

IVAN LAM: TWENTY

In December 2014, Wei-Ling Contemporary vacates its present space and moves into new premises on the 6th floor of The Gardens Mall.

This is an exciting move for the gallery as it will soon occupy a space that will measure approximately 9000 square feet and will house two major exhibition areas in addition to an art foundation. The new space aims to build on Wei-Ling Contemporary's current program of curated exhibitions by local and international artists, and will host up to four major exhibitions a year. In addition to this, the foundation endeavours to highlight works from the collections of selected private collectors over the course of the year, to allow the general public a glimpse into works that have left the public eye. It also hopes to create more educational programs that will bring together artists, curators, writers, collectors and art advisors on a platform for art discourse, debate, and discussion. As part of their objectives, the foundation will also create an international artist's residency where up to eight international artists will be selected to live and work in Kuala Lumpur for two months to realise a project.

To inaugurate the new space, the gallery will present **IVAN LAM: TWENTY**, an important survey exhibition which documents 20 years in the career and artistic journey of Malaysian maestro Ivan Lam, and will run from the 1st December 2014 - 1st March 2015.

Over the years Ivan Lam has never ceased to grow, develop, innovate, evolve and take risks in his career as an artist. He epitomizes the essence of a true artist, someone who is willing to push boundaries and experiment in his quest to keep taking his art practice to the next level. In this survey, 20 years of exploration: Ivan Lam audiences will for the first time be able to witness the artistic journey of one of Malaysia's most important contemporary artists. Ivan Lam's work has been exhibited world-wide and have featured at both Christie's and Sotheby's auctions. He has been collected by both the National Art Gallery of Malaysia and Galeri Petronas and was the first and only Malaysian artist to be given a solo exhibition at Art Basel Hong Kong's inaugural fair in 2013 (Art Basel is akin to the Olympics of the art world). He is also the first and only Malaysian artist to have been commissioned by Louis Vuitton to make a painting for their collection.

In bringing together approximately 45 works that span 20 years, one will begin to fully understand where his life path has taken him and how he has evolved into the man and the artist that he is today. From the early light boxes and silk-screens, through to the start of the paintings and their evolution into the magnificent statements that they have become, this survey exhibition will be presented on a museum quality scale and will be the first time that these works will be seen together in one space.

The time has come for an artist of Ivan Lam's stature, to be given the platform and recognition to demonstrate what defines him as one of Malaysia's leading artists and this survey exhibition will certainly be one of the most important and defining art exhibitions for 2014/15.

The new Wei-Ling Contemporary will be located at RT01 Sixth Floor, The Gardens Mall, 59200, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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IVAN LAM

Ivan Lam (b1975) has earned a reputation as one of Malaysia's leading contemporary artists for his ability to push the boundaries of his art practice. Unafraid to take risks and never content to rest on his laurels, he constantly challenges himself by experimenting with new techniques and mediums in a bid to take his artworks to a new level. In doing so he has managed to reach greater and greater heights and each of his iconic artworks reflect a rare purity and honesty which are reflective in the works of artists who are answerable only to themselves.

Over the last decade he has charted new territory on the contemporary Malaysian art scene with his mastery of printmaking and now his conquering of contemporary painting. He has exhibited widely in the local and international arena and has also garnered multiple awards in a 13-year career laden with solo and group exhibitions. 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 auction in May 2008.

Ivan Lam is an innovator, a fearless explorer and obsessive perfectionist-all qualities of a great artist in the making.

CHRONOLOGY

Ivan Lam graduated with a BA (Fine art Painting) from the Maine College of Art USA in 1998 and returned to Malaysia to begin his career as a fine artist.

Initially known as a printmaker he used the silkscreen as a means to create works that dealt with colour fields and reflected international issues. Seven years later, and having mastered the silkscreen with the back-breaking CMYK series (which unsurprisingly consists of only 10 pieces) in 2005, Ivan Lam was regarded as the country's most relevant contemporary printmaker.

At this juncture, Ivan Lam made the bold move of shifting his focus from printing to painting.

