



CHIN KONG YEE
THE FLOWER

Wei-Ling Gallery

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A minute's worth of an experience can equate to an incredible mass of data and what we choose to filter is what then remains as a memory. When we recall that particular moment, what we tend to remember of it is usually incomplete or has been recomposed in our minds into something a little different.

The world is special and uncertain.

That which we have never experienced only becomes "real" once we have actually experienced it for ourselves.

Art is like a vessel. It can transport us to different worlds and this sequentially reshapes our lives.

I have been a practicing artist for 16 years now. From "*Undulating Spaces*" to this latest solo exhibition, I have been on a continuous exploration of space and time and I have finally figured out that time is not linear. The past, present and future are all happening simultaneously. The past continues to change as our state of mind changes, in turn affecting how our future plays out.

Akin to a flower in bloom with its petals opening up unhurriedly.

I have been obsessed with chinese ink paintings for quite a while now. Xuan paper has been used for paintings since AD600 and my using this medium allows me to experience what painters from 1415 years ago experienced.

An art material can lead the way to paint, to think, and this inspires me greatly.

Acrylic on paper places another spotlight on this show, alongside other oil and canvas works.

The frequency of light (colours) has so much to do with work on different materials. It makes my work that much more expressive.

The concept of duality (yin and yang) is of a typical golden ratio.... The principal is simple, but quite magical; it is difficult for one to go wrong when creating anything with this concept in mind. *City and Forest* implements the duality and contraction of subjects; busy vs. still, natural vs. manmade, growing vs. spending.

Duomo Florence is a diptych work which could be rotated on its axis to alter the story of the painting through its varied arrangements. This paper work is what inspired me to create *City and Forest*.

When sunlight arrives on earth, we know that it took eight minutes to travel from the sun. When the sun sets, the skies a coloured red. Before the sun rises and after the sun sets, the colour blue is a constant. I love when the colour blue appears in the evening skies- it is a colour that holds feelings of hope. *Dresden in Blue* and *The Flower - Busan* are descriptions of my feelings towards blue light.

In 2011 in Berlin, Germany, while attending a 30 day course, I loved to sit at Tiergarten before and after classes as it was very close to where I was staying. This was during springtime and sitting still at the gardens and doing nothing was one of the great perks of being a student. It was from these moments that piqued my interest in practicing Chinese calligraphy, as I would sit in the gardens trying to spot anything within my surroundings that resembled Chinese words, just like a kid trying to form shapes and animals with the clouds up in the sky. When I returned from Berlin, I found myself constantly scribbling calligraphy on sheets and sheets of paper, just like you see on the canvas of *Tia Garden*.

Chin Kong Yee

August 2015

A Closer Look at 'The Flower'

There are a couple of facets to the enjoyment of Chin Kong Yee's works. First, and the most evident, is the visual pleasure that his paintings bring. Saccharine yellows flirt with lush cobalt blues on the canvas, and swirling landscapes send the eyes on a kaleidoscopic viewing journey that has become the artist's signature offering. Less obvious, though, are the subtle nuances that make up each work. There are the personal tales and precise moments in time when the scene was captured, and philosophical musings that simmer beneath the surfaces. So, despite their seemingly benign facades, Kong Yee's works are complex creatures. And the artist, a critical filter of life.

The artist's latest body of work comprises ten paintings, and understanding them means to trace aspects of Kong Yee's career. For one, we need to note how his painterly style hinges greatly on European painting legacies, and how his use of photographic tools throws his practice into more recent times. *Duomo Florence* is a vivid expression of this marriage. In the work, the great Florentine cathedral takes centre stage and is flanked by two gravity-defying buildings that threaten to topple upon it. Such fish-eye twists to perspective have come to define Kong Yee's works. And, the irony in this particular composition lies in the fact that Florence is the reputed birthplace of linear perspective; Masaccio's early Renaissance painting, *Holy Trinity*, can be found at the city's Santa Maria Novella church, and it takes podium place for its use of this spatial rule – the very one that Kong Yee flouts in his art.

