

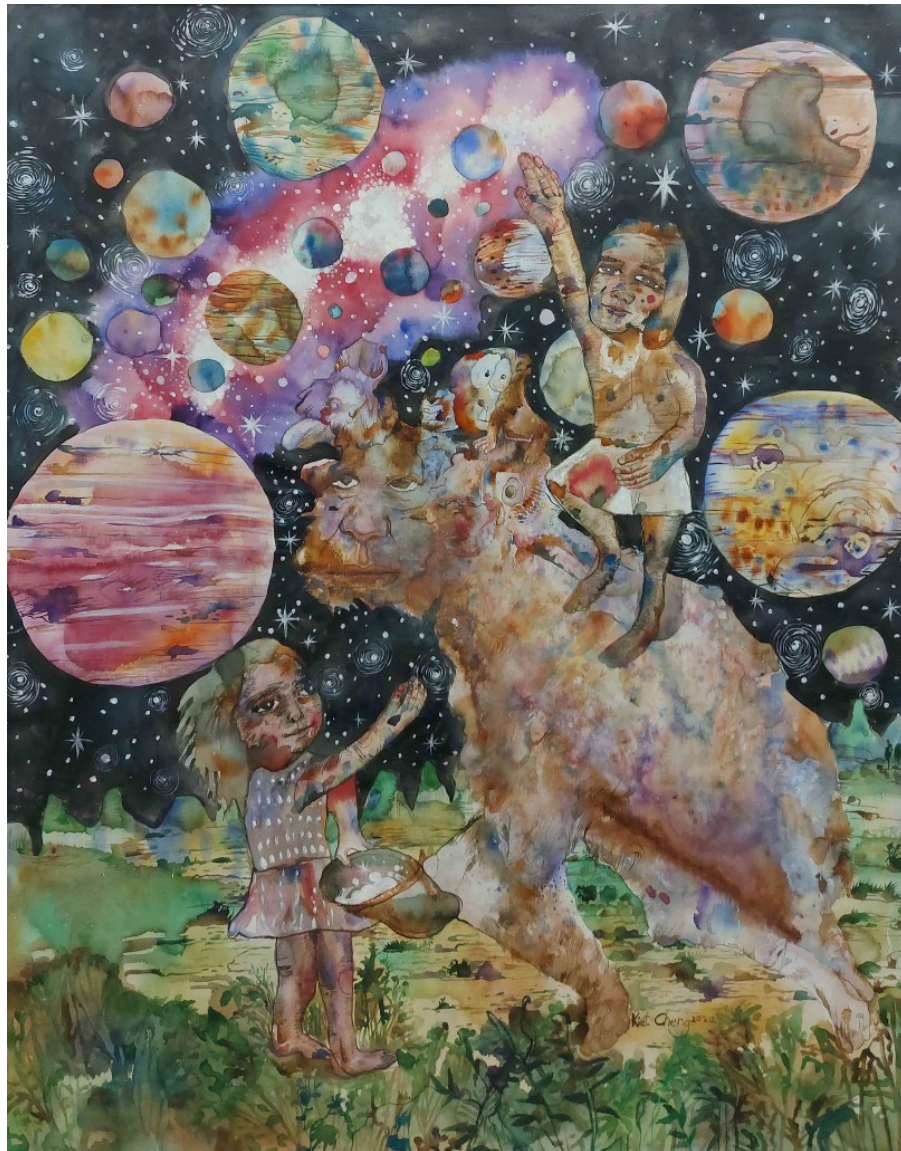
Flowers in the Sea



Flowers in the Sea (2021) | Watercolor on canvas; 77cm x 96cm

Flowers in the Sea (2021) was inspired by the philosopher Osho, who taught the meaning of self-consciousness and how to lose or get rid of it to become a brave person, through the power of imagination. He taught this lesson through the story of O-nami, who succeeded in becoming an undefeatable wrestler, by imagining himself as the great waves, sweeping everything before them. Kiet Cheng was motivated by this story, to overcome the big challenges that she faces in life. Akin to the wrestler, she also uses the power of imagination, through the act of painting, to overcome her fears. Here, she depicts herself as mythical creatures, swimming in the waves.