The ***After all these years...*** series saw Ivan Lam creating a suite of only 12 paintings over a course of 3 years (2005-2007) and in giving himself the task of discovering a new approach through the use of synthetic house paints he was able to open up a whole range of possibilities in his art practice. These highly-acclaimed paintings laid the groundwork of what was to come and allowed Ivan Lam to display his fearless approach in tackling unfamiliar territory.



Sushi Bar (The place where we first met)
Acrylic on canvas
60" x 66"
2005



Heaven (Heaven can't wait)
Acrylic on canvas
48" x 120"
2007

Panorama created between 2007-2009 were a series of 9 paintings which saw Ivan Lam more confident with his new medium and giving in fully to the painting process. The works which dealt with everyday scenes allowed the viewer to be the protagonist of the panorama

that was unfolding before their eyes. Each and every piece was undeniably fresh and powerfully heartfelt and the *Panorama* series saw Ivan Lam at the peak of his contemporary relevance.



Waiting for a better future, hoping for a better life
Nippon paint house synthetic paint on canvas
60cm x 240cm
2009



The beginning is the end the end is the beginning
Nippon paint house synthetic paint on canvas
60cm x 240cm
2009

Ivan Lam's solo exhibition, *Together Alone* 2009-2011 featured only 5 monumental paintings. This body of work reached a new realm with Ivan pushing the boundaries yet again with his utilization of scale and monumentality as well as his experimentation of a myriad of new mediums and techniques. In his inimitable way, he has once again beaten the odds and triumphed coming through at the top of his game.



I called but you were engaged
Nippon paint and resin on canvas
2 panels, 198cm x 244cm (each)
2010



Target and Deer - You Are Being Missed, Dear
Nippon paint and resin on canvas
2 panels, 198cm x 244cm (each)
2010

Lam's solo exhibition entitled, ***Machines***, featured 3 large paintings. Comprised of diptychs, the 3 pieces each measure 275x213cm (approx 9ft x 7ft) and represent the Trinity. In his use of the number '3' he addresses issues which encompass the power of the number in its biblical symbolism representing the Father, The Son and the Holy spirit as well as how this translates into the reality of life in multi-cultural Malaysia, where three races co-exist with

one another-sometimes harmoniously. These three works present the veneer of a harmonious existence, which is sometimes overshadowed by underlying issues that lurk beneath the surface. In these new works he captures the essence of what most Malaysians feel and although not apparent to most, it is clear to those who know. A combination of contrasts, these three works are visually arresting yet powerful in their message.



If the world ends tomorrow (I want to spend it with you)
Synthetic polymer paint and resin on canvas on board
274 x 288cm
2012

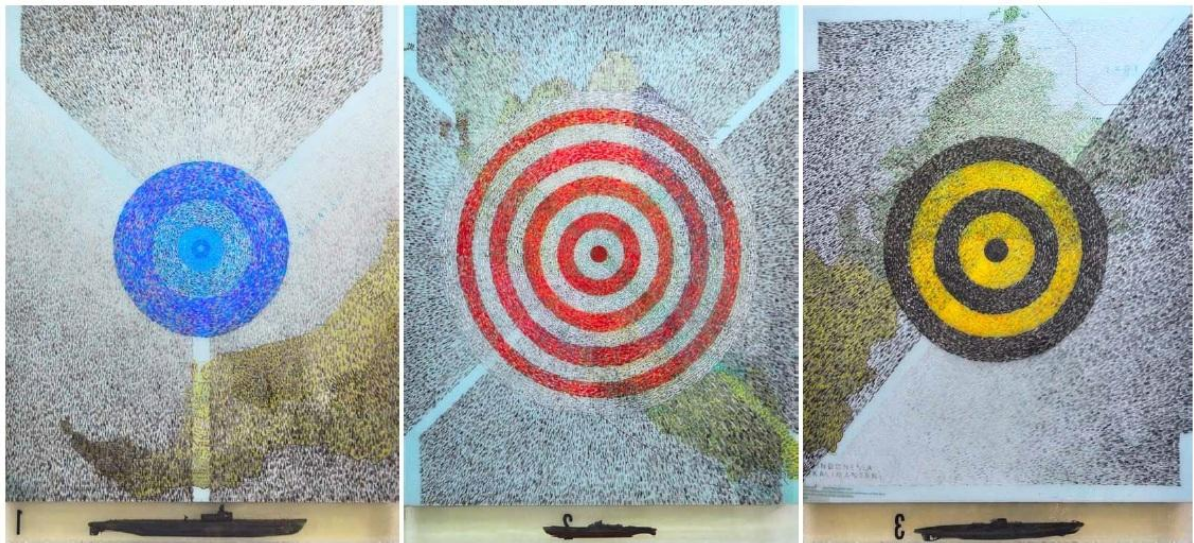


M A C H I N E

The Yellow Machine
Synthetic polymer paint and resin on canvas on board
274 x 228cm
2012

