Chin Kong Yee

REALITY IN WONDERLAND

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UOB is proud to be the presenting sponsor for the renowned local artist, Chin Kong Yee’s “Reality in Wonderland” exhibition.

This solo exhibition showcases works derived from Kong Yee’s recent trip to Europe and features many distinctive landmarks.

We are indeed privileged to be associated with a talented artist of his calibre and are happy to be able to continue to support his artistic development. The contemporary execution of his works is exemplary and refreshing and we would like to wish him every success as he continues on his artistic journey.

We are also delighted to work with Wei-Ling Gallery on this significant exhibition.

Mr. Chan Kok Seong
Director & Chief Executive Officer
United Overseas Bank (Malaysia) Bhd
The Gallery’s relationship with Chin Kong Yee is a particularly meaningful one as it goes back more than seven years to when both the gallery and Chin Kong Yee first started out. For the gallery it was the second solo exhibition that the gallery had ever had and for Kong Yee it was his first ever solo exhibition! Those were challenging times, for neither Kong Yee nor the gallery had any past performances to go by. The only thing we had was fate, belief and luck. Fate because our paths crossed, belief because we both believed in one another and as luck would have it we came across people who had faith in us.

When I first came across Kong Yee’s works all those years ago, I was immediately captivated by the way he envelops the viewer through his fish eye lens perspective and draws us into his magical space. I knew at that point that this artist had a tremendous gift. After having spent many hours getting to know him, I also began to understand Kong Yee. Here is an artist who has commitment and dedication to his artistic journey, who truly believes in his work. He is passionate to the point of being obsessive and he does not allow anything to come between him and his work. As a result his production of work is slow and arduous, with him making up to only six pieces a year. Over the last decade, Kong Yee has matured into one of the country’s most promising artists, with a following which spans far beyond the shores of Malaysia. Through his work he has also had the opportunity to travel the world and this has added a new dimension to the way he sees and paints light.

With “Reality in Wonderland” Kong Yee has expanded his European repertoire to cover all the cities he visited on his last sojourn there. For Kong Yee the need to capture the ‘essence’ of the place still reigns most important and all the works reflect the spirit of what he experienced while he was there. We felt the timing for this publication was right as it marks a decade of Kong Yee in practice and documents his journey so far. After looking at what he has achieved over the last decade, I am confident to say that Chin Kong Yee is going to be a force to be reckoned with for many years to come.

We are very thankful to United Overseas Bank (Malaysia) for their continuous patronage of Chin Kong Yee over the years. I would like to say a big thank-you in particular to Mr Francis Lee for believing in and having the foresight to support the rise of this spectacular artist.

Lim Wei-Ling
Gallery Director
June 2009
It is good to see Chin Kong Yee’s star rising again on everyone’s radar with his latest and very compelling exhibition, titled “Reality in Wonderland”, at Wei-Ling Gallery. Eleven wondrous new oil paintings are being showcased this time.

Looking at his new works, I do indeed get a sense of reality in wonderland, which has to be the most apt title for this exhibition. The structures in his paintings are real – but there’s Kong Yee’s signature warping of the visuals and clustering of them to breathtaking effect. Yet, somehow, for all the exaggeration and heightening that the forms are put through, we all know that these places do exist. You can’t help when you look at Kong Yee’s oil paintings but smile in your mind and think to yourself, “Wow! If only the rest of us could see things that way!”

These new paintings are the fruits of Kong Yee’s sojourns to Europe and Bali and were completed between 2008 and now. Places like Paris and Nice in France; Venice and Florence (Italy); Prague (Czech Republic); and Portugal and Bali are rendered on canvas with twisted panache by Kong Yee. All the works are visually kneaded and stretched in Kong Yee’s trademark style and what viewers get to see are indeed truly original and majestic portrayal of dignified buildings and places.

Like with all artists, colours, of course, play a major role in the success of Kong Yee’s artistic endeavours. Colours do more than their assigned role of conveying emotions. On the surface, the reds, blues, greens and a smattering of other colours indicate whether it is day or night or natural or artificial lights at play.

“Cathedral in Red” for example, has a nighttime setting but there is an interesting story behind the choice of colour. There was a fashion show being held at the cathedral when Kong Yee was visiting and the whole place was bathed in red light for effect by the fashion show organisers.

