

Panorama (2009) – Ivan Lam

“It’s been five years of exploration, sweat, elation, rejection and fulfilment. It’s like I went through the whole Shaolin Kung Fu training without learning any fancy moves, just sweeping the dojo, washing dishes or waxing the floor, ...only to realize that my master (myself) didn’t make me do it for the sake of torturing me - he made me more resilient. He taught me to surrender my ego of knowing and to start from nothing. Only now I feel free. Only now I feel like I am painting.” – Ivan Lam, 2009

Ivan Lam describes a kind of cathartic alchemy. His near obsessive gestation of rehearsed colours, brushstrokes and spatial tensions over a five year period has arrived at images so complete – free as he describes – they are an elixir to those who encounter them.

Aptly titled “Panorama,” this exhibition takes Lam’s 2007 landmark show, “After all these years...” and expands it to a broader vision that sits outside definitions of physical or psychological space. Just as a panorama traditionally transmutes visual reality with its unrealistic optical expanse and warp, Lam’s latest paintings are able to transport the viewer to a different dimension using triggers that are recognisable – ‘photo-real’ – and yet in them, reality is slowly unravelled, undermined by the artist’s decisions. It is intelligent painting at its best.

Take the painting “The Urgency of Inside Looking Out” (2009) as example, an image of a happenchance Chinese restaurant. It is unmistakable in its representation as ‘Chinese’ based on our collective knowledge and cultural branding the text central to the painting offers. Lam, however, deliberately works against such stereotypes painting the restaurant pregnant with emptiness; void of the noise and clutter we expect of this local narrative. He has deliberately chosen to paint a Halal restaurant and by assigning us – the viewer - as the only person ‘inside’ this scene from our very viewpoint, we stand testament to this silent cultural helix. Is it real...

photo-real or has reality been thwarted by Lam's hyper-saturated palette, fractured brushstrokes and 'unreal' perspective?

Standing in front of this painting it becomes increasingly apparent it is as layered as the image's internal reflections. Lam explains, "When we are inside we are being judged by our outside, our cover, never the content". The position that we take in viewing the world that surrounds us is an important one in the way we navigate our own sense of identity, cultural framing, political and environment concerns - our social consciousness. Across this suite of paintings Lam uses a distinctive viewpoint positioning his audience immersed within his banal narratives, looking through and into these scenes. It is a subtle confrontation perhaps underlined by the sheer scale or presence that these paintings command.

Speaking with Lam he explained: "It's like I set up the stage for the viewer to be the protagonist..." He continued, "They have been seen before somewhere. They will make up the stories. I just gave them the stage to do so. And because it's panoramic, automatically the viewer will perceive movement. It gives a very reel-like feel...like a movie or moving image."

Best illustrated by the painting "Waiting For a Better future, Hoping for a Better Life" (2009) one physically moves across this image of a crowded airport lounge reading it from left to right like a cinema still. I am reminded of Samuel Beckett's 1948 play *Waiting for Godot*, the story of two men waiting for another, perhaps God, who never arrives. It is perhaps a hint to Lam's wry questioning of the absence of meaning within contemporary society and our compulsion to construct value systems aimed at enlightening us or feeding our aspiration. As Beckett points out, it was not the arrival of the mysterious Godot that was the revelation, rather the wait itself.

In the most abstract sense it captures our impossibility, as human beings, to see the complete picture. Lam alludes to these musing suturing three digital images to achieve the impossible viewpoint for this painting. Its warped perspective plays off our skewed expectations in

contemporary life: a terminal for low cost air travel the ultimate melting pot of a society and its mobility, both from a physically and philosophical position.

There is very little interaction between this lethargic group, rendered anonymous, single units, coded and disjointed, paralleling perhaps another reality as Malaysia tolerates its internal divisions. For this writer, it is a deceptive loss of clarity that is underlined by Lam's fractured brushstrokes, almost digitised in blips as the scene's 'photo-reality' becomes over-worked like a pirate video. It offers a sense of air in the constriction of the packed crowd. One wonders if Lam similarly offers hope through the two children anchored at each side of the painting looking out in expectation, eyes cast with unencumbered dreams.

These kinds of 'constructed realities' ricochet across this exhibition like an anthology of short stories sliding between fiction and documentary where Lam invites the viewer to become the storyteller. They are no longer voyeuristic glimpses through Lam's absorbed personal chronicles of the past and bring a new freedom and a new involvement with the work. What is fascinating is this suite of paintings ability to transport audiences through their displaced familiarity. Essentially, these images could be anywhere, nowhere, everywhere and for that very reason they connect.

Despite being surrounded by people and the bump and grind of contemporary social relationships - whether it be an airport lounge or a blue public bus in commuter traffic - collective space becomes neutral to the point of impending negativity. That notion of populated vacancy is a curious contemporary phenomenon and one few artists tackle. While Lam's airport lounge is a crowd scene, in many ways it is as empty as the painting *There is no certainty within the wheel of life* (2009) with its melancholic title. It is a very perceptive connectivity that Lam draws across this exhibition.

