

Joey Velasco is a Filipino visual artist who dared to journey in a field, gingerly trodden by Filipino artists---religious art. His most notable piece is "Hapag ng Pag-asa" (Table of Hope), a recasting of the "Last Supper," where Christ shares a meal with hungry street urchins.

Having done 31 one man exhibits and 2 group shows in the past three years, the other works of Velasco had made the rounds not only of the gallery circuit but also of universities, churches and various groups here and abroad where they never fail to attract a crowd for their compelling themes bridging the celestial and terrestrial. He wrote the book "They Have Jesus" and produced single handedly three indie films. "Sa Kambas ng Lipunan (2006)," "Ang Lumang Paintbrush (2007)," and "Kakaibang Kulay (2008)."

Born in March 18, 1967 to Ciriaco and Adelita Velasco, Joey showed early signs of his passion for entrepreneurship. He took up law at the Ateneo de Manila but had to leave to be in solidarity with his working class parents.

He traces his catharsis and ensuing epiphany to a near-fatal illness that afflicted him four years ago. He underwent a major operation, causing him the loss of his left kidney. He was devastated. He slumped into a depression like being trapped in a dark, lonely, deep well. He totally withdrew from the world – from his work and social life – he avoided any contact with his friends and even his family – locking himself in one room as a total recluse. He prayed that God could throw him a rope for him to get out of darkness, and he was ready to catch it even if it was laced with broken glass. But instead of a rope, the Lord reached out through the paintbrush and he grabbed it. He finally saw light and new life.

His artworks haunt because they serve both as mirror and window. As mirror because the viewers see themselves reflected in the obras; as window because it opens for them a horizon. Velasco's paintings mirror the everyday life in which a Jesus of a different culture is deeply engaged, but they also open a window such that when people see children with down syndrome singing lullaby to an exhausted Christ on a canvas, the viewers are invited to open that window and plunge themselves into the world of mild to severe mental retardation, unspeakable burden, but also of innocent and unsullied compassion.

The forty two year old artist considers himself just a paint brush being used by the Divine artist. He regards his talent as a gift from above. Happily married to Marie Queeny Puno Sunga for 13 years, he considers this transformative journey in art a legacy to his beloved children Marco, Chiara, Clarisse, and Marti.