All That I Have



All that I have (2020) | Watercolor on canvas; 165cm x 119cm

In *All That I Have* (2020), Kiet Cheng invites us to a green field under a marvellous sky decorated with planets and stars. In the centre of the field, a man climbs the back of a friendly beast, to pick the stars from the sky. A girl stands patiently next to them, holding a pocketful of stars. When painting the image, Kiet Cheng tried to explore the perspective of Mother Nature. Thus, she imagined nature saying, "I would give 'all that I have', to fulfil the needs of all living things." Kiet Cheng invites her viewers to stop and think for a moment; what can we do in return to protect our environment? Adopting a surreal style, the artist evokes issues that concern us in the real life.

The Wolves are Waiting



The Wolves are Waiting (2020) | Watercolor on canvas; 96cm x 87.5cm

The Wolves are Waiting (2020) shows a little girl holding a bunch of items that symbolise her treasures in life. Apart from one's wealth, intangible things such as glory, talent, achievement, beauty and happiness, can also be considered as treasures. The wolves behind the girl stare intently at her wealth, eager to take them, as a metaphor for human ego.

Linger



Linger (2021) | Watercolor on canvas; 155cm x 137cm

In this piece, Kiet Cheng features her daughter in the centre of the painting. There is no specific concept behind this work. Instead, she conceived the story as she painted it. For Kiet Cheng, it is important that painting becomes a moment in which her consciousness could flow freely. With the use of watercolour, she could apply an approach of painting, without limiting her imagination and creativity. The result is a portrait of her daughter, surrounded with beautiful ornaments, symbolizing a mother's love towards her child.

When the grapes bear fruit



When the grapes bear fruit (2018) | Acrylic on canvas; 135cm x 170cm

This work was painted after Kiet Cheng gave birth to her second child. The female figure in the painting rides a large bird with one foot, in the surging waves of the river. On the other hand, the bird is seen nurturing the children and environment; fruits, grass and flowers. Both the woman and the creature symbolise women's beauty and ability to give love.

Kiet Cheng also wrote a poem to accompany the painting:

*The man I called my mother
Here it is, above the feathered bird
With many children, and flowers and grass grow luxuriously
The grapes bore fruit in clusters
Big bird she's jumping, she's jumping
The water is cold*

Filled with you



Filled with you (2020) | Watercolor on canvas; 164.5cm x 134cm

The phrase “filled with you” refers to the fact that as a mother, Kiet Cheng’s life is completed by the presence of her daughters. In the centre of the painting is herself, carrying her daughter, who she depicts as a mermaid, as a symbol of her love towards her. Her daughters love rabbits, therefore she was inspired by that to illustrate a figure of a rabbit, standing next to herself, as if caring for her daughter too.

Migration to the Land of Peach Blossom



Migration to the Land of Peach Blossom (2021) | Ink on canvas; 240cm x 290cm

This pen drawing work on canvas is Cheong Kiet Cheng's interpretation of The Peach Blossom Spring, a fable written by Tao Yuanming in 421 CE. Although there have been many versions of the tale, the main storyline consists of a chance discovery of an ethereal utopia - where people lead an ideal co-existence with mother nature.

In Kiet Cheng's version, the Peach Blossom land is depicted as a serene and prosperous place, where all living creatures live in harmony. In the land of Peach Blossom, human beings and spirits live inside the caves and live inside the caves and three holes. It is a place where trees grow tall, flowers bloom, and fruits harvest.

There are also immortals who are in charge of life and growth in the whole land. As an example, is the figure with three eyes. "The third eye" is referred to as the eye of knowledge and enlightenment. While the physical eye perceives the physical world, the third eye sees the true world — a unified one, with an unyielding connection to the spirit.

Kiet Cheng's Peach Blossom is full of mythical figures, often exploring the connection and hybridisation of human beings with animals. There is a woman riding a whale, a girl with deer antler. Under this deer child lies a rock with a hole on it. This hole refers to the entrance that leads the outside world to the land of the Peach Blossom.

