



Good Days Will Come
Wong Chee Meng

Every cloud has a silver lining

陆游
《游山西村》

柳暗花明又一村
山重水复疑无路



Good Days Will Come

A poem by Lu You, legendary poet of the China's Southern Song Dynasty, sits behind contemporary Malaysian artist Wong Chee Meng's new exhibition at Wei-Ling Contemporary: *Good Days Will Come*. Inspired by his travels, the poet wrote, "After trudging through endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt on whether there is a way out, one is welcomed with shades of willows, the glittery shine of blossoms, and a lovely village." Similar to the English saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining," Lu You speaks about overcoming struggles using the power of a positive mindset. It is a mantra that brings out the strength to carry on, for those who are facing uncertainties in life.

The artist's 2017 solo exhibition, *Have You Ever*, emphasized hope and opportunity, through symbolic figures, colourful palettes and compositions. Although optimism has always been the underlying theme behind his practice, it has certainly become more crucial during times like this. The artist decided to extend his paradigm in seeing new perspectives unfolding through his latest works. Through this new series, he expresses a bolder attitude in the way he views hope; in order to achieve something, one must first have a deep longing for it, and strive for it with yearning eyes. When the world seems to have fallen apart, it is our thirst for a better tomorrow, that will save us all.

To the artist, hope itself is a mysterious thing. It is similar to faith in the sense that it acts as a visualization of what we truly believe, yet at the same time being intangible. Hope blurs imagination and reality, as it refers to a conception that may or may not materialize in the way we foresee it. As a human being, we tend to invest our thought, time, and energy in what we have confidence in, although fate might suggest otherwise, and lead us onto a Different path altogether. Regardless of its ambiguity, hope allows us to feel a sense of persistence and contentment in moving forward. A reason to fight.

With this direction of thought, Wong Chee Meng worked with familiar visual elements including Chinese homophones, hidden numbers, lucky phrases and charms: iconic symbols found in Chinese culture, believed to carry positive energies and blessings. Hiding key elements within his paintings' multiple layers, the artist invites the audience to slowly reveal them. He was inspired by the science of optical illusion in applying the "anaglyph 3D" effect to his paintings, achieved by encoding one image to one coloured filter. The result is a painting that reveals three different images, as seen through a red-tinted filter, cyan-tinted filter, or without a filter. An approach that represents different perspectives based on how we choose to view life. While one filter reveals a landscape, an animal, or an object,

the other shows a number. More than a superstition, these hidden symbols and numbers serve as signifiers of better days ahead. As the artist believes, life works in a cycle, and it is only a matter of time that we find our way out of these hard times. Good days *will* come.



13 Safe and Sound (2020)
Acrylic on canvas
152.5cm x 107.5cm

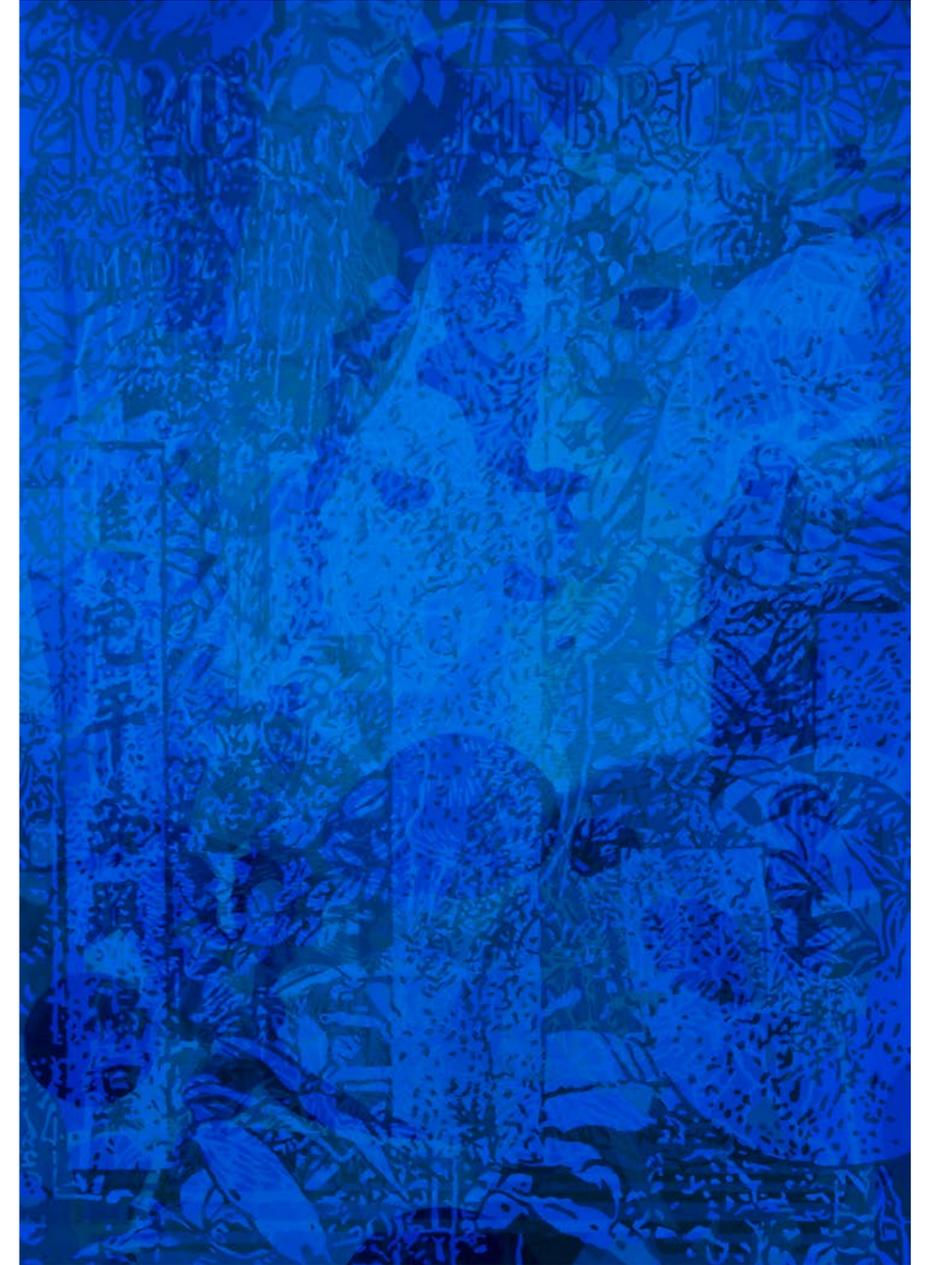
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13 Safe and Sound
 (As seen through red lenses)