Duality is a common theme that Lam executes in all his work; he compares it to his work and lifestyle. He often ponders over the fact that he knows how his pieces will begin, yet not how it ends. He compares himself to being akin to resin, which is an essential in all of his works: It is liquid, versatile, soft, yet when it gels, it is a strong structure. Much like his work for the **18@8 KUL-SIN** series (2012), with his piece titled 'y.z.x', a triptych at 165cm x 121.9 x 10.2cm. An exhilarating and fresh approach to his personalized style, Lam successfully executed again a puzzling yet unexcelled piece that depicted geographical segments of

Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, which represents the paradoxical unity that the three nations share. Made up of multitudes of resin and small dots, this was a pinnacle turning point for Lam's artistry. He pushes his depths even further by incorporating actual plastic assembled submarines within the thickness of the canvas and resin. Lam symbolizes the connections to our defense systems and targets, with the tactical jumble of the alphabet to show his personal view regarding each nation's order and state in this current time. With his paintings now in comparison with the past, one can see his expressive modification in his style, yet still reminiscent of his traditional painting forte. Analyzing the continuous cycle he feels comes with one's art, he highlights that his work shows a lot of emotional changes: 'you tap it. You clock in. You clock out'.

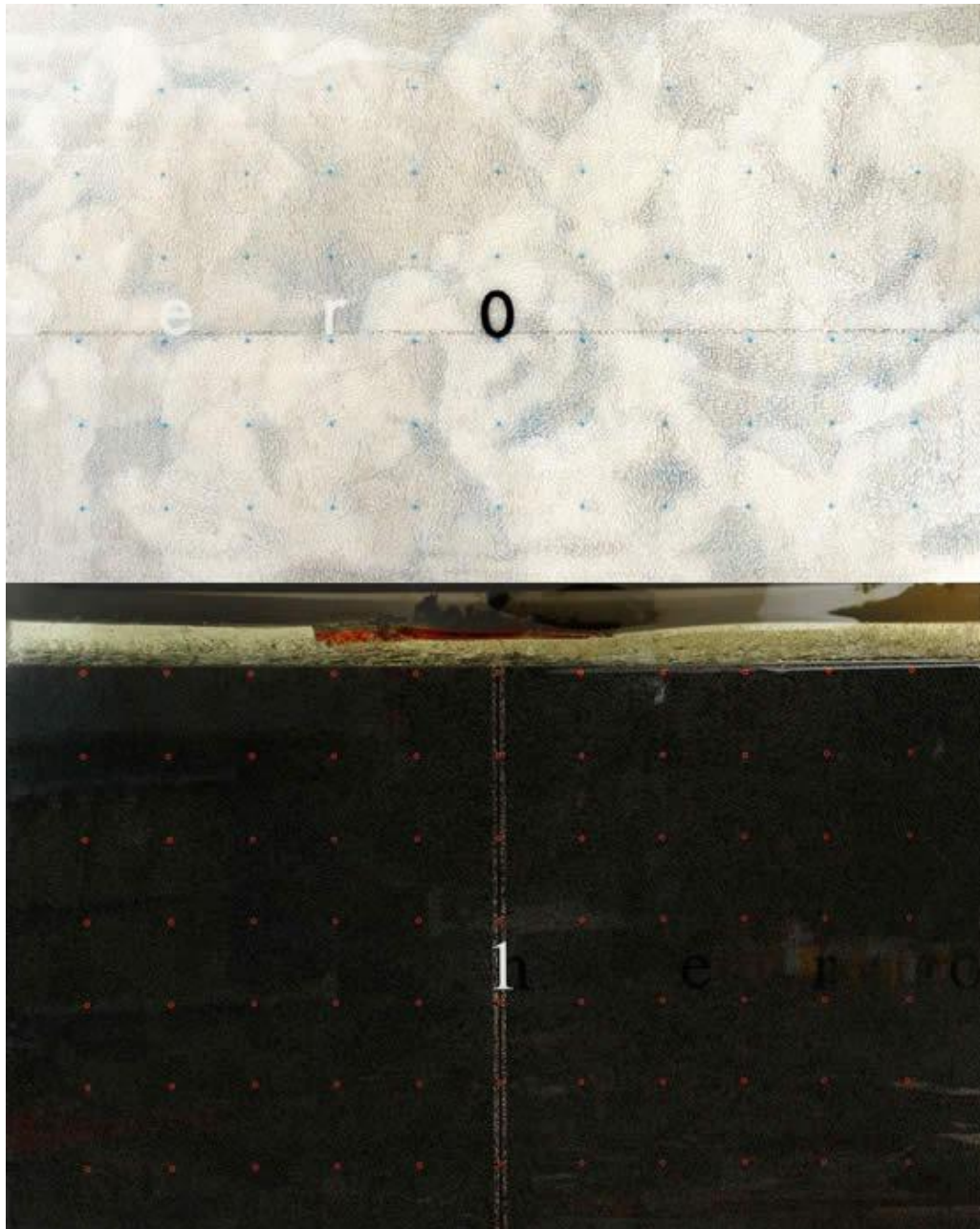


y . z . x
 Synthetic house paint on printed paper on board, resin & plastic assembled submarine
 64 x 144 x 4 inches per panel
 2012