The artist chose to imagine her own Peach Blossom, as she realized that every single being in this world yearns for their own utopia. However, she believes that no matter how far one searches, the real utopia actually lies in the bottom of our own hearts. As she said, *"When we feel peace and contentment within, that is in itself a utopia."*

Bring me to the end



Bring me to the end (2020) | Watercolor on canvas; 96.5cm x 87.5cm

In this particular series, Kiet Cheng experiments with the liberty of painting using watercolour. She would apply the watercolour painting on canvas, and leave it to chances, to see what forms might appear due to the fluidity of the water itself. As she mentioned, "*By adding water, the paint becomes less controllable, and the forms created out of it never fail to surprise me.*" Lastly, she would continue the forms to create surreal figures, such as the creature that she created in this painting.

Tree's whisper



Tree's whisper (2020) | Mixed media on canvas; 65cm x 48cm

Cheong Kiet Cheng's paintings have consistently highlighted the relationship between human beings and nature. As a person, she enjoys spending time in nature and believes in the spiritual connection that we have with our natural environment. Kiet Cheng has been visiting forests all her life; since a young girl, she has always loved hiking. As she stated, "*Some old forests really inspired me, such as the forests of Gunung Kinabalu, Taman Negara, and Gunung Rinjani in Lombok.*" This painting illustrates herself communicating with a tree that she encountered in the forest. It is to this tree that she tells her joys and sorrows. As the artist speaks her words, the tree seems to respond to her, shaking its branches and whispering answers to her questions. This mysterious connection between herself and the rest of the universe also makes her reflect on questions surrounding existence.

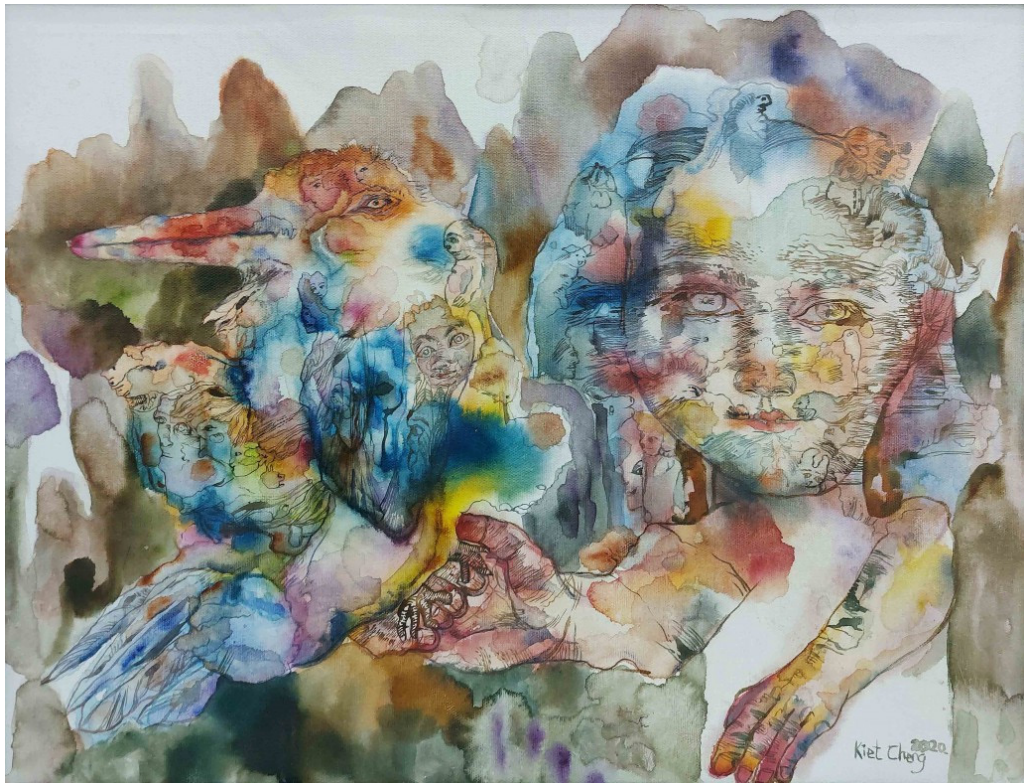
Blossom time



Blossom time (2021) | Mixed media on canvas; 44cm x 59cm

Cheong Kiet Cheng's works are often described as romantic as the artist draws inspiration from philosophy, literature, poetry, music, culture, and persona narratives. This painting describes her happiness of reuniting with her partner who had just come back from his travels during the start of the first lockdown in Malaysia. She was grateful that the pandemic allowed some space and time for them as parents to spend quality time with their two daughters. This feeling of delight is illustrated through this painting, in which she focuses on experimenting with lines and colours. The painting depicts animal-like creatures dancing and celebrating, as inspired by the festive culture of India. Just before the pandemic, Kiet Cheng travelled to India where she felt in awe of the beauty and dynamism of the country and its People.

