

Press Release

CONCRETE & STEEL COSMOS

Deeply felt emotions about a place tend to blur the details and the features and leave behind the saturate of shapes, lines and colors in one's mind. These sediments splatter on the paintings of **Julio Jose Austria a.k.a. Jojo Austria** in his fourth one-man exhibition entitled **"Concrete & Steel Cosmos"** at the HIRAYA GALLERY.

In his paintings, Austria reckons that Time is an irreparable illusionist. Through the large windows of the buses, his childhood eyes follow with wonder the large electric and telephone cables which ran from his home in Aguinaldo Highway in Cavite and endlessly into the heart of Manila, where his parents work. When he was an adolescent, he learned to watch the spots where the traffic would wind and the buses would lurch to a sudden stop. When he entered college at the University of Sto. Tomas, the spool inside his brains began to record his feelings towards the sights of patches of nipa shacks along the road sides, the thundering sound of jet planes, and the alternating masses and heights of hotels and commercial buildings on the seaside route to and from España, Manila. Today, the sights and sounds of the streets in Metro Manila coil around in his mind and grow as a hub of all his melancholic dirges for the mangled view of modern urban living.

Gifted with a childlike sensibility that is strung with his strong interest on the subjects of humanities---painting, architecture, art design, photography, history, geography and music---Austria intersperses in his works a plaintive and visual soliloquy on the march of

progress in the city landscapes and the fate of its people. He rues over the blaring cacophony which emits from videoke bars, the squalor under dimly lit streets, the sky marring sights of on-going or abandoned construction projects, and the heavy downpours that wash the city over and below from the overhanging smog. He yelps at the collusion of bulky buildings and their shadows erected under a BOT (build, operate and transfer) government contract. He casts a sullen look at the burning patch of small Filipino owned stores to be banished forever and to be replaced by giant malls and banks.

However, Austria's visual style blunts the chops of his themes and subjects. He shades them with a lingering beauty of slides of neutral hues, interrupted sometimes by a drench of reds and yellows. Their asymmetrical locations within the frame coheres into images of breathing and bulging spaces and masses, a discovery helped no less by the opportune linear motion of the electric posts and the horizons of cable wire loops.

Only 28 years old, Austria owns a degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts major in painting from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila and is a member of the Anting-Anting Art Group based in Cavite province. Just recently, he won the second best entry in the Exhibition Center for Contemporary Art (ECCA) – Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) 2nd Annual Abstract Art Competition.

Hiraya Gallery is located at 530 U.N. Avenue. For more information, please call/fax 523-3331 or email: hiraya@info.com.ph or visit website at www.hiraya.com

