



FERNANDO C. AMORSOLO  
ART FOUNDATION  
FEATURE PAINTING



**Portrait of Lina, 1946**

24 ½" X 33" -- Lina Amorsolo Collection

*By Edwin A. Martinez*

Amorsolo was classified by art historians as an Impressionist. He was however not an Impressionist in the same vein as Claude Monet or Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Nowhere is this more evident than in his work with portraits. It is in portraiture that the artist used the alla prima method more commonly associated with his greatest influences---Diego Velasquez and John Singer Sargent. In this portrait of his daughter Salome Lina, the face is more carefully rendered and has the emphasis on detail and exactness conceived by his classical training yet the body shows the spontaneous and bold brush strokes that characterize his landscapes.

It was a Good Friday in post-war Manila in 1946 when Amorsolo asked his daughter to pose for him. Being one of the holiest days of the year, the artist's studio was quiet and empty allowing him to concentrate on this piece. Having asked his wife and children to pose for him in the past, Lina thought nothing of the request. He would frequently use them as a reference for the figures in his paintings. After some time, Amorsolo called his surprised daughter to his side to show her the nearly finished portrait. It was one of only a few solo portraits that the artist painted of any member of his quite large family. This particular painting was completed in one day.

This portrait is unique in a number of ways. Unlike most commissioned portraits where the light source is in the foreground illuminating the full face, in this piece, the light comes from the right side of the viewer possibly from a window in the artist's studio. The off-center source of light gives the painting a darker aura with starker contrasts between light and shadows. The artist uses more earth tones of raw and burnt sienna which allowed him to use highlights with a yellow and orange hue for a more dramatic effect. The subject is not in formal attire having been asked to pose without advance notice giving the painting a more relaxed and spontaneous feel. Instead of looking towards the viewer the eyes are directed towards the side possibly to emphasize the subject's youth to add a playful and casual tone. Note the piece of cloth that the subject is holding in her hands. This was meant to represent Lina's affinity for sewing.

Despite the bolder looser brushstrokes, the artistry of the finished product is remarkable. Not being a commissioned piece, one can sense that the artist was painting most purely for himself. While Amorsolo was working on a portrait for a Mrs. Stowe, the client's husband saw Lina's portrait and was so impressed that he offered to purchase it. When the artist's daughter refused to sell, Mr. Stowe asked Amorsolo to make an exact replica. The original is still with Lina.

*Note: This article is an excerpt from the book "Maestro Fernando C. Amorsolo: Recollections of the family"*