

THE GIFT

Michael Villagante



ART CUBE GALLERY

info@artcubegalleryphilippines.com



**Heart of the Matter:
The Gift by Michael Villagante**

When one mentions the “heart,” one either refers to the vital organ of the circulatory system or the seat of love—or both. The correlation between the two has been established since time immemorial, rhapsodized by poets, artists, and musicians. Despite the claims of science that love—that which makes us alive, human, and seek out vital connections in the world—is a result of the chemicals of the brain, a neurological activity, the heart has emplaced itself in the imagination as the true arbiter of deeply felt emotions. Such a correlation is not unfounded. After all, if you stop the heart from beating, you stop the person from living.

In *The Gift*, Michael Villagante offers the viewer the heart—both as physical fact and the spiritual center of man. In this suite of works, the heart is exposed, offered as a gift. It has roots in Catholic iconography: Jesus Christ is depicted with his heart exposed and strewn with thorns. As a visual symbol, the heart is near universal. It is one of the first things that a child is able to draw. When one says that the heart is offered, it means that the self is given in its entirety and without conditions.

This offering may be seen suspect, rejected, or abused. This is why, in some of the works is the presence of the heart besieged: pierced through by a dagger, pricked by pins, made disposable in a swaddle of plastic garbage. This is heart betrayed by people, as Romans 1:29 puts it, who “have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice.”

But the heart, in the hands of people who understand the extent of such an offering, may be nurtured and made strong. In one work, the heart is depicted emerging in white petals. In another, it is shown as ferocious as a lion. These are hearts cultivated in the right conditions: gratefulness, kindness, sincerity.

By presenting the heart as a metaphor for gift, Villagante underscores the unconditional nature of the gesture of giving. One doesn't know how the heart will be received. And yet one is perpetually ready to be vulnerable, if only to go beyond the self and touch the other to offer a sacrifice, a lifetime promise, a love that endures.

Carlomar Arcangel Daoana



DOBLE KARA
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



MARTYR
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



**WALA NA AKONG I
BANG HILING**
Oil on Canvas
48 x 60 inches
2020



BRAVE HEART
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



COLORFUL HEART
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



HIGHER WITH THE SILVER CROWN
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



PLASTIK
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



PURE
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020



TAGOS SA PUSO
Oil on Canvas
6 x 6 inches
2020