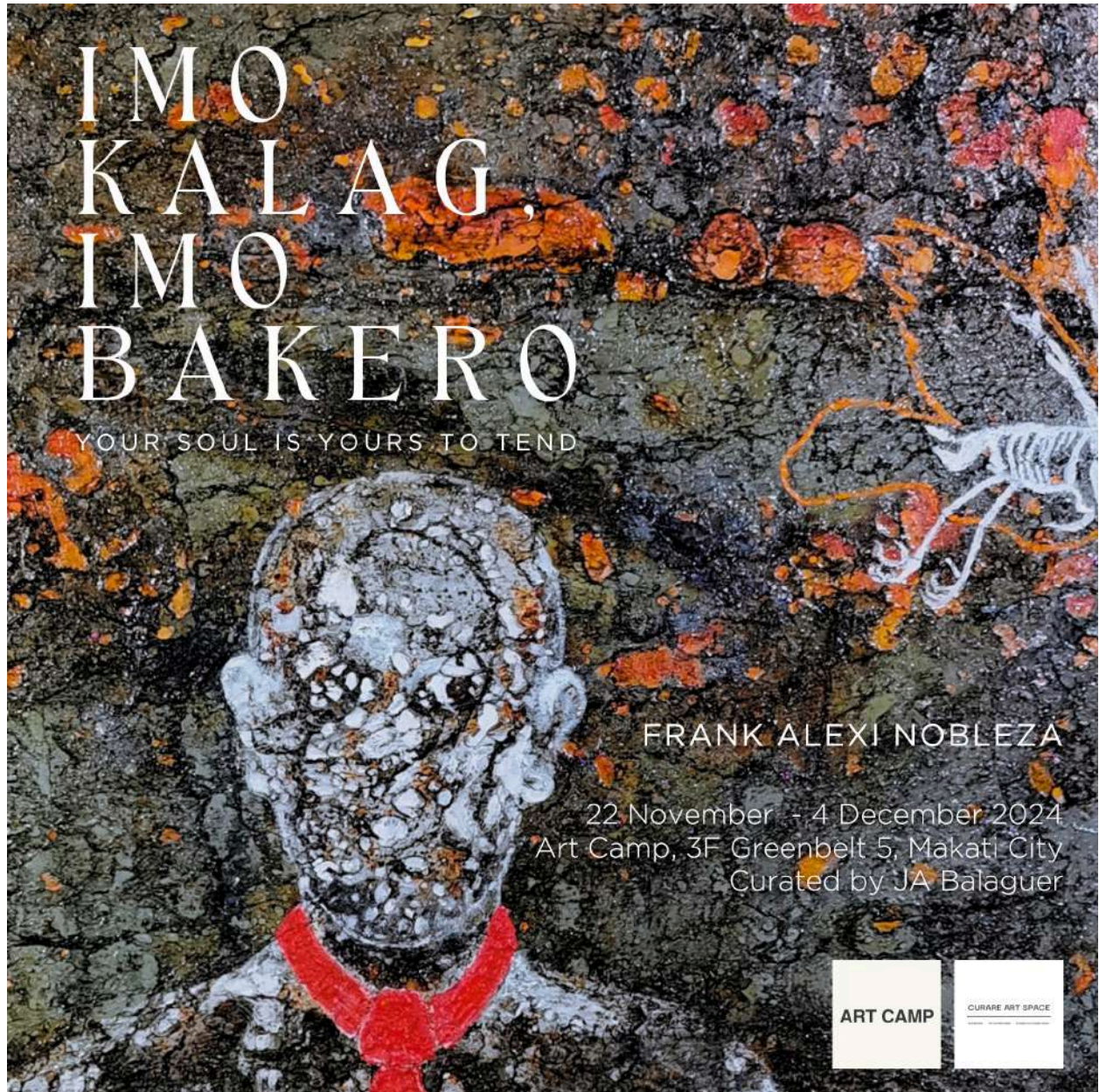


CURARE ART SPACE

Exhibitions Artist Formation Curatorial Collaboration



IMO KALAG, IMO BAKERO

YOUR SOUL IS YOURS TO TEND

FRANK ALEXI NOBLEZA

22 November - 4 December 2024
Art Camp, 3F Greenbelt 5, Makati City
Curated by JA Balaguer



IMO KALAG, IMO BAKERO (Your Soul Is Yours To Tend)

Frank Alexi Y. Nobleza

ART CAMP, Greenbelt 5, Makati City

The old Hiligaynon saying, "*Imo ulo, imo kolo; imo kalag, imo bakero*," means, "Your head is yours to carry; your soul is yours to tend." While it may sound like a blunt warning to mind your own business, it actually speaks to personal responsibility—there is a sense of self-reliance in this phrase, that our lives' paths are deeply shaped by our own actions and ambitions.

