



**FINALE**  
ART GALLERY

VALENTINE  
**WILLIE**  
*fine* ART



## The World of Interiors, The Interior World

In the domestic universe of Philippine artist Francesca Enriquez, the house is caught in the gaze of ambivalent feeling and tentative temper. As we go through twenty-seven rectangular frames of "interiors", scene by scene, furniture by furniture, space by space, we feel the tedium of routine but at the same time sense the vital fear of home: the loneliness of habitation pervades as aura of loss.

And we begin to realize that it is not really the house that so much matters as the rooms which dwell in its domain, indeed, its domicile. Into these rooms, we enter. Through these rooms, we come and go. Beyond these rooms, we find a reason to return. In all this crossing and traversing, the room remains. Enriquez investigates the remains of rooms.

The structure of these rooms, however, slowly but inevitably reveals its scaffolding of pigment, of tension, of energy. We soon understand that these rooms open into previous locations. Culled perhaps from glossy interior design magazines, these rooms look so ideal, in fact, un-lived-in for the sake of display and acquisition. But in the hands of Enriquez, the veneer of commercialism, the gloss of objects wears rather thin, with the domestic scene now reconstituted from magazine (by way of glamour photography) to painting. And so, the room as object to be advertised and sold is displaced by an artist's meaningful violation of its prettiness. In a 1995 work entitled *The World of Interiors*, an issue of the British magazine of the same name is neurotically painted over, page by page, picture by picture, text by text, with thick, almost dripping paint. Why does the artist paint interiors with such jealous regard?

This question, of course, invites debate over Enriquez' stance towards this form of exchange and labour. Is she affirming the fetish for objects, alienated from the context of their production? Or is she engaged in a parody of sorts? A parody of a certain neurosis: what we cannot have, we paint, and in the process of painting bring to our senses why we must overinvest the details of rooms and yet fail to explain the reasons for reiterating their presence. As Bertolt Brecht puts it: "The poor man who lacks a kitchen does not lack form and color. The wealthy man who has a beautiful old chair does not regard it as something to sit on but as form and color."<sup>i</sup> In the contentious discussion on objects and subjects, Enriquez leads us back to crucial questions, which may perhaps equip us with the consciousness of form, with the "specific objects of perception which may alter the relation of the viewer of his paintings to the objects represented in them."<sup>ii</sup>

We are tempted to see Enriquez' interiors in the light of Dutch domestic scenes, Pierre Bonnard's tables, Matisse's walls and windows, and the "intimist" vignettes of Les Nabis. But a more attentive look would dismiss the thought. These interiors are as elusive as their implied inhabitants are. Brooding, stark, dainty, banal - the moods swing back and forth, but always in the vacuum of solitariness. Chartreuse, tangerine, magenta. Fragile lines and expressionist impasto. Frontal views and bird's eye perspectives. Domestic but never local or native scenarios. Feeling and flat fauvist color. The diversity of temperaments runs through the depictions of kitchens, dining rooms, bedrooms and reaches the more intimate aspects of plates, chairs, floors, ceilings, blankets. Maurice Denis, one of the leading lights of Les Nabis, once remarked:

*On the cover*

**Easy Chair**

1997

Oil on canvas

40.5 x 61 cm



"Remember that a picture - before being a war horse or a nude woman or some anecdote - is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." Enriquez grapples with the ideology of picture-making: fragment, resemblance, figuration, abstraction, expression, subject matter, anecdote.

