

# Rhapsodies in Blue

by Amanda Lapus Santos

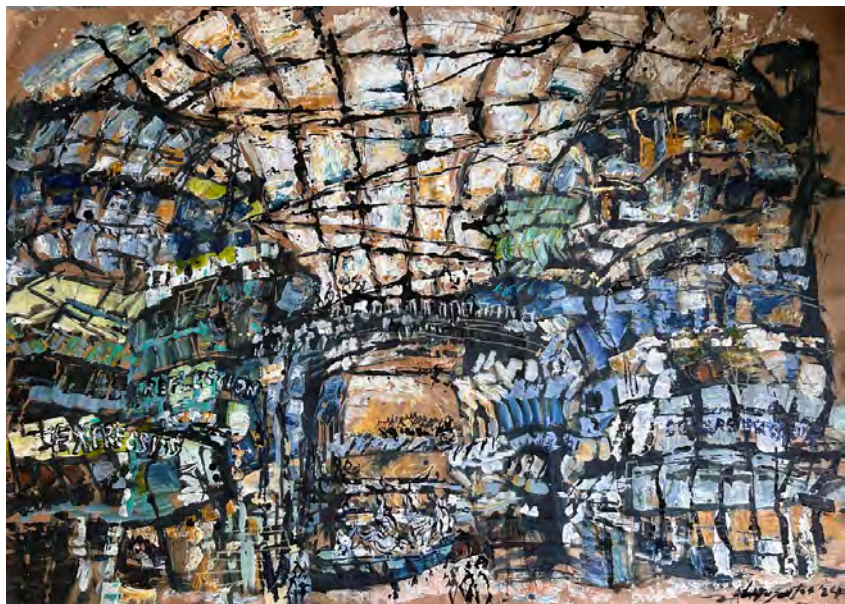


A rhapsody is a composition in one extended movement, typically one that is effusively enthusiastic or ecstatic, and yet blue can often be considered a somber hue. Hannah Gadsby once quipped, "Blue, if anything, is a feminine colour. It really is full of contradictions. Blue is a cold colour, on the cold end of the spectrum. But the hottest part of the flame? Blue. If you're feeling blue, you're sad. But optimism? Blue skies ahead! A blueprint is a plan, but if something happens not on the plan, where does that come from? Out of the blue!"

Like Picasso in his Blue Period, Santos has always been drawn to this colour and prone to pensive reminiscing. To draw herself out of sentimental nostalgia and in trying to reconcile the contradictions of this colour's representations, these paintings and cyanotype artworks of are the artist's recalling of blurred out memories, and celebrating things of bygone eras - a way of looking back to move forward. As seen in her hand-embroidered piece Glacier III and her series paying homage to ice cream vendors, Rhapsodies is her way of creating permanence for ephemera that are slowly chipping away with time.

*"It is strange how we hold on to the pieces of the past while we wait for our futures."*

