



**SPIRITUAL THUG LYF**  
**GENE PAUL MARTIN**

SILVERLENS

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9 JANUARY - 6 FEBRUARY 2021 | BY APPOINTMENT ONLY



Silverlens Galleries proudly presents a solo exhibition by Gene Paul Martin entitled *spiritual thug lyf*, a mesmerizing painting tour de force collapsing boundaries of abstraction, figuration, and landscape genres into a phantasmic panorama of shifting contexts and mutable identities that represent states of transcendental awareness born of aesthetic freedom. Mixing the infinite data looms of digital culture and its assembly machines with the mystical intuitiveness of traditional media, Martin thereby explores visual code switching into symbolic narratives, crossing the harmonic shuffle between artistic negation and rhythmical desire to deliver the birth of spiritual visions toward ecstatic experiences, while pitching the artist at the center of experiments in alchemical transformation and self-realization. The painter who uses his imagination as the sole essential force in creating the universe.

The goal of painting here is to introduce the extraordinary in the fleeting moment of creation possible within the confines of two dimensional space that also sets the tone for the artist's fabrication of the illusion of reality and the experience of magic. Indeed, Martin's approach to painting can be compared to sorcery with his ability to transform his medium at will, to dilute and coagulate his pigments phenomenally, to conjure fantastic shapes into anthropomorphic beings, and to compose his creations into manners of impossibility. The portrait of the artist as shaman thus figures frequently in Martin's work. Hence, the artist is perceived as a complex identity: one who is the harbinger of new realities as he destroys conventional interpretation and the logic of representation. Naturally, Martin answers this with an otherworldly sense of humor: in the painting "tree tops", the artist, echoing Guston's<sup>1</sup> cartoon aesthetic, is chillin' and overlooking a warm unearthly paradise after the nth day of creation. In the two "ghost portrait" paintings, Martin details with translucent color gradients the becoming spectral of the artist, letting go of corporeal limits, like any religious savant, to see visions beyond the everyday.

The strength of Martin's work lies in his astonishing imagination to conjure worlds that are familiar and understandable to us, recognizable in terms of figure and ground with narrative elements such as time and motion. And yet, in the same space, he discombobulates this world with a unique redefinition of the norm, which immediately creates an experience of the supernatural, towards flights of fantasy. Looking at the colossal "remember the future", an 8 by 12-foot oil on canvas, we marvel at Martin's synchronic approach to contemporary painting, by addressing issues on abstraction vis-à-vis representation, which the strategic solution accordingly is to apply these differing modes into hybridized fashion within the aegis of an apparent narrative composition, spatially fragmented or fractal they maybe, that might consist of a strange and surreal dimension. Thus, abstract forms in the painting are freed from the zombie vestiges of high modernism, exhibiting instead a perverse repopulation of space, maximalist in essence, deterritorialized, essentially a Heterotopia<sup>2</sup>. Martin's natural sensibility for his medium allows him to ease into action all the radical mark-making and gestural textures that painting allows for it to be seen as an abstract design without losing grip of his experimentation nor acquiescing to rote illustration. Therefore, we see certain explosions of paint that spill and cascade into ostensible ornate bouquets and occasional cosmic thunders, swirling gestures formed like planetary gemstones, or an interstellar tessellation that circumnavigates the span of two-dimensional space. The diversity found in Martin's painting thus provides a diachronic direction to what the work signifies - that it exhibits certain worlds within worlds addressing a continuum of visual styles and their context within the history and progress of art. Circumventing popular notions of art's supposed terminality following the development of its western discourse, Martin's work opens another space for painting that reinvents its conventions towards a unique vernacular language of aesthetic animism that doesn't resort to the trapping clichés of ethnographic design. But rather, by exploiting his radical formal innovations as an alterity Martin seems to update what contemporary painting, sans theoretical impasse, could be - painting as a reminder of the future.

Furthermore, sampling the tactical magic of painting with technology, Martin is inspired by the electronic music that he generates which feeds on glitch harmonies, dissonant gestalts, and blissful drones, all harnessed by intuition from the chaos and noise of random esoterica. Thus the visual language that he produces is a kind of poetic revolution which resists the systems that bind and control, in other words, a thug's life<sup>3</sup> at the edge of aesthetic reason.

