

Roel Obemio

b. 14 June 1967

Roel Obemio is a painter known for his volumetric figurations of storybook characters and, more recently, his appropriation of classic old-world paintings in a style similar to Colombian painter Fernando Botero (a style often called *Boterismo*). While Botero uses his practice as a means of critique, Obemio uses volume as a narrative device to convey whimsy and fantasy. The Pasig-based artist has also started to incorporate geometric patterns into his works--a developmental feature that demonstrates an intellectual curiosity in the relationships between figuration and the texture-like details that patterns can induce.

The artist also sees volume as a form of personal nostalgia that gives his works character and substance. He points to the fact that members of his family are often heavy-set, which is the reason, more than any affinity to Fernando Botero (who he counts as an influence, regardless) why the inhabitants of his canvases are large themselves. In fact, Obemio sees his practice as a form of world-building and encourages his audiences to visit the worlds he creates.

Roel Obemio is a product of the Fine Arts program of the University of the East, where he majored in painting. Among his first jobs was being an animator in Hanna-Barbera's now-defunct Philippine animation studio, and this aesthetic strain, not to mention an adherence to narrative, strongly influences his visual art practice. Obemio's other influences include Paul Klee and Gustav Klimt, which is why his practice is partial to form and palette rather than any heady concept beyond the idea that his works are meant to be uplifting. He is adamant that art should be accessible, and thus imbues his paintings with messages of positivity and hope. Volume is a device Obemio uses to lend a personal sense of nostalgia to the reality of this vision. But Obemio's secondary use of this artistic device is to tinge his works with optimism.

The artist's works are thus fanciful images that are accessible to everyone. Indeed, Obemio's works are decidedly family-oriented with his imagery reflecting the inherent sense of gratitude he has for the artists who have inspired him along with his unwavering zest for life. It is a rare thing to have a contemporary artist depict the hopeful and positive, and Roel Obemio captures the essence perfectly.

The artist has held seven successful solo shows, the last two at Galerie Francesca, and has steadily been gaining admiration from both collectors and critics. A member of the famed Saturday Group, Obemio has a slew of awards under his belt, including the Grand Prize from the 61st Art Association of the Philippines' Annual Awards.