13 Safe and Sound
 (As seen through blue lenses)





19 Eastern Sea, Southern Mountain (2020)
Acrylic on canvas
152.5cm x 107.5cm

There is a custom in traditional Chinese culture of wishing a person “happiness as immense as the Eastern sea, and longevity as long as the Southern mountain,” usually on one’s birthday. This saying inspired the title of this piece, as the artist highlights the hope for a long and joyful life. The idea of a long life is also symbolised through an illustration of a turtle, considered as a sacred creature that holds mythical power, also known for its patience and wisdom. Next to it is placed a Chinese pagoda, a holy place that marks faith and hope.

In Chinese, the number ‘19’ is pronounced similar to “forever”. It is therefore considered a lucky number to signify permanence or eternity.



19 Eastern Sea, Southern Mountain
(As seen through red lenses)

19 Eastern Sea, Southern Mountain
(As seen through blue lenses)

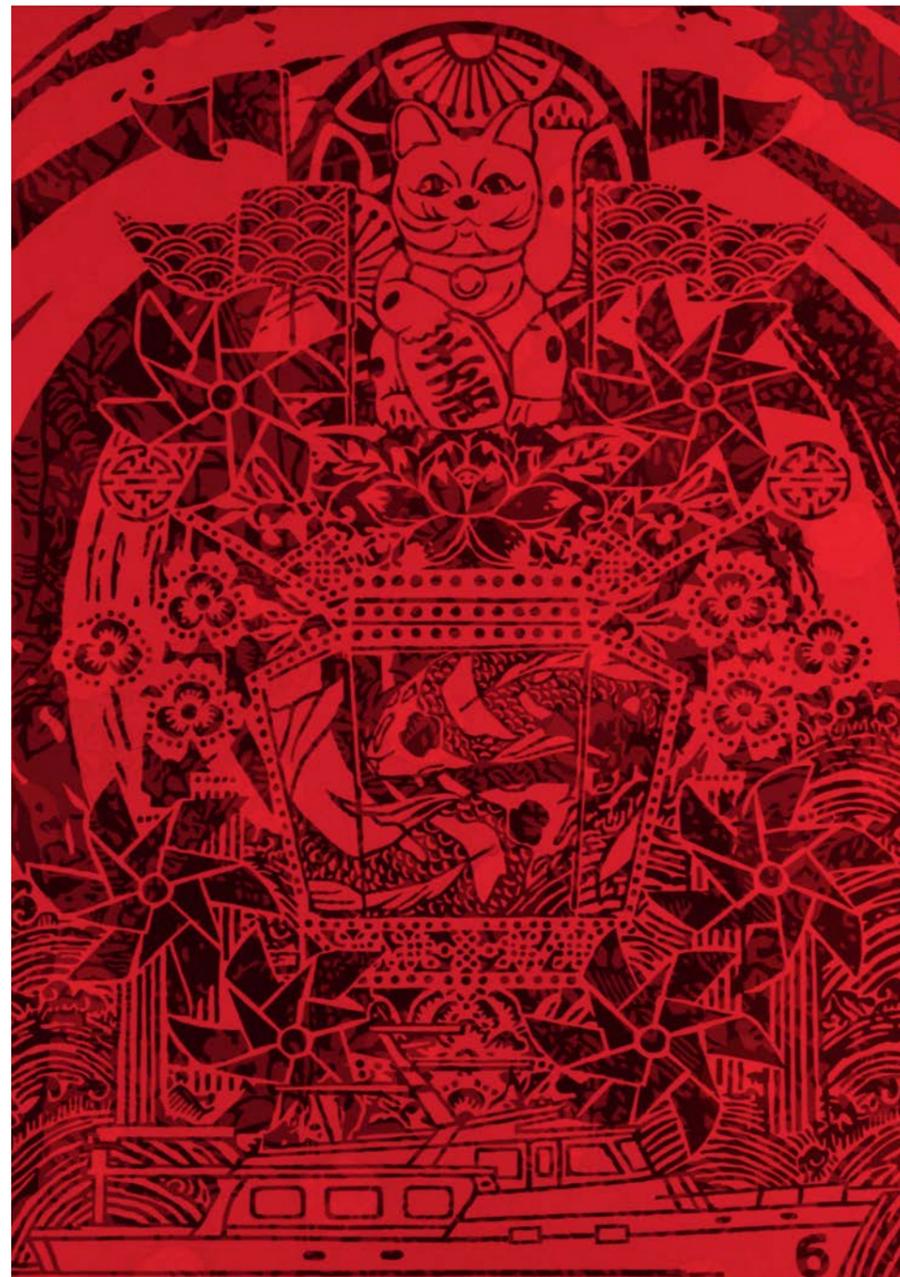




6 May You Have a Smooth Sailing (2020)
Acrylic on canvas
152.5cm x 107.5cm

The 'Maneki-Neko' is a common Japanese figurine of a cat which is also popular in Chinese culture nowadays, believed to bring good luck to the owner. The cat has a paw raised with constant beckoning gesture, allowing the flow of good fortune. Luck and prosperity are also represented here by falling golden coins and spinning pinwheels. In traditional Chinese culture, the pinwheel is believed "to turn one's luck around", and is therefore used commonly to welcome a new year or chapter.

In the centre of the image is a lantern containing two Koi, a type of fish recognised for its perseverance, as seen in their determinative struggle upstream. Koi is also believed to bring good fate and happiness to a family. Underneath is a ship with the number '6', a fortunate number mainly meaning smooth or well-off.



6 May You Have a Smooth Sailing
 (As seen through red lenses)

6 May You Have a Smooth Sailing
 (As seen through blue lenses)



168 Prosperous Landscape (2020)

Acrylic on canvas
122cm x 91.5cm (each)
122cm x 274.5cm (Triptych)