In *spiritual thug lyf*, Gene Paul Martin presents his unique rendition of Pop figurative abstraction with a touch of techno animism, providing his viewers a wisdom of insecurity<sup>4</sup> through a transcendental vision of a world forever in flux yet wondrously sublime.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Guston's paintings are spiritual meditations on human suffering and solitude applied with an ironic cartoon figuration brandishing abstract expressionist gestures.

<sup>2</sup> A space of alterity elaborated by Michel Foucault that are discursive, diversified, yet also discordant, in relation to the process of transformation.

<sup>3</sup> A nod to the legendary rap artist Tupac Shakur, whose iconic "Thug Life" tattoo is an expression of street cred, an autonomous self-determination by the underdog who succeeds against all odds.

<sup>4</sup> From the inspiration of Alan Watts, who wrote of a philosophical and spiritual belief system regarding the wisdom of insecurity, in essence to remove the anxiety of contemporary life that of an anxiety about the future which is an abstraction in itself, by following a conscious practice that abides by no names, no ideas, and no judgment in the experience of reality today - a fresh and creative approach to life.





*tree tops*, 2020

oil on canvas

36h x 48w in · 91.44h x 121.92w cm

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***remember the future***, 2020

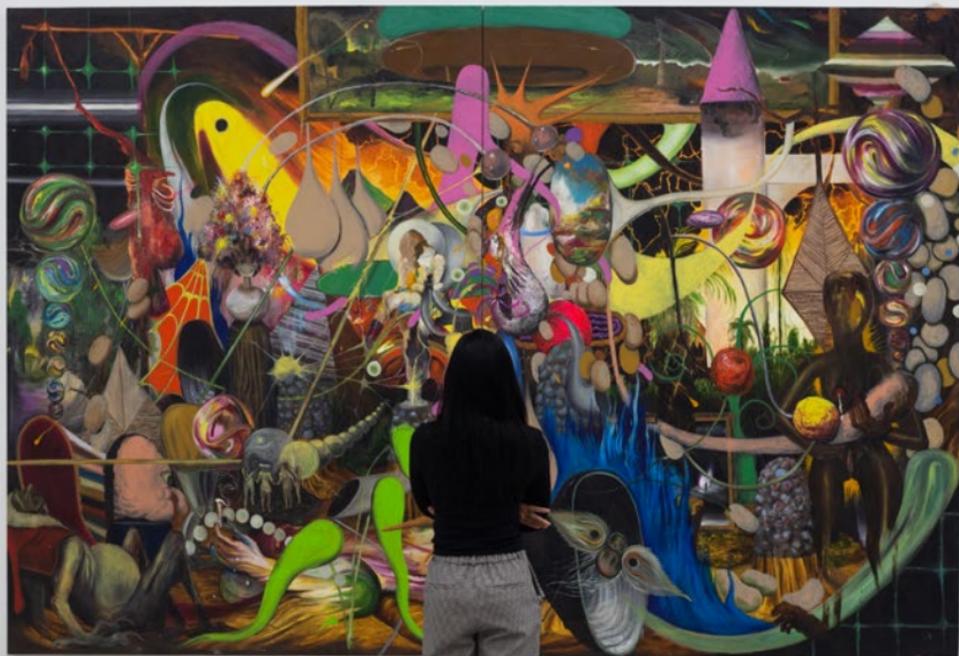
oil on canvas

96h x 144w in · 243.84h x 365.76w cm

diptych

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*strange totem*, 2020

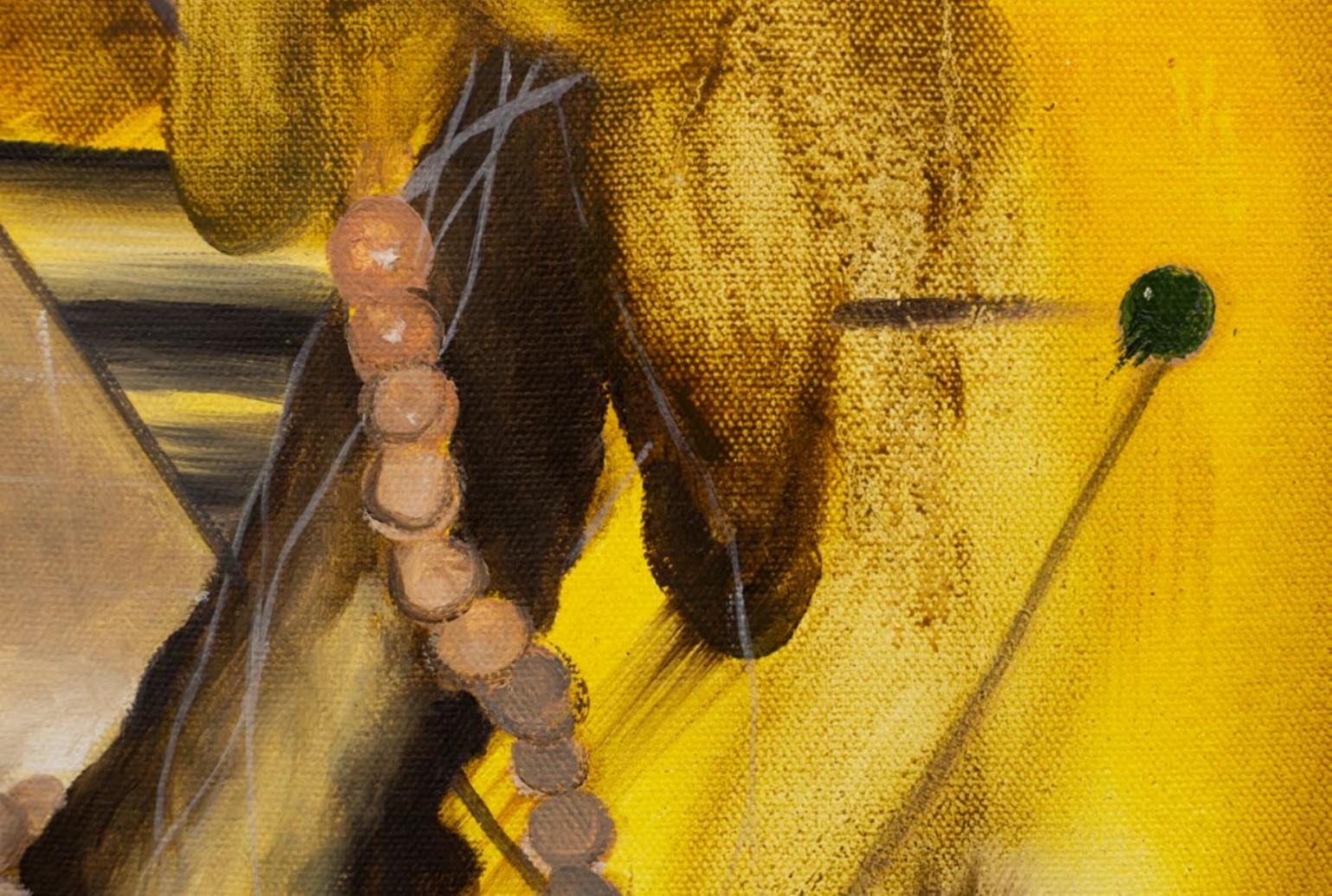
oil on canvas

20h x 16w in · 50.80h x 40.64w cm

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*a faceless entity*, 2020

oil on canvas

18h x 24w in · 45.72h x 60.96w cm

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*spook town magic*, 2020

oil on canvas

72h x 48w in · 182.88h x 121.92w cm

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***yellow haze***, 2020

oil on canvas

16h x 60.50w in · 40.64h x 153.67w cm

triptych

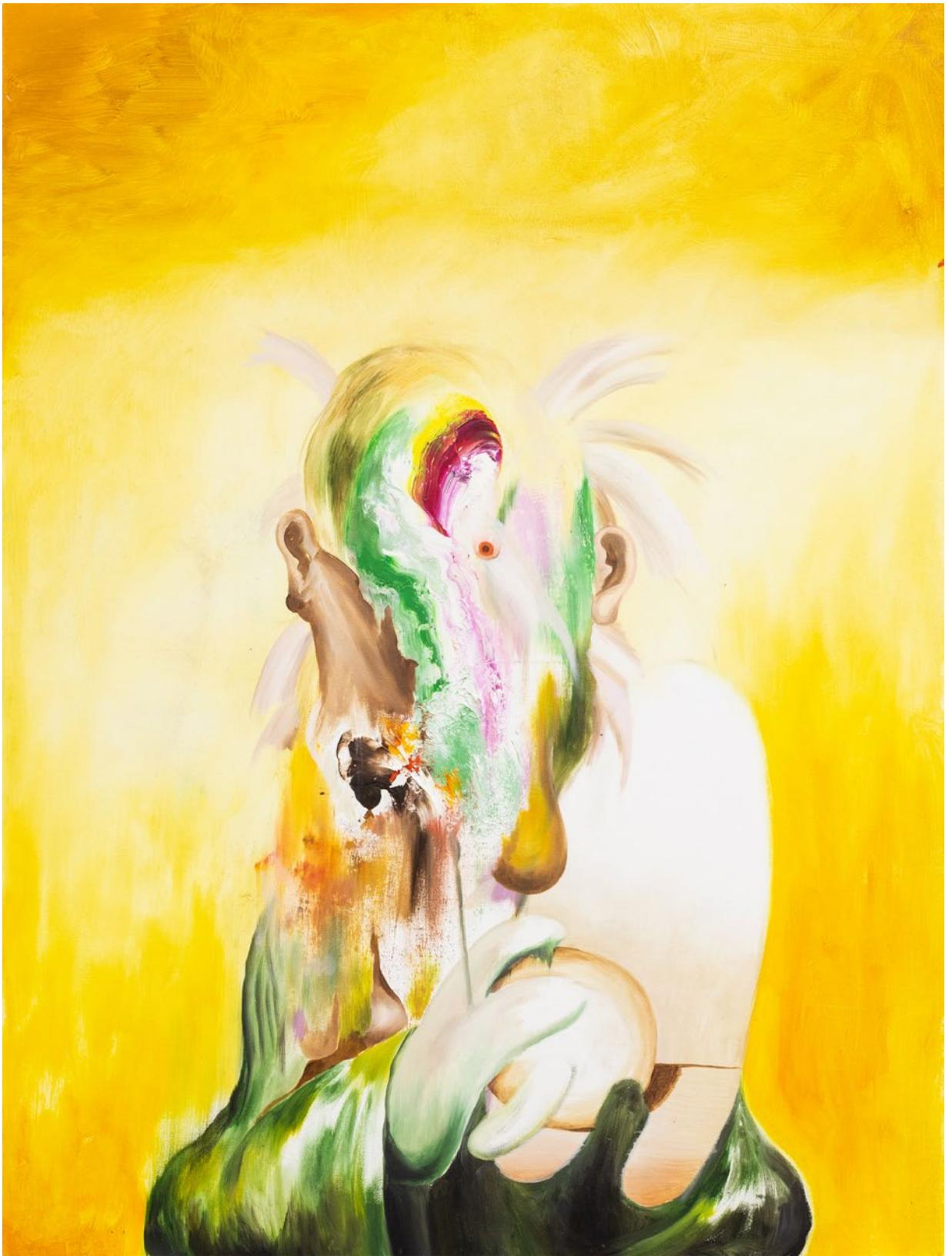
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*ghost portrait 1*, 2020

oil on canvas

40h x 30w in · 101.60h x 76.20w cm

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*ghost portrait 2, 2020*

oil on canvas

40h x 30w in · 101.60h x 76.20w cm

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

## GENE PAUL MARTIN

### Bio

**Gene Paul Martin (b. 1989, Manila) is a graduate of the Far Eastern University, Manila (BFA Painting, 2013). He was immediately offered solo shows at Silverlens. Since then he has had eleven solo exhibitions, and several group exhibitions including one at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Aside