purity and safety while black symbolizes harm. The wooden pieces represent humanity and society. As the black ink slowly drips on the stack of wooden blocks, the surface paper underneath it eventually breaks, causing the blocks to fall mark the blank white paper underneath. The resulting splatter is a visual representation of violence.”

– *Electrolychee*



WWar

“W is for War, particularly today’s so-called war on drugs. I am a mother and my son is at a very impressionable age. I want him to know that it’s not simply a case of the police ‘killing bad guys.’ He has to learn that everyone has rights, even the ‘bad guys,’ but it’s hard to make a 6-year-old boy see something that goes beyond black and white. Still, I have to do what I can to make him understand.”

– Lala Gallardo

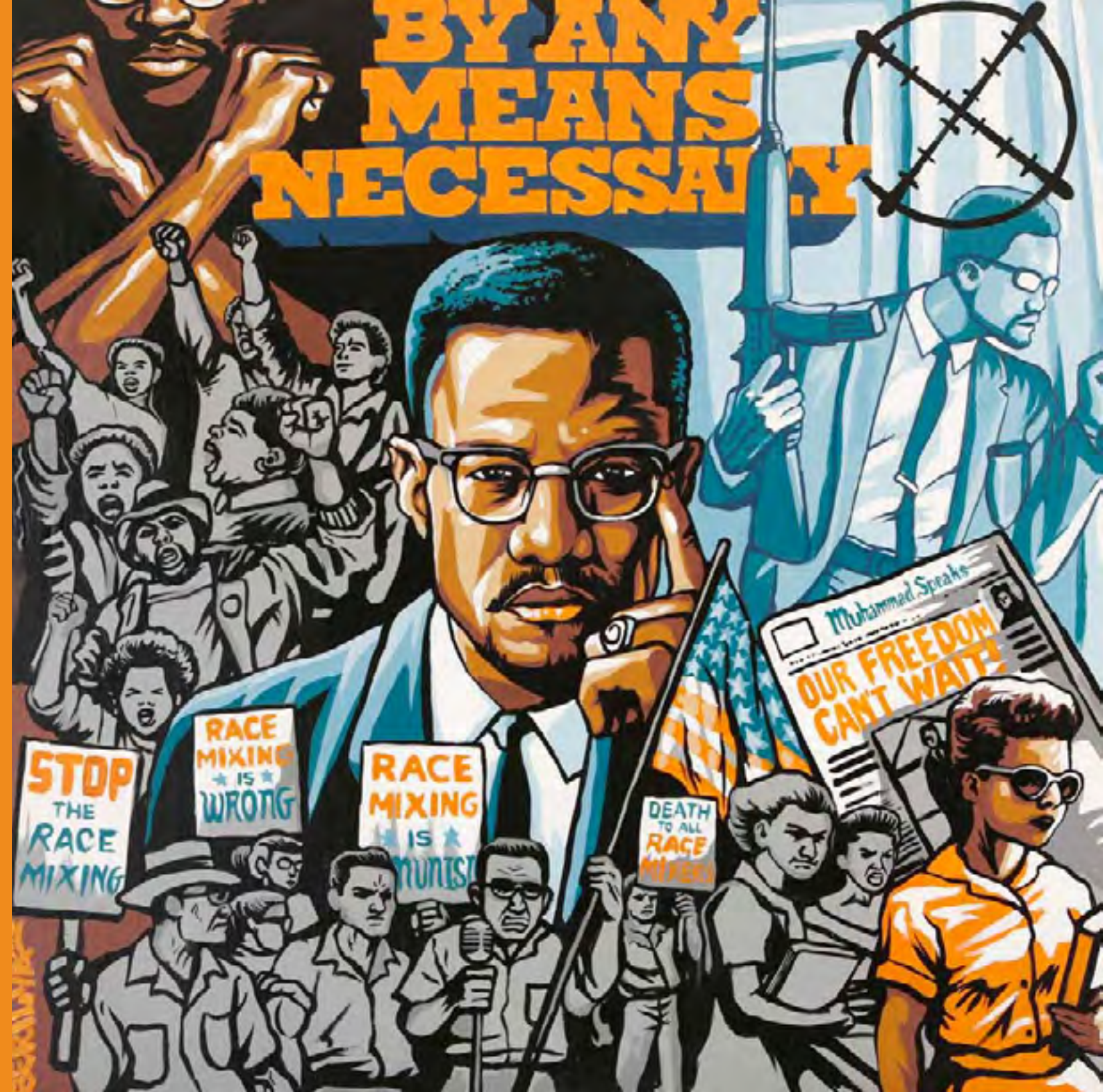