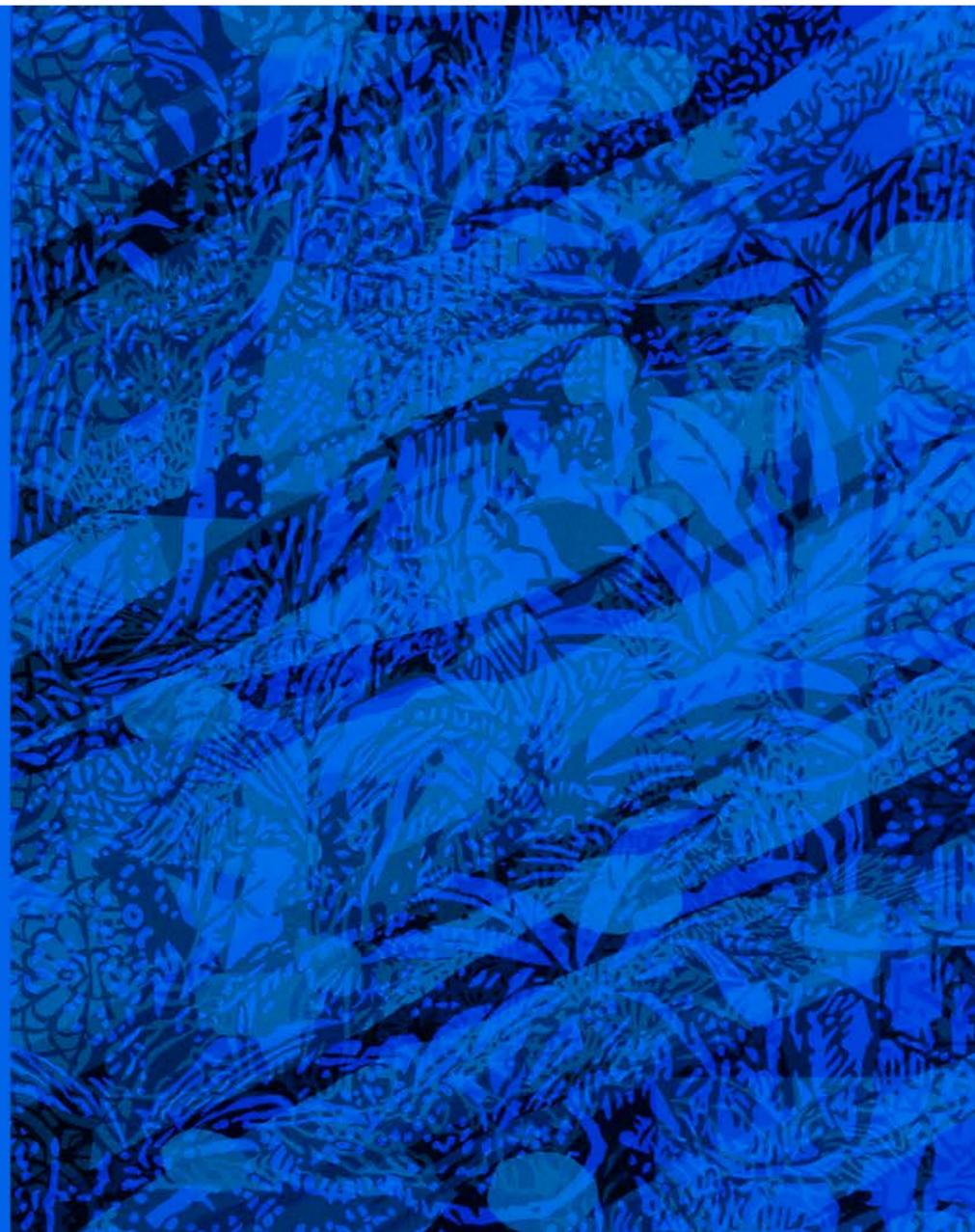
