

Absolute 18@8 – Group Show

SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY LEADS TO EXCEPTIONAL THINGS IN AN ABSOLUT WORLD -
ABSOLUT VODKA

An abstract subject yet a definitive term to work around, Absolut(e) is defined in some schools of philosophy as the ultimate reality that is not dependent on anything and is not relative to anything else.

This collaboration with Absolut Vodka has resulted in a selection of works which are both cutting-edge and ground-breaking as each artist has been confronted with the meaning of the term- Absolut(e)-how they define it, what their interpretation of it is, how it is seen in their 'world' and how to best convey that message through the works.

Ivan Lam, Anurendra Jegadeva and Anabelle Ng have used constructions in combination with other mediums to get their Absolut message across.

Ivan Lam has cleverly taken the 7 letters in the word ABSOLUT and created a play on the number seven (7). In his inimitable style he has layered and constructed the 7 colours of the rainbow using resin within a 7cm by 7-foot-long structure. The piece is housed within a Perspex box and is framed with the glow of two fluorescent tubes. Emanating from within the structure are SEVEN words which form the sentence:

YOU CAN ABSOLUTELY HOLD ONTO A RAINBOW

As the artist presses us to ponder the idea of holding onto the fleeting and impermanent - absolutely.

Anabelle Ng's work fuses her love for music (she is a trained concert pianist) with her art practice to create an Absolut Record. To her music is an essential part of our lives as it changes how we view the world so the ultimate experience of realising the absolute is through listening to a piece of music which appeals to our senses. In her construction/installation she has created a wooden structure made of wood, glass, Perspex and paint within which is housed a sound system playing introspective and melancholic music to try to illustrate 'absolute'.

Using three wooden carpenter's planes Anurendra Jegadeva has created a work which symbolizes the Holy Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and Christ on the cross. In looking at our need for absolution to absolve ourselves of our sins, Anurendra Jegadeva has mischievously highlighted the word Absolution in fluorescent lights using a font reminiscent of that for a bar. Perhaps in searching for Absolution it is akin to the use of alcohol to 'cleanse' ourselves of our sins?

From constructions of new forms we move to two artists who have deconstructed and stripped the human body down to its bare essentials. To Al Khuzairie modern science and technology have changed the way the human body functions. Having seen the way people manipulate their bodies from body building to human cloning the artist feels that there is now very little difference between the human body and a machine. His piece depicts the Absolut Body where the human body and its organs are interchangeably constructed and reconstructed much like a machine. Cheng Yen Pheng's skulls emerge from the deep recesses of the canvas in an almost poetic form with the blue and white motif/pattern which has been reserved for porcelain, tattooed over them in a repetitive format.

The two pieces are symbiotic to one another, in one piece, one can see the 3-dimensional contours of the skull in a convex formation and in the other the contours are reversed to reveal a concave skull which is being 'sucked' into the canvas. One cannot help but think that perhaps the absolute in life is ultimately death.

Yau Bee Ling and Gan Tee Sheng have approached the Absolute theme through their shared observations of groups of people in a social environment where there are varying levels of interaction between them. Yau Bee Ling's Absolut Celebration captures the beauty of human engagement and the complexity of human relationships which are a result of the multiple layers of emotions that only us as humans are capable of experiencing. Yau Bee ling has managed to achieve this through her method of building up and overlapping layer upon layer of expressive faces, some grimacing others smiling, which are interwoven with the bold outlines of inorganic shapes to capture an aura which is tense yet harmonious.

Gan Tee Sheng's work Absolut Party suggests a group in an inebriated state who are in total disregard for what is happening around them and are immersed only in their own actions. There are no boundaries or restrictions here as they search for absolute freedom away from the clutches of reality.

For Chin Kong Yee the absolute in art can only be found in the ultimate art museum in the world-The Louvre. Here he has rendered IM Pei's renowned inverted pyramid as it sits in the Cour Napoleon (Napoleon Courtyard) in all its multi-faceted glory holding the 'keys' to the Absolute. All around are crowds of people who are waiting to pay homage to the Louvre in their search for the absolute. In looking at works of art at the Louvre one is confronted with some of the greatest works of art ever created, deciphering the emotions, messages and expressions that the artist was trying to capture. The fact that the message is able to withstand the test of time speaks wonders about the artwork. For Wong Chee Meng his piece entitled Transmission Transition, addresses communication between human beings and how the transmission of information from one to another can sometimes be lost or distorted in

translation according to how it is viewed or seen. He has captured this in his piece by deliberately blurring the lines and shapes so that there is an element of camouflage, uncertainty and room for the possible and the impossible. Hamidi Hadi and Cheong Tuck Wai are two artists who have taken the term mixed-media to new levels with the layering of materials-print, industrial paint, glue, epoxy.

Hamidi Hadi's flat shiny, glossy surfaces are juxtaposed against 3-dimensional prints which have been silkscreened onto the background to create a web which entices one into its epicentre. The idea behind the work entitled Bloated can only be interpreted as bloated with anticipation for what is yet to come. In Cheong Tuck Wai's work entitled Get it Out he has layered images of old Chinese ink landscapes which have been torn out of a book. Protruding out of the surface of the three canvases in the middle he too has created a web, but in this instance his web symbolizes a web of destruction with the desecration of our environment to make way for development. The two canvases which sit on either side of his work stand there as the 'guardians' of our environment.

To Yim Yen Sum city and high-rise living has resulted in faceless people who go about their lives in an environment which is cold and sterile with little interaction with one another. While traveling through a small town she found that people were much warmer and welcoming, and she could not help but wonder if it had anything to do with their living environment. Her work Absolut Integration I is a compilation of pieces of fabric which she has embossed with the texture of an old stressed wall from a historical building and has sewn together to symbolize the connection and bond between people in less developed areas.

Choy Chun Wei's work also explores the idea of urban living and how it has changed our lives. In his work Shopping Ghettos he successfully combines the stacking of blocks to create his own 3-dimensional space within which he has juxtaposed horizontal and vertical lines with a collage of paint, words, found object, plastic, print and drawing. By inviting us into his created

'space,' he wants us to escape into another world to experience his reconstruction of it- an absolut paradise of sorts.

Chee Way and Faizal Suhif, have both used drawing as a means to express an underlying cynicism. Faizal Suhif's orangutan meanders through the forest holding in his hand a faint outline of an Absolut bottle with the warning that perhaps he should not swig and swing at the same time, while Chee way questions the disappearance of our forests to give way to development .

In the presentation of this exhibition it is prevalent that in the pursuit of the Absolut(e) each artist has his/her our own distinctive interpretation of what the term means from the attainment of the impossible in Ivan Lam's Absolut Rainbow to the need to communicate in its purest form in Wong Chee Meng's Transmission Transition to the preservation and lamenting of the loss of our environment at the expense of development in the works of Cheong Tuck Wai, Yim Yen Sum and Chee Way. The fact is at the end of the day, no matter how we see it, we are in ourselves absolute entities for the absolute reality lies in the fact that we ultimately die.

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