This painting picks up from Lam's last two works from his precursor exhibition, "Home (We Are finally Home)" (2007) [fig. 1] and "Heaven (Heaven can't wait)" (2007) [fig.2] with their

turgid dusk skies and linear silhouettes. However, it arrives at a fresh resolve. Lam tones down the expressive energy of his brush, finding a balanced ground between the weight of the stroke and blocked colour. Tensions are held in greater balance; they are more refined.

To explain a little further, characteristic to this suite of paintings the viewpoint is consistently unsettling. In “There is no Certainty Within the Wheel of Life” (2009) it is thrown off balance as the carnival ground fence tilts to the right, forcing the carousel out of frame. Slightly off-centre the Ferris wheel emanates a halo-like light with almost religious fervour. Where are the children...their laughter? The painting is blanketed in the glow of nostalgia like a faded memory bleached of colour. While Lam explains this painting was made in response to the invasion of Gaza by Israeli forces, its tone is unmistakably one of lost innocence and ideals, a kind of sorrow that we bring to the image as individuals regardless of the artist’s foundation for the image.

In the same way that a Ferris wheel triggers laughter, innocence and loss, the painting “The Machine That Walks This Earth” (2009) has a familiarity that is equally universal and one equated with aggregated doom. This machine that clears the land in the name of development comes at an environmental cost. The landscape lies barren in its wake. As Laurence Fishbourne cajoles in the 1999 film *The Matrix*, “Welcome to the desert of the real world”. Globalisation is not all grand.

Unlike Lam’s Ferris wheel, however, this machine sits central to this narrative in a plea for balance. It is an extremely active painting despite its static subject, pushing and pulling our eye between foreground and the background. Furthermore, the machine is anchored out of frame making its presence as expansive as its natural horizontal stretch. It is a visual and metaphorical power play and, as a painting, is far more complex than its simple pictorial.

It dredges a similar nostalgia for me as the Ferris wheel does for Lam, pointing to the land artists of the late 1960s and the tensions and balances with the land found in their art making.

I refer to writer David Company's comments about American Robert Smithson: "His was an art which might engage the natural in an intimate, physical way but only to bring us closer to a disclosure of our always unstable, always mediated relation to it. This was an important realisation – an understanding of nature would require a reflection on the nature of understanding."¹ Lam offers that same kind of springboard to understanding through this suite of paintings. It is not prescriptive. It is not derisive.

It is perhaps best captured in the painting "3 buses (I kept my end of the bargain how about you?)" (2009) which, upon first glance, sits as an anomaly to the others in this exhibition. However despite its jarring diptych, one is eased by its familiarity. The ubiquitous blue bus used by workers across Malaysia and the equally iconic 'spots paintings' made famous by British artist Damien Hirst. While Lam is not appropriating Hirst's dots - rather calling on his own history as a printmaker and the kind of colour-pot coding of his palette and previous series CMYK - to recall Company's words these comfortable hooks 'brings us closer to a disclosure' or understanding. By that I mean this painting oscillates between local iconography and international contemporary art vernacular. It is an extremely erudite image.

Hirst's spot paintings and screen-prints were all about 'factory-style' fabrication and authorship. The "Blue Bus" offers a similar racial-class coding. Lam refers to this painting as a 'time capsule'; an earlier version was painted in 2007. The mental agility to visually articulate change between paintings over the two-year period further parallels the kind of anatomical breaking down of an image Lam refers to through his 'dot colour code'. Furthermore, this time-slide also speaks to me as an art writer, scanning across art scenes, of Lam's awareness of the kind of local/global dynamics that drive current contemporary art practice. I cannot help but return to Lam's opening analogy of Shaolin Kung Fu training where focusing on the detail inevitably arrives at a resolved understanding and accomplishment of the whole.

"Panorama" expands our understanding of painting, of Ivan Lam's painting. Scanning across this exhibition one feels like they are standing on a threshold, invited to jump into a pool of

memories or to sit back like a drive-in cinema with its expansive frame and allow the images to wash over them without expectation. Lam's paintings unleash reality and it is exhilarating.

I met Ivan Lam more than a decade ago when he first returned from America.

He was only slightly younger then but already he had an intense realization that he would only ever be able to find himself through his art. He possessed a sharp awareness of tradition and a love for innovation, of popular culture and its iconographies as well as a deep need to communicate with his contemporary audience in real and meaningful terms.

A kind of Ying and Yang – the Alpha-Omega if you like.