But it's not just Occidental traditions that we can reference in Kong Yee's latest works. A relatively new addition to the artist's opus is the use of traditional *xuan* paper and Chinese calligraphy, as seen in *Tia Garden & Chinese Calligraphy*. Based on his own experiences in Berlin's sprawling inner-city park, Tiergarten, the work features an autumnal-coloured patch with thousands of Chinese characters written in ink. This specific element pays homage to the complexities of Chinese script and how repetitions in the thousands are necessary to achieve levels of mastery. Musing on this, Kong Yee pokes fun at life's challenges and confesses to his own unique brand of coping. "Life is 3D, written (forms) are 2D, but once read, it becomes 4D. So, I make it unreadable," he says, referring to the work's bed of Chinese characters and his own struggles learning German during his one-month stint in the capital city.

It's this errant humour that characterizes the artist's approach. And, during the course of our discussion on *The Flower*, the artist makes a joke about the socially-demanded linearity of thoughts and how manmade environments are all crafted along straight lines. Funny, he observes, pointing out rightly that the earth is round. This could explain why Kong Yee's horizontal panoramas of yore now reappear within more compact formats and circular guises, and how increasingly, the artist has shifted from atmospheric portrayals to detailed inspections. Indeed, there are introspective, zen-like qualities to works like the verdant *Forest*, or the eponymous painting *The Flower*. "Everything only happens in the present," says Kong Yee, drawing not-so-subtle hints to Buddhist teachings, and how the entire exhibition symbolizes the fact that the blooming of a flower is contained within a single moment and cannot be recaptured or repeated in its exactness. Could we not say the same of the ephemeral moments of life that Kong Yee captures in his works?

The two *Dresden in Blue* paintings illustrate this point, with both works showcasing rich blue light that could only have resulted from specific temperatures and other atmospheric conditions. Or, in *U Turn*, where a small group of people seem to march their bicycles out of one side of the painting and where a moving bicycle seems to spring forth from the opposite side. This decisive, unrepeatable

moment – the photographic punctum or punctuation, as described by Henri Cartier-Bresson – is exactly what Kong Yee captures in his works, and like a flower that blooms, each scene is a compression of thousands of moments, stories, and elements rolled into one. Kong Yee's compositions are anything but linear.

There's some logic then, in Kong Yee's adoption of the Golden Ratio. A mathematical principle that constitutes two rectangular shapes and a golden spiral, Kong Yee uses its principles to lay out the formal properties of all the works in this series. *The Flower* displays the golden spiral clearly, and so does *Orange Flower*, a portrayal of a vaulted church ceiling that curls upon itself and which seems to be doused in a glowing, golden-orange bath of light. These two accompanying works are regal and beatific, and the level of accuracy in the architectural detail is only accentuated by the artist's investment in every other aspect of the subject matter; Kong Yee wasn't just concerned with the physical spaces of the churches in these two works, but also researched other ecclesiastical aspects, such as the type of music they play in churches and how it affects people's moods.

Kong Yee's works lack aural properties, of course, but the artist certainly aims to encapsulate as many sensorial experiences into his works as he can. Indeed, Kong Yee presents a very keen and observant view of the world. He always has, and as an artist, plays the role of a 'fly on the wall' and a secret eye on the streets. With years of experience charting life unravelling before him, he has developed highly-tuned sensitivities to the temperaments of the weather, how these may have an effect on people's moods, and even considers real-world developments like the fluctuating oil prices, headlines that inevitably seep beneath the conscious human skin. In many ways, he ruminates all of this to try to bring us back to the very moment when the flower first 'bloomed' before his eyes.

Kong Yee's painting of Busan is his favourite in the series. It's where the sky is at its most evocative, spreading steel-grey swathes across the sky, and where Kong Yee channels his artistic language through the waves swirling in curly lines across the canvas and the plays of ink that pay homage to classic Chinese ink paintings. The work seems to hint that our possibilities are endless, and maybe they are. The elasticity of time is mentioned several times by the artist in descriptions of his work, and he hints that the warmer shades of his palette play a role in his past, while the cooler blues are a reference to the future. Perhaps Kong Yee's own words sum it up best. "I have been a practising artist for 16 years now. From *Undulating Spaces* to this latest solo exhibition, I have been on a continuous exploration of space and time, and I have finally figured out that time is not linear. The past, present, and future are all happening simultaneously. The past continues to change as our state of mind changes, in turn affecting how our future plays out."