With other paintings, the tinges of green and blues on building and on the landscape in pieces like “Portugal”, “Duomo Florence” and “Venice at Night” hint at dusk or nighttime. Yellow, naturally, depicts sunlight. These are simple and straightforward readings.

Now, all that was on-the-surface talk. Beneath the surface, however (– and despite Kong Yee’s calm demeanour!), the artist intensely wrestles with the colours in each painting as he tries to subdue them and make them serve his purpose and vision.

“Red is actually a violent colour, although the Chinese see it as a lucky colour. I find red an exciting colour but a difficult one to express. You have to control it or it is going to go over-the-top.”

So, how do you deal with it?

“The artist has to find a way and this could take a lot out of him until he gets it to do what he want it to do;” he explains, rather philosophically.

Kong Yee, needless to say, always gets his colours to do his bidding.

An outstanding part of the exhibition is a trifecta of paintings depicting people. “Walking”; “Bali” and “Nice 2” show Kong Yee’s mastery of the human form. In his early days as an artist, he delved extensively into portrait painting and he has obviously mastered the dynamics of the human form.

These three paintings are delightful because they draw our attention to the movement of people. There are no warping or distortions in these three particular pieces.

At this point, it bears saying that it has been one of my greatest privileges indeed to have met Chin Kong Yee and cultivated a friendship with this talented artist for about half a decade now. Born-and-raised in the bustling city of Kuala Lumpur, Kong Yee’s casual and easygoing manner run counter to the almost-staggering visions of reality that he presents both in his oil paintings and photography.

(Yes, he is also a very talented photographer. Earlier this year, I had the great privilege of seeing his digital photography works and I must say that they are beautiful glossy counterparts to the paintings that Kong Yee is most famous for. If you are interested in photography, his photography are must-see works.)

His mastery of paintings and photography are so complete that I dare say that he is a multi-medium genius indeed. Both in photographic print and on the canvass, his works are always visually vibrant.

In keeping with artistic traditions, on canvass, Kong Yee’s works have indeed been informed by famous artists, like his favourite French painter, Paul Cezanne.

Even artists who made an impression on him in his student days, have had an effect on the works he produces today, however mildly it might be. Take Dutch artist M.C. Escher, for example.

“I saw works of M.C. Escher when I was a student and I was very inspired. Escher is more like a scientist than an artist. I like his logical take on things,” says Kong Yee.
When prodded as to why he likes Cezanne, Kong Yee says, “Cezanne has always been very inspiring and has always been my favourite artist. I decided to become a professional artist because of Paul Cezanne. During my student days, he was always talked about as the father of modern art. I especially love the landscape works he has done. You can feel the landscape! Until today, I have not seen another artist who can paint landscape the way Cezanne did.”

Of his own style, actually Kong Yee himself says it best: “I was thinking about the kind of art works that I have done and I asked myself why my paintings have a lot of things surrounding me. That’s because Klang Valley really is a valley and we are always surrounded by things. We don’t have a distinct horizontal line.”

Indeed, our lives inform the kind of works of art that we produce!

With a capacity for self-reflection like that, is it any wonder at all that Chin Kong Yee’s star is on the ascendancy?

Francis Dass has been a journalist for the last 16 years with Malaysia’s leading newspapers. He writes on a range of topics from the arts, technology, education, health, fashion and “just about everything else,” he confides. However, this highly regarded Penang-born journalist’s greatest passion has always been the arts. He is an avid photographer, short story writer and blogger.
Night in Venice I. 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 130 x 190 cm
Nice • 2008 • Oil on Canvas • 190 x 340 cm
Prague. 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 170 x 190 cm
Venice at Night. 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 170 x 190 cm
Reality In Wonderland

Walking, 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 100 x 300 cm
Reality In Wonderland

Nice II. 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 60 x 300 cm
Eiffel. 2008/09. Oil on Canvas. 170 x 190 cm
Portugal. 2008. Oil on Canvas. 130 x 190 cm

