



Have You Ever
by Wong Chee Meng

have you ever...?

Have You Ever

Social progress is the idea that societies can or do improve in terms of their social, political, and economic structures. From a logical standpoint, this of course seems to be something positive in nature. However, in this current day and age, we are boxed in with repetitive routines based on beliefs that society has set as the norm. This in turn, causes some to be completely overwhelmed and fall into a state of mire. Through this body of work, Wong Chee Meng seeks to share his self-revelation and positive view on life (after a particularly unsettling period in his own journey) in the hope that it might provide comfort or guidance to those in need.

'Have You Ever' features seven paintings, each depicting a familiar scene from everyday life yet fraught with deep underlying symbolism and meaning. The colour blue is dominant in the artworks, but a beach ball is incorporated into each piece. As Wong was travelling, groups of children playing with beach balls caught his attention. He noticed its familiarity among people, which then led to the decision of incorporating it into his paintings. To Wong, the beach ball is the perfect physical representation of Bruce Lee's quote "be water, my friend"; flexible in shape and colours. The balls are all caught in mid-air or placed on higher planes, as they are tossed up and juggled or tempting someone to pick them up and act as metaphors for new perceptions, action, willingness, optimism and the opportunities in life.

'Who To Trust When Everyone's Out For Themselves'. A common phrase, often said when facing hardship. The in and out motion of a chair sliding under the table is equated to the coming and going of people in our lives. But the beach ball, placed on the table signifies that someone will always be there for us. Though sometimes, when that certain someone does not show up, it is important that we have faith, stay strong and believe that another someone will come along.

The ability to stay strong is perhaps most prominent in a juggler, specifically, a juggler of life. Wong believes that, in life, everyone is a juggler. The visuals of "The Juggler" are self-explanatory and refers to the multi-tasking capabilities of humans. Every day, we juggle between our jobs, families and friends. Much the same as how a juggler juggles up to nine balls at once. Wong expresses how he truly respects the capabilities of a juggler of life.

Juggling life can be tricky as we are constantly making active choices between this and that. In "Aim For The Best", a monkey is seen climbing a coconut tree, its job is to pick the best coconut from the tree. This may seem like a metaphor for passing the decision on to someone else, but at the end of the day, the choice of which is the "best coconut" has to lie with us.

We have a choice in life, to just give up when faced with the seemingly impossible, or to pick ourselves up and turn the impossible into the possible. "The Moon and The Star For You" is the artist's depiction of optimism. The visuals of this piece were inspired by William Blake's "I want, I want" (1793) and Georgia O'Keeffe's "Ladder To The Moon" (1958). Both of which depicted ladders leading up to the moon. Wong advises us to just "believe that anything is possible if we set our minds to it".

To set our minds is to focus. This is crucial as we have heard many times that "Every Second Counts". Wong Chee Meng explains that the "golden opportunity" is forever present and that we only need to recognise what is in front of us. The painting likens this situation to a shooting gallery at a funfair. Targets (opportunities) are constantly appearing one after another, and the person has to be forever ready to shoot (grab) it before it's gone.

Be that as it may, other times it is best for us to "Watch In Silence For The Changes". A swimming pool crowded with people is the scene depicted here; to the artist, a swimming pool is the most chaotic place that one can be in. We tend to respond to chaotic situations in a state of panic. But if we just take step back and slow down, it will allow us to properly analyse the situation we are in, and figure out the best response; or as the old saying goes "Slow and

steady wins the race!"

Staying calm brings us many advantages; we will know when and where to set our goals. "Run, Baby, Run!" shows a gym with various objects dangling in front of the equipment. Wong takes inspiration from the idiom "carrot and a stick". It is named in reference to a cart driver dangling a carrot in front of a mule and holding a stick behind it. The title is a sort of tongue-in-cheek reference to the mule running away from the stick to avoid punishment. In this case, we are the "mule" and the objects are our "carrots". Realising that the stick is right behind us, we will then push ourselves to keep moving, to work harder knowing that our goal is just in arm's length.

