

**ELMER MISA BORLONGAN** is a contemporary Filipino artist known for her figurative expressionism. He won multiple awards including the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) 13 Artist Award in 1994 and the 2004 Award for Continuing Excellence and Service, Metrobank Foundation.

#### The artist

Elmer Borlongan is born in 1967 in Manila. He learned painting under the direction of Fernando Sena from the age of 11 years. He is graduated of the University of the Philippines' College of Fine Arts (1987). Elmer Borlongan and his wife, an artist, Plet C. Bolipata, live in San Antonio, Zambales.

#### Work

Elmer Borlongan paints stories of everyday life, survival and endurance in the midst of poverty and despair. His work is characterized by stylized figuration, bald heads, large eyes and elongated limbs. Elmer Borlongan grew up in urban downtown Manila. From the beginning his sensibilities, his choice of subjects and themes, were in tune with the daily struggles of the Filipino working class. His portrayal of the homeless and street children especially drew the attention of the Filipino art world towards this young artist in the early 90s. His paintings evoked empathy but the artist also wanted to show the implicit sense of humor existing in the simple life of people. After collaborating with the ABAY collective in the late 80's, he joined the artist group Salingpusa and later Sanggawa. With Salingpusa and Sanggawa, Elmer Borlongan shows his ability for figurative painting to produce large-scale interactive paintings. These works were shown in Australia, Denmark, and the United States, as well as important mural projects such as paintings for the Centenary at Malacanang Palaces, the residence of the President of the Philippines. In the late 1990s, Elmer Borlongan moved to San Antonio, Zambales, a rural province northwest of Manila.

Comparing his works before and after 2002, we can see some differences. When he was in Manila, his paintings depicted urban degradation. They were full of emaciated beggars trying to make a living in the streets of the city, and his colors were darker. After settling in San Antonio, he started drawing more rural scenes: vendors carrying a bowl of freshly caught fish, a family sitting in what looks like a fabric boat. His colors are also brighter. Elmer Borlongan continues to portray lives of Filipinos: provincial fishermen, beggars in city streets, and jeepney drivers.