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### Cover Page Footnote

All photographs were provided by the artist.

# ART FOLIO

## SPECIMENS: THE EARLY ABSTRACTIONS

*An Exhibition by Ivi Avellana-Cosio*

*November 23, 2017, to January 6, 2018*

*Avellana Art Gallery*

*2680 F. B. Harrison, Pasay City, Philippines*

This is the second in a series of retrospective exhibitions entitled *JOURNEY: ART: 50* which marks my 50 years of artmaking. The first one earlier this year entitled *Work on Paper* consisted of fine prints, nudes and flowers in pen-and-ink and pastel, and photographs, all produced in the period from 1967 to the 2000s. This time, *SPECIMENS: The Early Abstractions* showcases works done in the 1970s and '80s when I was enamored by abstraction, the kind generally known as "pure," especially as done by the first generation of the famous New York School of artists and poets. My idols were the likes of the incomparable Mark Rothko with his color fields, Robert Motherwell, Clyfford Still, and later on, the abstract expressionists Willem de Kooning, Lee Krasner, Jasper Johns, as also the famous Chinese-French painter/calligrapher Zao Wu-Ki.

One may wonder: what is the point of exhibiting paintings which are not in pristine condition, having fallen victim to termite infestation, cracked or crackling wood and paint, stains of unknown origin, discoloration, chipping, water damage, rust, permanent dust marks, warping? I would like to think of this as "show and tell for adults." This is heartbreak. This is what happens when you do not have the proper facilities for storage, controlled temperature 24/7, or space enough so that one painting does not stick to the next one it is leaning on in storage. Then of course there is manhandling by people who do not know that paintings are to be treated with care because

they are like your children, they are important, therefore you do not push and pull or toss them around. Or hold them with ungloved dirty hands. Or use them to walk on when you're repainting the wall of a building with a new owner. I am not making this up. Bubble wrap was thought to be the answer until we found that it leaves little round marks on the paintings after some time. Glassine paper is marvelous, non-acidic, but frightfully expensive.

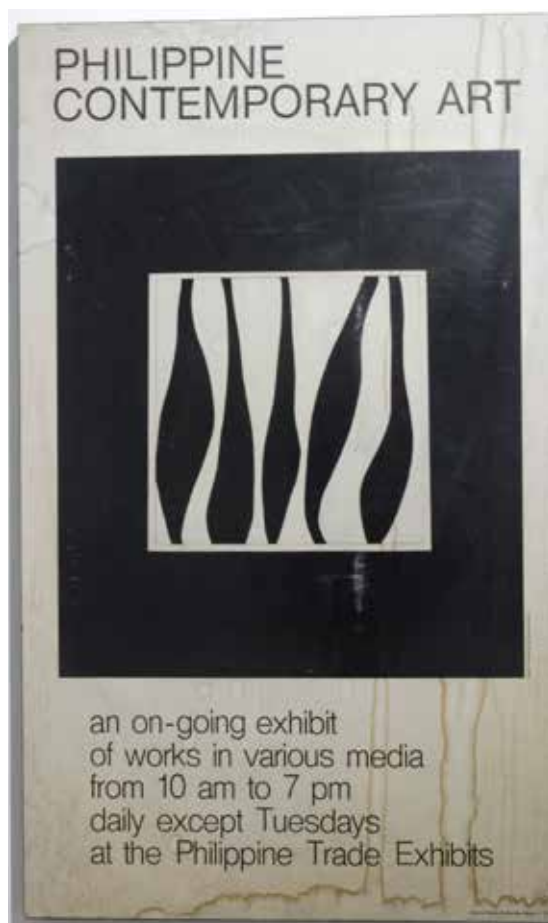
And so, here is my work. I have always wished for viewers of my abstractions to approach my paintings with an inner stillness. Hopefully, you will find what the late lamented artist Ray Albano called "a quiet space."