John Lim
Wei-Ling Gallery
April, 2017

Who To Trust When Everyone's Out For Themselves 🌈

Acrylic on canvas

152.4cm x 213.36cm (Diptych)

2016

In facing hardship, even when chances seem slim; things will always get better if you believe it will and someone will be there when we need them. However, even if that someone is a no show, we need to have some self-reliance and courage; have faith, smile and believe that another someone will come along.



The Juggler 🎨

Acrylic on canvas
152.4cm x 213.36cm
2016

A juggler knows a vast number of techniques and variations of juggling. 6 ball juggling, 6 balls in 2 count, 9 ball shower, 9 ball shower in reverse! These tricks are an emphasis on the capability of a juggler. By the sound of it, juggling is a skill that is hard enough to master, yet you have people who want to be stilt-walkers and unicyclists too.

In a way, I believe that we are jugglers of life. We're constantly juggling the "balls" of love, family, friends, and so much more. No matter how tough life can get, we just need to keep "juggling".



Aim For The Best 🍌

Acrylic on canvas

152.36cm x 170.6cm (Diptych)

2016

We live in an unprecedented age of options and human nature often leads us to choose the best among the worst/lesser of two evils, because theoretically it means we made a wiser choice.

This painting explores a set of ideas contained in a symbol and is an attempt to explain some of the obvious and subtle aspects of its meaning. Monkeys are often trained to climb trees and pick what they think is the best coconut. But at the end of the day, the choice of which is the "best coconut" lies with us.



The Moon and Star For You 🌕

Acrylic on canvas

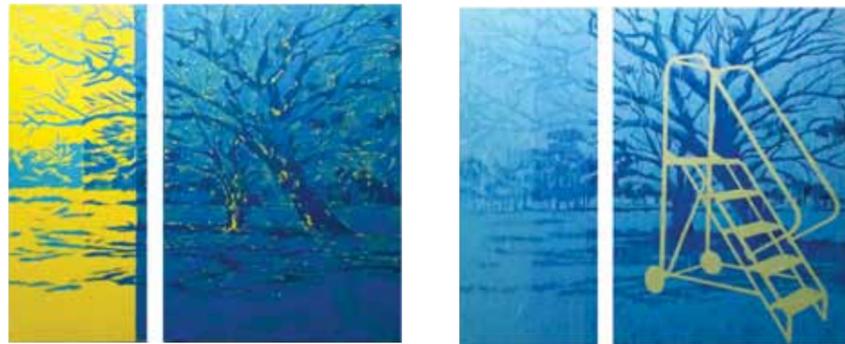
152.36cm x 170.6cm (Diptych)

2016

William Blake's sketch, "I want, I want" (1793) and Georgia O'Keeffe's "Ladder To the Moon" (1958) appeared in my mind when I was composing this piece. William Blake drew a ladder leaning from the earth to a crescent moon while Georgia O'Keeffe drew a handmade wooden ladder suspended in the turquoise sky. I wondered how long the ladder should be to reach the sky. First, I searched up the distance between the Earth and the Sky. I got the number 384,400km. Then I used a formula to calculate the time it would take to reach the Sky.

$$384,400\text{km} \ 10\text{km/h} = 38440\text{h} \approx 4.4 \text{ years}$$

A fusion of ideas took place. Dull men are sincere and honest. They get ladders and climb and will continue climbing to reach the moon and the star for you. This is what they do when they have fallen head over heels for someone.



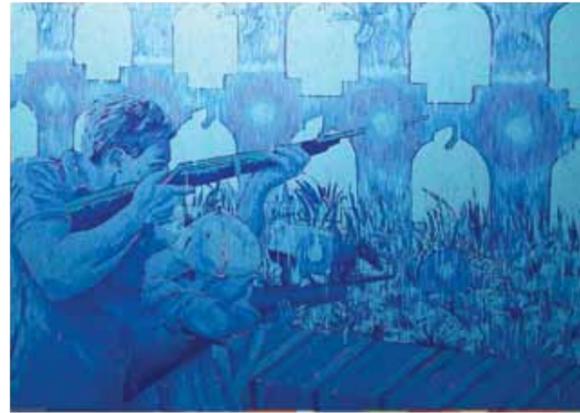
Every Second Counts 🎨

Acrylic on canvas
152.4cm x 213.36cm
2017

We have heard many times, 'time is gold, grab the opportunity and every second counts'.

