

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Dian Lee, Yvette Kang, Claire Lee Bloy, Lim Wei Ling, Christina Ho, Putri Badrinise, Shirieene Hajamaideen, and Meera Sen



A creation by Cheng Yen Pheng



In Good SPIRITS

For a great cause the urban mall joined forces with the gorgeous gallerist to create a little city buzz and some serious juice. By Sunitha Thayaparan.

Investment bankers, corporate high flyers, serious art collectors, and a sprinkling of the city's sparkling socialites are sipping vodka martinis and considering statement pieces at Sage. There's development heiress Dian Lee, and owner of multi-brand boutique Maizen, Shirieene Hajamaideen makes an appearance. The lovely Claire Lee Bloy and Yvette Kang, who both cause a bit of a stir later that night, are also in the house, but more on that later. Tonight, the 3,000 sq ft of space at The Gardens Mall – more familiar as the good girl's haven that serves up delectable

morsels of foie gras – has been reinvented to showcase the artwork of established and up-and-coming artists.

Welcome to 18@8, the annual art exhibition curated by beautiful gallerist Lim Wei Ling. Says the spirited woman behind the project, "Our annual 18@8 exhibitions have always been highly anticipated as they bring to the forefront a selection of the country's most compelling and interesting artists all working within the perimeters of a theme or the exploration of an idea, but more importantly allows them the freedom to experiment." Its debut in 2005 featured 18 artists at her eponymous split level art space, Wei-Ling Gallery, at No 8 on Jalan





Jeslina Hashim and Maya Karin



Dato' Kok Yul Shin and Sharon Oh



Dian Lee



Lourenco Calvalho makes a bid



Emcee Stephanie Chai



Datin Nadia Wong Abdullah with Fazila Filippi

on this was easy, she reveals, as the designer vodka has an easy relationship with contemporary art what with the brand's first artistic partnership with the late great Andy Warhol in the late '80s. As Terence Ong, sales and marketing director of Pernod Ricard Malaysia, puts it: "The Absolut brand and its inspired campaigns have a cache of appeal that is both alluring and enduring. It's no surprise that it's now synonymous with vodka, style and all things creative." And when luxury brand Louis Vuitton launched it's biggest space in the city at The

Scott, and the next year saw the exhibition travelling to the Amin Gulgee Gallery in Karachi, Pakistan. "This fifth edition is a little different, with the artists working concurrently on a collection that will be displayed at the gallery and this, really meaningful one," smiles Lim.

"New partners have come aboard like Absolut Vodka and The Gardens Mall, and it's especially significant as not only does it bring the art to a broader audience but this year proceeds of this exhibition here at the mall – where the artists have worked with physical Absolut Vodka bottles to interpret the concept of the absolute – will go to a worthy cause, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)," says Lim. Collaborating with Absolut Vodka

Gardens Mall in 2010 with its *Toys & Trunks* exhibition, Lim met Joseph Teoh, marketing manager of The Gardens Mall, himself an arts enthusiast, and the two conspired to not only make art a little more accessible to the general public but to simultaneously generate funds for a worthy cause. Art with heart, if you will.

To that end this gathering of the city's art enthusiasts at Sage for a private charity auction prior to the exhibition of Absolut 18@8 Bottles at The Gardens Mall where rock stars Anurendra Jegadeva and Ivan Lam lead a brilliant cast of artists. Anurendra reveals the illusively playful nature of the brief gave him the room to think about form and construction within his aesthetic while being cheeky and irreverent. "I like irreverence,"



A creation by Chin Kong Yee

THE HEART OF ART

A quick roundup of the 18@8 collective.

1 CHIN KONG YEE

He is a star on the local art scene for his dramatic fish-eye lens perspectives and over the last 12 years Chin Kong Yee has steadily built a reputation for himself as one of the country's most original painters. For 18@8 he decided to go against the grain and used three bottles as his paint brushes to create a singular painting.

2 CHEE WAY

A versatile artist who works in different mediums ranging from 3D animation to painting, sculpture, and installation pieces, Chee Way has a rather unique perspective on life and this is reflected in his artworks. In an attempt to convey his concern with the increasing extinction of animals he made papier-mâché deers which he printed and painted over.



A creation by Chee Way

3 YAU BEE LING

One of the country's most relevant contemporary artists, Yau Bee Ling's art career has spanned 15 years and she's exhibited in countries like Singapore, Bangladesh, Japan, Pakistan, and China. Her signature is contorted faces of people in groups as she aims to capture the complex relationships between people.

4 CHOY CHUN WEI

An alumni of Central Saint Martin's School of Art in 1998 Choy Chun Wei's inventive use of recycled materials in his collage works makes him one of Malaysia's leading contemporary mixed media artists. Similar to his collaged paintings and 3-D works, he has managed to translate his paint and collage technique onto the bottle to give us a new perspective on a familiar form.