“Malcolm X was an African-American Muslim minister and human rights activist. His life exemplified the very thin line that separates civil disobedience and armed revolt, and the difficult choices that activists have to make.

We chose one of his most powerful quotations and focused on this theme throughout the artwork. It was very important for us that we showed an anti-race mixing white rally alongside a portrait of Malcolm wielding a rifle and peeking out the window. We also opted to not write the ‘X’ as a letter, but instead as a symbol, referring in particular to the sniper scope and the crossed arms of an African-American.”

– Ang Gerilya

XENOPHOBIA



YOUTH

“More than anyone,
it is the

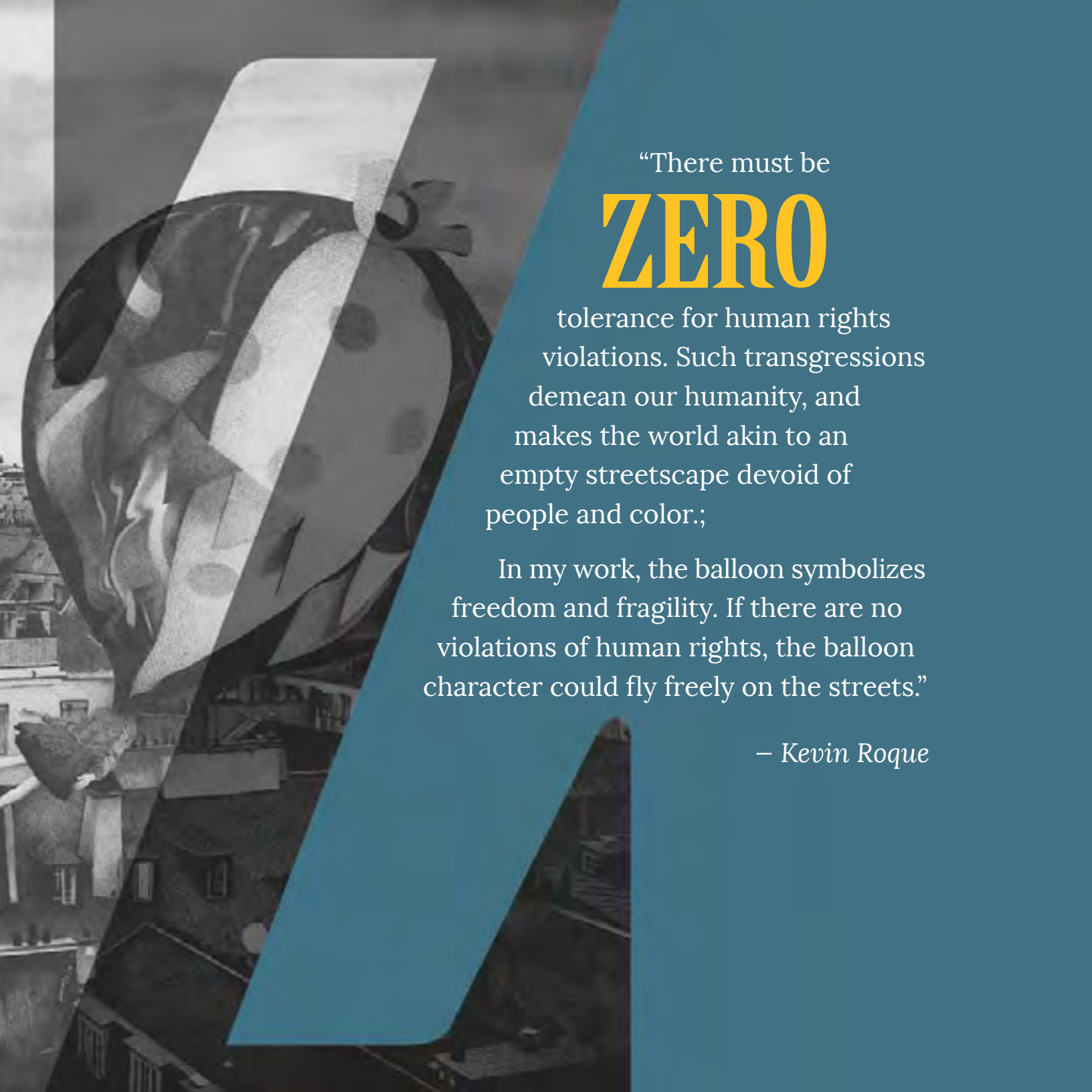
who are empowered by
technology. The keyboard is
their tool and their weapon. It
gives them tremendous power,
unlimited possibilities, and
heavy responsibilities.