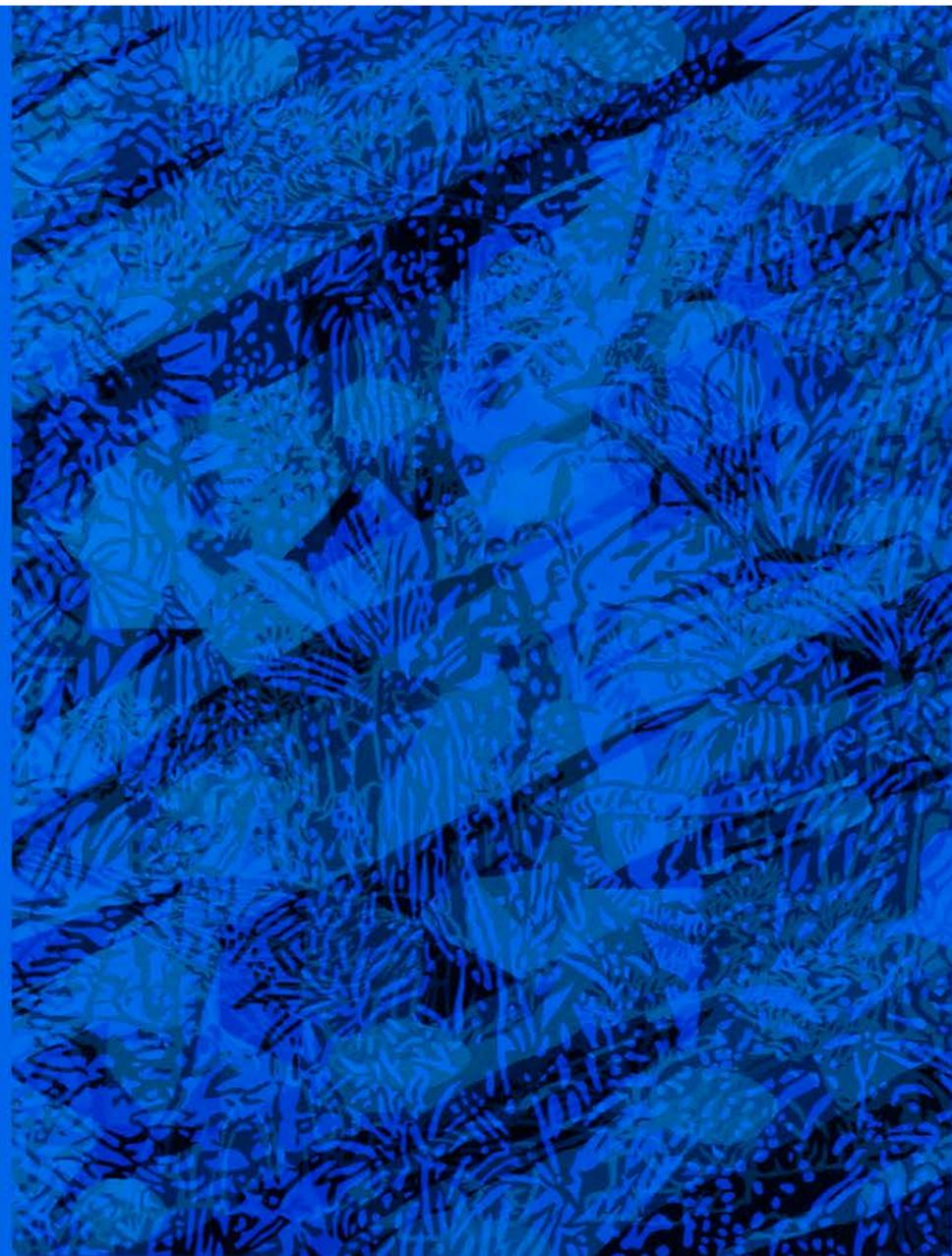