'**Coma 38/500**' (2012-13) 183 x 122 x 79cm, diverted Lam's successful style once again. The installation incorporates a working vending machine along with 28 individual artworks in Perspex. Depicting the idea of consumerism, Lam subtly questions societies with the question of '*what if art was to turn into a commodity?*' Lam's theory is that he finds if someone pays with money, then sometimes art and necessities loses their meanings. The fact that the machine is vending art suggests symbiotic connections with the purchaser and the art. The vending machine is about perception and culture: it shows the personal relationship one has with the art piece they choose. The name of this piece reflects Lam's vigorous opinion on art in Malaysia. 500 slots were open to Malaysian artists to contribute to as Lam wanted this to represent Malaysia and the creative talent and diversity of the nation, yet only 38 artists contributed to this piece. Ironic in itself, the title 'Coma' is akin to the spirit of the piece- Malaysian art is in a standstill and Lam is voicing his concerns to pick it back up. As innovative and unique as this piece is, Lam confesses that it was difficult to get artwork and artists to compensate as they didn't get much out in return.

Judging his assimilation on considering new means of art, Lam's true exploration 'parasite', is pushing himself to the complete limits of a discovered task. He eventually becomes his own master, and yearns for more. Never being fully satisfied with his skill, he always thinks 2 steps ahead, resulting in sensational finishes. Lam's **Day Zero, Night Hero** triptych (2013), is

a perfect example of this. He upholds his piece with a psychological twist: underlying concepts that may or may not be seen by the naked eye. A piece that denotes the metamorphosing cycle of life and death, this work is not only political yet respects our true heroes today. The fatality of soldiers and the prejudice that the world ceases to get over is a theme that runs throughout the piece: men being the Alpha fighters (heroes), whilst women are left to guard and protect the valuables (zeroes). He is highlighting this concern and paradoxically translates it onto canvas.



