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## In the Figurative Funk Zone

Los Angeles–based Filipino-American artist Godofredo Astudillo Energizes the Venue of the MCASB Satellite Gallery at Riviera Beach House, Verging on the Funk Zone

By **Josef Woodard**  
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'Coast 1269' by Godofredo Astudillo | Credit: Courtesy

LA-based Filipino-American artist Godofredo Astudillo is presenting his debut solo show in Santa Barbara, and in an unexpectedly suitable setting. Winner of the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara's "Call for Entries," the artist's work hangs in the lobby and walls of the Riviera Beach House, a boutique hotel just a few blocks from the beach and at the portal to the Funk Zone.



'Frankie's 1323' by Godofredo Astudillo | Credit: Courtesy

Vestiges of funk and neo-expressionist-dusted gestures live in his figurative paintings, often rough-hewn but empathetic portraits of young men, alone and in pairs and groupings. And yes, hints of the beach and seaside sites find their way into the show's visual and almost narrative mesh.

Astudillo's exhibition, informed by memories of his formative years in the 1980s and '90s and the environment of his youth, goes by the title *Makahiya: I wanted you to feel the same*, tapping into the solidarity and community and the *makahiya* plant, which withers inward upon human touch. As he explains in an artist's statement, "I paint to hold onto what's fading. I paint to forgive, to remember, to make peace with what's left behind — and to dream boldly of brighter days."

The most affecting paintings in the show find fresh, distinctive routes to the figurative painting game, off to the side of standard practices and rules of painterly engagement. And they are all placed upstairs, in the common area above the more public lobby below. In one of the works, a party is underway, replete with a party hat atop a glum-faced man/boy. The punch has been spiked with angst and the uncertainty of youth, as reflected in the painting's murky visual approach.





'West Jefferson' by Godofredo Astudillo | Credit: Courtesy

A horizontally pitched image finds two stern young men mysteriously perched in the back seat of a bulbous vintage car, casting suspicious gazes amidst the moodily painted scene with a strip of ocean blue teasing the eye through the car window. By contrast, a portrait of a man swimming in a color scheme with a nod to the Fauvist palette in the rendering of his face. Further expanding the palette, his checkered shirt is playfully matched by the painting's checkered backdrop (or wallpaper), like Catherine Deneuve in *Umbrellas of Cherbourg*.

In another, ostensibly "straighter" portrait, a man in a suit-and-tie lounges lugubriously in an embracing leather chair, his brooding countenance resonating within a composition that includes an extra helping of negative space.

In these paintings, in particular, the artist ventures into rewarding, fresh, expressive turf, pushing the contemporary figurative art impulse toward a more personal vision. The show deserves a visit from the art-curious, Funk Zoners in need of an art break, and anyone with an eye and hunger for evocative art on the town and, in this case, by the beach.

MCASB Satellite at The Riviera Beach House is open to the public from 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. every day. For more information, see [mcasantabarbara.org](http://mcasantabarbara.org)