



HUMAN FORM / ANYONG TAO

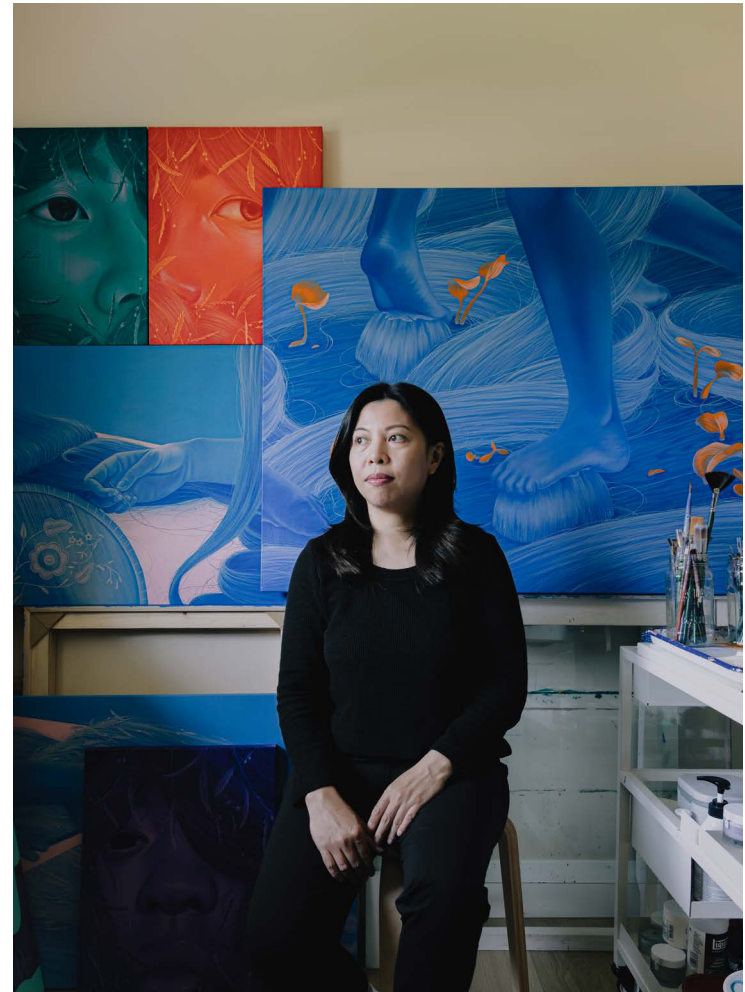
FLORENCE SOLIS

DURAN | MASHAAL GALLERY

Human Form (Anyong Tao) is a series of paintings that depict my experiences throughout the first year of postpartum following the birth of my son. Initially conceived as a collection of illustrated Filipino folklore intended to be a storybook for my son, this project evolved significantly. During my pregnancy, I researched the mythical creatures and childhood folklores I grew up with, but as I delved deeper, the effects of postpartum haze began to shape the work into a reflection of my own mental decline in the months following my son's birth.

Instead of illustrating traditional stories, I created my own characters for this series. The term "Anyong Tao", which translates to "Human Form", typically describes supernatural creatures in the Philippines that assume human forms to lure prey or coexist with mortals. I felt a profound connection to this term, as I navigate life as a mother, struggling to reconcile my new role with my previous identity.

This series is inspired by themes of nature juxtaposed with everyday scenes of domestic life, drawing from my childhood experiences in the Philippines. The paintings create a surreal world of distorted memories, reminiscent of the mother figures I grew up with. Throughout the creation of these works, the paintings have served as a visual journal of my emotional and mental state, helping me make sense of the metamorphosis I am undergoing.





Cut & Sew I

Acrylic on canvas
24" x 30" (canvas),
25.5" x 31.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$3,450 (+HST) CAD



Cut & Sew II

Acrylic on canvas
24" x 30" (canvas),
25.5" x 31.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$3,450 (+HST) CAD





Cut & Sew II



Cut & Sew I

Cut & Sew is a diptych piece that captures the cyclical nature of the emotional highs and lows I experienced as a new mother, focusing particularly on the self-criticism and self-discovery that accompany the journey of parenthood. This series serves as a visual metaphor for the continuous process of shaping and reshaping one's identity in the context of motherhood and individuality.

In *Cut & Sew I*, the scene depicts a figure meticulously sewing their hair into a pattern resembling a face. This act symbolizes the intense effort to construct an idealized self-image, reflecting the pressures and aspirations to meet certain standards as both a parent and an individual. The delicate interplay of the threads represents the fragile yet determined endeavor to weave together the various facets of identity and self-worth.