zero hero

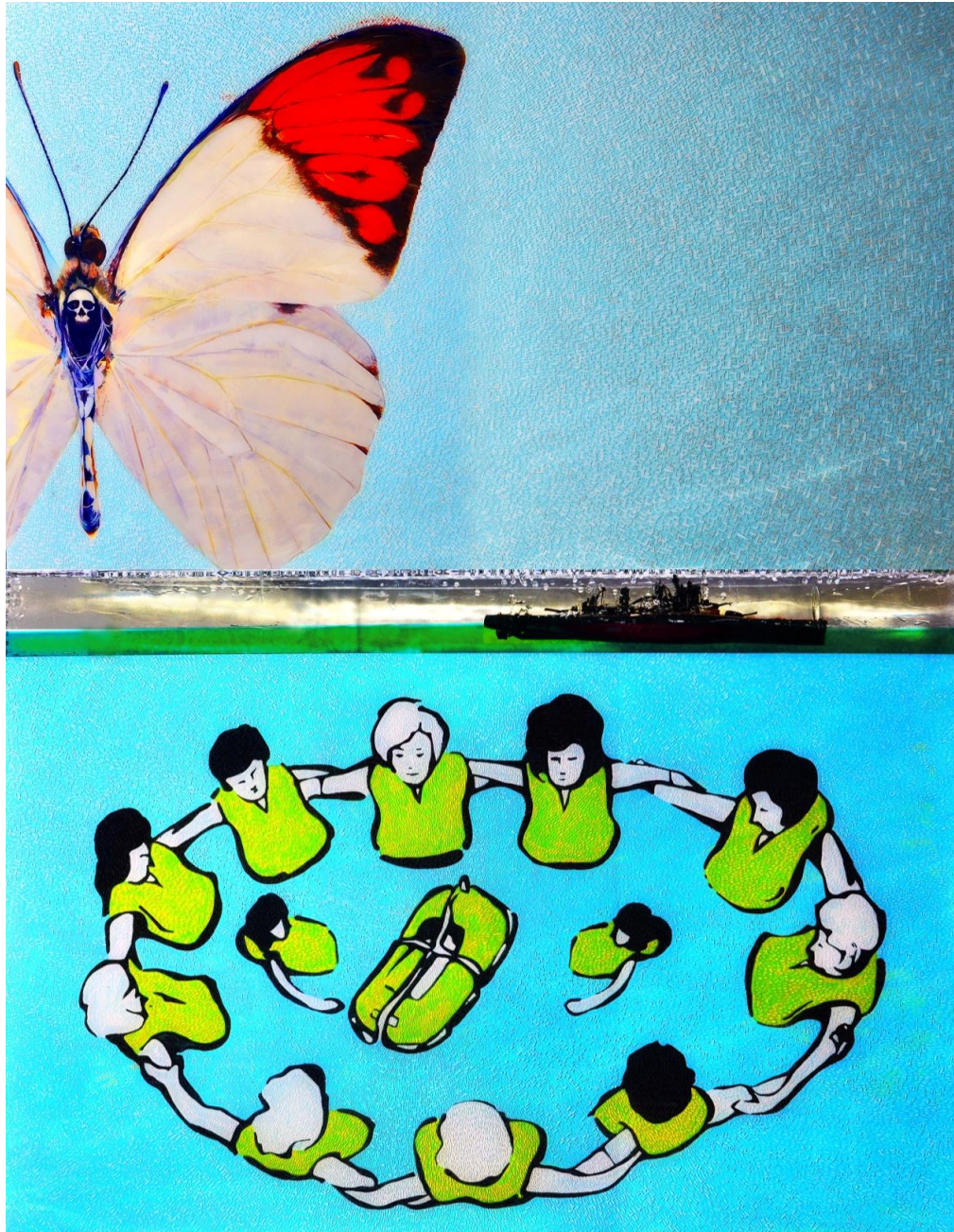
Synthetic polymer paint, scale model battleship encased in resin, canvas on board

235cm x 183cm x 10.5cm (diptych)

2013

He separates the triptych into Day, Night and the in between, 'dusk' setting if you will, whilst symbiotically showing the relationship in it all. The thick layers of material coated on the canvas connect the three panels together in an innovative way: 3 plastic scale model battleships that Lam assembled himself is seen encased in thick resin (hence why the piece is 10.5cm thick) This tranquil hiatus runs through each panel and is the visible divider between night and day.