And so we ask: is this also still life? And if, indeed it is, we might well heed Norman Bryson's argument that to arrest the meanings of still life is to re-view the "overlooked":

"(1) the life of the table, of the household interior, of the basic creaturely acts of eating and drinking, of the artefacts which surround the subject in his or her domestic space, of the everyday world of routine and repetition, at a level of existence where events are not at all the large-scale, momentous events of History, but the small-scale, trivial, forgettable acts bodily survival and self-maintenance;

(2) the domain of the sign systems which code the life of the table and 'low plane reality' through discourses which relate it to other cultural concerns in other domains (for example those of ideology, sexuality, economics, class);

(3) the technology of painting, as a material practice with its own specificities of method, its own developmental series, its own economic constraints and semiotic processes." <sup>iii</sup>

Enriquez does not make light of the room as a space of one's own, or as locus of everyday and quotidian history. Proceeding from works like *Home Management Blues* (1986), a *tour de force* rendering the bedlam of domestic chores, and *The House: Everything is Every Thing*, an installation involving a heap of miniature houses on which a "painting" of a domestic scene is inscribed, it is quite evident that she seriously deals not only with the theme of domesticity, but also with the discourse of domestication and gender, of the material home and "homelife" (like lard in works for Perth, Australia and an all-women's group show in Manila and plaster-cast houses for the Second Asia Pacific Triennial) as at once oppressive and reconstructive. The artist speaks from the point of view of home in the subjunctive, and in the first person plural.

While there are no people in Enriquez' rooms, an active force of subjectivity rules the realm. It is a subjectivity reared in the conceptual art tradition, the angst of neo-expressionist preoccupations, and the desire to come to terms with manifold modes of subjection. Beyond the solitary confinement or domestic detention are vast possibilities of worlds: a world of interiors and an interior world of passages/passageways. As pictures of expensive and lavishly festooned houses accost the attention of consumers, Enriquez captures the allure, traps it in pigment, and wears it down with the density and lustre of paint. In the continuing dialogue with the tastes of the art worlds, the preferences of clientele, and the sumptuous *élan* of painted objects, the artist makes the second noun in the mystical term "art objects" the verb of our contemporary life's questions.

<sup>i</sup> Brecht, Bertolt, "On Non-Objective Painting", *Modern Art and Modernism: a Critical Anthology*. (eds. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison) Harper & Row, New York, 1987, p. 143-144

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid., p.144

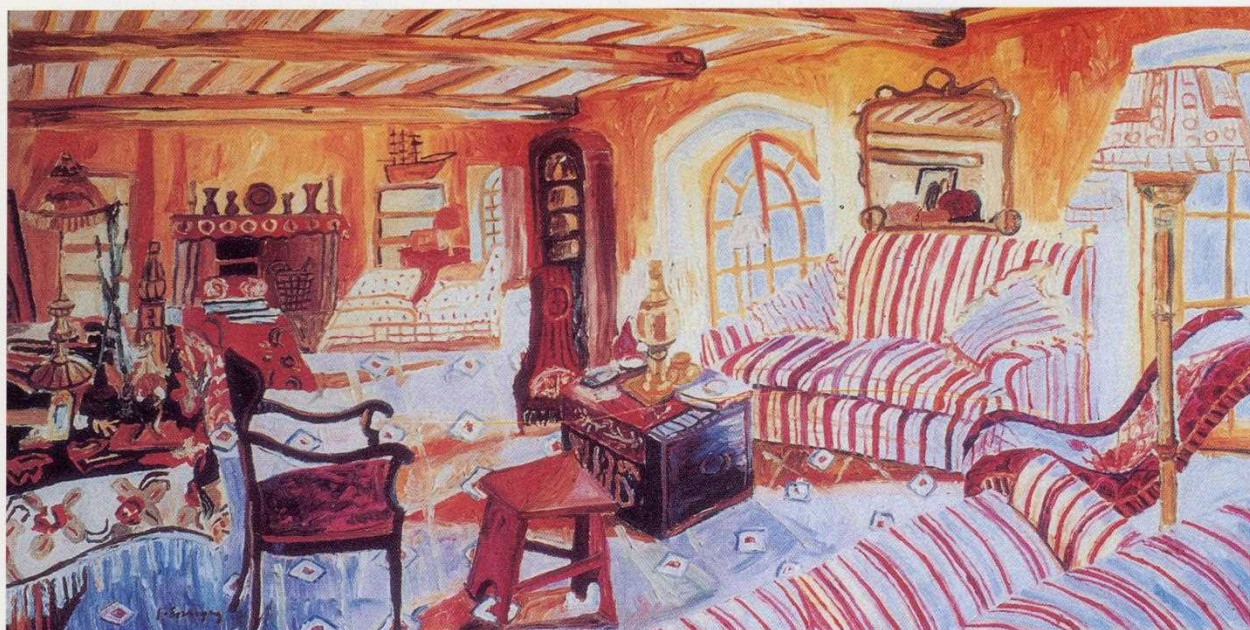
<sup>iii</sup> Bryson, Norman, *Looking the Overlooked*, Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 14