Cut & Sew II transitions to a new scene where the same figure is now cutting the growing folds of hair, which accumulate into a pile. This act signifies a moment of release or transformation, suggesting the end of one cycle and the potential beginning of another. The cutting of hair, a powerful and symbolic gesture, represents letting go of old patterns, criticisms, and expectations, making way for renewal and growth.

Although these two works were made together, I decided to frame them apart signifying an effort to break my own behavior and patterns.



Hapag

Acrylic on canvas
24" x 30" (canvas),
25.5" x 31.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

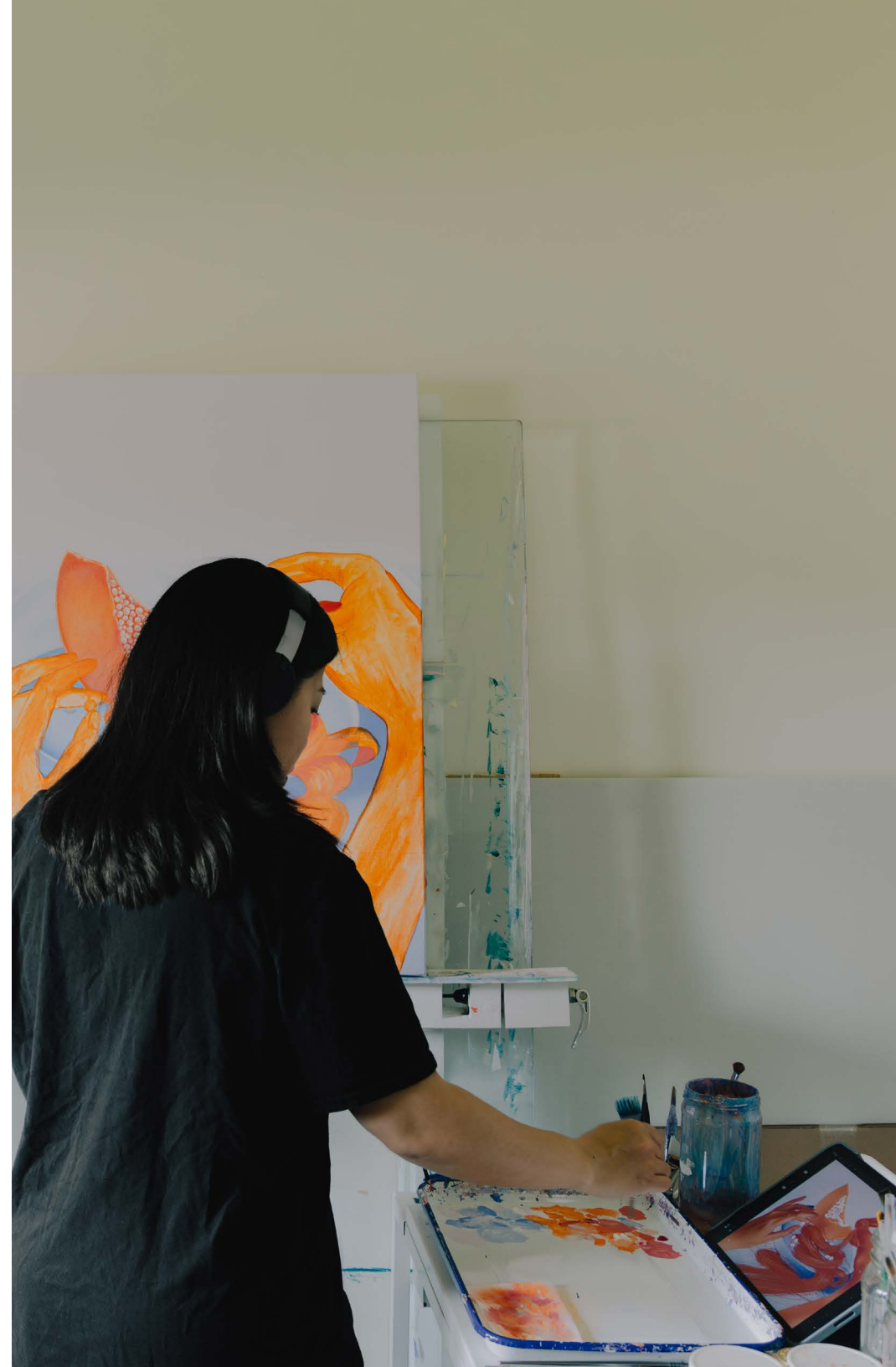
Price: \$3,450 (+HST) CAD

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"*Hapag*", meaning "dining table" in English, depicts a figure about to feed themselves using their bare hands, a common way of eating in the Philippines. This simple act embodies a deeper challenge for me: reconnecting with my cultural roots and sharing them with my son. It represents my struggle to overcome internalized shame about my own customs and beliefs, symbolized by the act of eating with our hands.