Reality In Wonderland
In the Introduction chapter of Heinrich Wolfflin’s “Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art,” the author began with how 4 friends painted a similar landscape (same subject matter). They promised to remain true in the depiction of nature. At the end of the session, their productions reflected different results in accordance to individual character and personality. To artists and art historians, this observation is undoubtedly nothing new. Where everyone perceives and analyses things differently. The question that comes to mind is, how do we comprehend and define our natural surroundings visually? Wolfflin further commented on the lesser interest of artists in style, stating that, “They take work exclusively from the standpoint of quality—is it good, is it self-sufficing, has nature found a vigorous and clear presentement...” This quotation brings our attention to the uniqueness of highly stylized and individualized depictions. No doubt, the essentials of nature or a subject matter is faithfully portrayed. However, more questions stem from the end result of picture making. How do our minds see and digest visual and optical information? Disconcerting effects cause us to reflect on ambiguity and notions of the real.

Prodding on the notions of the real, it is perhaps essential to read into Wang Zineng’s “Curatorial Notes” for “Strategies Towards the Real: S. Sudjojono and Contemporary Indonesian Art.” Wang posed these questions, “Is the real an objective realm that can be seen and understood similarly by everyone... Is the real as plain and apparent as the reality that surrounds us?” The real is further proposed by Wang to be conceptual in nature, when compared to reality. In this instance, the proposition of the real in a configured setting fits the ideals and productions of Chin Kong Yee like a bullet to a gun. The artist’s time-based studies created interesting and whimsical memories. Hence, actual scenarios seemingly become the stage for fantasy constructed and derived from the real to showcase recollections of the past.

In departure from academic training of depicting accurately what we see in front of us, Kong Yee plunged into the artistic problems that arise from visual possibilities. There is a sense of continual transformation. The vision is juxtaposed in incongruous space, creating multiple layers in its evolvement from past, present to future. Chin Kong Yee presents depictions with different perspectives and experiences flowing through the paintings. Closer observation would perchance provide more acute and rhetorical readings of his intentions. Perhaps Kong Yee’s artistic productions may also be seen from the viewpoint of pictorial representation. In “Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation,” Ernst Hans Gombrich questioned the representation of the visible world in different periods or ages. The author used exemplifications from psychology, philosophy to science in his construction of the answer to the above. Gombrich also brought our attention to the concept of schema. Meaning that the artist “begins not with his visual impression but with his idea or concept” and that the artist adjusts this idea to fit, as well as it can, the object, landscape, or person before him or her. Gombrich calls this theory “making and matching.” To digress, Kong Yee obliged to share his working methodology with me in dialogue.
Indian Temple. 2001. Oil on Canvas. 60 x 120 cm. Private Collection

Circular Street. 2002. Oil on Canvas. 250 x 130 cm. Collection of United Overseas Bank (Malaysia)
He mentioned going to various places to capture the essence of the place. Kong Yee manipulates the images until he is satisfied before he works on the final art work. The artist has a preconceived idea of the desired effect and reconstructs existing images by kneading and wedging the idea to merge with the subject matter. Indeed, the concept of schema may define the stylistic tendencies of Kong Yee. It is interesting to note that the pictorial schema have also developed in ways that is different from the cult of the picturesque.

In 1768, William Gilpin published three essays on the Picturesque. The essays were entitled “Picturesque Beauty”, “Picturesque Travel” and “Picturesque Landscape”. They served as guidelines to professional and amateur artists. In addition, the essays provided directives as to how landscape compositions should be drawn, proposing clear definitions between the foreground, mid-ground and background. These were seen as important aspects required for the portrayal of inspiring compositional landscapes. The elements featured details, depth-of-view, nature and atmospheric conditions. Kong Yee’s paintings are in a way, an infusion of schematics combined with elements of the picturesque to create a unique vision of his surroundings (Fig. 7).

In a feature of Kong Yee’s previous solo exhibition, Li-En Chong wrote that the artist was inspired by Surrealism and Abstract Cubism. My dialogue session with the artist suggested Cézanne as an important influence. The latter’s usage of colour and fragmentation of objects to basic shapes, coupled with his indifference from portraying reality as it is resulted in a huge impact on Chin Kong Yee. Here, we may sense the attempts made by Kong Yee not to create a reproduction but to express and enforce the feelings felt from depicting the subject matter (Fig. 6). He did not want to emulate Cezanne. Kong Yee wanted to look beyond, developing his own ideals and concepts of time and vision.

