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| Legaspi, Cesar Torrente (1917-1994) |
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| Cesar Legaspi was a Filipino painter known as one of the 13 Moderns, a group of emergent artists whose work, according to artist-art educator Victorio Edades, was an alternative to the classicism and nostalgia-laced realism popular during the pre-WWII juncture of American colonialism in the Philippines. Along with peers Hernando Ocampo and Vicente Manansala, Legaspi was part of a generation of artists whose early image making engaged with questions of distortion, and the liberties artists could take in construing reality. In the early 1950s, these painters were regarded as the neo-realist triumvirate. While they produced works dealing with the same everyday subject matter as conservative artists of the period, they unselfconsciously took from other stylistic traditions encountered through research and peer exchanges. In doing so, they worked towards more individuated ways of rendering subjects, finding affinities with cubism, surrealism, and expressionism. In the post-WWII period, the neo-realists manifested a cynicism toward the urbane, which they resolved visually in different ways. A well-known work of Legaspi’s from this period, *Gadgets II* (1949), depicts the mutant fusing of man and machine in an age where the industrial was both feared and mythologised. This work, alongside pieces imaging the working class (including stevedores, grave diggers, beggars, seasonal farm workers, and internal migrants) is associated with his early proletarian or proto-social realist phase. |
| Cesar Legaspi was a Filipino painter known as one of the 13 Moderns, a group of emergent artists whose work, according to artist-art educator Victorio Edades, was an alternative to the classicism and nostalgia-laced realism popular during the pre-WWII juncture of American colonialism in the Philippines. Along with peers Hernando Ocampo and Vicente Manansala, Legaspi was part of a generation of artists whose early image making engaged with questions of distortion, and the liberties artists could take in construing reality. In the early 1950s, these painters were regarded as the neo-realist triumvirate. While they produced works dealing with the same everyday subject matter as conservative artists of the period, they unselfconsciously took from other stylistic traditions encountered through research and peer exchanges. In doing so, they worked towards more individuated ways of rendering subjects, finding affinities with cubism, surrealism, and expressionism. In the post-WWII period, the neo-realists manifested a cynicism toward the urbane, which they resolved visually in different ways. A well-known work of Legaspi’s from this period, *Gadgets II* (1949), depicts the mutant fusing of man and machine in an age where the industrial was both feared and mythologised. This work, alongside pieces imaging the working class (including stevedores, grave diggers, beggars, seasonal farm workers, and internal migrants) is associated with his early proletarian or proto-social realist phase.  [File: Legaspi.jpg]  Figure Cesar Torrente Legaspi, *The Planters*, 1968, Legaspi Family Collection (contact author for copyright).  The earliest of Legaspi’s major oil pieces consist of compact compositions of figures in muted earth tones, emerging from stone forms. However, shifting from advertising to full-time painting in the 1960s allowed him to further explore materials and stylistic language, including experimenting with shaped canvases, printmaking, collage, and a sustained affinity with figuration and draughtsmanship. This would eventually give way to a more vibrant palette that increasingly demonstrated his interest in broader sets of ideas, including more optimistic renderings of the folk themes generally used in the works of conservatives and critiqued by modernists as nostalgia for the rural and pre-industrial.  Legaspi received his art education from the University of the Philippines School of Fine Arts, the Cultural Hispanica in Madrid, and the Academie Ranson in Paris. He was a representative of the Philippines to the 1967 Sao Paulo Biennials of 1967 and 1969. His acknowledged influences included Fernando Amorsolo, Carlos Francisco, and his fellow Neo-Realists, Hernando Ocampo and Vicente Manansala. Like his aforementioned colleagues, Legaspi was proclaimed a National Artist for Visual Arts (1990). He passed away in 1994 from complications arising from cancer. |
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