Nature Reflection



Nature Reflection (2020) | Watercolor on canvas; 46cm x 60cm

This work is the first of her watercolour series. Having travelled to India, she felt inspired by the colours found in the nature, historical sites, and local customs that she witnessed there. Therefore, upon returning to Malaysia, she used her imagination to start a series of watercolour paintings, in which nature still plays a strong force. In *Nature Reflection* (2020), she emphasises the importance of self-reflection through spending time in the nature.

Life Being



Life Being (2020) | Ink on paper; 58cm x 48cm

This piece was completed during the pandemic. Upon her husband returning to Malaysia during the lockdowns, they found themselves at home the whole year, taking care of their daughters together. The woman in the centre of the drawing is wearing a skirt formed out of flower petals, as a representation of femininity and beauty. Having spent more time with her husband and daughters, she realised women's potential in becoming the guardian of the family; nurturing yet strong.

Riding



Riding (2020) | Ink on paper; 58cm x 48cm

Inspired by one of the scenes in *Lord of the Rings* that had left her a strong impression and fascination, Kiet Cheng drew an adaptation of the swan boat that appeared in the movie. As a surreal painter, Kiet Cheng often references to science fiction and fantasy stories. Through this drawing, she compares herself being the swan boat – feminine and elegant, yet carrying a big responsibility. A fictional character is seen riding the swan boat with her animal friends, letting the swan lead them towards better future.

Went into the orchard in spring



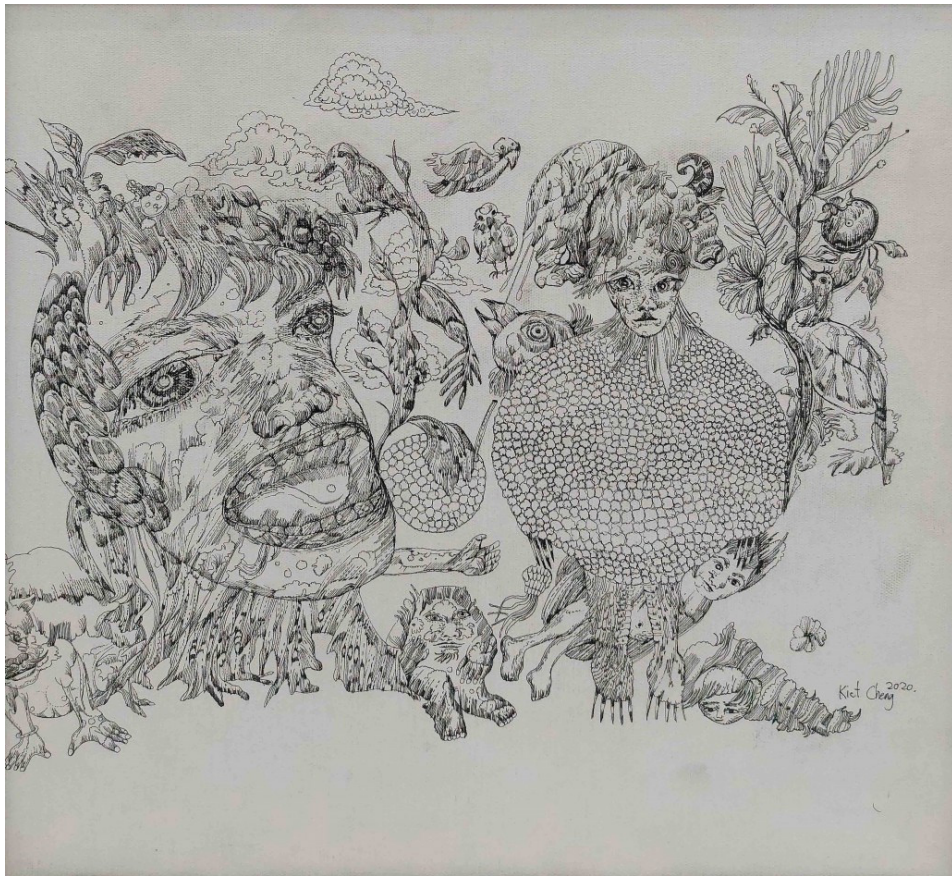
Went into the orchard in spring (2021) | Mixed media on canvas; 54cm x 57cm

Cheong Kiet Cheng's works are often described as romantic as the artist draws inspiration from philosophy, literature, poetry, music, culture, and personal narratives. This painting was inspired by a poetry by one of her favourite writers, Rumi.