We only truly realise its importance when we are given a set time frame to do our best. Time is important in a test, an operation, when giving birth, competitions, the share market, reunions, editorial industry, transportation, daily wage labours etc.

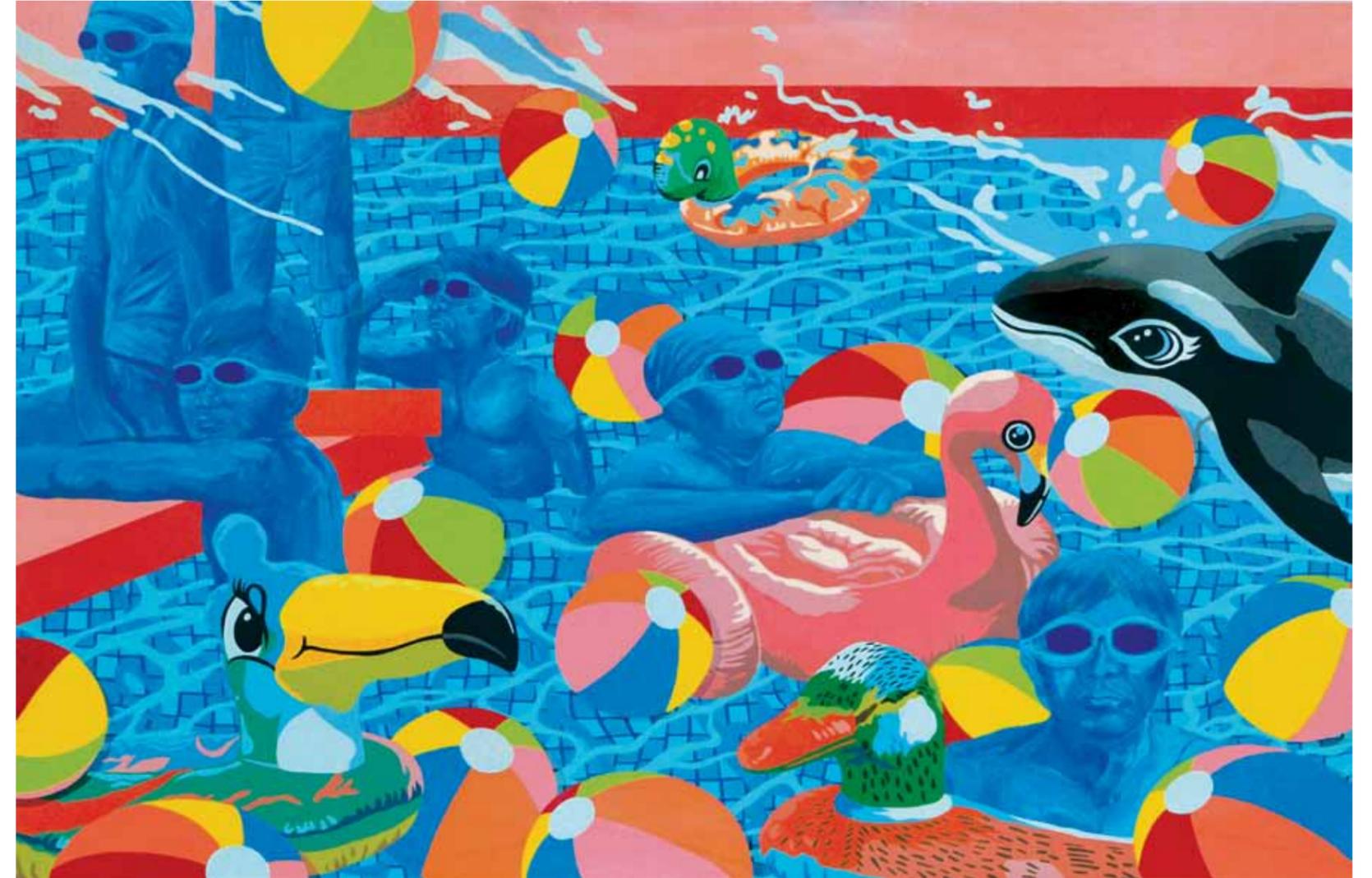
Life is the greatest gift we have been given by God. What we need when the opportunity comes knocking on our door is the ability to recognise it, grab it, do our best to act on it sensibly or use it effectively. Opportunities of any sort can become a great chance for us to progress and for personal growth, even if they were not the ones we wished for in the first place.