For his fifth solo exhibition, Guimaras-based visual artist and architect **Frank Alexi Nobleza** presents mixed-media canvases that ruminate on humanity's often fraught relationship with nature. Through tactile, textured surfaces that evoke organic forms, Nobleza's compositions offer an exploration of human impact on a world increasingly marked by ecological distress. His paintings reach beyond mere preservation, extending a call to care for the soul of the land itself, recognizing our profound interdependence with it.

In *Bakero*, a diptych, Nobleza centers the cowherd—a figure historically low in social standing. Here, the half-living, half-dead cow suggests humanity's need to become true stewards in sustaining the planet. Another series, titled *Imo* ("Yours"), inverts familiar landscapes, with tree silhouettes cast as human shadows. This unusual perspective emphasizes both our unity with and estrangement from nature. With *On This Site, Soon To Rise*, Nobleza critiques real estate slogans, creating a triptych that imagines a barren future—tree shadows and ghostly cattle the only signs left on a desolate landscape. In this bleak vision, humanity faces a distant, ambiguous horizon where hope may yet linger. Meanwhile, *Kalag* reflects on the soul's place amidst modernity's encroachments. Here, a figure in a red necktie, symbolizing industry and civilization, appears disconnected from the skeletal avian behind him, posing the question: what has this progress truly cost? Nobleza invokes the butterfly—a symbol of the soul in Filipino folklore—to remind us of the spirit's enduring call for balance and care.

Imo Kalag, Imo Bakero (Your Soul Is Yours to Tend) issues an urgent appeal: to hear the cries of the natural world and recognize the consequences of our own individual aspirations on all living things. While others may offer support or guidance, no one else can carry our burdens or cultivate our inner peace for us. In the end, we alone are responsible for our life's direction. As the bakeros of this earth, tending to it is akin to saving our souls.

John Alexis Balaguer

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Frank Alexi Y. Nobleza (1977) is a visual artist and licensed architect residing in Guimaras, Philippines. His mixed media artworks explore intricate social themes, particularly the dynamics of contemporary power and humanity's relationship with the natural environment, addressing urgent issues like inequality, environmental degradation, and cultural identity. By using tactile materials and innovative techniques, Nobleza creates pieces that evoke a sensory experience, capturing the complex anxieties of modern life.

Throughout his career, Nobleza has held four solo exhibitions in the Visayas (1999, 2018, 2023, and 2024). He served as the Island Coordinator for Guimaras at VIVA EXCON in 2023, and was an exhibitor at the Tubo Art Fair (2023, 2024). He also exhibited with the V-Saya Art Collective at the 2024 Mindanao Art Fair and at the 2024 Luzon Art Fair. His work has appeared in prominent publications, such as NCCA's Pananaw: Philippine Journal of Visual Arts, and has been showcased in a range of galleries and institutions in Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, and Manila. These include Art Anton, Art Elaan, Eskinita Art Farm, Qube Art Gallery, Nuzen Art Gallery, Gallerie G, Pugad ni Art Studio, Art Thrive, Imahica Art Gallery, SM Art Center, Alliance Francaise de Manille, UP Visayas Museum of Art and Cultural Heritage, and Museo Iloilo. Notably, he was selected as one of fifty artists for the "Sung-duan" National Traveling Art Exhibition, held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Nobleza has received several awards, including being a finalist in the Tarlac National Art Competition (2024) and the Philippine Art Awards (1997, 2008, 2010), as well as winning the Visayas Art Awards (2007, 2009), the MetroBank Young Painters Annual (1998), and the Shell National Students Art Competition (1996, 1997, 1998, 1999). As an advocate for regional arts development, he co-founded the Subli Artist Collective, which provides mentorship and artistic opportunities for emerging artists in Guimaras.

ABOUT CURARE ART SPACE

Curare Art Space, founded in 2019 by curator and critic John Alexis Balaguer, is dedicated to the formation and visibility of emerging Filipino artists by offering curatorial support and artist development. With its name rooted in the idea of "care," Curare focuses on the formation of artists, curating digital exhibitions, and fostering collaborative curatorial efforts. As incubator, Curare works closely with contemporary creatives to bring their artistic visions to life, providing curatorial guidance and artist management assistance throughout, from concept development to exhibition.

Exhibitions are launched on Curare's website and in partner spaces, complemented by public programs designed to engage audiences. Each project is curated with attention to its unique objectives, ensuring an artist-centered approach to exhibition and audience engagement.