How the YOUTH choose
to wield technology will
determine humanity’s future.”

– Meneer Marcelo



You



“There must be

ZERO

tolerance for human rights violations. Such transgressions demean our humanity, and makes the world akin to an empty streetscape devoid of people and color.;

In my work, the balloon symbolizes freedom and fragility. If there are no violations of human rights, the balloon character could fly freely on the streets.”

– Kevin Roque

FEATURED ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

ELECTROLYCHEE is a creative studio run by Bru and Marcus Nada. The studio plays within the realms of digital (*electro*) and organic (*lychee*) imagery. Both visual artists are long-time members of Ilustrador ng Kabataan (InK).

Electrolychee's clients run the gamut of big and commercial to small and fulfilling. Electrolychee is featured in publications such as Asian Creatives (Ubies), How Magazine (UK), *Katha* Magazine (Philippines), The Great Big Book of Fashion Illustration (W&V Press), and Great Graphic Design on a Budget (How Books). Their studio's 2015 full-color book "Biyaheng Langit: Jeepney Folk Art" documents the roving imagery of jeepney vinyl decals.

Their works can be viewed at www.facebook.com/ElectrolycheeStudio.

N – wood and mirror / **V** – mixed media

DAN MATUTINA is a graphic designer and illustrator. He is a founding partner at Plus63 Design Co. and the Hydra Design Group. Dan received the prestigious Art Directors Club Young Guns Award in 2013.

His style is described as a combination of angular, graphic shapes layered with hand-painted textures. Dan's illustrations have appeared in print, digital and animation.

J / T – acrylic and metal

GERILYA is an artist collective formed in 2008. Its three original members, Jano, Kube, and Zap, hail from the College of Fine Arts at the University of the Philippines. Gerilya is involved in various art related activities and experimental ventures such as comics, street art, graffiti animation, fine art exhibitions, and illustration commissions. Their work is inspired by Philippine culture and history, exploring socio-political issues and national identity. They seek to make their art as relevant as possible and draw influence from Philippine popular and mass culture.

Their works can be seen on Tumblr and Facebook as *Gerilya* or *Ang Gerilya*, and on Instagram as *anggerilya*.

G / K / X – acrylic on plywood

JOHN ED DE VERA is a multi-disciplinary designer, with a penchant for lettering, paper-cutting, and experimenting with different and new media. His philosophy of creativity has so far led to finding new ways to push and innovate his craft, unafraid of learning new things and twisting them in his very own creative way.

John Ed is currently a creative director at TBWA\SMP, leading the ad agency's design team. He is also recognized and celebrated by the international design community as @battery_full on Instagram, or at johned.co.

B – watercolor and paper cut-outs / **Q** – wood

JOM MASOLABE strives to bring ideas to life through thoughtful play of colors, Jom Masolabe creates pieces that reflect his personal beliefs as well as his passion for arts.

