

# Sketching a Promising Career



(Left) Bal during screening of animation scholars in Pandacan, Manila.



(Right) Bal at Toon City.

The eldest of 4 siblings, Astrobal “Bal” Bautista is an Animation Skills Development Course graduate. He says, “malaki ang diperensya ng buhay ko noon kung ikukumpara sa buhay ko ngayong nakatapos ako bilang Shell scholar (The life I lived before and the life I live now that I have completed a course as a Shell scholar are very different)”.

Bal relates that his mother used to accept laundry work, while his father used to help in a small canteen owned by one of his aunts. He stopped studying when he was in 3rd year high school due to his addiction to illegal drugs, “kaya napabaya ko na ang pag-aaral ko (that was why I took my studies for granted),” he relates. He was sixteen when he first worked as a construction worker in Angat, Bulacan where he was employed for only 2 months. After which, he was hired as painter for another few months.

Bal recounts how difficult it was to find a job, “hindi palaging may trabaho, kadalasan ay nakatambay lang ako, tulog sa umaga at gising sa gabi (I was not always employed, most of the time

I was out-of-job, asleep in the morning and awake in the evenings)”. At the time, Bal was already seriously addicted to drugs, “sa loob ng halos pitong taon ay ganito ang naging buhay ko (for almost seven years, that was the kind of life I lived),” he says.

When Bal turned 23, he decided to turn away from drug addiction and, so far, has been successful in doing so. “Nasa tao talaga kung gusto niyang huminto sa bisyo (It is up to the individuals to decide and take action if they want to stop their vices),” he says. He was already seeking employment for a fast food chain when he chanced upon a poster informing Pandacan residents of the availability of a scholarship for Animation Skills Development Course through PSFI.

Bal was one of 23 Pandacan residents awarded a scholarship for the Animation Skills Development Course at ArtFarm Asia. Bal’s decision to change his lifestyle was further made firmer by his experiences during the conduct of the Leadership Enhancement and Attitude Development (LEAD) Workshop, and having been introduced to the character of Kenshin Himura of Samurai X which is one of the most popular animé series today.

As a kid, Bal was already interested in drawing. His talents were reinforced when he won first place in a drawing contest during his junior year in high school.

Bal currently works as a clean-up and in-between artist at Toon City, where part of his job is to animate the sketches and clean the sketches of in-between artists.

Like Kenshin, Bal had a dark past to which he has promised to turn his back from. “Malaki ang pasasalamat ko sa Shell (I owe Shell many thanks),” he says, “nakatulong ang karanasan ko bilang Shell scholar sa aking pagbabagong buhay at sa pagpapaunlad ng aking kakayanan (my experiences as a Shell scholar have helped turn my life around and in improving my skills)”.

Bal intends to stay with Toon City and pursue a lifetime career in animation.

