This special post is dedicated to a great Filipino master who spent his retirement years with his family in Davao City from 1967 until he breathed his last on 1985 at age 89. He was a Philippine National Artist, and co-founder of the Mindanao Ethnoculture Foundation that focused on the indigenous culture and heritage of Mindanao. He was Victorio C. Edades, "Father of Modern Philippine Art."

Born on December 13, 1895 in Barrio Bolosan in Dagupan, Pangasinan, Victorio Edades was the youngest of ten children, six of whom died from smallpox epidemic shortly before the turn of the 20th century.

Edades' artistry began at an early age. He obtained his early education in barrio schools and went to a high school in Lingayen, Pangasinan. By seventh grade, his teachers were so impressed with his talent that he was fondly named, "apprentice teacher" in his art class. He was very good in class from the very beginning, having earned several awards in school debates and writing competitions.
In 1919, after high school, Edades left for the United States to study arts. He initially worked in salmon canneries in Alaska and eventually moved to Seattle where he took up Architecture at the University of Washington and earned a Master of Fine Arts in Painting. It was also during his stay in the U.S. that he married American Jean Garrott, with whom he had his only daughter, Joan.

While in the United States, he saw numerous artworks of modern European artists such as Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, and the Surrealists exhibited at the New York Armory Hall. Edades found that the artworks were a complete departure from the conventional Impressionistic and Realistic works of arts that were traditionally presented in refined detailing and visual fidelity. He was so deeply impressed with the modernist style that he began to paint in the modern manner. This new style allowed him freedom to fill his canvases with artistic expressions in his own way.


When Edades returned to the Philippines in 1928, he saw many of his contemporary fellow artists were doing similar themes painted in a limited technique that mostly followed Amorsolo’s style. Dismayed by what he saw, he launched a one-man show at the Philippine Columbia Club in Ermita, Manila in December 1928 and featured thirty of his most renowned paintings including...
those that won acclaim in the United States. The conservative Filipino art circle was apparently shaken by his artworks that not one painting was sold. His paintings were in contrast from the works of Amorsolo and the Classicists who painted bright cheery scenes of flawless Filipinos and their idealized daily routines. His were figures and images done in muddy earth colors - yellow ochres and raw sienna accented by bold black distorted contours whose proportions defy classical measure. Edades choice of subject caused quite a stir among his viewers and critics. His painting "The Builders" (1928) portrayed tough, dirty construction workers drenched in grime and sweat. The painting became known as the first ever Modernist painting in the country. Even his nude paintings were nothing like Amorsolo’s portrayal of the Filipina at her best. ("The Builders" is now part of the collection of the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila).

In 1930, Edades joined the University of Santo Tomas in Manila and helped organized the school's Department of Architecture. He was eventually appointed director of the university’s College of Architecture and Fine Arts in 1935. Guided by the existing American curricula, he designed the first Liberal Arts curriculum which led to a Bachelor’s Degree in Fine Arts, a first in the Philippines since art was only taught in vocational schools then. Subjects such as, Drawing, Painting and Composition, including Western and Oriental Art History, foreign languages, and elective science subjects such as Zoology and Botany were standard to the curriculum. Owing to the immense contribution of Edades, the University of Santo Tomas became the forerunner of Modern Art in fine arts education in the Philippines and has produced generations of artists who have dominated the Philippine art scene.
Through his continuous propagation of his beliefs and ideas on Modern Art as shown in his artworks and teachings, Victorio Edades sparked a friendly debate between modern and academic (classical) arts with Ariston Estrada, Ignacio Manlapaz, and Fermin Sanchez. This was interrupted by the second World War, but resumed in 1948, with sculptor Guillermo Tolentino and painter Fernando Amorsolo representing the conservatives. In the pages of the Herald Mid-Week Magazine, Sunday Times Magazine, and This Week, Edades debated with Guillermo Tolentino, who spoke for the conservatives. The spirited exchange was very educational for readers and fostered appreciation of artistic and intellectual currents. Edades debated that the conventions and clichéd ideology of domestic art stunted the development of Philippine art, attesting that “art is ever the expression of man’s emotion, and not a mere photographic likeness of nature. Thus to express his individual emotion, the artist is privileged to create in that distinctive form that best interprets his own experience. And the distortion of plastic elements of art such as line, mass and color - is one of the many ways of expressing one’s rhythmic form.” Edades also explained that Modern Art is not anti-Classicist. He said, “From the technical point of view, Modern Art is an outgrowth of Classical Art. Modern Art is the interpretation of the Classical concept conditioned by the artist’s new experience with the aid of improved means of aesthetic expression.” By his defiance to the academic perception of art and determination to stand by his ideology, he made art available to the common man.
With the uproar Edades’ ideas raised, he knew that he cannot make a living by merely painting. So he went by producing commissioned works, particularly murals. He did murals for prominent individuals (like Juan Nakpil) and institutions. And in 1934, Edades invited fellow artists, Galo B. Ocampo and Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco to collaborate with him in a mural project for the lobby of the Capitol Theater in Escolta Street in Manila. This led to several other collaborative projects, and they eventually formed a group known as the Triumvirate of Modern Art. This began the growth of mural painting in the Philippines.