There's hope and promise in those words, and a palpable belief that nothing is permanent. After all, flowers continue to bloom and though each one only blooms once, there is nothing more beautiful and wondrous than pausing to enjoy a single, irretrievable moment. Thank you for reminding us to do just that, Kong Yee.

Rachel Jenagaratnam
March, 2016



Dresden in blue

Oil on canvas
190cm x 170cm (Diptych)
2013

Dresden at night
Acrylic on paper
135.5cm x 171cm
2012





Left:

U-turn

Acrylic on paper
143.5cm x 145.5cm
2015

Right:

Duomo Florence

Mixed mediums on paper
184cm x 90cm
2012





The Flower-orange flower
Acrylic on paper
144cm x 145.5cm
2015



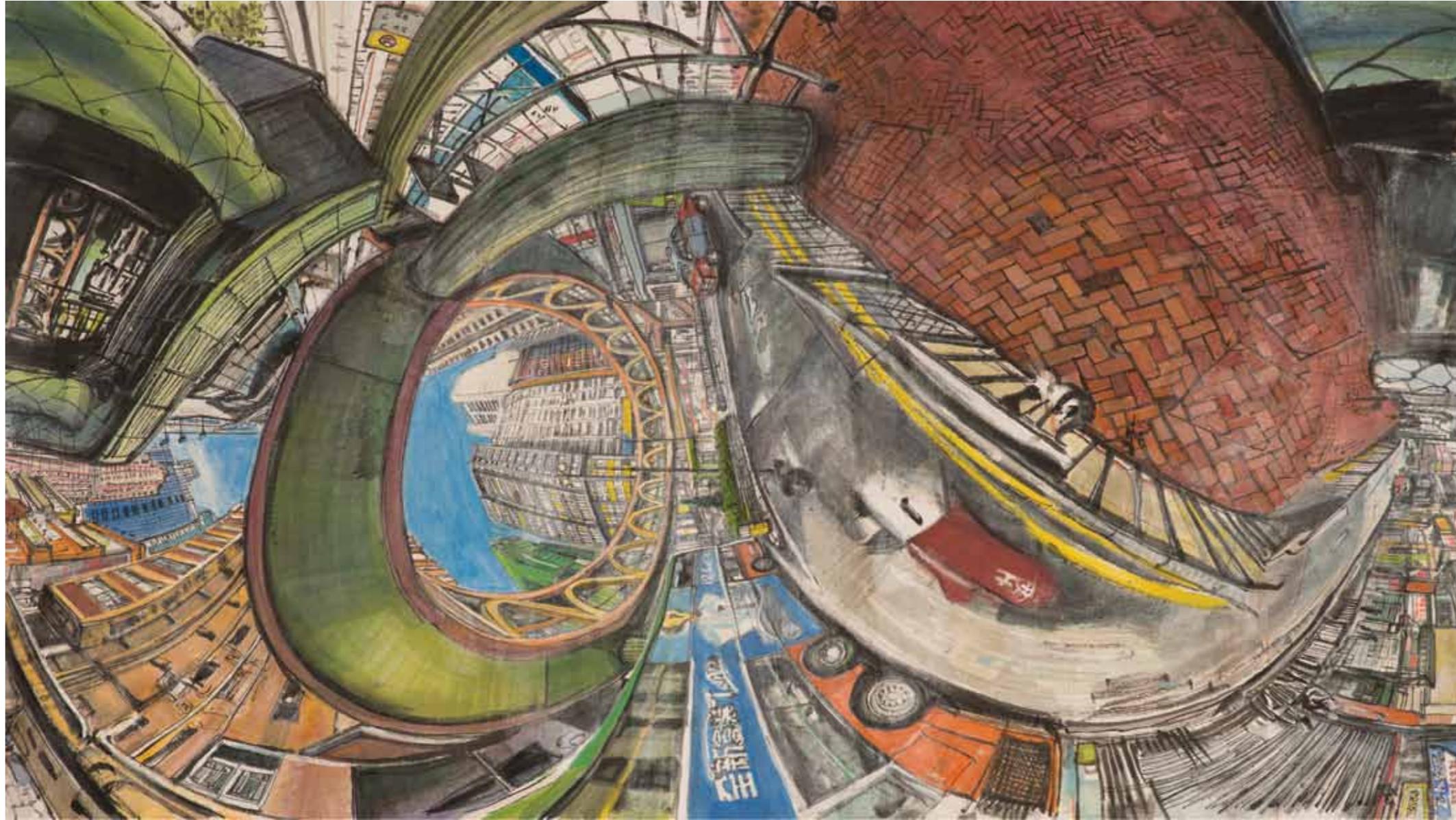
Tia Garden and Chinese calligraphy

Oil on linen
190cm x 130cm (Diptych)
2014

The Flower-Busan

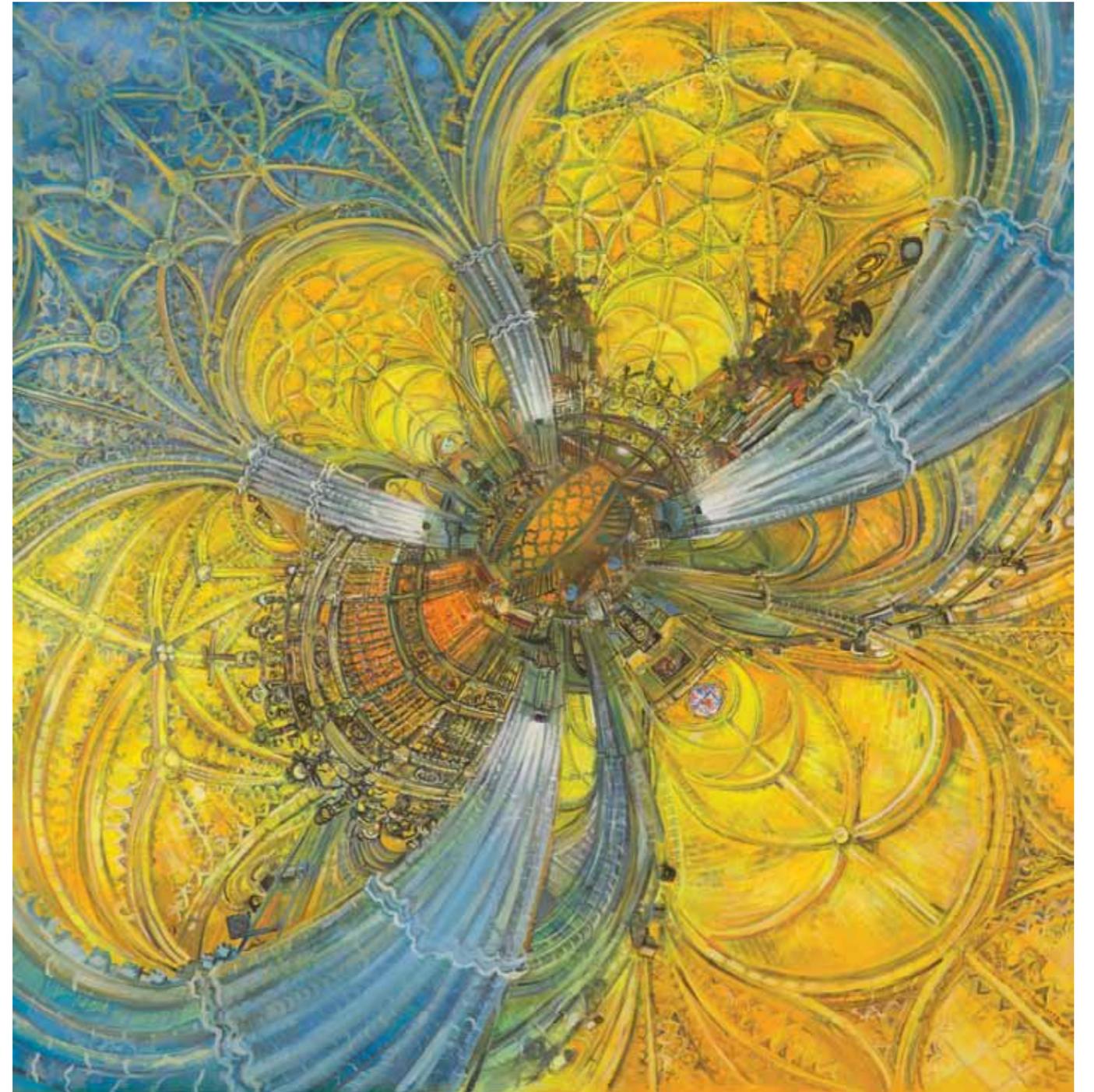
Chinese inks and colours on Xuan paper
190cm x 193cm
2015