Another feature written by Francis Dass provided interesting insight on street scenes. Dass wrote that, “If one really takes the time to observe closely, the streets are very telling of the cultural influence that surrounds and pervades them. Streets lines with kopitiam have a distinctly Chinatown feel, while those with Indian or Indian-Muslim shops have a uniquely quaint air about them just as city centres and their buildings have a distinctively cosmopolitan and urban feel to them.”

“Reality in Wonderland” sounds like a title for a Walt Disney cartoon, a la Alice in Wonderland. A paradox of living in the unreal or fantastical world we see in animation. Chin Kong Yee has made sense of this, by juxtaposing real situations within imaginative settings. The artist feels strongly for this, noting that in reality nothing is stagnant. Images change and evolve as we look at them. Years ago, the artist invented a painting style he coined Actuality Accorded Painting (AAP). The rendition of AAP may be read as
the depiction of the real via non-stagnated images that change and evolve as we look at them. The unfixed image is thus the artist’s impression of different times and happenings of a place viewed collectively in a single instance. This time-based study of the artist produced images that titillate our senses. Recently, I asked him about AAP again, in a bid to extract deeper meanings for this technique. His response was to paint according to one’s feelings and intent, not to follow others. The painting will stand-out if it is done with honesty.

How did it all begin for Chin Kong Yee? What prompted him to create such idyllic and mind-bending images that we see today? For every artist, there is a starting point, a tiny step that set them on the yellow brick road in a bid to achieve their goals and objectives. Chin Kong Yee began his artistic practice in 1999. Swept up by the tornado that is the Asian financial crisis, he was inherently strong-willed and determined to succeed in his ambition. The financial instability and insecurity he felt prompted the need to look beyond the confines of stereoscopic vision. Kong Yee said, “How do we see in a wider scope in view of all the uncertainties we face?” Being aware of the focal issues in monocular visions, he sought for answers in the encompassing vision of living things like fish and dragonfly. He also voiced the human need for others to see in a wider spectrum, be it diagonally or vertically. His intention to expand our human view started the early paintings that would have been rejected decades ago. From Kuala Lumpur, Kong Yee created his own visual language, stretching our vision beyond the norm. He studied time, incorporating antiquarian and current elements in a historical dialogue. The title became a notation of the place, which is less significant to the point of inconsequence. Each painting was a narrative, filled with layering similar to Chinese paintings. Note the elongated Chinese format of certain paintings (left to right or right to left) (Fig. 8). The artist voiced his concern again stating that, “Everything is detailed and focused in the background. Good layering is a must of every painting. Then only do we have more things to see in the painting”. Figure became a very important aspect of his works. ‘Disjointed people’ enforced the fleeting moments and our impermanence in time.

An avid traveller, Kong Yee is never without his trusty camera, looking for interesting objects or compositions. Photography is important to the work. He takes every view and angle into consideration before embarking on finalizing his composition, with a penchant to look at the environment, people and local life. The artist gently reminds me that he did not
use fish-eye lens for photo shooting. Furthermore, much of how he shot was determined by ideas he had at that point of time. According to Kong Yee, photographs presented real documentaries, while painting dealt with colour and form. Colour, especially, was crucial in its definition of time and space.

If we compare the earlier productions to the later ones, Kong Yee has developed and matured rapidly as an artist. In a decade of practice, viewers are taken on a ride to grow and learn from this prolific artist. Older works positioned the viewer at t-junctions compacted with details and perspective. From 1999 to 2003 much of Kong Yee’s attention was directed at buildings. From 2003, he arrived at crossroads in his practice. Being more at peace with himself compared to the turbulent years, his style also matured. Kong Yee began using a sphere to represent inner peace and calm at the center, protected against the storm raging at the periphery (Fig. 11). Until 2007, he was deeply ingrained in his use of the same colour range and confined himself to working within a specified space or frame. His recent works are poignant and suggestive. New works are more personal, featuring stairs and bridge(s) signifying a communicative discourse with his grandmother. The works are thus an outpouring of innate feelings and sensitivity in confluence with his experience of travelling abroad.