- Ally Condie

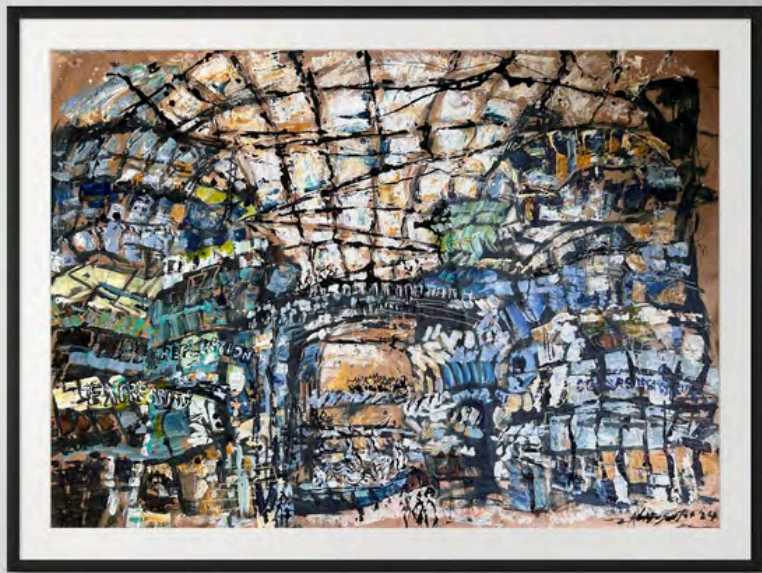


# Look Back at Lasalle

Amanda Lapus Santos

Acrylic and ink on lignin paper

133 x 100 cm / 2024



One of the reasons why the artist had made the decision to emigrate from the Philippines to Singapore a decade ago was spurred by a visit to the McNally campus of Lasalle College of the Arts. The building itself had been awarded *Building Of The Year* and the *Design Award for Institution* category by the Singapore Institute of Architects in 2008. And Santos's experience there as a student, was a formative one. Seeing the irregular glass panel fascade evokes fond memories of a free-spirited, brief, yet significant era.





## Glacier III

Amanda Lapus Santos

Acrylic and thread on round canvas

60 x 60 cm / 2019



This tondo, a circular piece of art, is an acrylic impasto painting with hand-embroidery stitched in and over the thick paint strokes to create depth and texture. Santos created this artwork to deal with anxieties over lack of climate action. "It's about committing to memory something one knows is ephemeral or vanishing," much like the rapidly melting ice in both poles of the earth caused by global warming. Each embroidered stitch is about making the inevitably impermanent more permanent with every stitch.







## Lau Pa Sat (Quadriptych)

Amanda Lapus Santos

Mixed media on 4-piece canvas

60 x 42 cm (30 x 21 cm each) / 2024



Depictions of scenes from the Lau Pa Sat hawker centre, two exterior, two interior; in ink, acrylic, and oil pastels







# City Of God

Amanda Lopus Santos

Mixed media on canvas

46 x 123 cm / 2024



The artist's rendering of her birthplace, Rio de Janeiro, particularly the view of Christ the Redeemer on the mountaintop, as made through a recollection of stories and old photographs from family albums





**Pusong Pilipino**  
**Amanda Lapus Santos**  
**Cyanotype on paper**  
**21 x 30 cm / 2024**



Created using the artist's actual chest xray image and an illustration of a bleeding heart with the Philippine flag symbols of the three stars and sun





# Big Tree

Amanda Lapus Santos

Cyanotype with ink, watercolour, and graphits on paper

42 x 30 cm / 2023



Using a brush dipped in the photo-sensitizer, this Mondrian-inspired painting with branches and roots drawn in ink and graphite, is about Santos's love for centuries-old trees that somehow survive urbanisation





# ICE CREAM SERIES

Growing up in a humid, tropical place, ice cream treats can evoke special childlike glee and fond memories for many. And the traditional ice cream carts with their metal bells, for both Filipino and Singaporean children are as iconic as the music-blaring ice cream truck for more Western countries.

This series of cyanotypes was created by exposing Santos's large illustrations of two main images: an umbrella-shaded \$1-ice cream cart that you would typically see around Orchard and Bugis, and a traditional, intricately-painted, Filipino sorbetes push-cart, with its small cabinet of cones, cups, and buns fastened on top. Branded on the sorbetero's cart is the Tagalog word *Pag-asa*, meaning **hope**.





## Pag-Asa Sorbetes Cart

Amanda Lapus Santos

Cyanotype on unbleached, calico cotton fabric canvas with acrylic ink

76 x 86 cm / 2024





A traditional Filipino, two-wheeled ice cream cart, which houses dirty ice cream, a colloquial term due to the fact that it is sold on the streets. Sorbetes is a beloved street food in the Philippines made with coconut milk, sugar, and carabao milk. Sorbeteros (vendors/street hawkers) were often present during fiestas or community celebrations, hence the small inscription on the cart that reads 'We Accept Special Orders';

with acetate-exposed images describing the early history of ice cream vendors in the Philippines, floating like posters above the cart as a blurred backdrop.