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**Footstool**

1997

Oil on canvas

61 x 122 cm



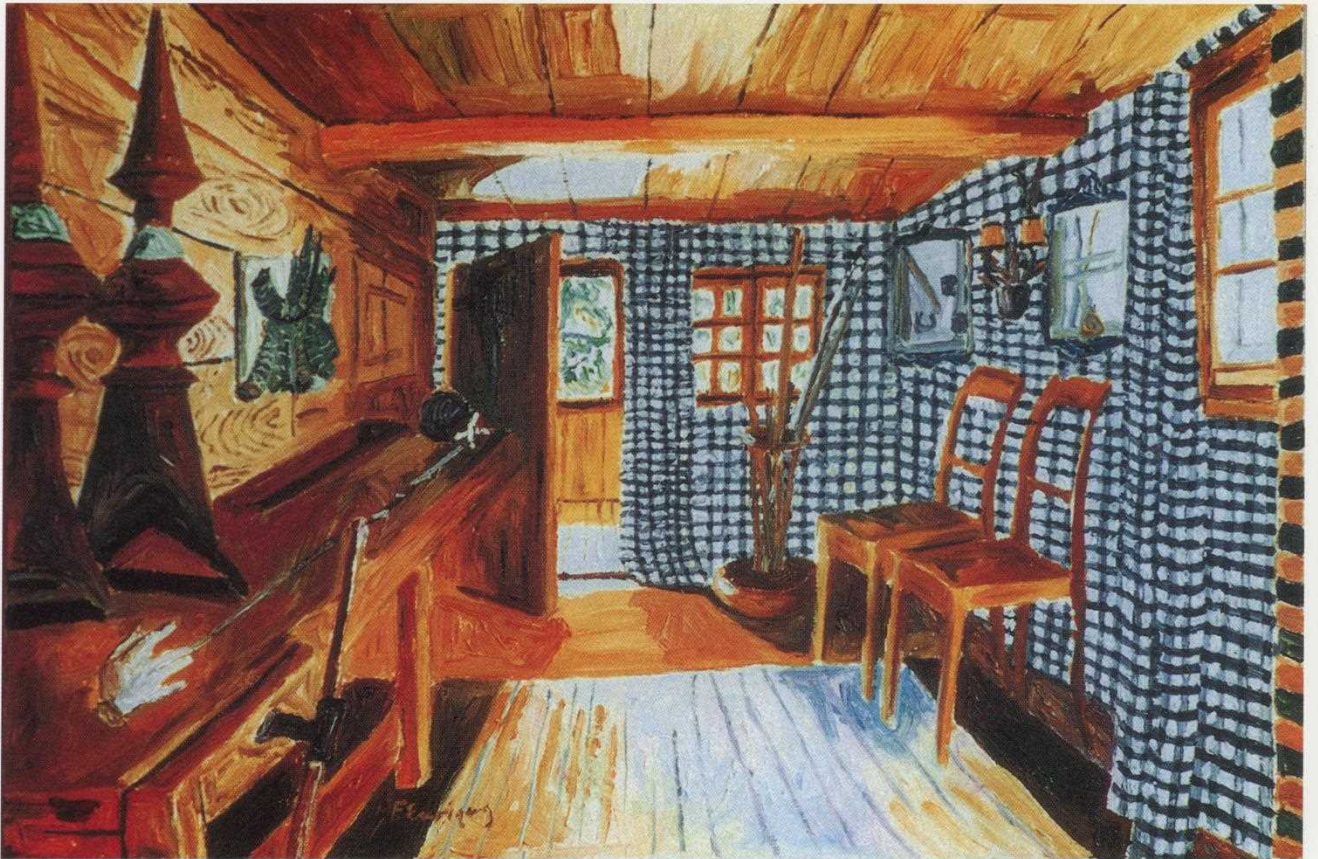
**Purple Bed**

1997

Oil on canvas

40.5 x 61 cm





**Two Chairs**  
1997  
Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 61 cm

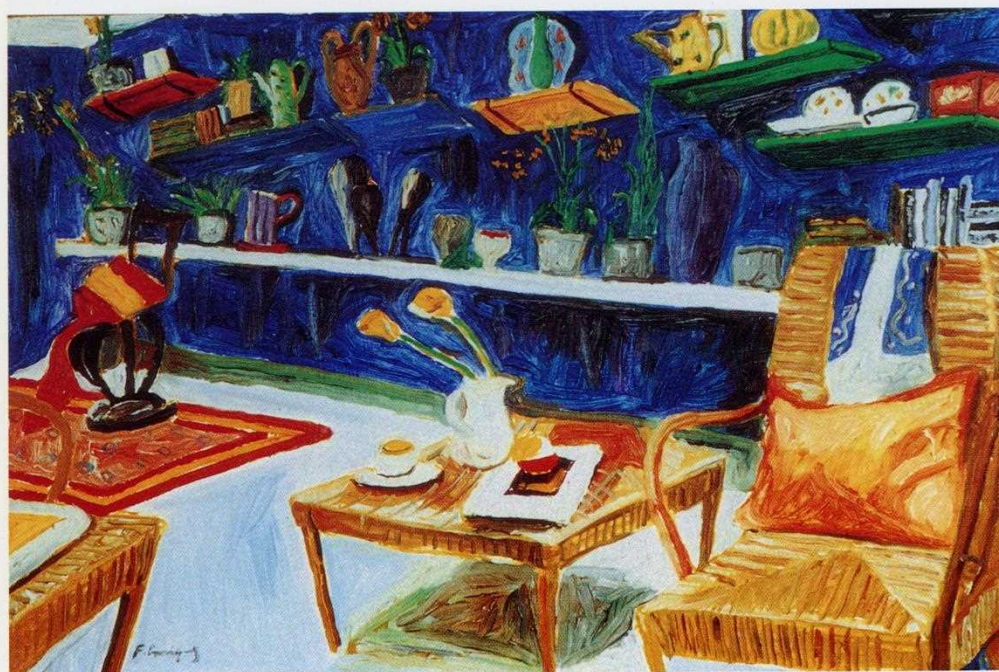


**Yellow Kitchen**  
1997  
Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 61 cm





**Day Break**  
1997  
Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 61 cm



**Blue Walls**  
1997  
Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 61 cm





**Blue and Yellow Carpet**

1997

Oil on canvas

61 x 122 cm



**Day Bed**

1997

Oil on canvas

40.5 x 61 cm



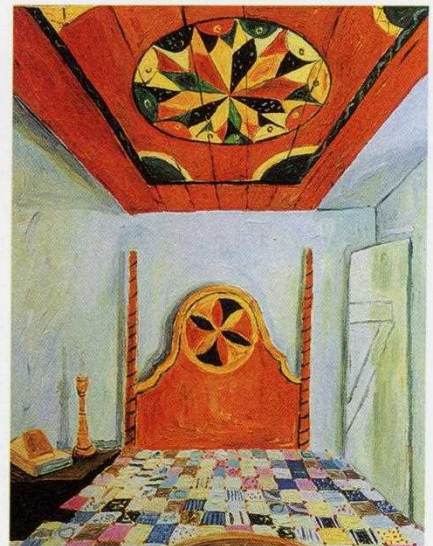


**Red Door**

1997

Oil on canvas

61 x 40.5 cm



**Patches**

1997

Oil on canvas

61 x 40.5 cm



### Education

- 1987 University of the Philippines,  
Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts, Major in Painting
- 1994 UNESCO and Norwich University, England,  
Master of Fine Arts