Kong Yee read a wide range of topics, including Chinese philosophy. The reason, he said was the need to know and to understand. He has also read extensively into Western and Eastern art history. I vividly remember his take on art history, “To be a contemporary artist, we need to know [art] history. Do not divide Eastern and Western Art. Collate all forms of history as reference for our work.” Kong Yee recognized the importance of history as a foundation for art practice. “In order to move forward we have to understand our history,” he added.

In the course of writing for Chin Kong Yee, one wonders at the surreal sensations experienced, falling deeper and deeper into his reality or is it wonderland?

Footnotes:
2 Ibid, p. 10
4 Ibid
5 “Art and Illusion” 17 June 2009 <http://www.enotes.com/art-illusion>

Kelvin Chuah is an artist, curator, writer, lecturer and writer. He is currently researching into the art and art history of Southeast Asia.
fig. 14 Batu Caves. 2008, Oil on Canvas, 80 x 300 cm. Collection of National Art Gallery, Malaysia.
**fig. 15** Hari Kuningan Procession. 2005. Oil on Canvas. 80 x 336 cm. Collection of Aliya & Farouk Khan
fig. 16
Portrait of Chong, 2000. Oil on Canvas. 30.5 x 30.5 cm

fig. 17
Portrait of Ching Boon Geok 2, 2000. Oil on Canvas. 32.5 x 41 cm

fig. 18
Portrait of Ching Boon Geok 4, 2000. Acrylic on Paper. 22 x 8.5 cm

fig. 19
Portrait of Ching Boon Geok 5, 2000. Oil on Canvas. 46 x 38 cm
Photographs

fig. 20
Bali, 2006. C-Print. 100 x 70 cm

fig. 21
Ampang, 2006. C-Print. 100 x 70 cm

fig. 22
Basilica S. Pietro, 2006. C-Print. 100 x 70 cm

fig. 23
Kunst Museum Stuttgart, 2006. C-Print. 100 x 70 cm
抓紧时间，免得不安：浅谈陈凯歌的视见秩序
文／詹驰朗（Chai Chiang Hwang）

真正的画面及一种缺席——没有看，我们或许察觉不到这种缺席，而那些是我们的损失。
——John Berger，艺术批评家

一、时间长卷：塞尚的美学启迪

陈凯歌的《霸王别姬》发表于去年Wei-Ling画廊主办的一项联展中，图中显示了schemas视觉系统与语言，引人深思。有人曾秉持一种信念——对宗教的虔诚，而纵使彼此互不熟悉，依然努力探索着最前言的，男女男女，从从容容。

无论如何，画家描绘“多视角的表观法”来弥补，他的出发点，旨在解脱“绘画乃
是客观描绘语言”的羁绊，就审美接受美学，某些人物可能已陷于一种抽象概念
的状态，身体不由左右晃动，匀称，乃至自我变形，一瞬秒到下下一秒的交差
在一起，以致“过去的人”及“现在的人”得以图像化呈现，共同，不经意间间
成为时间滑梯的证物。

这种看似中国本土式绘画的横向构图而形成，一直不随同画派的创作重心，他坦
言，上述倾向以文人欣赏来作为主体的作品，这些年来，大概只有三四年期间，从
了最早一个改变是基于四年前的《Hari Kunangin》，此外，在自作中，也有一
幅不同寻常的观念与哲学的，油画取材自南洋一个村庄小镇，只是年轻男女，
景色在地面上行走，色彩绚丽的阳光明媚和夏日的
风景，值得一提的是，画家成熟的绘画语言比其它类型来得感受的。

从味觉层来说，时间感，由视觉里，形成阅读每一次创作文本的一个重要环节。

欧美艺术史的正统派，格拉斯本也有过一种对自我的定义，在油画，文艺复兴后开始的横向一种修辞，即所谓符合科学性理论以及人类视觉逻辑的横
幅抽象，价值是许多艺术家对传统这个命题有特殊感情的导