~ *The Moor's Pavane* ~



*The Moor's Pavane* (1979)  
48"x48" lacquer on wood

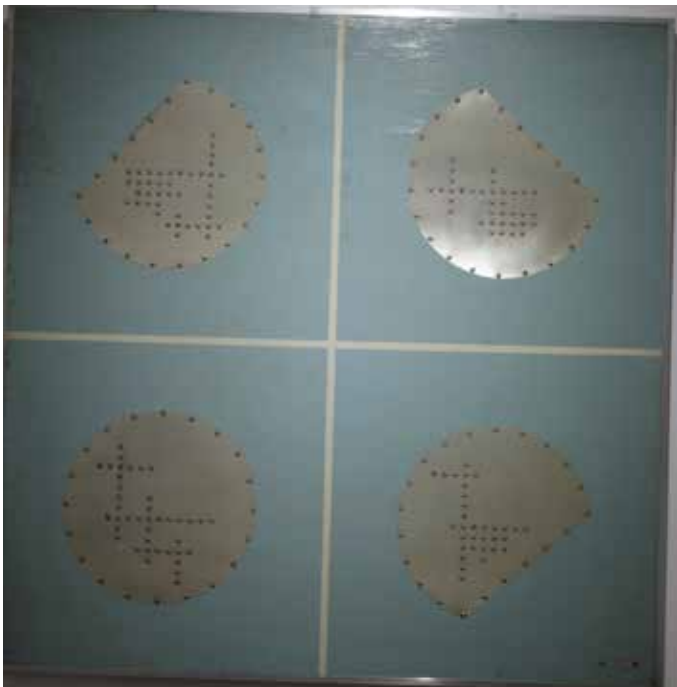
*The Moor's Pavane* was inspired by the world-renowned dancer Jose Limón's magnificent interpretation of William Shakespeare's tragic *Othello* at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Limón was tall, wiry, graceful, passionate, and the image of his horrible realization that the beloved wife he had killed was innocent stayed etched in my mind for weeks. I knew I had to paint it.



Then in 1979, I was invited to join a group show of abstractionists curated by Arturo Luz. I submitted *The Moor's Pavane*, hoping he would like it, or at least not screen it out. We

met a few days later and he told me, with his usual poker face, "I chose your painting for the show poster." I think I managed to mumble a "Thank you, Sir" even though I was quaking in my boots. After all, this was THE Arturo Luz.

~ *Moonglade II* ~



*Moonglade II* came out exactly as I had envisioned it. It is so painful to know that there is absolutely no way of restoring it. I had been told that marine plywood would not warp or

crack, so I had two layers of putty applied and sanded to a satin finish before I sprayed on the base color of blue. I then added the heavy aluminum shapes and tacks. Finally, I sprayed on the silvery white finish. It is still one of my favorite paintings.

~ *Bosque* ~



*Bosque* (1976)  
48" x 48" lacquer on wood



*Bosque III* (1976)  
30"x30" lacquer on wood

The *Bosque* series is my interpretation of a forest. Mark Rothko said, "I paint big to be intimate."

The 48"x48" *Bosque* was my entry to one of the early Art Association of the Philippines' Annual Competitions. National Artist H.R. Ocampo said he put me down for First Prize in the Painting category, but I missed it by a few points. I was thrilled, nonetheless, to say the least.

~ *Lacquer on Wood* ~



*Three-part Invention* (1979)  
48" x 48" lacquer on wood

H. R. OCAMPO came to our 1976 joint exhibit (my husband Allan's and mine) where we showed works in lacquer on wood. He was very encouraging and kind. Before he left, he told me, "Remember. If you are going to be doing more of these paintings, they must be impeccable. Impeccable."

After a few years, Allan and I gave up doing lacquer on wood because despite working outside in the driveway with masks on, and with the house windows all closed, this was exacerbating our eldest daughter's asthma, not to mention wreaking havoc on our lungs. I must say that I truly enjoyed wielding the spray gun myself so I could control all the nuances that I wanted to achieve. But it really wasn't worth the damage to our bodies.



*Untitled (1987)*  
48"x48" acrylic on canvas

**Ivi Avellana-Cosio** has been exhibiting professionally since 1967. Her paintings, prints, and sculptures have won for her numerous awards at various competitions such as the Philippine Airlines Art Contest, Philippine Association of Printmakers Competition, Art Association of the Philippines Competition, and Philip Morris Art Awards. She was awarded a Project Grant by the Cultural Center of the Philippines for a large scale Installation at the Little Theater Lobby of the CCP. She was also a recipient of the Patnubay ng Sining at Kalinangan Award for Painting given by the City of Manila. She has exhibited her works locally and all over the world

in solo, group, and joint shows with husband and fellow artist, Allan Cosio. Her works can be found in prestigious institutional collections, such as those of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Museum of Philippine Art, Metropolitan Museum, and Philippine International Convention Center, as well as private collections locally and internationally. Her work has been included in over a dozen art books. She is also a veteran actress on stage, radio, and television. She has also published various writings, from short stories, articles and columns in local periodicals.

All photographs were provided by the artist.