Watch in Silence For The Changes 🎨

Acrylic on canvas
122cm x 183cm
2017

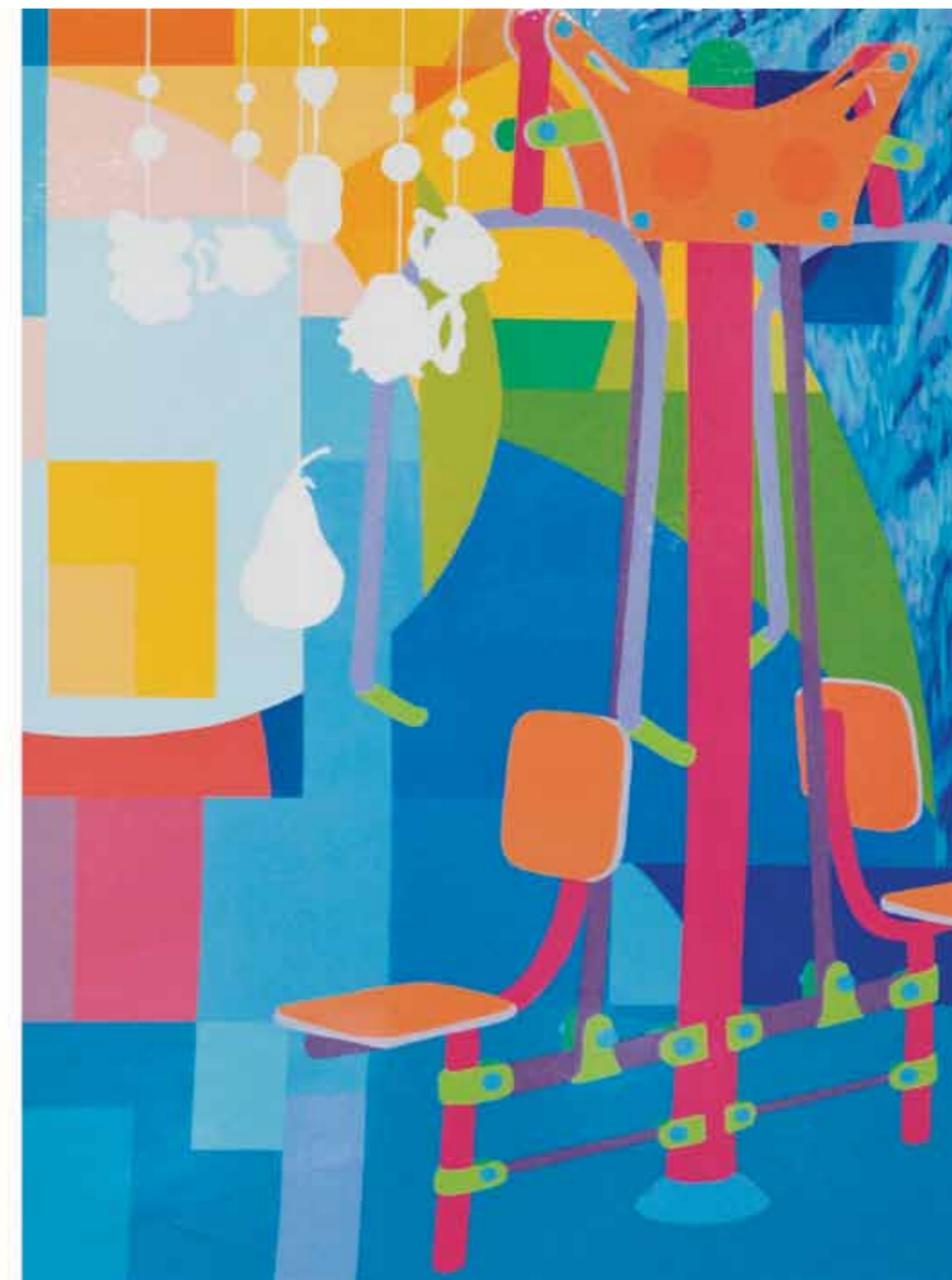
Today, we face many challenges, we need to be wise to respond towards said challenges. We should try to not look at negative situations with folded arms. We should give a little more time to observe the situation or observe the changes unfolding silently in order for us to respond wisely. The art of 'waiting' certainly needs self-cultivation and wisdom, or as the old saying goes "Slow and steady wins the race".