"Come to the orchard in Spring. There is light and wine, and sweethearts in the pomegranate flowers." (Rumi, Quatrain 914, *Open Secret: Versions of Rumi* (translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks))

Based on these words, the artist imagined a fictional character surrounded by flowers, animals, and mythical creatures. Through her 2021 series of pen drawing and water colour painting, Kiet Cheng hopes to convey positive feelings to her viewers, despite the uncertain times that our world is facing.

Going to the Spring (I)



Going to the Spring (I) (2020) | Ink on canvas; 46cm x 49cm

During her recent trip to India, which was in early 2020, Kiet Cheng brought along a few rolls of canvases together with her. This particular drawing was drawn on her way to Jaisalmer. It was a ten-hour train ride through an uninhabited desert. Somehow, the empty landscape that she saw from the train inspired her to draw a fictional landscape. In her imagination, she sees a bearded man, a peach, and several nature-inspired ornaments.

Going to the Spring (II)



Going to the Spring (II) (2021) | Ink on canvas; 46cm x 58cm

Kiet Cheng has always enjoyed hiking in Malaysia and had always loved climbing the Gunung Apek in particular, which is located in Cheras. This mountain is an important and remarkable element in her life, as she has a lot of memories with her family there. As she recalls, *"I drew the mountains as well as the fictional creatures that I imagined there."* She also stated that going into the nature has helped heal her, and enrich her imagination.

Going to the Spring (III)



Going to the Spring (III) (2021) | Ink on canvas; 46cm x 48.5cm

She created this piece of drawing on canvas while taking care of her daughters during the pandemic. The figure of a deer gives her a very mysterious impression. To her, a deer is like the king of the forest. Inspired by this thought, she drew a deer person, with humans and elves surrounding it. She believes that whenever there is a forest, there are creatures, Gods, and spirits that surround him, providing protection to nature and human beings.

Birth by the tree



Birth by the tree (2020) | Ink on canvas; 57.5cm x 46.5cm

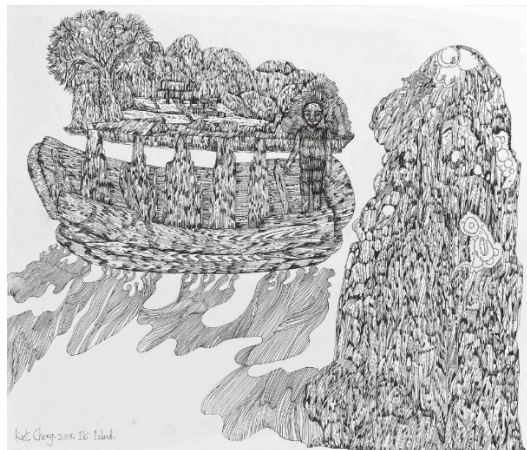
The philosophy behind this work is that all life comes from the same source. The artwork highlights a tree to which all living creatures are connected to. All creatures exist within an ecosystem or a tree of life, and all species are connected to one another. We have all evolved over time, and by now, we become creatures with souls.



Descendants of mountain (2020) | Ink on canvas; 44cm x 53cm



Wild Flower (2019) Ink on canvas; 41cm x 32cm



The Creation of Sailing (2019) Ink on canvas; 38cm x 45cm

Kiet Cheng received the 2018 UOB Painting of the year and had the occasion to do a residency program in Fukuoka. During her stay there, she delved herself into the creation of drawings using pen on canvas. These small drawings are traces of her visits to different sites in Fukuoka, such as the Iki island, local villages, and the nature. As her first visit to Japan, the trip was memorable as she was deeply fascinated by the details both in the nature and traditional culture of the country.