In the artwork, the papaya with pearl seeds alludes to the popular Filipino folklore of "Darna," a local equivalent of Wonder Woman. In the story, Darna gains her supernatural strength by ingesting a magical stone. In the context of the artwork, the stone represents more than just physical strength; this metaphorical stone symbolizes a profound sense of empowerment, allowing her to pass on these values to her child.

The papaya is a recurring element in my work, traditionally symbolizing beauty and nutrition. These are aspects that often seem elusive during the early days of parenthood, when exhaustion and the demands of caring for a newborn overshadow personal care and well-being. The papaya becomes a powerful emblem of the balance parents strive to achieve—maintaining their own well-being while providing for their children. It reflects the journey toward reclaiming a sense of self and finding beauty in the everyday challenges of parenthood.





Bunot

"*Bunot*" is a Tagalog term for a coconut husk that, when dried, serves as a manual hardwood floor polisher in Filipino homes. The process involves stepping on the flattened top of the husk and rhythmically scrubbing the floor back and forth until the wood reveals its shine, as depicted in the painting.

In this piece, multiple figures are illustrated to represent the mother figures who surrounded my family. These women created a village around my mother and siblings, working together to raise five children and taking on transformative roles in our lives. Their collective effort and support are symbolized by the communal act of polishing the floor, a task that requires coordination, rhythm, and persistence.

The inclusion of water hyacinths in the painting adds a layer of symbolic meaning. These free-floating, invasive plants appear out of place, signifying the constant challenges and disruptions that life brings. The need to keep scrubbing and polishing the floor, a relentless act, reflects the ongoing effort required to manage and overcome these challenges, preventing them from taking root and spreading.

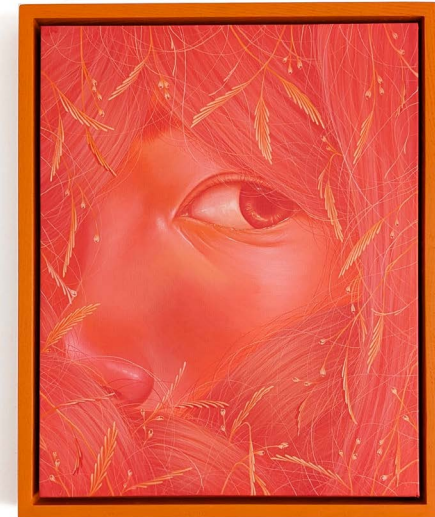
Bunot is a tribute to the strength and solidarity of the women who shaped my upbringing. It highlights the beauty of communal care and the unyielding spirit necessary to maintain a harmonious and nurturing environment amidst life's inevitable difficulties.



Bunot

Acrylic on canvas
36" x 48" (canvas),
37.5" x 49.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$5,375 (+HST) CAD



Makahiya III

Acrylic on canvas
16" x 20" (canvas),
17.5" x 21.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$2,160 (+HST) CAD



Makahiya IV

Acrylic on canvas
16" x 20" (canvas),
17.5" x 21.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$2,160 (+HST) CAD



Makahiya V

Acrylic on canvas
16" x 20" (canvas),
17.5" x 21.5" x 2.5" (framed in solid oak wood)

Price: \$2,160 (+HST) C

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The "makahiya" plant, aptly named for its shy nature, responds to stimuli by closing its leaves and drooping down when touched. Despite its modest appearance and small size, it is a remarkably resilient and adaptable plant, spreading and growing rapidly while responding adeptly to various potentially harmful stimuli. Reflecting on my journey through motherhood, I see striking parallels to the makahiya, symbolizing habitual learning and unwavering growth through challenges.

In my work, the figure is draped and concealed in woven streams of its own hair, representing both protection and binding—much like the early months of parenthood. Despite these layers, the makahiya persists, growing and thriving within its constraints.

Reminiscent of my earlier works, "Makahiya I" and "Makahiya II," the subsequent pieces, "Makahiya III," "Makahiya IV," and "Makahiya V," are dedicated to my fellow mothers and parents who share in this profound experience. Many of these parents have been sources of support and strength as I prepared for this series. Their stories of parenthood—a mix of joy, love, and occasional pain—are reflected in the figures depicted in my work, each looking in different directions but ultimately confronting the same challenges.

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