City
Chinese inks and colour on Xuan paper
113cm x 203cm
2015

The Flower
Acrylic on paper
144cm x 145.4cm
2015





Forest
Chinese inks and colours on xuan paper
113cm x 193cm
2015

CHIN KONG YEE b.1973

EDUCATION

1990 Central Academy of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015 The Flower, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2013 Infinite Canvas: Kuala Lumpur, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2010 New landscapes, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2009 Reality in Wonderland, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 SOS Château de Trémazan, Maison des Canons, France
2005 Cerulean Skies, Townhouse Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2003 Undulating Spaces, Townhouse Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 Art Stage Singapore 2016, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore
2015 18@8 Heirlooms, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Art Kaohsiung 2015, THE PIER-2 ART CENTER, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Being Human: Figuratism of 16 Malaysian Artists, White Box, Kuala Lumpur
Being Human: Figuratism of 16 Malaysian Artists, The F Klub, Art Stage Singapore 2015, Singapore
2014 Korea International Art Fair 2014 (KIAF), COEX, Seoul, Korea
The Peak group show – 'HO MIA', Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Flesh, The F Klub, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2013 Seated, The F Klub, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2012 A decade of collecting- Timeless, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Skin, The F Klub, House of MATAHATI, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2011 Art Stage Singapore 2011, Singapore
2010 Absolut 18@8, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tiger Show, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2008 China International Gallery Exposition 2008 (CIGE), Beijing, China
Mind Body & Soul- MBSIII, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 Annual 18@8 exhibition, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
EYE-Ilusions, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2006 1st ART Exhibition, The MuGung Hwa Centre for Korean Culture & Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
zweihundertzweiundsiebziegeinhalbstunden und mehr, Galerie Tanner, Germany
Mind Body and Soul II, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 Kuala Lumpur- Karachi, Amin Gulgee Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan (in Collaboration with Wei-Ling Gallery)
Convergence- Contemporary Malaysian Art, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2005 18@8: Contemporary Artists from Malaysia and Beyond, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2004 East-westcontemporaries, Cluj-napoca Art Museum, Romania
SEOUL International Stars Exhibition, Seoul, Korea

2003 Philip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Awards 2003, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2002 Identities Who we are, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Figuring Splendour, Metro Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2001 Locals Only!, Gallerie Taksu, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Manusia, N.N. Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2000 World in Square Feet, Central Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Colors of Brazil, Isetan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
3 Man Show, Anugerah Gallery Star Hill Lobby, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Philip Morris Group of Companies ASEAN Art Awards 2000, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

