
ART FOCUS

MUSING OVER HUMAN NATURE

Yau Bee Ling mulled at length about humans' simulated sincerity and false cheerfulness. The result is a series of portraits that showcase what lies beneath - looming unresolved issues, dishonesty and envy.



Yau Bee Ling graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Art in 1995 and has since built a reputation as a respected artist in the local arts scene. She has received numerous invitations to exhibit her works in Japan, Singapore and Bangladesh, and found the experience of being dislocated as good exposure. "It was great thought exchange (from one culture to another) and now, I have a better understanding of other cultures and myself," Bee Ling shared of her experience abroad.

After careful deliberation and two years of allowing her creative juices to flow, Portraits of Paradox is her first solo exhibition. "It was just a natural progression," she said about the long due solo efforts. "The psychological readiness and the dynamic involvement

of my works contributed to the fact that I waited 13 years to do a solo show." Bee Ling became a mother in 2006 and vehemently stressed that she makes art not because she is free from the household chores but because it's a process of self-searching. "My art is a zone of security and comfort where through the process of making art, I better understand the relationships with others. I become more accommodating, forgive and forget hurts and lastly, make peace with people around me."

She is well-known for her vibrant, expressive works that tackles family issues and in this exhibition she has not digressed far but maturity and personal experience has made her works stronger. Somehow, everyone belongs to a family, she said and Bee Ling has since evolved to looking at the

bigger issue of how she relates to others through the roles that she plays – daughter, wife, daughter-in-law, mother and et al. Her take on family issues are executed in a colourful, layering on/scraping back, oil paint process which has become her signature style that she is recognised for.

The layering on/scraping back process is employed to discover marks and meaningful images that somehow may never come into sight. "The layers and depths are intended to be explosive, the repetitive patterns are meant to reflect speed and superficiality that spread like folds of micro-organism covering us from all angles," she explained. The layers also suggest insight suffering and tragic entrapment of primary communication between self and others.

Her figurative works in Portraits of Paradox centre on her struggle and observation with the superficiality of human relationships and communication, where what's on the surface is not necessarily reflective of what's beneath the façade. "I got my inspiration from daily encounters with others. Nothing you see or feel is real. It is a constant psychological experiment, of power and political struggle." But she's nevertheless optimistic about each one making a conscious decision to be earnest. "It's up to us. Be open and sincere and always get in touch with your primary self," she opined.

Through her paintings, she wishes to convey the message to proudly accept ourselves as part of a paradoxical life and to face up to our strengths, weaknesses, limitations, shame and uselessness, and figure out how to improve on it. "I believe the paintings will make everybody think a bit about themselves in their relationships with others as an individual. The paradoxical zone is an interesting one," she assured.

Portraits of Paradox will be held at Wei-Ling Gallery, Brickfields from July 14 to August 5. For more information, please call 03-2260 1106/07.

