

Julius Clar (b. 1953, Surigao del Sur) was born in the same year his town, Cortes, gained independence as a municipality. Growing up with his grandparents he observed his grandfather paint betting boards and election banners for local officials and shared his grandmother's passion for live performances of serialized radio dramas.

After graduating from high school, he moved in with his uncle to study Journalism at the Lyceum of the Philippines. His first job was at a marketing firm where he wrote, took photographs, did the layout and supervised the printing of a monthly newsletter. It was here where he would learn to understand “how white spaces work” and determine “the weight of colors”.

He would then move to and spend twelve years (1985-1997) in Riyadh working as an audio-visual technician at King Saud University. Here he learnt the fundamentals of photography under the mentorship of fellow Filipino Pons Español who was also working in the same department. He spent many hours at the library looking at photography books and magazines particularly the now-defunct Darkroom Magazine-- where he discovered the works of American photographers: Ansel Adams, Minor White, Paul Strand and William Eggleston.

He was particularly struck by the work of Willy Ronis which he discovered by sheer coincidence while flipping through a furniture brochure in a receiving room. In one of the pages, was an office interior with small framed poster reproductions by Ronis hanging on the wall, namely *Boulevard Richard Lanoir*, Paris, 1946 and *Nu à la Fenêtre*, Paris, 1955. This instance actually made him purchase his first Hasselblad system to shoot medium format.

In his last year in King Saud, he used the darkroom and made gelatin silver prints on 11"x 14" fiber-based Forte paper, encased them in German-imported aluminum frames, and brought them home to Manila for his very first exhibition at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, *Light Among the Ruins*. The series “documents the changes of the temperament of light” as seen in the mud brick buildings in the town of Diriyah which existed before the discovery of crude oil in the Arabian Peninsula.

Other notable exhibitions include: *A River of Light* (1998) at the Lopez Museum and *Untitled Discomforts* (1999) at the Ayala Museum.

At the turn of the millennium, Clar would shift to processing his photographs through the Van Dyke method. Using sunlight to print the image on a substrate coated with a mix of chemicals, the process would result in rich, sepia-toned prints which he eventually incorporated into boxed assemblages.

In 2004 he was invited to become the chairperson of the new Photography Degree Program of the School of Design and Arts in the College of Saint Benilde--- the first of its kind in the country. His aim was for the photography student to be completely “photography literate” and have a robust, well-rounded knowledge of the specificities of the medium across different contexts.

After around a decade of exhibiting photographs and assemblages he would eventually stop participating in commercial exhibitions and focus on what he now considers his “graduation” from photography: collage.

According to Clar, “Photography can be set-up; collage is constructed”. He is drawn to the work of the Dadaists and believes that everything should be approached through a kind of playful destructive-constructive tension that the European, anti-art movement aimed for.

His attention is now turned towards a steel cabinet containing books with photogravure prints from the 1900s: “There is no use for me to stock up on these books. So, I turn them into collage”.

References:

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