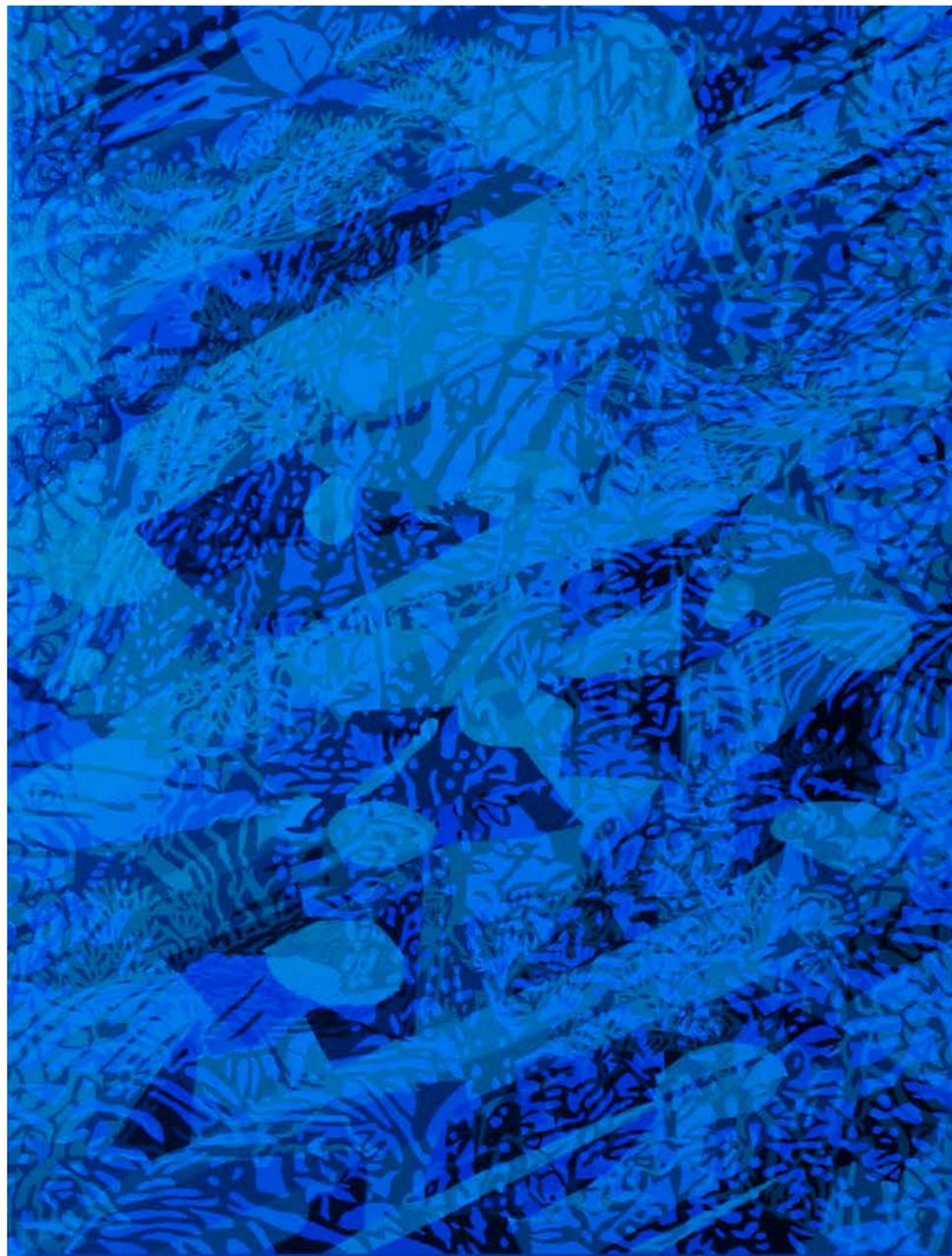


