

RYAN VILLAMAEL is a young contemporary artist working on cut paper that he elevated to a fine art form on the Filipino art scene.

The artist

Ryan Villamael is born in 1987 in Laguna, Philippines. He obtained his Bachelor Degree in Painting at the University of the Philippines (2009). He was also a major in Visual Arts. After graduation, he worked as an assistant for Nona Garcia, Louie Cordero and Gary Ross Pastrana. In 2015, he won the Ateneo Art Awards for his work "Isles." He lives and works in Quezon City.

Artwork

Ryan Villamael worked on several media before choosing paper as a medium and revealing exceptional images. "I started working with paper, not out of desire, but out of necessity," he said. I realized "that I could say what I wanted to say and do what I wanted to do with a very simple material," he explained. Ryan Villamael is guided by the conceptual elements of paper cutting. He builds frieze shapes and patterns using a negative space. He uses paper and felt.

Early on, Ryan Villamael showed an interest in nature, history, geography and a penchant for an almost scientific process, like his mother. "You could say the intricacy of my handiwork is my way of aping my mother's preciseness in her laboratory," he explained. Regarding his love for the cards, he explains: "My father left home when I was young and growing up, looking at maps was for me a way to communicate with him, to trace the paths he might have traveled, try to see the places where he could live"

"Cut Felt", was Ryan Villamael's first solo exhibition, at Silverlens Gallery, Manila, in 2011: an exhibition of large-scale paper cutouts with weird but balanced patterns. In 2015, he presented "Behold a City" at Silverlens in Makati City. This installation was for him as a "love letter to the city": it is his own map of Manila, made by shaping mirrors and placing them flat on the floor to mimic system of streets, avenues and waterways in the city, then Ryan Villamael erected cut-outs photographs of Old Manila's most popular heritage sites to create three dimensional illusions, while light is used to create shadows on the facades of buildings, allowing you to see these structures from a different perspective.

For the Biennale of Singapore in 2016, the artist created an installation, "Locus Aneomus": he filled the greenhouse of the Singapore Art Museum with foliage cut from old Philippine maps. In 2017, he presented "Epilogue", still at Silverlens: his paper installations - which looked like organic matter rather than weapons and to synthetic ships - were presented on war books. For Art Fair Philippines in February 2019, he re-used his work "Behold a City", paying an homage to the city of Manila.