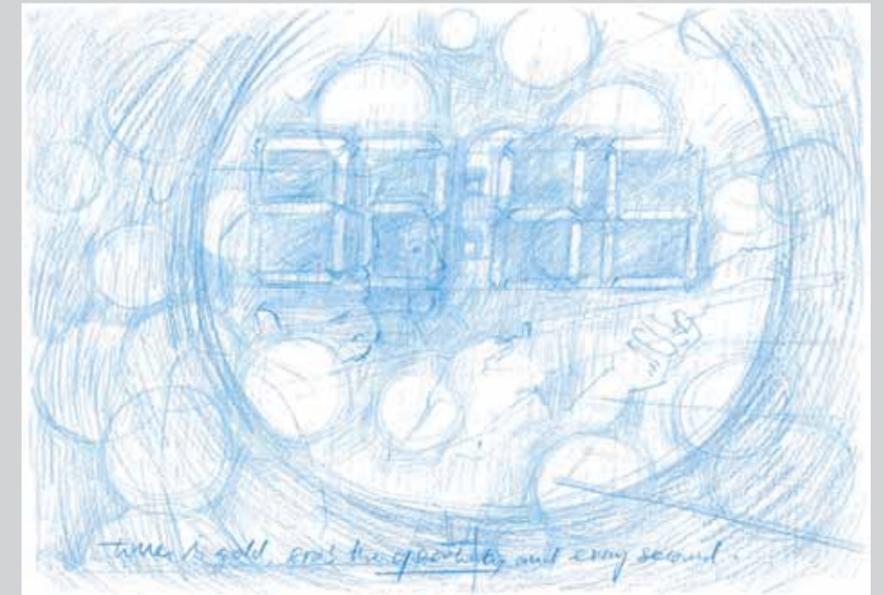
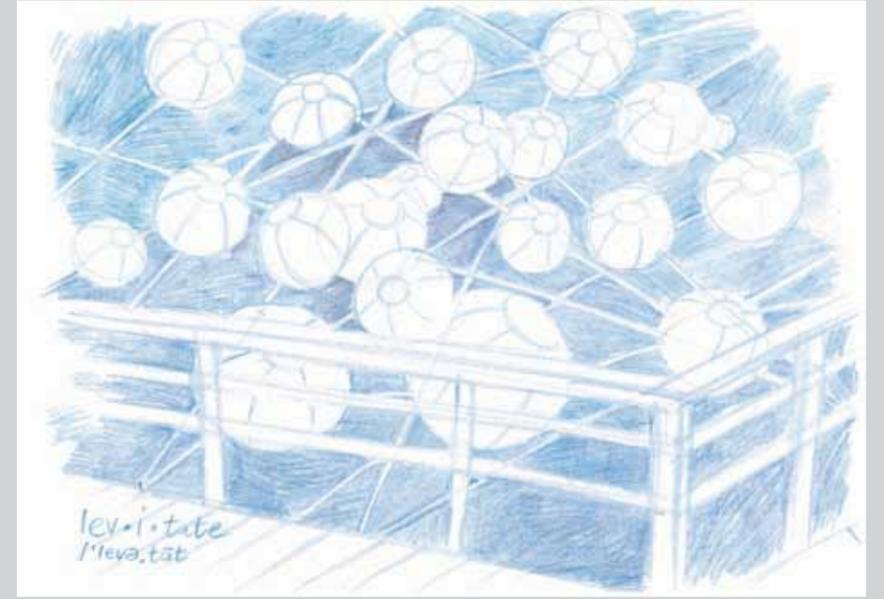
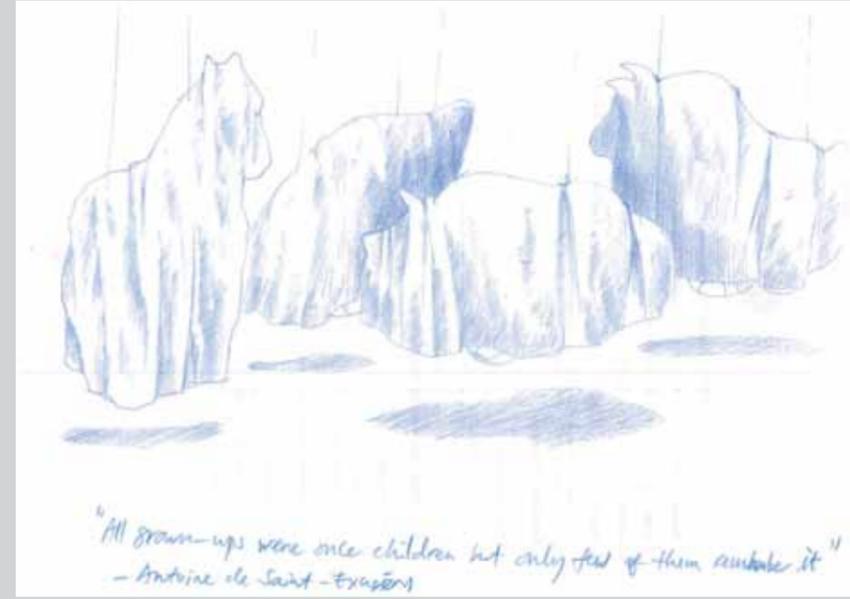
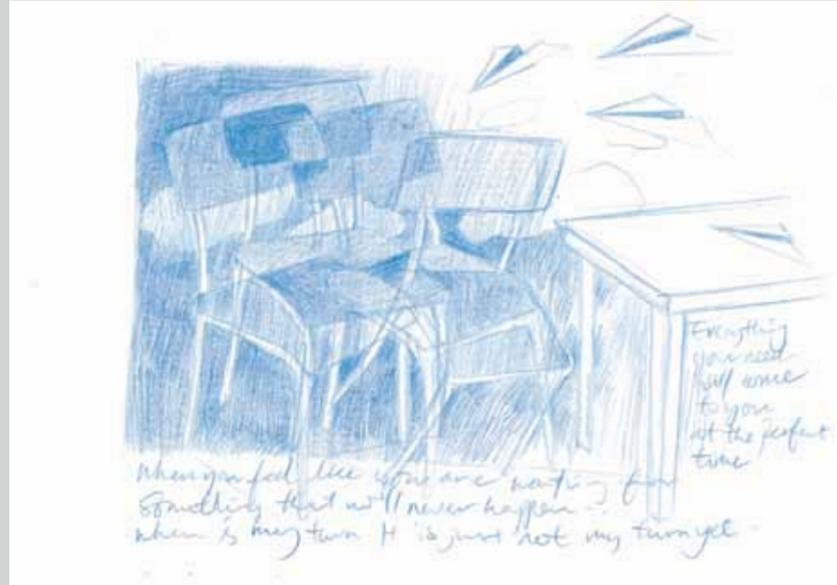
Run, Baby, Run! 🎨