WORKSHOPS/RESIDENCIES

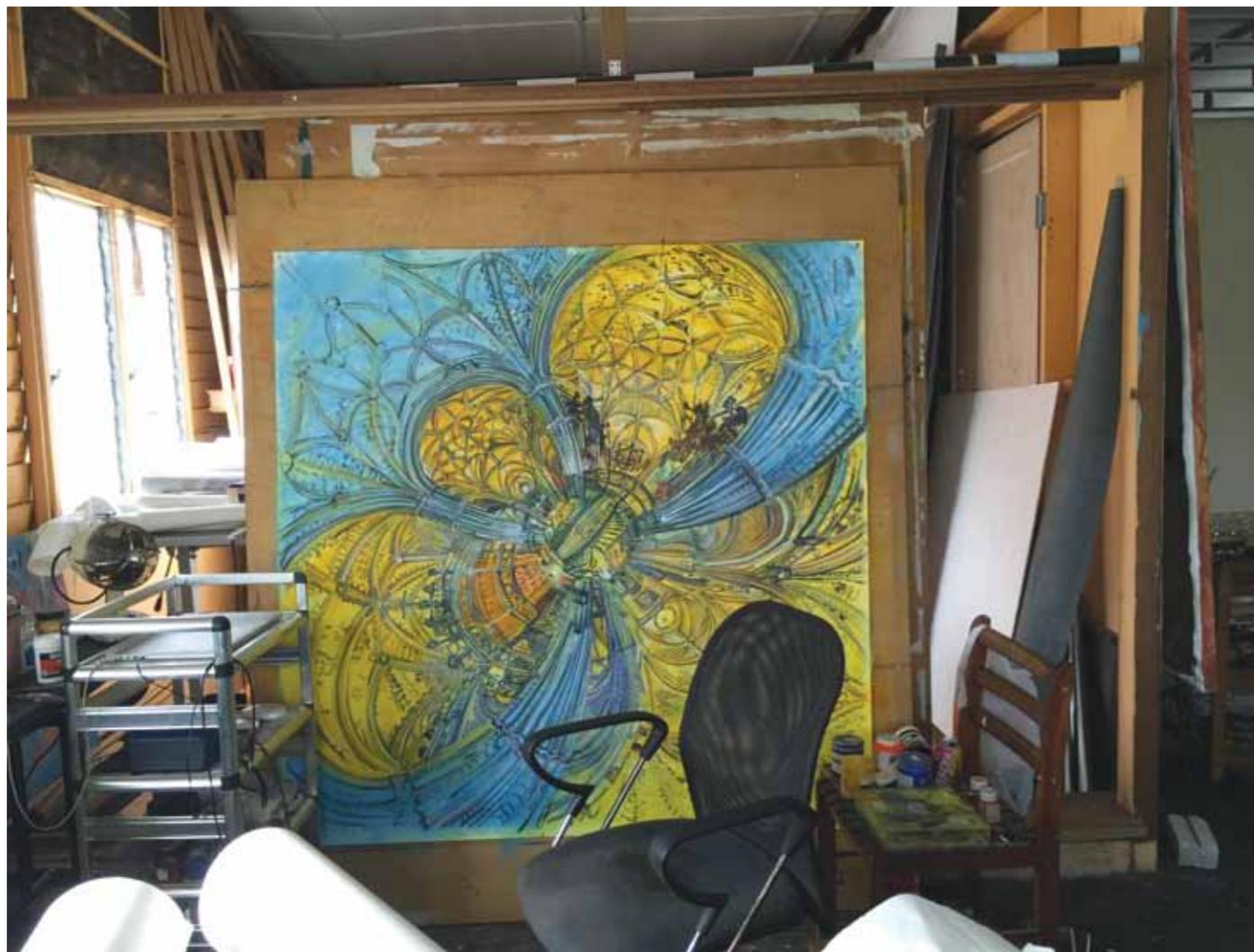
2004 Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania (Seminar/Workshop/Exhibition)
Invited by organizer Dorothea Fleiss and East West Group of Artists
Artist in Residence at Pangkor Laut Resort
(Sponsored by YTL Hotels and Properties)
2002 Artist-in-Residence at Tanjung Jara Resort
(Sponsored by YTL Hotels and Properties)

AWARDS

2000 Honourable Mention, Philip Morris Group of Companies ASEAN Art Awards

COLLECTIONS

Anika Insurance Brokers, Malaysia
Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania
Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre, Malaysia
HSBC Bank Malaysia
National Art Gallery, Malaysia
Shearn Delamore & Co. Malaysia
The Aliya & Farouk Khan Collection, Malaysia
United Overseas Bank, Malaysia
Wong & Partners



I would like to express gratitude to the people who have helped and supported me throughout my solo exhibition.

I am grateful to Gallery Director Lim Wei-Ling for her continuous support, ongoing advice & encouragement, from the beginning up until today. For helping me in completing the project through her exchange of interesting ideas and thoughts which has made this show both interesting and wonderful.

I am particularly grateful for the assistance received from Lim Siew Boon who also designed and edited this catalogue.