“拉斐尔（Raphael Sanzio）之后，西洋画学越来越重视横幅感——就像在现
场，身在其中那样的感觉，——虽然，那不过是一种空间效果而已。

“直指画派（Paul Cezanne）出现了，情况开始有所转变，各种绘画时的时
候可能才使画面生动起来，如杜象（Marcel Duchamp），未来主义，等等，

对于塞尚的强烈投入似乎也跟一般观察者，属于画家年代的学者，他试图说
明这两个特征，电影中有何步伐不同时间层次在同一个画面里；二则作品都是
经由长时间从不同角度观察出来的结果。

稍有一点绘画经验的人理应了解，人的常规（visual field）要以一直处于固定
位置下，因此图景的视觉对象不难会“脱离变形”，甚至，其轮廓与位置会“不
停移动”，情况一般应不包括在这次内——便是透过对事物反复观察的前进，而
把握住一种视觉上的纵向尺界，约言之，一幅画所呈现的，不仅是时间的幅
面；“它还涉及一种存在的探讨”。

“艺术的表达包含了创作者自我生命的流露，我的作品并不纯粹，即使是画一幅风
景画，也能够在民族风格地方照出自然世界中的一石一木。”

总之，如果我们发现有些特别尊重“视觉感知”（visual perception）的现
代和现代派的理论，那么，也未免看“现代绘画之父”塞尚的真容
属，不是吗？

二、心灵空间：不变的真要形式

城市，街头，对画家来说，俨然是一个舞台，常常是富有意趣，召唤着人们采
取好好的欣赏的眼光。然而，毋庸说，一般论者对于现代的视觉建筑，甚是热
望那些富有深度的景象，不相关，那街巷，人行道，交通，地标等百首歌曲已
经了在实际与政治的日常生活风貌，更增添认识空间感的韵味，于是，画家强
调，

“城市无疑是一种表现当代生存感觉的最佳题材”。不但如此，而且，他尚有一种
期待：一座古典建筑的去留与传统完全取决于它的拥有者，街道的风情，无形中就
是许多人的集体意识，我会尽量告知观众展示出这个事实来。

起初，刚专注于描绘吉普森这拙劣出名画家的本身。多年之后，名画才慢
慢地送到登龙群，成凤，凤巢与画廊等地方，2004年，他去马来西亚，眼界
打扩了，当下像在泰国走遍写生大闹大把自身的顽皮，后，显然没有多大
声势，就在前年一重双人画展里，我们终于看到画家的“一秀”中出当地形
　　”而有旅行者中间所见——作为表现对象的佳作。

“当你来到一个陌生的环境，随意逛上一逛，感觉准会特别敏锐，而且，你越
是到那个地方不了解，就越容易产生安全感！”

刚谈这番话，应该说，形象了其作品与作品之间的连景，如同他在世界在观
念中的一一致，但是，并着把旁人的感受加一点以为画面可能出于一种怀旧情调，抑
　　或，外国月亮比较圆的心理作想，否则何来“到欧洲走一走”的必要？——也
　　开化掉了。不安全感，想必是驱使画家创作的不二法门！
像“吉隆坡系列”大多以描绘十字路口为主，画面不大，却同时铺垫着多重视角下的组合关系。宽广的视觉范围把视角的极限风景包含起来，形成一个视觉混乱，弃置，至乎不守的画面。此外，在其早期作品中，甚至还能看到一种现代城市人普遍有的紧张，这或或或或跟画家彼时的处境息息相关，对未充满不确定性；孤单，明晰，焦虑，等等。

即使到了欧洲，敏感于心的画家，乃自己的敏感因何时何地而唤起冲动——创作的冲动，——言之，画家完全凭着视觉呈现，去观察去搜集那些视觉的自然的反应，感，最后呈现出来的视觉体验，或破坏，或解释不同，或阐释，等等，必然经过一番情绪作用，或仿佛；一连串的经验，印象和记忆交错过程中所构成的审美情绪（aesthetic emotion），从根本上说，那是艺术家个人生存状态的折射。”

结束本文之前，不得不提起，画家在描绘天空，尤其常画而中空万里，浮云，云彩，云朵等是画中最大点，另一方面，有趣的是，以《Infinity》与《Barcelona at Night》为例来谈，天空居然可以完整地乃至巩固地浮于诸多物象之间，前者有像云一样的形状，后者则像一幅十字架造型，甚至，是以一种感觉上近乎寻常的透视表现，即把平视角和仰视角糅合在一起并让人在立像观察的画面上，让看画的人宛如被笼罩其下！