His understanding of structure, pacing and rhythm allows him to depict meaningful and thought-provoking concepts. The artist especially enjoys turning static design into pieces in motion, adding fun and even a little bit of whimsy to his creations.

Not limiting himself to digital arts, this Philippine-based artist continuously explores different media in order to develop his personal style, one that he hopes will be eventually identified through every piece he makes.

E – laser-printed acrylic sheets

U – acrylic and hydrated coco peat

JUNE DIGAN is a graphic designer, illustrator, and letterer based in Manila. Her works have been featured in some of the most distinguished design blogs, and also appeared in publications such as *Katha*, *Candy Magazine*, *The ABCs of Hand-Lettering*, *A Year of Positivity*, *Rizal in Germany*, *Stick 'Em Up*, and in *Decorative Lettering*.

Today she spends most of her time working as a graphic designer while pursuing personal art projects on the side. If she's not in the office designing or at home doing watercolor, you'll find her outdoors doing murals.

Look for her at <http://www.junedigann.com>.

H / S – acrylic and mixed media on canvas

KEITH DADOR is a professional photographer and educator. He runs Catnip Studios, a photography, video, and design company. He has done commercial, advertising, corporate, and editorial work for various clients here and abroad. Keith also teaches photography at Asia Pacific College School of Multimedia Arts. He was part of the photography panel for the Behance Portfolio Reviews Manila in 2015. On the side, he's an avid cyclist, a cat lover, and a coffee enthusiast. At night, he plays in a noise/post rock band called Legarda.

His works can be seen at www.facebook.com/wearecatnipstudios or www.flickr.com/photos/xkeidax.

D / R – photograph

KEVIN ROQUE is best known for his intricate pencil drawings with high level of naturalism. His works have dark undertones and are atmospheric in nature which conveys a sense of mystery and nostalgia. Self-taught, he incorporated surreal imagery in his works by using techniques he learned in graphic design, collage, and photography. Later, Kevin devoted himself to the creation of more symbolic visual storytelling by carefully reconstructing personal observations of his immediate surroundings.

Some of his works are online at Facebook and Instagram as *kevinroqueart*.

C / Z – graphite on paper

LALA GALLARDO is an artist based in Manila, Philippines. She graduated from the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts with a degree in Art History in 2004 but has been practicing her art since her early youth. While she often takes on illustration and graphic design projects, at her core she is a painter and mixed media artist. She has had several group and one-woman shows, and has participated in TransCultural Exchange's worldwide Tile and Coaster Projects. Her graphic novel collaboration with writer/sister Waya Gallardo was awarded first place in the Philippine Graphic Fiction Awards.

Her works can be seen at lalagallardo.com.

L / W – fabric, soft sculpture

MENEER MARCELO is a freelance graphic designer, illustrator and teacher. He has been doing designs and illustrations for local and international publications for more than five years. He has also worked with some of the best agencies in the Philippines. Currently, he is a lecturer at the Ateneo de Manila and Mapua Institute of Technology.

More of the Meneer's works can be viewed at *behance.net/meneer*, and *meneermarcelo.tumblr.com*.

M – candle wax / **Y** – silicon keyboard cover

PALMA TAYONA is an illustrator, visual artist, and book designer. Since its inception in 2005, he has been part of the Center for Art, New Ventures & Sustainable Development as its creative director. He has designed and illustrated children's books for more than 15 years, amongst them *Bugtong*, *Bugtong I* and *II* for Tahanan Publishing, *Tsinelas ni Inoy* in *Gintong Habihan: An Anthology*, the *Batang Bayani* Series for Museo Pambata, and "See, I'm Holding Daddy's Hands." Two of his book designs have won prestigious awards: *Doll Eyes* (winner of the National Children's Book Award in 2012), and *The Rocking Horse* (winner of the 2007 Gintong Aklat Award).

He is on Facebook as *daniel.tayona* and on www.visualviscera.blogspot.com.