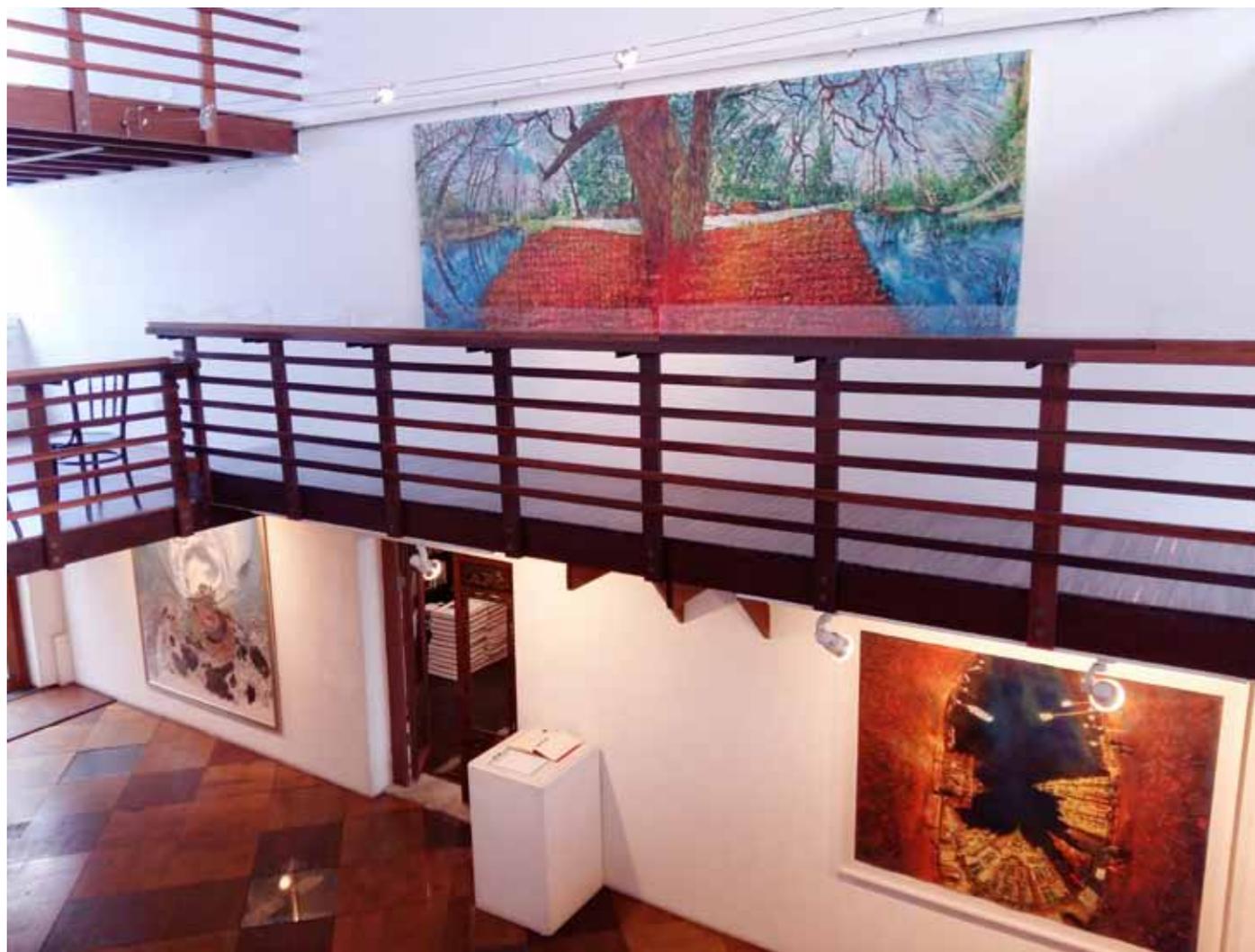
To Dennis and Kok Hua for the framing of my works.

A special thank-you to Rachel Jena, who has made this catalogue even more colourful with her essay.

I wish to express my great appreciation to UOB Bank who has given me so much support since my first solo.

I would like to thank the following companies for their support through the collecting of my artworks:
Accenture Solutions, Wong & Partners, National Art Gallery,
Anika Insurance Brokers, Shearn Delamore & Co.
Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre, HSBC Bank ,
The Aliya & Farouk Khan Collection and collectors.

And last but not least, I want to thank my parents Chin Yap Heng and Lim Yoi Moi, and my wife Ching Boon Geok for their undivided support and interest. They inspire me and encourage me to go my own way, and without whom I would not have been able to complete my dream.



Produced by **Wei-Ling Gallery**

To accompany the exhibition entitled '**The Flower**' by Chin Kong Yee from 13th August - 14th September 2015 at

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Cover image: *The Flower-Busan*, 190cm x 193cm, Chinese inks and colours on Xuan paper, 2015