就某种意义上讲，我们所看的习惯的方式被“重造”（re-making）了，反而大大地增添其动吸引力。

事实上，面对这些画作时，我们所见之视为一种纯粹的绘画手段，或者，图像风格，更无法通过创作者的自觉形式进入他的心灵空间，解释，不画气，亦可呼“新的感性”的，我们瞥见另一种视觉秩序。
1 & 2: Ausstellung: zweihundertzweisundbüberzighalbsten un
mehr, Galerie Tanner, Germany
3 & 4: Sos Chateau de Tremazan, France
5: Teaching in Romania
6 & 7: East-West Contemporaries, Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Ro-
mania
Every painted image of something is also about the absence of the real thing. All painting is about the presence of absence.

- John Berger

1. Cézanne’s Aesthetics: Unrolling the Temporal Scroll

Chin Kong Yee’s “Batu Caves” (fig. 14) was featured in a group exhibition hosted by Wei-ling Gallery last year. In this painting, the Wesak Day festivity crystallizes into devotion of the colourful procession of believers. Strangers they may be to each other; nonetheless, they file past in ease, peace and harmony. The passage of time is expressively depicted by swaying bodies, stretched and distorted – the appearance of the same person, apart from other perspectives, challenging the single-point perspective in conventional temporal representation. The painter uses a multi-dimensional approach to define his viewpoints; the visual narrative is anything but objective.

Chin’s use of temporal continuity resembles that of Chinese scroll painting. This, however, has never been the artist’s creative thrust. Over the years, he has only produced a handful of such paintings that adopt human landscape for an artistic pursuit.

The earliest work of this genre was “Hari Kuningan” (fig. 15) which I completed four years ago. Among my recent paintings, there is one with the

Chin Kong Yee’s Paintings

TEMPORAL GRIP AND A SENSE OF UNEASINESS: The Visual Order of

2. Room for the Soul: an Unsettling Intuition

Chai Chang Hwang

Cities and streets are to Chin a stage on which drama unfolds every now and then, and to the curious delight of man. While historical buildings signify the heavy-hearted passage of time, these are but a fleeting backdrop. The streets, the pavements, the time signals and people in general are far better metaphors – they are impregnated with the nuances of our daily lives. As the artist puts it:

“Cities are the most subjective matter in expressing the contemporary feeling of existence; this is without a shadow of doubt. The decision to keep or demolish an old building lies entirely on its owner. The streetscape, however, is a collective decision and happening – something I seek to reflect in all its honesty.”

To begin with, Chin focused on Kuala Lumpur, the city where he was born and brought up. He then widened his scope to include Terengganu, Penang, Bangkok and Chiang Mai. In 2004, he travelled to Romania, after which he decided to visit the cities in Europe. In a two-person exhibition (Eye-Illusions) two years ago, he showcased the results of these trips – paintings of city scenes, highlighting the streets, squares and the happenings.

“The moment you set foot on a strange land, your senses will be heightened. The more unfamiliar you are with the place, the more insecure you will feel.”

This, perhaps, illustrates the consistency in Chin’s concept and attitude towards creativity. While people may doubt if his European trips are fuelled by nostalgia or worship for everything western, it is the feeling of insecurity he pursues. In other words, an unsettling mind may well be the creative drive behind the artist’s works. Paintings in the “Kuala Lumpur” series, (fig. 1 & 2) for instance, zoom in onto crossroads in the city. The multi-viewpoint composition covers the people and everything in sight in a small painting, creating a chaotic, claustrophobic and unsettling scene. In fact, there is a prevailing sense of tension of urban folks his earlier works. This may be a projection of the artist’s own situation at the time – being lonely, helpless, anxious, and uncertain about the future.

When he was in Europe, Chin was paying absolute attention to his own creative urge. He monitored his intuitive response to the world around, relying on nothing but his visual perception. The resulting collage of visual representation – distorted, compressed, overlapped and fragmented – is the artist’s response with empathy. “Basically, it is the projection of the artist’s state of existence,” he says. “The aesthetic emotion is, therefore, structured by a series of experience, impressions and impreseesed memories.

