Our National Artist for Literature, the insuperable poet Xoce Garcia Villa, must have suffered a seizure of sorts when he conceived the durable line "The Nude is to be Viewed between her thighs."

A Surprise. (His pawkish humor?)

Now looking back, at this remove in time, at THE FILIPINO NUDE by Alfredo Roces, it was a braveheart's pioneer book collection of nudes by our artists such as Lee Aguinaldo. (I was quite harsh in my judgment of the book when I first looked into it some three decades ago, and no longer now. I see it now as a syllabus for artists essential to their artistic evolution. So three cheers to Alfredo Roces.)

We are in the cultural and artistic milieu where The Taboo (The Forbidden) is not only mystifying and attractive but also seductive, like the sensation of leaping in the dark (this in spite of the easy accessibility of porn in the Internet). In our conventional culture, The Nude is taboo, yet our young ones and some oldies you encounter in the malls are in various stages of undress. Yet The Nude or nudity is the forbidden. Yet there can be nudity were it a natural urge as in children and accepted as a form of natural social behavior.

Though there are among our beautiful young lasses at the drop of a coin will freely shed off their clothes.

Religious constraints, social taboo, hypocritical Puritanism, old maidish attitude, can stop us from enjoying the great little beauties you can see in The Nude of the female anatomy in art. For its great importance in our art, where The Nude is missing as essential. How many can draw or paint it!

The abstract expressionist de Kooning did not earn his laurels by ignoring The Nude. He worked to the bone his visual perception by doing countless nudes, to urge on his vision of abstract expressionism. No artist worth his weight in gold ignores The Nude. Alcuaz did them to the high heavens; so did the dyed-in-the-wool abstractionist Lee Aguinaldo did his nudes and nudities. The exception seems to be the great Cezanne who trembled at the thought of doing nudes with live models, who avoided meeting and confereing with fellow artists. He did his nudes through girlie nude photos. He transcended his neuroses through his genius.

Foundationally, art is line, all lines and form, that even the most abstract art is still lines and form. Like a horse-and-carriage they go together, like a well-married couple. The artist is an oneiromancer, dreamer of dreams, dreams the unattainable. He never rests until he reaches the often ungraspable, the peak of his dreams. Our artists must do The Nude in whatever form it compels them. We are fast being liberated sexually by the Internet. So by all means, we should do nudes.

I cannot think of many Filipino artists who can do justifiably nudes. Among the young ones especially, Freud teaches that as a rule artists are proud of their libidos. Taken as given, can they spill them all out in their canvasses art for art's sake? A nude painting is not only a body. It must sizzle with sensuality, eroticism and sexuality. It must fire up the hidden, fantastic imagination of the viewer. It must make him tremble with ardent desire to worship his beloved with a vengeance.
Contrast the great sculptor Maillol with the homoerotic Michelangelo whose virtuous libido made his Saints and Popes naked only to be coerced to clothe them by his Pope benefactor. (A loss to great art.) Maillol was no inventor of new forms—but he sculpted his freewheeling libido into his nudes. Letting it all hung out, proving his true male libido, sensually, erotically, sexually. He inhabited them drowning in the innate fleshly beauties of his creations precisely.

The gay abandon is what we need. The Nude the artist must not lack to inject vitality in the feeble bloodstream of our art. It will put great energy in our humdrum lives.

Ah, to borrow from another lover of art, to hear those melodious harmonies emanate from The Nude with the visual eye-perception with delectation. Only those artists who accept the naked human body with awe in an open straightforward manner have such command of line and form. The naked flesh shall yet be our salvation.

A sort of celestial call that, the call to the artist who will save us from perdition.


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