F / P – graphite on paper

WESLEY VALENZUELA works with various mediums and disciplines such as painting, serigraphy, collage and graphic designer. His works personify the condition and influence of the environment he grew up in, utilizing the city's symbols, sounds, imagery and narratives as a starting point for his creative process. Using iconography and symmetry as a basis for composition, he then reconstruct and reconfigure images collected from varied sources, altering its original context, and placing it within his own visual language.

Wesley is a visual artist and graphic designer born and raised in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

A / I / O – framed lightbox



CANVAS' 1 Million Books for One Million Filipino Children Campaign aims to inspire in children a love for reading by donating its award-winning books to public schools, hospitals, and disadvantaged communities throughout the country.

A child that reads is a creative, empowered, and imaginative child who will learn independently, envision a brighter future, and ultimately lead a productive and meaningful life.

You can help us!
For more information, visit www.canvas.ph, email info@canvas.ph, or find us on Facebook: **Center for Art, New Ventures and Sustainable Development.**

CANVAS, a non-profit organization, works with the creative community to promote children's literacy, explore national identity, and broaden public awareness of Philippine art, culture, and the environment.

More books from CANVAS



ELIAS AND HIS TREES
Adapted from "The Man Who Planted Trees" by Jean Giono
Adaptation by Augie Rivera
Art by Romeo Forbes



ANG BATANG MARAMING BAWAL
Story by Fernando Rosal Gonzalez
Art by Rodel Tapaya



SI LUPITO AT ANG BARRIO SIRKERO
Story by Rowald Almazar
Art by José John Santos III



THE ROCKING HORSE
Story by Becky Bravo
Art by Elmer Borlongan



ANG DYP NI MANG TOMAS
Story by Genaro Gojo Cruz
Art by Anthony Palomo



EARTH TALES: 3 ECO-FABLES FOR CHILDREN
"The King and the Royal Trees" by Paul Aird
Art by Ilee Olivares-Mellor
"The Hummingbird" (author unknown)
Art by Plet Bolipata
"The Star Thrower" (author unknown)
Art by Liza Flores



THE BOY WHO TOUCHED HEAVEN
Story by Iris Gem Li
Art by Sergio Bumatay III



SOL, A LEGEND ABOUT THE SUN
Story by Agay Llanera
Art by Farley del Rosario



TAHAN NA, TAHANAN
Story by Maria Isabel Alarilla-Arellano
Art by Don M. Salubayba



MESSAGE IN THE SAND
Story by Charmaine Aserappa
Artworks by Roel Obernio



RIZALPABETO
Poems by Vim Nadera
Art by Elmer Borlongan



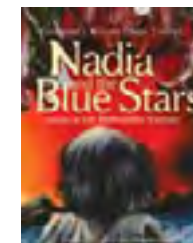
DOLL EYES
Story by Elaine Santos
Artworks by Joy Mallari



THE CAT & THE BAT AND OTHER FABLES
Adapted by Rhandee Garlitos
Art by Elmer Borlongan



THE TRIANGLE MAN AND THE FLIGHTLESS DIWATA
Story by Kate Osias
Artworks by Dex Fernandez



NADIA AND THE BLUE STARS
Story by Francesca Nicole Chan Torres
Art by Liv Romualdez Vinluan



A FISH TALE
Story by Becky Bravo
Art by Daniel dela Cruz



HERE BE DRAGONS
Story by Victor Fernando R. Ocampo
Artworks by Jon Jaylo



MY BIG SISTER CAN SEE DRAGONS
Story by Rocky Sanchez Tirona
Artworks by Liza Flores



INANG KALIKASAN'S BAD HAIR DAY
Story by Reclé Etino Vibal
Artworks by John Paul Antido



BENCAB'S ACTIVITY BOOK FOR CHILDREN
Activities written by Karen Joy Desamparado-Foronda
Art by Benedicto Cabrera



PANYAAN: THREE TALES OF THE TAGBANUA
Stories by Rhandee Garlitos and Annette Ferrer
Art by Sergio Bumatay III

