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# HELPING FROM THE (HE)ART

In celebration of *The Peak's* 25th anniversary this year, this magazine, Wei-Ling Contemporary and Royal Selangor team up to host a special exhibition this month in aid of two charities titled, simply, *Ho Mia*.

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What do you get when you put together 10 of Malaysia's biggest names in contemporary art together with the country's preeminent pewtersmith's most iconic product? A charity exhibition with a difference, that's what. Titled *Ho Mia*, a Hokkien-Chinese term that expresses the acknowledgement of good fortune, the theme was so chosen as the team at *The Peak* wanted something that could broadly capture the essence of the magazine; all the elements it stood for as well as a celebration of a 25-year milestone in Malaysian publishing. "I'd approached Lim Wei-Ling of Wei-Ling Contemporary with an idea of creating an exhibition that would showcase *The Peak's* 25 years of, essentially, covering the cream of Malaysia's corporate crop, as well as being the arbiter for the finer things in life, a tagline we adhere to till this day," noted Diana Khoo, the magazine's Editor-in-Chief. "We were brainstorming over tea together and we whittled down a list of various ideas before eventually settling on a broad definition of what *The Peak* is all about; in short, an editorial celebration of success in all its forms. We explored the idea of success and, being Hokkien, put forth this relatively familiar phrase of *ho mia*." To those unfamiliar with the Hokkien-Chinese dialect, *ho mia* is a term that covers a multitude of meanings, conveying, essentially, an expression of good fortune and to describe a good life. Casual but profound, this expression explores the myriad circumstances of what life at 'the peak' may be. "*The Peak* celebrates success but what is success? Some people attribute it to pure luck, the blessings of God, sheer hard work or even being at the right place at the right time," Khoo points out, "so we wanted to put this forward to 10 of Malaysia's top contemporary artists and see what their interpretation of *ho mia* may be."

To be held on June 19 at Wei-Ling Contemporary in Mid Valley City's The Gardens Mall, the 10 artists would, not only exhibit their artistic



interpretations of good fortune, but also specially embellished Royal Selangor teapots, generously donated by the pewtersmith, which will be put up for auction that night. "It's also not often one gets the chance to work with such a stellar line-up of Malaysian artists, so when *The Peak* approached us with the idea, I jumped at it," adds Yong Yoon Li, Executive Director of Royal Selangor and great-grandchild of Royal Selangor founder, Yong Koon. "We're excited about the idea as the exhibition will offer visitors the chance to see the rare merging of craftsmanship with the unique perspectives and sense of design offered by some of

**01** Royal Selangor's Executive Director Yong Yoon Li and Lim Wei-Ling of Wei-Ling Contemporary.

**02** Ten of Malaysia's top contemporary artists will embellish Royal Selangor's iconic melon teapots in aid of Badan Warisan and the SPCA.

**03** Exquisite craftsmanship and an enduring tale of good fortune are embedded in every single Royal Selangor melon teapot.

the best names in the Malaysian contemporary art scene today." Certainly, the artistic line-up features a roll-call of Malaysia's best and brightest, including the celebrated Ivan Lam, Choy Chun Wei, fresh from a successful stint at Art Basel Hong Kong, and Anurendra Jegadeva.

The teapot the artists will be working on is, in fact, Royal Selangor's iconic melon teapot, which comes with its own legacy of luck. "If you had to choose just one product that is iconic of Royal Selangor, it would, undoubtedly, be this melon teapot. It has so much history behind it," points out Yong. Going back to the time of the Second World War, a villager named Ah Ham was foraging for food during a period of aerial bombardment. His eyes spotted a melon-shaped teapot on the floor and, just as he stooped to retrieve it, narrowly missed being hit by shrapnel. Claiming it as his very own lucky talisman, Ah Ham regaled guests with the tale whenever possible. One day, Chen Shoo Sang, who is married to Datin Paduka Chen Mun Kuen, granddaughter of Royal Selangor founder, Yong Koon, paid Ah Ham a visit and was entertained with the story of the 'lucky teapot', at which point Chen mentioned his wife happened to work in a pewter factory. "Ah Ham then asked if my dad could help get the old teapot polished," notes their son, Tien-Yue, who also works in the family business as Executive Director of Royal Selangor Marketing. "We still had many of the older workers with us then and, the moment they saw the old Yu He Zu Xi touchmark, they excitedly told us it





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bore my great-grandfather's seal." It then took many years of convincing before Ah Ham would part with his lucky teapot and, today, it takes pride of place in the Royal Selangor museum.

"It would seem that luck attracts luck," laughs Khoo, "as I only remembered Ah Ham's story after coming up with the *Ho Mia* idea and convincing both the gallery and Royal Selangor to work with us on this project. But the idea of these great talents interpreting the concept of good fortune via their respective genres and then further transferring their designs onto an already-lucky teapot is, I'm happy to say, a wonderful stroke of luck."