5 CHEE ENG HONG

Having started on his artistic journey later in his life, Chee Eng Hong's abstract portraits, reminiscent of Francis Bacon have been collected by Galeri Petronas. He used emulsion paint to achieve the white background on the bottle, upon which he painted his customary abstract brush strokes.

6 YIM YEN SUM

Despite her relatively young age, Yim Yen Sum's works display a sensitivity and maturity that is reflective of a more seasoned artist. Employing the transfer technique she conscientiously collects and records textures from the stress walls of old buildings and silkscreens them onto gauze and fabric, which she then sews together to create her artwork.

7 STEPHEN MENON

Stephen Menon's works combine portraiture and spiritualism. He was a finalist of the Young Contemporary Artist exhibition in 2007, an award given out by the National Art Gallery. Here, he silkscreened Mao Tze-tung's face in black onto the red background in a continuation of his solo show in 2010 entitled, *Mao and Me*.

A creation by Yau Bee Ling



8 AL KHUZAIRIE ERY

A young artist whose main medium is clay Al Khuzairie Ery's pieces are a lively combination of made and found objects. Casting the bottle as well as the 'metal' handle entirely out of porcelain before painting and firing it in the kiln.



A creation by Yim Yen Sum

9 CHEONG TUCK WAI

Using a technique which involves layering found materials like gauze and plastic with an overlay of charcoal, silkscreen, ink pencil and paint, Cheong Tuck Wai's meticulous works have evolved into a hybrid between paintings and sculpture, where the two dimensional surface extends into a three dimensional one through the moulding of his chosen material.

10 CHENG YEN PHENG

Cheng Yen Pheng's beautifully rendered paintings depict poignant and pressing issues that are relevant to all of us. For the exhibition she cast the bottle out of ceramic and painted the floral pattern by hand before casting it in the kiln.

11 WONG CHEE MENG

Due to an accident which affected his eyesight, Wong Chee Meng's works reflect an interesting camouflage effect where the subjects seem to float in and out of the canvas overlaid with a flat layer of pattern. He encased the bottle inside a glass jar to elevate it, and surrounded it with birds and leaves.

12 GAN TEE SHENG

His distinctive, surreal paintings are somewhat disturbing yet instill a sense of voyeurism in all of us. In employing a narrative which forces us to figure out the story behind the images, he immerses us in the stories that he is playing out in his mind. For the exhibition, Gan Tee Sheng wrapped and layered hair over the entire bottle to create his art piece, *Absolut Hair*.

13 ANURENDRA JEGADEVA

As one of Malaysia's most important contemporary artists, Anurendra Jegadeva believes in the enduring power of the painted image. Hearts, which are symbols that he constantly employs in his beautiful narrative works, were painted onto the bottle, while the creator of Absolut Vodka is painted on the bottom right.

14 IVAN LAM

Is on his way to the annals of Malaysian art history with cutting-edge works that push the boundaries of what we know as painting. In his inimitable style Ivan Lam has once again managed to capture the juxtaposition of colours through his layering of resin inside the bottle.



A creation by Anurendra Jegadeva



A creation by Wong Chee Meng

says Anu. As this is a two-part exercise, the artists created a second piece around absolute as a concept. "So, for example, Anabelle Ng's work fuses her love for music, she is a trained concert pianist, with her art practice. To her, music is an essential part of life as it changes our perception of the world so the ultimate experience of realising the absolute is through listening to a piece of music which appeals to the senses. She created a wooden structure made of wood, glass, Perspex, and paint within which is housed a sound system playing introspective and melancholic music in an attempt to 'illustrate' the absolute.

Later that night, when the bidding starts, the generosity of a small group of society women shines through and auctioneer Han Hoh, Lim's gregarious god-brother who'd been co-opted for a good cause and who literally had the floor enthralled with his rapid-fire good-natured humour could barely keep up with the rising bids. The highest bid of the night came from Dian Lee who bid RM10,000 for Wong Chee Meng's work which she said not only really spoke to her but which would be a great springboard to introduce local art to her young son. Meanwhile, Claire Lee Bloy and Yvette Kang kept Han Hoh on his toes, starting light-hearted bidding wars with everyone else in the room, raising the bar for the SPCA and egged on by cool girlfriend Christina Ho – clearly as much a fan of good causes as she is of vintage champagne. ■ *Absolut 18@8 Bottles* was exhibited at the concourse of The Gardens Mall from December 6, 2010 to January 2, 2011 and raised RM53,850 at a private auction held earlier for the SPCA.



