



# Concealed revelations

By Sherwin Fontanilla Coronado

A 1998 graduate of the UP College of Fine Arts, Anton Del Castillo embarked on his artistic career with his childhood zeal for inventiveness and experimentation. Years of constant creative productivity resulted in the fine-tuning of his artistic and social consciousness. Hence, his subjects become focused on images both reactive and responsive to the art world and social strata to which he belongs. A founding member of the 7th Day Art Group and an art teacher at the UP Integrated School, Del Castillo's visual assertion fearlessly poses questions, perplexes the viewer and summons him to delve into the intricate conceptual and ideological realms of his artworks.

Del Castillo's Master of Fine Arts thesis "Unraveling the Inner Realities of a Two-Dimensional Surface Through the Use of Black light" – a site-specific installation as he calls it and exhibited at the Tanghalang Huseng Batute of the Cultural Center of the Philippines – brings the spectator to a journey into the depths of nocturnal darkness submerged in the fluorescent effect of black light. Titled *Mutiny*, his first solo show successfully captures the theatrical mood of the exhibit space by creating an eerie virtual reality of gloom accented with evanescent hanged human figures that appear to drift in the dark, empty space.

The show is comprised of 13 pieces of 5x2 feet oil on canvas paintings, each framed in aluminum that serves as housing for the black light attached to the top portion and left-right side of the painting.

Each canvas panel underwent the process of underpainting with controlled vertical impasto strokes of vermilion. After this layer had thoroughly dried up, the images of the hanged man were painted on impasto. When this next layer dried up, the images were finally covered with a final layer of vermilion. Installed in varying levels and at random positions inside the exhibit space, the paintings that were literally "hanged" with rope radiate diverse symptomatic meanings and manifest traces of

shortly – as signified by the invisibility of the figures in regular light and their appearance when the black light is triggered on by an electronic sensor aimed at a particular painting.

Gripped by an evading social anguish and instances of frustration in his struggle to be recognized, the images reveal his psyche's angst that resulted from his experiences of vindictiveness in an art world and social system of which he is undeniably a part and at the same time a casualty.

Del Castillo's images do not convey the tangible presence of any particular individual – for example, a particular artist or art critic. They resemble the *bulul* sculptures of the Ifugao, signifying general forms rather than particular types. To the hanged human form, the artist does not provide any social background, only a flat and moderately textured darkness. In these "fugitive images," he provides no hint or props of milieu to ascertain the identity of each image with a class or profession and furnish its specific reality. Rather, he dissimulates all external significations and positions of the concealed figure at the center of a red and nebulous atmosphere. Under black light, this atmosphere becomes an infinite dark violet-ochre space where the hanged figure seems to float.

The painter composed each hanged figure as an integral part of a