Every canvas in this triptych represents one number in ancient Mandarin characters. Individually, each of these numbers unfolds different significance: '1' (whole), '6' (smooth) and '8' (wealth). Similar to these meanings, '168' can be translated as "rich all the way". In other words, when combined together, these three numbers depict an ongoing prosperity.

This painting also features multiple birds, similar to many traditional Chinese paintings. According to the Chinese belief, birds are signs of life and positive energy, as only when there are water and food in a place, would birds make it their home.



168 Prosperous Landscape
 (As seen through red lenses)



168 Prosperous Landscape
(As seen through blue lenses)



7 Rising Stars (2020)
Acrylic on canvas
122cm x 91.5cm

'7' is known to be a lucky number in many cultures. In Chinese belief system, the number sounds like both (qǐ), which means "start" or "rise", and also (qì), which means "vital energy". The number also holds a special meaning for relationships and the Qixi Festival, falls on the 7th day of the 7th month of the lunar calendar. This day of love is based on an ancient folktale, a love story between the weaver girl and the cowherd. As their love was not allowed, they were to remain at opposite sides of the Silver River – however, on the 7th of July of every year, a flock of magpie birds would form a bridge to reunite the couple.

The artist also includes a pineapple arising from the grown, as a symbol of growth. Next to this pineapple are two cranes, playing the role of guardians.



7 Rising Stars
(As seen through red lenses)

7 Rising Stars
(As seen through blue lenses)





520 Happily Ever After (2020) | Acrylic on canvas; 91.5cm x 122cm

When pronounced in Chinese, 520 (wǔ'èrlíng) sounds similar to the phrase I love you (wǒ ài nǐ). Therefore, the number 520 became an online slang used by the Chinese as a shortcut to express love, similar to 'ILY' in English. This word then came to be associated with the date May 20th (5/20), which made it a meaningful day linked with love.

Love is symbolised in the painting by two child figures. Next to them are two Mandarin ducks, or what the Chinese call yuānyāng, where 'yuan' and 'yang' stand for male and female. Mandarin ducks are believed to be lifelong couples, thus regarded as a symbol of affection and fidelity. The cow signifies land, and is therefore a sign of prosperity.



520 Happily Ever After
(As seen through red lenses)



520 Happily Ever After
(As seen through blue lenses)



The Yearning Realm (2019) | Acrylic on canvas; 107.5cm x 152.5cm

This painting is the first of the series and offers mainly two images and a pair of numbers. The first shows a pair of siblings as symbols of love. The saying ‘family is life’ is a concept that holds true in Chinese culture. In fact, several Confucian thoughts are based around the family. Children are highly valued within a family structure, and I considered as a good luck. The second image is a basket of fish, fruits, vegetables and paddy, representing a healthy and prosperous life.

In Mandarin, the number ‘2’ means easy whereas the number ‘8’ represents prosperity. Thus, when these two numbers are combined together as ‘28’, it would indicate an “easy” flow of good fortune. The number ‘2’ could also be understood as double, hence “double wealth”.



The Yearning Realm
(As seen through red lenses)



The Yearning Realm
(As seen through blue lenses)