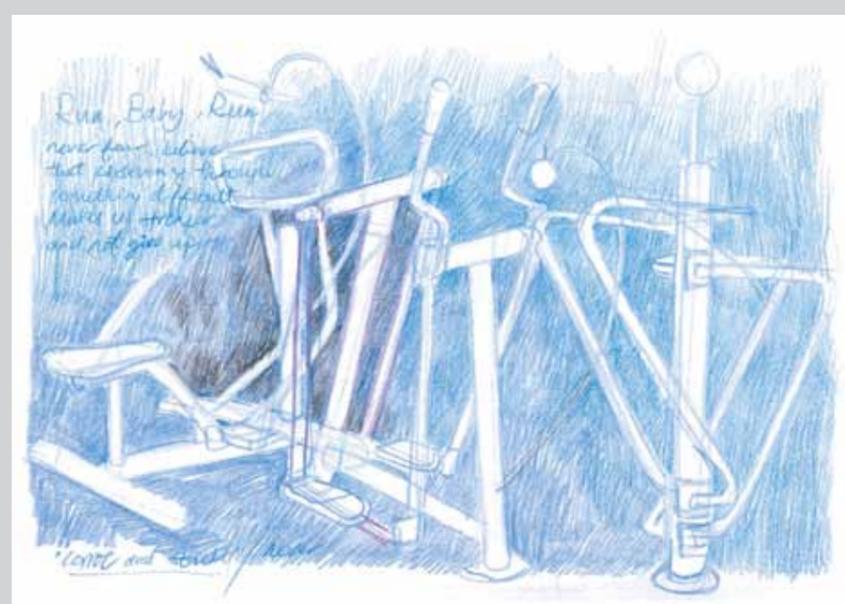
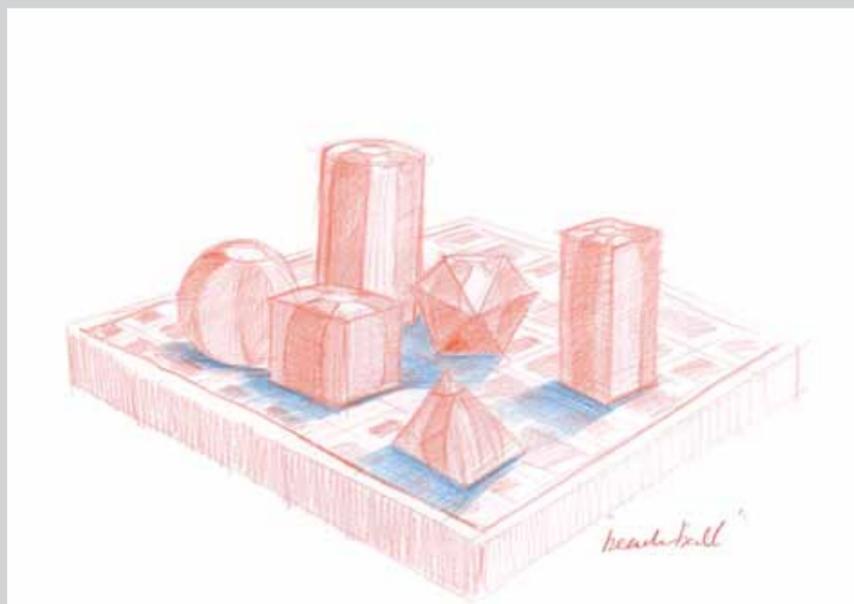
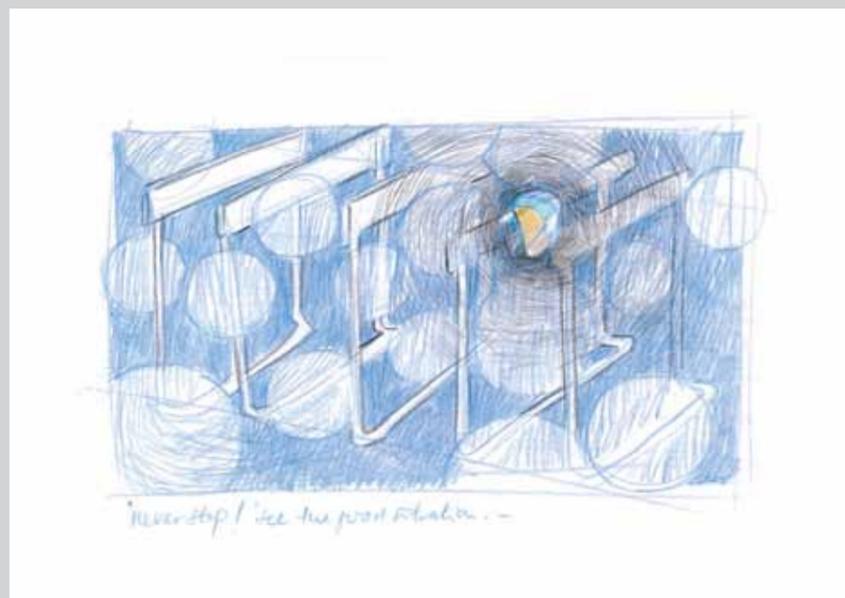