### Awards and Scholarships

- 1983 University of the Philippines  
Fine Arts Alumni Foundation Scholarship
- 1985 ASEAN Festival of Arts, finalist
- 1994 UNESCO and Norwich University, England,  
MFA in Painting, scholarship

### Exhibitions

- 1986 Recent Paintings, Finale Art File, Manila  
Group exhibition with Popo San Pascual  
& Pardo de Leon, Pinaglabanan Galleries, Philippines  
*Young Art*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines  
*Art Association of the Philippines - Rotary Open Art Competition*, Museum of Philippine Art Gallery  
*Bahagari 1*, Philippine International Convention Centre  
*Small Works*, La Tasca Gallery, Philippines  
Inaugural exhibition, Kulay Diwa Gallery, Philippines
- 1987 *Just Thought I'd Stop by for a Bottle of Beer*,  
Kulay Diwa Gallery, Philippines  
*Side A Side B*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1988 *6 x 6/ 8 x 12"*, Finale Art File, Manila
- 1989 *Paintings*, Alliance Francaise, Manila  
*Walong Salita/Eighth Words*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Australia  
*Signed, Sealed, Delivered*, Performance Space  
Gallery, Australia  
*Metro Manila*, Australian & Regional Artists' Exchange,  
The Gallery, Australia  
*China Crisis*, Pailou Plaza Gallery, Australia  
*New Works*, Finale Art File, Manila  
*Vision and Values*, the First ASEAN Travelling  
Exhibition of Paintings, Photography and Children's  
Art, ASEAN countries  
*Sunset and Other Vanishing Acts*,  
Pinaglabanan Gallery, Philippines  
*Serendipity*, Art for Architecture Gallery, Philippines  
*Sikat*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines  
*Banaag*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1990 *Four Generations*, Finale Art File, Manila  
*Homage to Van Gogh*, Alliance Francaise, Manila  
*Women and Ecology*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines  
*Women Artists*, Art Lab Gallery, Philippines
- 1991 *Stepping Stones*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines  
*From the Artists, For the Artists*, Kanlungan Ng Sining  
Gallery, Philippines  
*Fifty Years of Philippine Abstract Art*, Cultural Centre  
of the Philippines  
*Four Generations - New Paintings*, Finale Art File, Manila  
*Tradition and Innovation*, Third Badui Art File  
*Art Manila '91*, Philamlife Gallery, Philippines  
*Knowledge of the Simple*, Ayala Museum, Philippines  
*Chairs*, Ayala Museum, Philippines  
*Italian Mail Art Exchange*, International Mail Art Archive,  
Pisa, Italy with Kulay Diwa Gallery  
*The Best of Two Worlds: A Festival of Arts & Culture*,  
Philippine International Convention Centre
- 1992 *Destination: Southeast Asia*, Canada  
*The Filipino Woman: Myth and Reality*,  
a KASIBULAN - CCP Exhibition Project,  
Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1993 Finale Art Gallery, Manila
- 1995 *Works from England*, Finale Art Gallery, Manila  
*Painting by Numbers*, Cultural Centre of the Philippines
- 1996 *Interiors*, Finale Art Gallery, Manila  
*The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*,  
Brisbane, Australia





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*Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art*

This exhibition will be opened by  
HE Mr. Jose Brillantes,  
Ambassador of the Republic of the Phillipines,  
on Sunday, 23rd November 1997, and will end on 5th December 1997.  
Curated by Evita Sarenas of Finale Art Gallery, Manila.