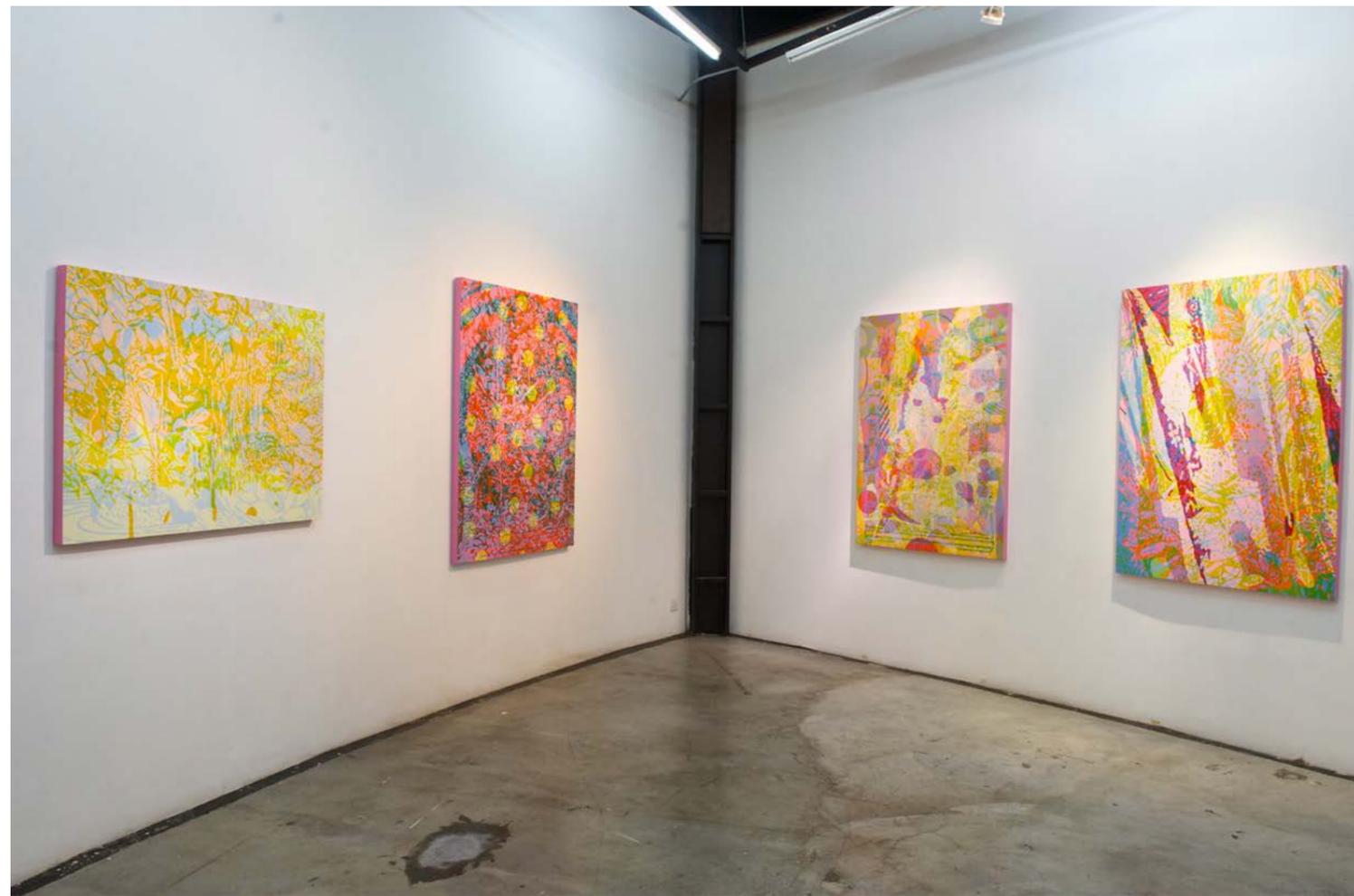


5 Lucky Connections (2020) | Mixed media; Dimension variable



The paintings featured in the show are accompanied by an installation work consisting of 5 arrangements of flowers and objects. This work is an adaptation of the “bouquets” that are commonly used as decorations or gifts during the Chinese New Year celebrations. The artist aims to incorporate them as part of his research and observation on the Chinese kitsch culture. Mundane and decorative objects are arranged into multiple compositions that explore various Chinese superstitions.

Each element in the arrangements upholds a particular value or meaning: fruit (fruitful life), coin (wealth), calculator (income), bowl (steady job), cherry blossom (connections, and partner), scoop (effort), ant (“ma yi” means ant but also “one million” in Chinese), peanut (money), rice basket (full), etc.



WONG CHEE MENG (b. 1975)

Wong Chee Meng's view on the world is skewed by the blurring of lines and double images-the result of an accident that left him with permanent damage to his vision. Playing on the way he sees things, in multiple layers, sometimes crossing over and overlapping, his works are complex and multi-faceted. By meticulously painting layer upon layer of images, he camouflages many stories and hidden vistas, creating harmonious compositions that reveal deeper references, as we focus and look beyond the surface.

Wong Chee Meng's interest lies in the investigation of image-making through additive and subtractive transformation. He weaves random objects and subjects into intricate forms that are seemingly there, but fade into an absolution of colour chains. To him, art has a strange presence in our daily lives; it occurs anytime and anywhere. Through his paintings, which are often combined with techniques such as paper cut and stencil, he responds to social issues and cultural interventions that play on his subconscious, urging him to question and ponder their significance. Drawing on traditional symbolism, and subjects gleaned from fables of yore, he crystalizes his irreverent position and stance on the subject.

His last exhibition '*Have You Ever*', was held at Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2017. It featured seven paintings, each

depicting a familiar scene from everyday life yet fraught with deep underlying symbolism and meaning. In this series, beach balls – caught in mid-air or placed on higher planes, as they are tossed up and juggled – act as metaphors for new perceptions, actions, willingness, optimism and opportunities in life.