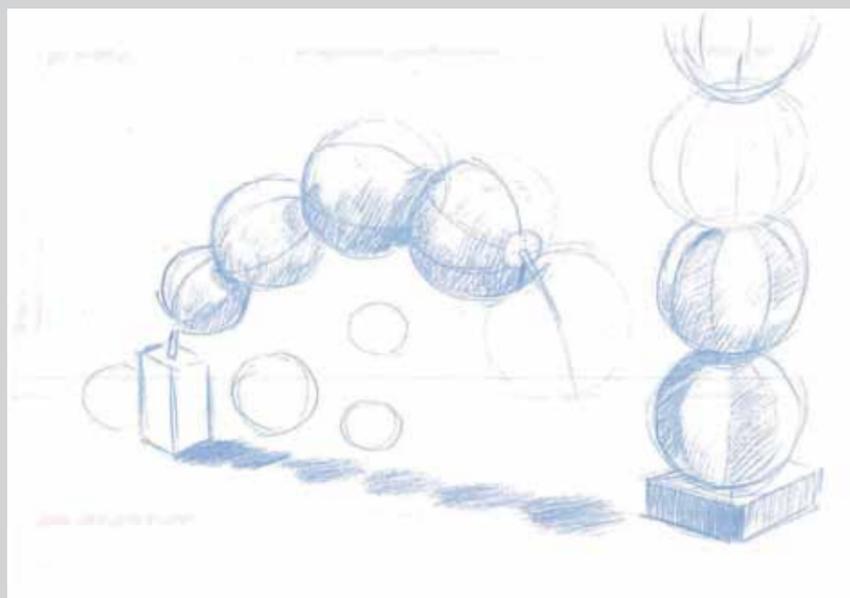
Acrylic on canvas
152.4cm x 228.6cm
2017

