

Guillermo Tolentino

Early Life of Guillermo Tolentino

Guillermo E. Tolentino, or Guillermo Estrella Tolentino. He was born on July 24, 1890 in Malolos, Bulacan. Tolentino is the fourth (4th) child among the eight siblings. His father was a tailor whose passion for the guitar was his single creative quality. Guillermo inherited this artistic talent from his family, also known as Memong. In addition, Memong rose to become one of the top three guitarists in the Philippines at the time. (<https://artesdelasfilipinas.com/archives/104/guillermo-estrella-tolentino-a-classic-of-his-time>)

Even as a young child, Tolentino showed an outstanding talent for sculpture. He created a clay sculpture of a horse, a dog, and many more using materials on the town's fishpond banks.

Tolentino studied at Malolos Intermediate School, where he met Mrs. H.A Bordner, his teacher from fifth to sixth grade, who gave him instructions for drawing. He went to Malolos High School for two years. (<https://artesdelasfilipinas.com/archives/104/guillermo-estrella-tolentino-a-classic-of-his-time>) After learning from his cousin that there is an Art School in Manila, Tolentino pursued his passion at Manila High School in Intramuros. He studied in the afternoons at the University of the Philippines' School of Fine Arts. Vicente Rivera was his sketching teacher. Subsequently, he chose to study sculpting with Vicente Francisco. He soon lost interest in painting in favor of sculpture.

In 1911, Tolentino, being in high school, drew a group of drawings of Rizal, Burgos, Antonio, Juan Luna, Regidor, and others, also known as Filipinos Ilustres, and was lithographed and published in a weekly magazine called Liwayway.

While studying, he supported himself by working for various marmolerias in Manila. In 1914, he made his first important work for Architect Juan Arellano. The figure is that of a woman praying against a cross for the tomb of the Palma family in Cementerio del Norte. The same year, he completed the relief figures conceived by Arellano for the Taft Avenue exterior of Casino Espanol.

He studied and graduated from the School of Fine Arts in 1915 with a degree in painting and sculpture. However, he chose to stay for an additional year. He created the San Miguel de Mayumo monument during this period to symbolize the Biak na Bato Pact. Juan Arellano designed it.

Tolentino lived primarily in Laguna in 1918. He collaborated with builder Tomas Zamora to create monuments honoring Rizal, a mausoleum, and other structures. Precioso Palma, one of his pals, encouraged him to start his store. They even made him an offer of money so he could. Tolentino declined to accept. He replied, "Because I was not yet a sculptor," when asked why (Paras-Perez, 1972). (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillermo_Tolentino#cite_note-inquirer2-6)

Career

On January 24, 1925, Tolentino inaugurated his studio in Manila after being a professor at the University of the Philippines' School of Fine Arts after his return from Europe.

In 1930, Tolentino entered a competition to design the Bonifacio Monument alongside thirteen other painters. He spoke with participants in the Philippine Revolution to obtain information for the monuments rather than basing them on written sources. The bone structure of Espiridiona Bonifacio, the Supremo's surviving sister, served as the model for Bonifacio's figure. By July 29, the committee had narrowed its selection to seven entries. Tolentino's entry took first place, earning him 3,000 pesos in cash.

A jury tasked with choosing the best design to honor the Katipunan Supremo convened on August 9, 1930. When entering the designs, he used pseudonyms. The winning entry was submitted by Tolentino using the pseudonym Batang Elias. He won the design contest and received a commission to install the Bonifacio Monument. In 1932, he finished the monument's figures. He sent the figures to be cast in bronze in Italy. He ended the Bonifacio Monument in 1933.

Approximately concurrently with his work on the Bonifacio Monument, Tolentino completed the Oblation. He combined the bulky build of his assistant and sculptor Anastacio Caedo with the stature and dimensions of Caedo's brother-in-law, Virgilio Raymundo, to create the Oblation.

(<http://noypicollections.blogspot.com/2011/07/life-and-works-of-guillermo-tolentino.html>>)

Rafael Palma, President of the UP, ordered the memorial. The Oblation was first displayed at the Padre Faura Quadrangle at U.P. in 1935. Madrid. Later on, he was moved to Uttar Pradesh. 1949 saw Diliman. In the U.P. Today, the Oblation represents academic independence.

October 25, 1935: The U.P. The Alumni Association intended to build an arch to remember the Commonwealth of the Philippines' founding. They asked Tolentino to get the maquette and design ready.

The time it took Tolentino to create a maquette was short. The National Assembly and President Quezon gave their approval to the design. The monument was estimated to have cost around Php 500,000. Despite a lack of funding, Mrs. Aurora Quezon placed the first trowel full of cement on the monument's foundation on November 15, 1938. They intended to erect the Commonwealth Triumphal Arch in front of the Legislative Building at the intersection of Taft Avenue and Padre Burgos. Sadly, the war intervened, and they never constructed the triumphal arch.

In the absence of Fernando Amorsolo, Tolentino was named Acting Director of the School of Fine Arts on July 23, 1951. In August 1953, on August 4, he got the position of Director.

In 1955, Tolentino resumed his private practice following twenty-nine years of service at the University. Soon after he retired, the U.P. He was made Professor Emeritus by the Board of Regents. The Philippine Institute of Architects named him Sculptor of the Year.

He also won numerous accolades and citations in the sculpture industry. He was granted the UNESCO Cultural Award in Sculpture in 1959. He was awarded the Araw ng Maynila Award in Sculpture in 1963. Additionally, in 1970, he received the President's Medal of Merit for his exceptional assistance in arts, particularly in sculpture.

In 1967, Tolentino was granted the Republic Cultural Heritage Award for contributing to Filipino culture. He also received the Diwa ng Lahi Award in 1972 during the Linggo ng Kalinangan festival in Manila. In 1973, First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos presented him with a plaque recognizing his distinguished contributions to developing art in the Philippines. (<https://daytwoconnectph.carrd.co/>)

Moreover, Tolentino was granted the National Artist Award on June 12, 1973, through Proclamation No. 1144, in acknowledgment of his exceptional talent and noteworthy contribution to the field of sculpture.

Death

Twelve days before turning 86, Guillermo E. Tolentino died at 8:00 p.m. on July 12, 1976, at his house in Retiro Street, Quezon City.

Family

Mother: Babina Estrella

Father: Isidro Tolentino

Spouse: Paz Raymundo (Married in 1932)

Children: Liwanag, Dalisay, Soliman, Magligtas, Marikit, Isagani.