



LOVE IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

11 FEB 2022 to 11 MAR 2022

"Love in the Time of Pandemic" brings together two creatives and Asia Society Asia 21 Young Leaders, collaborating to touch hearts through art.

Together in this project are photo-documentarist Xyza Cruz Bacani, and poet-author Quintin Pastrana.

Between Xyza's powerful images and Quintin's poetry from his latest book, "Ambahan: A Love Story", spring seeds of hope and stubborn inspiration.

"Love in the Time of Pandemic" celebrates small acts of kindness and innate, instinctive, indigenous empathy which, together, allow great feats and save lives.

Your purchase of this set - which comes with 12 Postcards of Xyza's images, a copy of Quintin's Ambahan: A Love Story and Manila House's signature cocktail - will help raise funds for an ambulance and in setting up a community library through the Library Renewal Partnership, for Xyza's hometown in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya.

This project is brought to you by Asia Society PH in partnership with Manila House. Also by Fuji Film, which supports Xyza in her photography, and by FEU Publications, publisher of Quintin's works.

Exhibit runs from 11th of February to 11th of March 2022 at Manila House.

Visit bit.ly/ASPHFeb11 to know more.



IMMOLATION

There are many things I
wish to say, but only one
starkly felt in the gloaming:
My heart burns through kerosene and all I
have is this star. Embracing self and shadow,

I know we walk under Light.

see the full version of the poem on pp.38-39

INFLECTION

Some hours I wish I never
met you; but I did. Up to
the point when I was mumbling underneath my
breath - saying just that - as a sleepwalker
knows, yet trudges anyway: waves enamored of
the reef

And as my ship ran farther
aground, fraught with a scar tissue -
I disembarked to trace the
scent of the wind in your hair,
our tongues parched in fear - marching past the
point we could not be: closer to the taste of rain.

see the full version of the poem on pp.40-41



MOTHER'S DAY

I'm asked how I will miss you - what might be left after all this
fading. I will say this:
Every time I choose kind words over the throwaway barb,
Self-depreciation over
the basement of self-pity

Each time I give, yet want for nothing; or pray, and find that
my call
is its own answer.
Anytime i cook with grace

or fold the sheets, part my hair, stanch a cut, or floss my
teeth: This sacred ordinary

When each glance at my beloved brings me to full
redemption;
Where I learn to both hold on and let go, until the dark

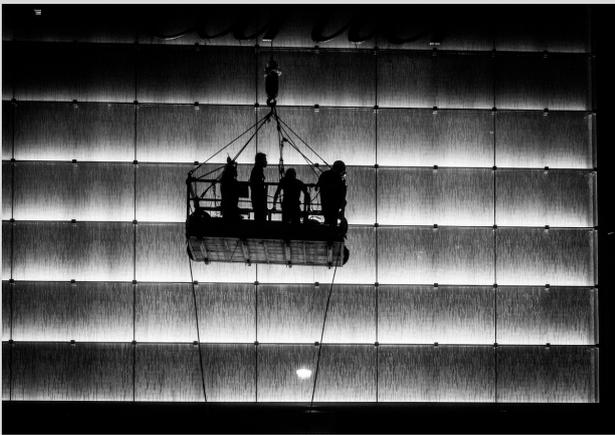
tides pass and stars show the shore. Your face will always
be there:
All that remains is kindness.

see the full version of the poem on pp.50-51

REST

When were you last held by the sacred
ordinary; but
the last time your fever broke where rivulets
traced your limbs like dew, cooled by the
wind, then stanchd by the garish sun who
relinquished it to the sea?

see the full version of the poem on pp.68-69



NOCTURNE

It was almost perilous
save for the moon's captive gaze. Climbing down the
locked stairpath into foliage that barely
cloaked the painted river's face,
I parsed each footstep with the current's breathing,
and
all eyes

observing how I wandered
in the pensive nightfall's hearth, and what began to
stir
as
I traced how far we had come; then braved past the
trees' eclipse, to stand unsheathed in light, and fall
into
the scheme of things

see the full version of the poem on pp.54-55

ORPHEUS REDUX

He knew he'd died of his wounds - He
sensed he was in a dream;
He kept walking into it
He wished it would never end:
He fought each day of waking.

He lurched in fumes of sleep - 'til She drew
him into her breath

see the full version of the poem on pp.60-61





PRESENT

My smartphone's battery died - then
everything came to life:
I traced the footsteps of words; city light
constellations
waft in this winter's gaze that stilled grains
from peat to glass, to melt like music in the
mouth.
We welcomed each note's heartbeat, each
pause a longing that drew
in every breath: then love spread like
applause as we grabbed the invitation to
breathe in
and inhabit a moment
that was hiding in plain sight

see the full version of the poem on pp.62-63

STILL LIFE

It's so silent, you can feel
the wind-trails comb the ripples: in that
cross-hatch of our lives is a stillness
that breaks you, gently 'til you fall into
a cadence that floats to the horizon as the
first star

see the full version of the poem on pp.74-75



SINGULARITY

We chose to no longer be hostage to the
elements:
dust clouds nipping at our heels, Broken
weight on the pedal: The hum turns to
rattling, then a sonic drill-bit whirl, 'til
there's nothing left but silence
We're right on the cusp of time itself, taken
at the flood.
We're not waiting anymore
for some sign or permission
to make this quarterlife count. We're stars
and constellation held aloft by gravity

see the full version of the poem on pp.72-73

TRANSCEND

If I dwell on this trifle,
I begin to remember
how an ordinary day
can write chapters of a book.
And here I am, stuck in a
puddle that strayed from this flood that
seeks to rejoin the sea

see the full version of the poem on pp.80-81



SYMPHONY

I've been caught in the crossfire of a diesel
engine's wrath
while the world as I know it recedes before
me into
the sheltering horizon
as lapis lazuli waves
turn into turquoise windows
I'm bathed in drizzling starlight while the
silence envelops
my breathing, just like music coming from
another room:
my life played out before me, each memory
woven like constellations for my soul

see the full version of the poem on pp.76-77

THE NIGHT SKY ON MY BACK, INEBRIATED

It's as if I was dangling
from my tailbone as I looked through this

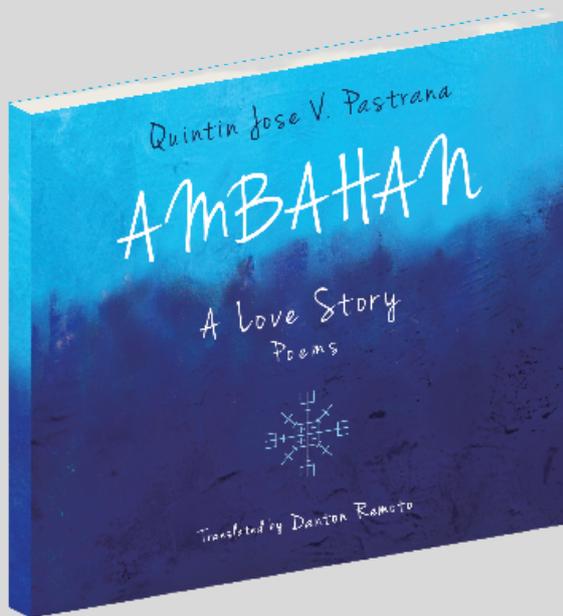
singularity -
that nourishing darkness hinged on stars of
parchment, hanging on your every word,
telling
me to just breathe and let

see the full version of the poem on pp.52-53





Full version of the poems in English, Filipino and Mangyan transcription can be found in:



Ambahan: A Love Story Poems

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Translated by: Danton Remoto

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