Active as an artist since 1996, Wong Chee Meng has been represented on numerous local and international art platforms. His work can be labeled as Contemporary Pop with a focus on Social Realism. He was selected as the artist in residence at the Mali Hom Residency in Penang in 2007 and represented Malaysia at an exposition of Malaysian art in Havana Cuba in 2006. His works have been widely collected by both private and public institutions and can be seen in the collections of Axiata, Rimbun Dahan, ABN Amro Bank, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Visual Art Gallery in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

EDUCATION

- 2011 MA in International Contemporary Art and Design Practice, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Malaysia
- 2006 Bachelor of Arts, Curtin University, Australia
- 1996 Diploma in Fine Art, Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Good Days Will Come, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2017 Have You Ever, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2015 [F]ortune of Lives, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2013 THE URBAN ABYSS, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2008 INWARD, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2003 DO YOU NOTICE ME, Reka Art Space, Selangor, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 18@8 Turning Points, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2017 18@8 RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2015 18@8 Heirlooms, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Blue Garden: Petite Tour, Kuandu Residency Program, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan
THE SPACE BETWEEN, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2014 The PEAK Group Show- HO MIA, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2012 18@8 KUL-SIN, 18@8 KUL-SIN, ION Art, Singapore
A Decade of collection Featuring- BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS, Wei-Ling Gallery and Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
PRECIOUS LITTLE PIECES, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Southeast asia art group exchanged residency (sager), HOM Gallery. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Southeast asia art group exchanged residency (sager), Perahu art Connection Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2011 18@8 SAVE THE PLANET, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ART CAGED, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 WHAT’S YOUR PORN?, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 ABSOLUT 18@8, ‘Safe The World” Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2010 ABSOLUT 18@8, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 A METER PERSPECTIVE, Matahati & Friends at HOM Gallery. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 MALAYSIA BOLEH, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 ANNIVERSARY SHOW 2009/2010, Pace gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2009 ISKANDAR MALAYSIA CONTEMPORARY ART SHOW 2009 (IMCAS), Danga City Mall, Johor, Malaysia
 FAB 4, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2008 LOCALS ONLY, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 PENINSULA & ISLAND, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 EXHIBITION # 3, Artist in Residency Program Exhibition, One Menerung Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2007 EXHIBITION # ONE, Artist in Residency Program Exhibition at ABN AMRO Building, Penang, Malaysia
 FORCE OF NATURE, Darling Muse, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 18@8 2007, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2006 KATA DI KOTA: a Malaysia Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Cuba: In conjunction with the 9th Havana Biennale 2006
 MERDEKA SCULPTURE EXHIBITION, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
 FEED ME WWF Charity Show, Rimbun Dahan Art Gallery, Malaysia
 2005 ANNIVERSARY SHOW, Darling Muse, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2003 THINKING SPACES, Soka Gakai Tower, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2002 CHOW KIT FESTIVAL, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2001 MALAYSIA STILL LIFE, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 OPEN SHOW 2001, National Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 CIVILIZATION DIALOGUE- INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION, Metro Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 2000 SAN, a cash and carry art exhibition at Wan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 LANGKAWI INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS (LIFA), Ibrahim Hussien Museum, Langkawi, Malaysia
 1999 HUMAN EXPRESSION, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 1998 COMING TOGETHER, Pelita Hati Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

GEMA: RESONANCE (MALAYSIA CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION), Manes Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic
 13th ASIAN INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
 1997 14 EXPRESSION, Graduation Show, Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 PEKAN SENI IPOH II, Town Hall, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia
 WU GROUP EXHIBITION, Wan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
 12th ASIAN INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION, Macau
 1996 YOUNG TALENT 96, Bank Negara, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 CONSTRUCTION WORKSHOP, Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 MALAYSIAN YOUNG CONTEMPORARY 96, National Gallery Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ART FAIRS

2016 Art Stage Jakarta 2016, Sheraton Grand Jakarta Gandaria City, Indonesia
 2014 THE 13TH KOREA INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION 2015, COEX Hall, Seoul, South Korea
 2009 ART SINGAPORE 2009, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

AWARDS

1997 Honorable Mention in “Philip Morris Malaysia Art Award”
 1996 “Merit Award” in Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
 International Art Competition, Malaysia

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

2015 Kuandu Residency Program, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan
 2012 Southeast Asia Art Group Exchanged Residency (sager), Malaysia and Indonesia
 2007 EXHIBITION # ONE, Artist in Residency Program Exhibition at ABN AMRO Building, Penang, Malaysia



Wei-Ling Gallery

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To accompany the exhibition entitled '**Good Days Will Come**' by Wong Chee Meng
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Wei-Ling Contemporary

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Cover image: **168 Prosperous Landscape** (2020)