

Migs Villanueva

b. June 27, 1961

Throughout her life, artist Migs Villanueva has worn many hats and has played many roles. From her earliest start, graduating with a degree in Psychology from the Ateneo de Manila University in 1982, Villanueva was a corporate career woman. It was in the field of business that she first found success, eventually becoming the President and CEO of Gold Packaging and Manufacturing Corporation in the early 1990s. However, Villanueva was destined to leave her mark in far more creative endeavours.

Ultimately, Villanueva is a storyteller. After leaving the corporate field, Villanueva set out to chart a successful career in the arts. Along the way, she won three Palanca Awards (2002, 2004, and 2006) and two NVM Gonzales Awards (2001 and 2002), attesting her firm grasp of the nuances of narrative. It is little wonder that her own naïf visual art career is also narrative in scope. Having been schooled by the famed Mauro Malang Santos as a member of the Saturday Group (of which she is now the current President), Villanueva eschews the strict formalism of the Academe, and its obsession with perspectives and anatomy, instead relying on bold pastel colors, wanderlust compositions, and the inherent narrative that radiates from her all her works.

Villanueva takes her character sketches and illustrations and imbues them with saturated lightness and refreshingly simple arrangements. She takes her subjects and puts them in activities we imagine children should do—playing in gardens, pulling toy wagons, skipping rope. The exuberance and innocence of childhood is expressed in a recurring Villanueva motif: that of dots representing the eyes, nose and mouth. By reducing what should be the prime characteristics of a child to pictorial ‘suggestions’, Villanueva invites the audience to put their own childhood experiences in her works—our faces being that of the child in the painting. We become characters in the artist’s narrative, which only emphasizes her exploration of the concept of escapism. Escapism, Villanueva seems to be telling is, is to remember childhood in terms of longing and nostalgia.

Her approach to visual art has seen continued success for the intrepid painter. From her first solo show at Galerie Francesca in 2010, Villanueva has now exhibited in and around Manila, Davao, and Hong Kong. She also continues doing cross-artistic works, having recently completed a screenplay. Migs Villanueva continues playing her many roles and finding success in all of them.