I would also like to bring up Chin’s accomplishment in painting vast expanse of sky with passing cloud – scenes that are pleasing to the eyes and calming to the minds. Take “Infinite” (fig. 5) and “Barcelona at Night” (fig. 12) as examples, the sense of harmony which arises from the sky spreading uninterrupted across canvas, punctuated with a host of images. In “Infinite”, the sky is a great vault, while in “Barcelona at Night”, it combines both levelled and elevated viewpoints in a cross-like composition. The impact is overwhelming. As such, our habit of viewing is ‘re-made’. The paintings have taken on a greater impact and magnitude. To me, this is a means for the artist to render his paintings or to present images. It is almost impossible not to visit his soul or feel his restlessness through his intuitive approach. Perhaps, this could be the ‘new sensibilities’. I see an alternative visual order in Chin’s paintings.

Chai Chai Chang Hwang b. 1969, Taiping, Perak, is a member of Rumah Air Panas an artist-run-space established in 1997. Graduating with a Diploma in Fine Art from Malaysia. Institute of Art in 1990, he is also a freelance writer, contributing to local Mandarin publications and newspapers. Actively involved in the Malaysian art scene, he now lives and works in Kuala Lumpur.
CHIN KONG YEE

b. 1973

Education

1990
Central Academy of Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Solo Exhibitions

2009
Reality In Wonderland, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2005
Cerulean Skies, Townhouse Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2003
Undulating Spaces, Townhouse Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Selected Group Exhibitions

2008
Chinese National Gallery Exposition, Chinese World Trade Centre, Beijing, China
Mind, Body and Soul 3, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 Vice and Virtue, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2007
(Eye)-llusions, 2 man show, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 2007, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2006
18@8 Kuala Lumpur - Karachi, Amin Gulgee Gallery, Karachi, Pakistan
Convergence - Contemporary Malaysian Art, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Ausstellung : zweihundertzaundsechzigtausendzweiundvierzigstunde und mehr, Galerie Tannen, Germany
Mind, Body and Soul 2, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2005
18@8: Contemporary Artists from Malaysia and Beyond, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2004
East-West Contemporaries, Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania
SEGUL International Stars Exhibition, Seoul, Korea

Workshops/Residency Programmes

2004
Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania (Seminar/Workshop/Exhibition)
Invited by organizer Dorothea Fleiss and East West Group of Artists
Artist in Residence at Pangkor Laut Resort
(Sponsored by YTL Hotels and Properties)

2002
Artist-in-Residence at Tanjung Jara Resort
(Sponsored by YTL Hotels and Properties)

Awards

2000
Honourable Mention, Philip Morris Group of Companies ASEAN Art Awards

Public Collections

Wong & Partners
National Art Gallery, Malaysia
United Overseas Bank, Malaysia
Anika Insurance Brokers, Malaysia
Shearn Delamore & Co. Malaysia
Glenegles Intan Medical Centre, Malaysia
Cluj-Napoca Art Museum, Romania
HSBC Bank Malaysia
The Aliya & Farouk Khan Collection, Malaysia
Artists have the free will to practice his/her own works and to get appreciated is pure luck. I am a very lucky guy, because many people have helped me to make it happen. I have chosen the career of an artist for a decade now, and looking back over the past ten years, I realise that it is not a journey that I have taken by myself. I would like to say thank-you to everyone who has taken part in my artistic journey.

First, I have to thank Wei-Ling Gallery and United Overseas Bank (Malaysia), for their continuous support in presenting my 3rd solo exhibition in Kuala Lumpur: “Reality in Wonderland.” Especially to Lim Wei-Ling (Gallery Director), who has believed in me and given me the opportunity to show my artworks over the last 7 years. Mr. Francis Lee and United Overseas Bank, whose generous support has made my obsession with painting to becoming an artist, a reality. Also a big thank-you to editor and writer: Kelvin Chuah, writers: Chai Chang Hwang and Francis Dass. Farzeera Emir (Gallery Manager), Lisa Ahmad (Gallery Assistant), who have assisted greatly in making this book possible.

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Chin Kong Yee