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2 CHEE ENG HONG Having started on his artistic journey later in his life, Chee Eng Hong's abstract portraits, reminiscent of Francis Bacon have been collected by Galeri Petronas. He used emulsion paint to achieve the white background on the bottle, upon which he painted his customary abstract brush strokes.

3 YAU BEE LING One of the country's most relevant contemporary artists, Yau Bee Ling's art career has spanned 15 years and she's exhibited in countries like Singapore, Bangladesh, Japan, Pakistan and China. Her signature is contorted faces of people in groups as she aims to capture the complex relationships between people and the multiple 'faces' that human beings are capable of.

4 STEPHEN MENON Stephen Menon's works combine portraiture and spiritualism. He was a finalist

THE HEART

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of the Young Contemporary Artist exhibition in 2007, an award which is given out by the National Art Gallery. Here, he silkscreened Mao Tze-tung's face in black onto the red background in a continuation of his solo show in 2010 entitled, Mao and Me.

5 AL KHUZAIRIE ERY A young artist whose main medium is clay Al Khuzairie's pieces are a lively combination of made and found objects. In exploring the confluence between where human beings leave off and machines take over, the artist strives to find a balance between the two. Al Khuzairie cast the bottle as well as the 'metal' handle entirely out of porcelain before painting and firing it in the kiln.

5 CHEONG TUCK WAI Using a technique which involves layering found materials like gauze and plastic with an overlay of charcoal, silkscreen, ink pencil and paint, Cheong Tuck Wai's meticulous works have evolved into a hybrid between paintings and sculpture, where the two dimensional surface extends into a three dimensional one through the moulding of his material. He carried through his technique of layering transfer prints of old Chinese paintings depicting landscapes onto the surface of the bottle.

6 CHENG YEN PHENG Cheng Yen Pheng's beautifully rendered paintings depict poignant and pressing issues that are relevant to all of us. She was one of the recipients of the Malaysian Emerging Artists awards in 2009 and had a her first solo exhibition in 2010. Yen Pheng cast the bottle out of ceramic and painted the floral pattern by hand before casting it in the kiln. This bottle can be used to contain liquids as the interior has

been treated.

7 CHIN KONG YEE Chin Kong Yee is a star on the local art scene for his dramatic fish-eye lens perspectives and over the last 12 years he has steadily built a reputation for himself as one of the country's most original painters. Kong Yee decided to go against the grain and used three bottles as his paint brushes to create the abstract canvas painting which comes with this piece.

8 Chee Way (b 1980) A versatile artist who works in a myriad of different mediums ranging from 3D animation to painting, sculpture and installation pieces, Chee Way has a rather unique perspective on life and this is reflected in his artworks. In an attempt to convey his concern with the increasing extinction of animals he made three papier mache deers which he printed and painted over.

9 Gan Tee Sheng (b 1984)

His distinctive, surreal paintings are somewhat disturbing yet instill a sense of voyeurism in all of us. In employing a narrative which forces us to figure out the story behind the images, he immerses us in the stories that he is playing out in his mind. Gan Tee Sheng wrapped and layered hair over the entire bottle to create Absolut Hair.

10 Wong Chee Meng (b 1975) Due to an accident which affected his eyesight, Chee Meng's works reflect an interesting camouflage effect where the subjects seem to float in and out of the canvas overlaid with a flat layer of pattern making our eyes work to figure out what should and should not be seen. He encased the bottle inside a glass jar to elevate it to a somewhat sacred status, surrounded by birds and leaves, as though it is an exhibit at a museum for us all to view.

11 Anurendra Jegadeva (b1965)

One of Malaysia's most important contemporary artists whose career spans close to 25 years. Anurendra Jegadeva believes in the enduring power of the painted image and consistently forges an effective narrative approach to contemporary and historical themes. Anurendra painted hearts which are symbols that he constantly employs in his beautiful narrative works, onto the bottle while the creator of Absolut Vodka is painted on the bottom right.

12 Ivan Lam (b 1975) Ivan Lam is well on his way to the annals of Malaysian art history with cutting-edge works that push the boundaries of what we know as painting. Most recently, his painting Three Buses received a final bid of HKD120,000 three times the higher estimate from Christie's Hong Kong Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art May 2008 auction. In his inimitable style Ivan Lam has once again managed to capture the juxtaposition of colours through his layering of resin layers inside the bottle.

13 Yim Yen Sum (b 1987) Yim Yen Sum's focus is on the print medium in her works. Despite her relatively young age, her works display a sensitivity and maturity that is reflective of a more seasoned artist. Employing the transfer technique she conscientiously collects and records textures from the stress walls of old buildings and silkscreens them onto gauze and fabric, which she then sews together to create her artwork.