



The art of everyday, made beautiful in El Salvador

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The flat of her foot is exposed, toes clinching to the thong of a plastic slipper. Were it not for this I would have thought the painting Parisian, but here, in El Salvador's Suchitoto, listening to a tale of lost love, last hope and redemption through art, I learn there are things universal, made local in the details.

To die for love seems an old-fashioned notion. But El Salvador's Mauricio Escobar inscribes his love (forbidden, restrictive, freeing, whole) on canvas, cardboard, an adobe wall; and I realize there are all kinds of love and as many forms of death.

Discovering his passion for painting after leafing through an imported book on the Impressionists, Mauricio gave up his education as an engineer to the chagrin of his father and at the cost (literal and figurative) of a woman.

I meet him at a conference in San Salvador, follow him to Suchitoto and there meet his subjects caught in the ritual of the everyday.

Billy Joel's Piano Man plays (interpreted) in a crowded room in Los Almendros de San Lorenzo Hotel & Restaurant. Mauricio drums out a beat on the table, sings along in perfect English.

He turns to us, and, forgetting our lack of comprehension, Spanishes his way through something beautiful. Seeing our blank monolingual faces, he tells us in an English unpracticed that he loves the song, wants to tell us more, but not knowing the words instead touches his heart and smiles.



"I love to paint to music," Mauricio says at dinner, his brown face brightened by the candlelight at his chin.

"Painting a mural, I do not need anything but music."

In a country painted Mayan, Pipil, Spanish, American, El Salvador is the unplanned beauty of mixed paint on a palette. Here, the (sometimes troubled) marriage of Indigenous and European finds a comfortable home on the walls of mountain villages, in handicrafts packed for tourists and on the canvases of Mauricio Escobar.

We have driven from the bright campesino motifs of painter Fernando Llorca that decorate the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Savior in the country's capital, through the mural city of Concepcion de Ataco and end, staring at a man who says over and over again:

"I just want to paint."

All images courtesy of Mauricio Escobar:
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For more information on Los Almendros de San Lorenzo, click [here](#).



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