'I have hated you too much to be grateful of the day' is the lighter diptych in the series, depicting a butterfly on the top half and a group of women protecting supplies in the water. The relevance of this is to portray sexual discrimination; Lam got his inspiration from a 1970s Danish emergency brochure that he stumbled across. Lam ridicules the concept and of women having to 'protect' supplies whilst men are the ones who truly have to protect, thus being the actual heroes of the situation. He speculates the norm and brings to issue that this prejudice is still current in the world today, 40 years on. The symbolism of the butterfly patronizes the women as it further represents how we all live and die and are consequently equal beings. The Ship in the center of the panel is placed in such a cunning way to show the irony of the 'protection', thus reiterating Lam's logic behind this issue. Lam concludes it with this statement: *'Us as a species try to prolong life as much as possible. We haven't attained mortality but are trying to do so'*.



I have hated you too much to be grateful of the day
Polymer paint and resin on canvas on board, Model battleship encased in resin
235 cm x 183 cm x 10.5 cm (Diptych)
2013

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the dark panel ***'I have loved you too fondly to be fearful of the night'*** not only balances out the painting, yet the ethos surrounding the piece. Lam confessed that this was one of his greatest challenges: Painting the dark. *'It is never JUST black'* he quotes after admitting to using 12 shades of black to complete the coup. The top half portrays the universe, where here Lam told me the running pun he has with it: *'Now you paint the Universe... isn't the world enough?'* Throughout this process of painting the Universe, Lam continually questioned and challenged himself on how one makes the Universe appear sexy and aesthetically pleasing. Every stroke had to appear the right shade and angle otherwise it wouldn't work. This revokes back to the theme of duality that is constant in all his works; you need light and darkness in a symbiotic concept for everything

to spin correctly on its axis. The bottom half of the panel represents intricate star constellations. This further portrays life and reality; further enhancing the relevance of astrology the zeitgeist we call existence. Subsequently, Lam uses many different layers intertwining one another to create an effect of actually looking up into the dark night. The amusement he brings to his work and attitude is visible in everything he creates, from his titles to his symbolisms.



I have loved you too fondly to be fearful of the night
Synthetic polymer paint, scale model battleship encased in resin, canvas on board
235cm x 183cm x 10.5cm (diptych)
2013

Birthing his next diptych for **18@8 Mirror, Mirror on the wall**, Lam's style is encapsulating as ever. Relating his work to embodying the idea of being time capsules, he discusses how in

the future he could come back to a current piece and create a connecting continuation for it. Entitled 'Solipsism', following the theory that the self is all that can be known to exist, he prevails once more taking his mediums to a new level as well as using eccentric ways to show his message. Lam separates the friezes to spell out a subtle 'I', 'M' and 'U' to connote how we are all one being and one existence. Having the middle frieze was made up of a gold mirror for the am/ 'M' part of the piece, Lam further highlights the materialistic attitude that millions personify in life today, so as one looks at themselves in the gold mirror, one ponders over the fact as to whether they embody the attributes of being a solipsist or as a moral and grounded individual.