In 1937, Edades also traveled to Paris to observe and study the different modern arts, architectural design, and watercolor painting at the Atelier Colarossi and Ecole des Beaux Arts, Fotainbleau.

By 1938, Edades, along with Diosdado Lorenzo and Galo Ocampo, opened up the Atelier of Modern Art at the M. H. Del Pilar, in Malate, Manila. This resulted in the formation of the Thirteen Moderns, considered the pioneers of modern art in the Philippines. This group was headed by Edades and included such masters as Carlos Francisco, Galo Ocampo, Diosdado Lorenzo, Vicente Manansala, HR Ocampo, Anita Magasaysay, Cesar Legaspi, Demetrio Diego, Ricarte Purugganan, Jose Pardo, Bonifacio Cristobal and Arsenio Capili. This distinguished roster of artists was strongly committed to explore the modern style in Philippine art. Edades also organized the School of Design with Juan Nakpil in 1940.

In 1961, Edades received the Pro Partia award during the Rizal Centennial Celebration of the same year, and in 1964, he was also given the Araw ng Maynila Award in Painting.

After serving many years as Director of the College of Fine Arts and Architecture, he retired from the University of Santo Tomas in 1965 at the age of 70, and was later bestowed with the degree of Doctor in Fine Arts, Honoris Causa on February 12, 1977.
Following his retirement from the University of Santo Tomas, Edades retired to Davao City with his American-born wife Jean and their only daughter, Joan. There, he spent most of his time at his garden in Davao, listening to Chopin as he painted and received friends. The many years that Edades spent at the university is foregrounded by the lush painting “UST Botanical Gardens”, which emphasizes the master’s deep interest in gardening and horticulture. He also taught for a time at the Philippine Women’s College and resumed his career as an artist. His later works are said to be “flatter.” His portraits and genre paintings in Davao are not seen to be as heavy or solid as his earlier painting of “The Builders.” From Cézanne, Edades grew more interested in the style of Utamaro of Japan and other artists whose charm is in color rather than solidity.

Edades also co-founded the Mindanao Ethnoculture Foundation which focused on the indigenous culture and heritage of Mindanao. In his last fifty years, the subject of his paintings had also become indigenized.

And in 1976, at the pinnacle of his career, Edades was named Philippine National Artist for Painting.

On March 7, 1985, Victorio C. Edades - a great Filipino master and Father of Philippine Modern Art, leader of the revolutionary Thirteen Moderns, National Artist, and a distinguished retiree in Davao City, passed away at the age of 89, leaving behind him a legacy of distinct style of Philippine Modern Art - an art which had been an obvious awe to his contemporaries, an admiration to his followers, and will undoubtedly serve as an inspiration to the generations of budding Filipino artists in the many years to come.

Edades’ major works include:

- 1928 - The Sketch, National Museum Collection
- 1928 - The Builders, Cultural Center of the Philippines Collection
- 1935 - Interaction, with Carlos V. Francisco and Galo B. Ocampo
- 1976 - Demoiselles D’avao
- 1979 - Kasaysayan, a mural for a Manila bank

Achievements:

- 1961 - Pro Patria Award, given during the Rizal Centennial Celebration
- 1964 - Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan Award, from the City of Manila
Thirteen Moderns of Philippine Art

Victorio Edades  
Carlos (Botong) Francisco  
Galo Ocampo  
Diosdado Lorenzo  
Vicente Manansala  
H.R. Ocampo  
Anita Magsaysay-Ho  
Cesar Legaspi  
Demetrio Diego  
Ricarte Puruganan  
Jose Pardo  
Bonifacio Cristobal  
Arsenio Capili

The Thirteen Artist is named in honor of the pioneering group of thirteen modernist in Philippine art.

The Thirteen Artists Awards started as a curatorial project of the Cultural Center of the Philippines under its first museum curator Roberto Chabet. The award recognizes progressive, young artist who are chosen based on: a body of work characterized by artistic integrity; innovativeness and congency of ideas; responsive to contemporary realities; and sustained artistic ability demonstrated in individual and collective exhibitions. The Award is now given every three years.

Ref.: http://davaocitybybattad.blogspot.dk/2012/01/victorio-c-edades.html

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