## Pag-Asa Sorbetero

Amanda Lapus Santos

Cyanotype on unbleached, calico cotton fabric canvas

87 x 134 cm / 2024



A traditional Filipino ice cream cart with a faint shadow of the *manong* or *mamang sorbetero* ('uncle' vendor/'ice cream man') scooping the *sorbetes* onto a *monay* (bread bun)— an ice-cream-sandwich-making practice shared in Singapore and other Asian countries, that may seem odd to those less familiar with the sweet-salty combination. Here you can see the details of the waffle cones, stacked plastic cups, the intricately carved wooden wheel, and the three, distinct lids of the metal canisters that would typically house flavours such as mango, *ube* (purple yam), and cheese.

The abrupt geometric markings of the sensitised blue backdrop were simultaneously painted by both Soh and Santos, as if to resemble the cross-hatching of a basket weave, a criss-cross in cultures.





## Sorbetero and Cart

Amanda Lapus Santos

Acrylic and ink on clear PVC

78 x 93 cm / 2024



'Cyanotype is a monochrome print or image made by placing objects on a pre-prepared light-sensitive surface. A vast majority of them are created with a negative photographic image to capture the shadows.'

This artwork is actually the original negative- the illustration used to make the previous two sorbetes cart cyanotypes, directly drawn as an image in reverse, onto a thick sheet of polyvinyl chloride plastic and then exposed in the sun; now flipped and framed so viewers may be appreciate and better understand the process.





## One-Dollar Ice Cream Cart

Amanda Lopus Santos

Cyanotype on unbleached, calico cotton fabric canvas with  
acrylic ink and hand-embroidery

72 x 83 cm / 2024





A 2023 Business Insider article stated, "Singapore's 'ice cream uncles' are disappearing. Traditional ice cream carts and their elderly vendors are a familiar sight in Singapore. The \$1.10 treats are often sandwiched between rainbow-coloured bread and are especially popular.. But strict regulations around street hawking put the future of the industry in question."

Santos used colourful threads to bring out the desserts and letters from the faded silhouettes, symbolic of the present but fading sight of these carts around Singapore.



## Ice Cream Cart Man

Amanda Lapus Santos

Cyanotype on unbleached, calico cotton fabric canvas

82 x 102 / 2024



"Soon, he'll load his cooler with ice cream from the wholesale distributor next door before selling the treat to passersby in the sweltering equator heat for about 1.50 dollars, with only the shade of his bike's umbrella to keep him cool. Sellers like him are remnants of a bygone era. Up until the '60s, Singapore was teeming with street hawkers.. Now, only about 150 of them are working on the streets today, with 11 active ice cream street hawking licenses left, down from 13 previously in 2023, largely due to strict regulations in the city-state.

Nostalgia and tourism could save the industry, but is it too little, too late? For many Singaporeans, these traditional ice cream sellers are an important part of the local heritage. It would be very sad if we are no longer able to hear the familiar sound of the ice cream bells ringing in our estate in the near future."

- Lester Ledesma for Business Insider



# LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH



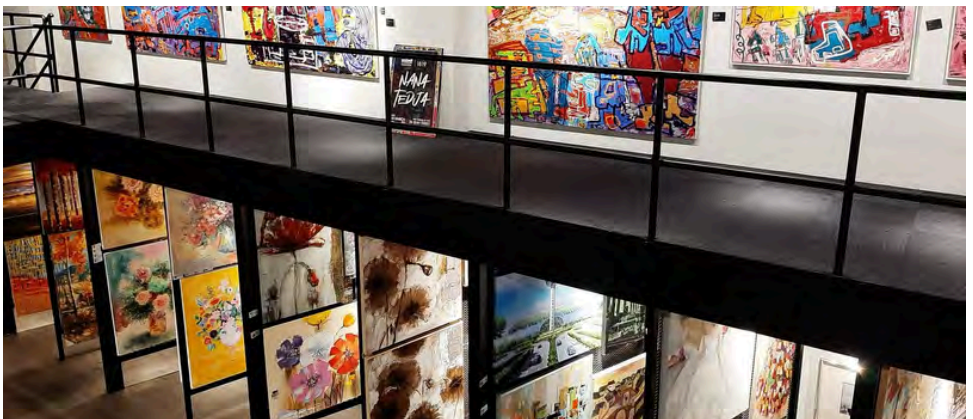
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