

# In Capital We Trust

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Iggy Rodriguez



# F o r e w o r d

*Beauty belongs to the sphere of the simple, the ordinary, whilst ugliness is something extraordinary, and there is no question but that every ardent imagination prefers in lubricity, the extraordinary to the commonplace.*

– *Marquis de Sade*

These are strange times indeed.

Diplomacy and human decency have become obsolete values overnight. World leaders are conniving and showing off their worst nature; meantime, our own planet admonishes us about global warming as it starts to raise its ugly head, while the rest prefer to squat like disgruntled bullfrogs barking about some appalling socio-political issue. Everyone shrugs their shoulders, but their eyes mirror worry and disbelief.

In a somewhat bare similarity to this peculiar and tumultuous times, are the works by artist Raoul “Iggy” Rodriguez. He likewise confronts his audience head on, but he uses a language that is an antitheses of the atrocious political remarks we hear. His language is embellished, curious and ambiguous. His latest collection, *In Capital We Trust*, characterizes a struggle to soothe the innocent and exploited, by provoking us with portraits of passion and strain, rife with abscess and sores, yet shrouded by its somber wit and tone.

His new works display his persistence to refine his own technique, to transcend the hideous and repulsive, recreating magnificent creatures through his genius with pen and ink, and using a language that is glaring, yet muted. He tickles our curiosity, coaxing us to disentangle the contradistinction of his works, but also imparting the value of gentle discourse.

In retrospect, it is through perceptive talent like Iggy Rodriguez that we witness many artists as conceivably *‘the wise and quiet sage’*. We should perhaps contemplate on this – as our own seriously distraught world might perhaps start to take a serious cue from artists like him.

**Roberta Dans**  
Founder and Director  
Artesan Gallery + Studio  
Singapore



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*In Capital We Trust*  
Iggy Rodriguez

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# In Capital We Trust

By Philip Paraan

Edited by Roberta Dans

Iggy Rodriguez's art and personal insights have always followed a populist vein, frequently attempting to cogitate on widespread social problems. Whilst he offers to open a discourse on grittier truths and all forms of societal inequity and discrimination, he is persistent with matters that jab a personal and social response from its viewers, despite the obvious confrontation to his own artistic diplomacy. Ultimately, for the artist, each collection takes on a more personal credence; it becomes an opportunity for self reflection to examine relationships, the lives of his circle of close friends and family as individuals who similarly grapple with issues of greed and inequity in today's society.

For this collection, *In Capital We Trust*, he invests in images related to worship, an idealism signified by its icons and the ritual use of objects. Rodriguez recasts and repositions some classic imagery, icons, ciphers and gestures as a reference to devotion, obedience, ideal virtues, and representations, but only as an allusion and veil to articulate and contextualize thoughts about excess that reigns in today's society.

*Romantiko II*  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
121.92 x 106.68 cm (4 x 3.5 ft)  
2017





*Litanya ng Mga Walang Hanggang  
Buntong Hininga I  
(Litany of Never Ending Sighs I)*  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
91.40 x 60.96 cm (3 x 2 ft)  
2017

He alludes to a system that has made us believe in its competence, exclusivity and ability to recover, as professed by self-proclaimed free-market prophets. By deftly employing distortion, symbolism and detail, he aligns it with his publicly established and visually defined style of figurative expressionism.

Throughout his practice, and for sometime being actively involved with cause-oriented groups, Rodriguez has consistently echoed power and class struggle in his works. In the series *Litanya ng Walang Hanggang Buntong Hininga* (*Litany of Never Ending Sighs*) for instance, surreal figures re-appear in a gesture of contemplation and hope, suggesting the quintessential human hopefulness for miracles. The paintings suggest a perverse and mechanical devotion to the messianic fervor of wealth, greed and free enterprise. However, in all these somewhat warped sense of promise, one can sharply sense feelings of abasement, erosion and delusion. His works turns to focus on the power of capitalism and its practitioners' self-imposed pseudo obedience, naturally crystallizing a stark parody and dissonance between devotion and



*Litanya ng Mga Walang Hanggang  
Buntong Hininga II  
(Litany of Never Ending Sighs II)*  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
91.40 x 60.96 cm (3 x 2 ft)  
2017





*Litanya ng Mga Walang Hanggang  
Buntong Hininga III*  
(*Litany of Never Ending Sighs III*)  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
91.40 x 60.96 cm (3 x 2 ft)  
2017



*Devotion*  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
152.40 x 121.92 cm (4 x 5 ft)  
2017





social reality. Through his representations, he exposes the system's own vulnerabilities, resonating feelings of human distress, decay, and hopelessness.

Having to live in a time where the glorification of profit rules, (without necessarily sparing the art trade), his personal reflection is honest, and fearless, as is his pen and ink skills are deliberate and precise, plucking us away from our comfort zone, and drawing us within an obscure world expressed by the inked arc and bends of a brilliant talent.

Whilst Rodriguez continues to dabble in complex social issues, concurrently utilizing pen and ink on acrylic on canvas as a refined style, he utilizes exact and finite strokes to assimilate his own thoughts. Most importantly, it is this fascinating skill that draws us, the viewer, to take a closer look at his oeuvre – to understand the energy and strength impressed on his creations. It is quite apt to say that this time we see an artist who has developed a refined and mature approach to his practise – perpetuating a disquiet, combined with an unusually sophisticated sense of integrity.

*Litanya ng Mga Walang Hanggang  
Buntong Hininga IV*  
(*Litany of Never Ending Sighs IV*)  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
91.40 x 60.96 cm (3 x 2 ft)  
2017



*Anointed*  
Iggy Rodriguez  
Pen and ink, acrylic on canvas  
91.40 x 60.96 cm (3 x 2 ft)  
2016





*Devolved Status III*  
 Iggy Rodriguez  
 Oil on canvas  
 137 x 122 cm (4.5 x 4 ft)  
 2014



*Ode to the Syndicate of Follies II*  
 Iggy Rodriguez  
 Oil on canvas  
 182.88 x 152.40 cm (6 x 5 ft)  
 2017

# About the Artist



**Raoul Ignacio (Iggy) M. Rodriguez** (b.1974) received the Grand Prize in *Pen and Ink Drawing category of the Art Association of the Philippines Annual Competition* in 2001, and the *Thirteen Artists Award of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines* in 2009. An activist, he was among the members of the *Ugnayan at Galian ng mag Tanod ng Lahi* or *UGAT Lahi* (f.1992), a collective of progressive artists based in Manila known for producing effigies and street murals, from 1999 to 2009.

Rodriguez first exhibited in Singapore in 2008, as part of an artist exchange program organised by Artesan Gallery as a joint project with the National University of Singapore Museum, the Lee Foundation and the National Arts Council, Singapore. He held his first one-man exhibition, titled *Kimi/Imik*, the year after in the Philippines and has since then shown his work in group exhibitions in China, Cambodia, England, Malaysia, and South Korea. His latest accolade include his participation in the tenth Florence Biennale 2015 in Florence, Italy, as well as his first solo exhibition in Singapore entitled *In/dependent States* in 2015, followed by a group show in September 2016 entitled *Skein*, as part of the Philippine Art Trek 2016 in Singapore, all in collaboration with Artesan Gallery + Studio, Singapore.

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Tel +65 9842 7817 • +65 6338 5818

[www.theartesan.com](http://www.theartesan.com)

[roberta@theartesan.com](mailto:roberta@theartesan.com)

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by Iggy Rodriguez

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