Chin Kong Yee, one of the 10 artists taking part in the *Ho Mia* exhibition, muses: "The teapot is actually beautiful and perfect as it is, so it will be difficult adding our interpretation onto it." But, as Choy Chun Wei, another of the participating artists, remarks: "This collaboration is indeed a great way to expand the possibilities of our art and a chance to experiment with an exciting new material – pewter. I'm toying with the idea of engraving text on to it but am not sure yet. You'll have to see the final outcome at the exhibition."

"The 10 artists participating in this project represent some of the leading names in contemporary art today," shares Lim Wei-Ling, founder of the eponymous gallery. "These are masters who have withstood the test of time and have persevered in their quest to be great artists. To be great artists requires not only talent and passion but, also, perseverance, sincerity, integrity and dedication. It is a long, hard road to become a great artist but these 10 are examples who have stood firm and stayed on the straight and narrow. They are where they are today because of sheer hard work and determination. I am proud to be able to represent such a strong core of individuals."

The proceeds from the teapot auction will benefit Badan Warisan and the SPCA, both of whom were selected by Royal Selangor and Wei-Ling Contemporary, respectively. "We are glad for the chance to be able to support our country's built heritage through the work of Badan Warisan," says Yong, while Lim is known for her support of animal charities as well as her great love of animals. Artist Hamidi Hadi also adds "that the charity angle was another very appealing aspect" that helped convince the artists to participate in the project. "This collaboration is



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**04** Wei-Ling Contemporary at The Gardens will be the venue for the 19 June auction.

**05** Ivan Lam, who delighted Art Basel Hong Kong last year with his *Compendium of Malaysian Art (COMA)*, will be one of the 10 talents participating in *Ho Mia*.

also very exciting," adds Lim, "as it takes the artists out of their comfort zone and allows them to venture into unfamiliar territory. Great creativity is usually borne out of situations like these and seeing all these elements come together is very compelling."

*Ho Mia* will open on 19 June at Wei-Ling Contemporary at The Gardens, Mid Valley City. For more information about the exhibition or the auction, e-mail [ruebee@bluinc.com.my](mailto:ruebee@bluinc.com.my)

# TOP 10

A quick look at the 10 artists participating in *The Peak's* upcoming *Ho Mia* exhibition with Wei-Ling Contemporary and Royal Selangor.

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**CHOY CHUN WEI**

Choy's celebrated collage works, some of which form part of the National Visual Arts Gallery's permanent collection, are reason enough to catch his new creations at this month's exhibition. A meticulous artist who painstakingly executes each and every piece he creates, his main sources of inspiration remain his immediate surroundings – ranging from suburban Malaysia to the local countryside. Choy has also recently returned from a triumphant showing at the second edition of the prestigious Art Basel Hong Kong, which took place last month.

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**KIM NG**

Johor-born Ng is known for using a variety of printmaking methods, including silk-screen, etching and wood-cut, to create his distinctly unique works of art.

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**WONG CHEE MENG**

Wong's body of work focuses on the experimentation and discovery of different image-making techniques. Believing that art has a place in all our lives, Wong refers to his pieces as 'fictional compositions' and credits countless sources of inspiration, which may include advertisements, urban art, furniture, dance and music.

07



**IVAN LAM**

One of Malaysia's most exciting names in contemporary art, Lam continues to push the boundaries of his practice by taking his artworks to brave new levels. His usage of startling colours, emphasis on composition and tongue-in-cheek social commentary has singled him out as one of the most advanced pop artists in Malaysia.

03



**YAU BEE LING**

One of Malaysia's most powerful contemporary painters, Kuala Lumpur-born Yau is celebrated for her distinctive layered works. Her pieces have attracted international attention and the talented painter has held exhibitions all over the world, including in Japan, Singapore, Pakistan, China and Sweden.

08



**HAMIDI HADI**

Having won numerous awards, including the coveted Philip Morris ASEAN Biennale Art Award in 2000 and Bank Negara's Kijang Award in 2004, Hamidi's works utilise a variety of mixed media, including acrylic, industrial paint, polyurethane and enamel, and are said to radiate abstract yet poetic qualities while portraying ethereal emotions.

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**JUHARI SAID**

Celebrated printmaker Juhari Said is renowned for using woodblocks to create distinctive works of art on paper or canvas. Having studied traditional Japanese printmaking under Yoshisuke Funasaka, Juhari has participated in solo as well as group exhibitions all over the world, including in Spain, Japan, the Czech Republic, Austria and Indonesia.

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**ANURENDRA JEGADEVA**

Renowned for his insightful and, oftentimes, searingly honest works that feature themes of the displacement of culture and traditions as a result of migration and modernisation, Anu's works strike a chord with modern Asians trying to balance ancient cultures vis-à-vis globalisation.

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**CHIN KONG YEE**

Renowned for his fish-eye lens artworks, Chin's paintings evoke a surreal feel that has attracted the keen interest of local and international collectors. He has labelled his own style as 'Actuality Accorded Painting', whereby, in portraying an object, it has to have existed and undergone the process of 'being real' in order for him to be able to translate it onto canvas as art.

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**CHEN WEI MENG**

Largely known for his photo realist landscape depiction, visual artist Chen constantly strives to showcase complete visual purity in a thoroughly aesthetic sense. (A)