The Idiom “carrot and a stick” often relates to reward and punishment. Taken literally, the composition of this piece can be quite demotivating but at the same time quite hilarious. The mule continues working so hard but there is no pie in the sky. What it gets in the end might not be the fresh big carrot it sees in front of him; but certainly it would not be as happy if it had gotten the carrot immediately. Subconsciously, I believe that something precious or valuable needs to be difficult. Reaching a goal set by ourselves could simply mean to dangle a carrot in front of our heads. It keeps us moving and moving, knowing that the goal is right there and hard work needs to be put in. Never fear, believe that persevering through something difficult makes us stronger and to do not give up!



SKETCHES 🍌





WONG CHEE MENG (b. 1975) 🌈

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

- 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

- 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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 🍷

First and foremost, my thanks goes out to the team at Wei-Ling Gallery, you all have played an invaluable part in making this solo a reality. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Lim Wei-Ling, gallery director for giving me support and encouragement throughout the years. I would like to thank my family and my in-laws, who have always supported me unconditionally throughout my career, I really appreciate it. I feel fortunate and grateful to have friends and colleagues who have given me their friendship and provided me with lifts and practical help. My heartfelt thanks to those who have provided guidance and cheers to all the inspirational conversations we have made. Thank you!

-Chee Meng







Wei-Ling Gallery

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Cover image: *Every Second Counts*, Acrylic on canvas, 152.4cm x 213.36cm, 2017.