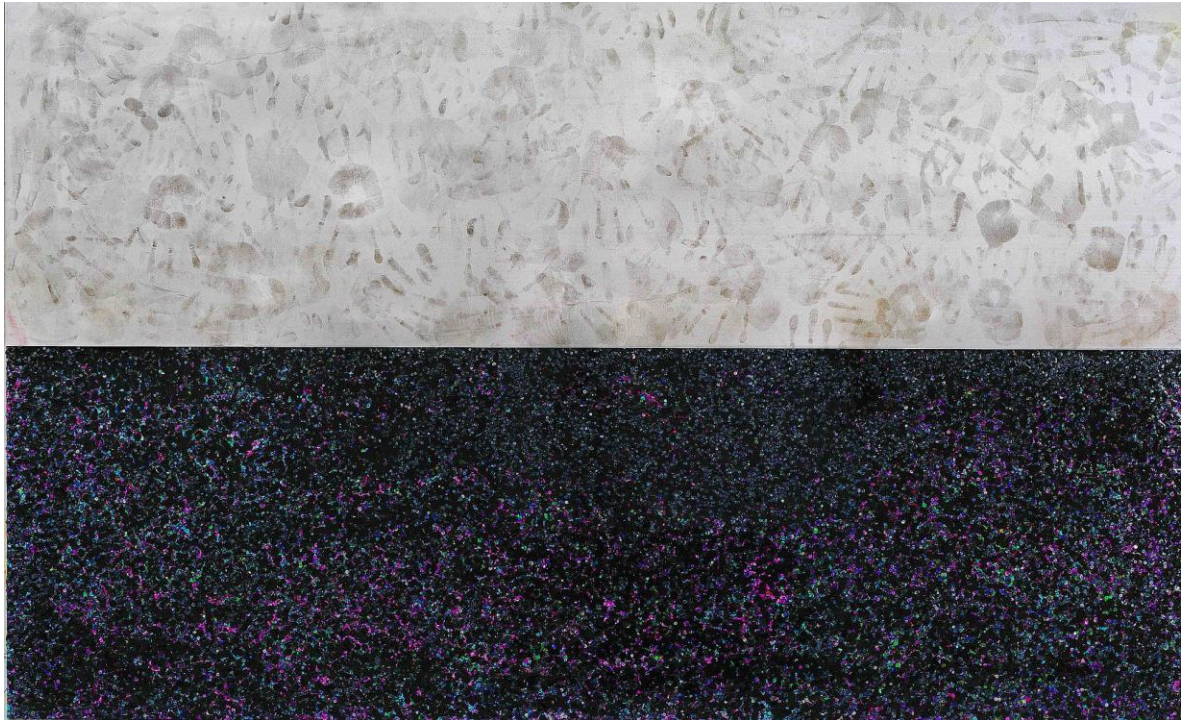


Solipsism

Etching on aluminium, acrylic golden mirror, plastic train tracks, synthetic house paint, resin on board
90cm x 270cm

2013

Lam's career has sky rocketed from day 1 to where he is now. In 2013, Lam received a commission from Louis Vuitton to paint a piece for their shop in Kuala Lumpur. The piece was done on a large aluminum structured canvas and was a diptych. Titled '**beLieVe**', again Lam uses puns and wordplay to satirize his work. The top half of the piece is made up of 4 generations of handprints. Intriguingly enough, every generation comes from the women in his family. Every layer is a different generation, ranging from his grandmother to his own daughter- a graceful expression to connote the relationship that femininity has from Louis Vuitton. The Bottom half portrays layers of pink, silver and black sequins to further enhance the feminine gestures of the piece, and also adds to his modern pattern of work: working and progressing in layers.



beLieVe
Sequins, inked handprint and synthetic resin on aluminium panel on board
110cm x 180cm
2013

Ivan Lam's latest piece 'Arrival' that was included in the latest *Ho Mia* (2014) exhibition at Wei Ling Contemporary, not only commemorated the concept of 'Good Life', yet thoughtfully provoked the audience; it respectfully regarded the tragic loss of Flight MH370. In a triptych formation, as well as one of them being made up of rulers, the 3 panels subtly and courteously portrayed each number '3', '7' and '0' on each section. Pushing his boundaries once again, Lam strategically pushed his mediums to the brim as well as paradoxically using a pun to show no disrespect in his piece.



Arrival
Plastic rulers, synthetic resin, fabric, synthetic polymer paint, vinyl on board
118cm x 354cm
2014

ABOUT WEI-LING GALLERY

For over a decade Wei-Ling Gallery has nurtured the development of Malaysia's contemporary art scene. With the opening of Wei-Ling Contemporary (the gallery's second space in Kuala Lumpur) in 2011, and the recent launch of the gallery's third space in Penang, the gallery has established itself as the largest commercial gallery in Malaysia.

The objective of the gallery is to promote and cultivate the best of contemporary art in Malaysia, working with a core stable of artists who are dedicated to their artistic journey and vision. Today, they represent some of the country's most prominent and important contemporary artists.

The gallery's program changes regularly with a strong and diversified selection of exhibitions. It has also played a significant role in bringing Malaysian contemporary art to international audiences, taking major exhibitions of Malaysian art to China, India, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Shanghai, Singapore, South Korea and Taipei. The gallery also represents a selection of important internationally well-known foreign artists. Most recently, it commissioned the first site-specific installation in Malaysia, Fiberspace, a light installation by Venezuelan light artist Claudia Bueno which made its debut at their gallery space in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

In its mission of fostering local contemporary art, the gallery has also become the largest publisher of art books and catalogues in Malaysia with close to 100 titles to its name.