from Manila, he has shown in Malaysia and Taiwan. One of the more dynamic artists of his generation, Martin's work has caught the attention of important collectors and art audiences. Aside from his practice as an artist, Martin also curates and organizes exhibitions through his platform Sampaguita Projects run out of his studio in Project 8.**



## GENE PAUL MARTIN

### Bio

b.1989, Manila, PH



*remember the future, 2020*

### SOLO SHOWS

- 2021 *spiritual thug lyf*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2020 *Made of Light*, Art Fair Philippines Special Projects, Manila
- 2019 *Do You Do It? Or Does It Do You?*, Nunu Fine Art, Taipei  
*Improvised Exits*, ArtInformal, Manila
- 2018 *Constructed by Chance*, Silverlens, Manila  
*Middle Space*, Underground Gallery, Makati
- 2017 *Basic Visuals*, West Gallery, Manila  
*On Higher Grounds*, Art Fair Philippines, Nunu Fine Art, Manila
- 2016 *Formosa 101 Art Fair*, EXPO Dome, Taipei Expo Park, Taipei  
*What's So Wrong If You're Wrong*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2015 *Collecting Fragments*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Malaysia
- 2014 *Homemade Drill*, Silverlens, Manila

### EDUCATION

- 2006-2013 *Far Eastern University*, Manila Philippines  
Bachelor of Fine Arts, major in Painting

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