This commitment to the struggle to make meaningful work has stood him well through the years. From early painted print works and the ground-breaking Perspex light boxes of the 90s to the prize-winning "Integral" (2001) and "Symphony of our Children " (2003); from the celebration of popular objects as monuments in works like "Evo 7" (2003) and acidic post colonial references to the confluence of traditional symbols, fleeting trends and contemporary values in sexy, sexy works like the Ripple Series (2003) and "Utamaro" (2003) – Lam has been on a quest for a style and technique that consciously pushed the boundaries of painting as he searched for reason through observations of contemporary life.

His ability to continuously push the boundaries of painting has also meant that he has remained relevant within a creative mainstream more and more dominated by new and mixed media, and where painters have felt the acute need to reinvent the medium itself for it – and them - to remain innovative and significant.

His treatment of his subject matter also pushes the boundaries of the narrative. With a refreshing irreverence, Lam strips down the narrative in his work to single moments – always from a distant standoff tinged with personal experience and unwilling to dictate any kind of definite meaning to his audience.

The common experience he wants to convey is almost abstract in how it is presented. It doesn't translate into a specific Malaysian or Asian one but finds a larger resonance that is more interested in the artist and his audience as witnesses to a world afflicted by media and consumerism, confusion and displacement – and always - the universal loneliness of that contemporary citizen within a world of webs crowded with noise and opinion.

These distinct narrative devices and painting formats came to fruition two years ago when Lam gave us “After All These Years...” autobiographical paintings hung like a wayang in 9 scenes, stories of love and family, of birth and change. Of memory and reality - always tinged with a sense of loss.

A painter at heart, “Panorama” sees Lam at the peak of his contemporary relevance. A culmination of sorts – the exhibition attests to a mastery and reinterpretation of contemporary realism through a definite and highly defined technique, style and expressions that have been perfected over the last decade.

As he himself very humbly puts it - ‘I have spent the last ten years honing my skill – I know the ‘Kungfu’ – now I wanted to tell the story.’

There is a strong narrative quality that continues from “After All These Years...” but it is not a ‘continuing narrative’. “Panorama’s” stories are broader and more inclusive and unapologetic that these pictures have a story.

Still, to see this exhibition as a sequel to “After All These Years...” (2007) is convenient and enjoyable even if unnecessary. Every stage of an artist’s development refers to its own past, especially its immediate one.

“Panorama’s” seamless execution may find its beginnings in its predecessor, but this is an undeniably fresh and powerfully heartfelt body of work. As contemporary painting, “Panorama,” the most recent genre paintings by Ivan Lam, with their meticulously observed realism are his most beautifully pedestrian and resolved to date. His atmospheric yet detached interiors of restaurants and cars; exteriors which are deliberately contained ... traffic jams; desolate construction sites, crowded airports or the KL Eye carnival – all compulsory parts to a Kuala Lumpur state of mind are the focus of the artist’s increasingly psychological examinations of isolation and displacement as he tries to make sense of the immediate world around him.

Through his paintings Lam has always strived to develop seductive visual elements through the appropriation and reinvention of technologies and industrial processes to portray feelings of alienation associated with contemporary life – and always, in a contemporary visual language. And while some of the previous works, “Sushi Bar” (2006) and “Surgery” (2007) already saw the beginnings of human places devoid of human beings but packed with their trappings, PANORAMA finds all the new works whole-heartedly located in quiet settings that are baroque environments. These recent paintings are filled with the detail of everyday life – but in their absence of human beings they blister with a methodical silence dictated by their very formatted, almost cubist compositions.

Even in a work like “Waiting for a Better Future, Hoping for a Better Life” (2008) which is filled with people waiting at the LCCT departure lounge, the human actors in the painting are given the same treatment and importance as the corrugated walls or the arrivals/departures information board, the stainless steel railings, the plastic tandem chairs. Later you realize, that the artist has also created a space from which the viewer, like the artist himself views

the vista and becomes a part of the painting. However, the artist immediately sets a boundary – a distance from the panorama that denies any kind of real interaction with the space or its sitters. The viewer remains separate and alone within the setting. And as if the artist is conscious of what he senses at the corners of his eyes but can never quite see – Lam brings to his paintings his signature panoramic views – he takes the 120 degree, standard view of our perception of the world and gives us a wide angle 170 degree, view of the world... as if to suggest that if we could see more, we would also understand our world better.

Lam enjoys the physicality of these familiar objects yet presents all of them equally, as forthright statements of visual fact. No one object is more important than another. As he distils his visual information, his concern is with the surface of things – corrugated walls, plastic chairs, the various components of the monumental piling crane, the complex play of interiors meeting exteriors; of the horizontal assembly line of red table cloths against vertical lines of door frames and glass fronts. Amidst all this paraphernalia of everyday life, the artist commits to a unity of the picture plane – a flatness of the surface where the in and out movement is less important than how all the colours and forms come together in delightful oneness and perfect harmony.

With tantalizing invitation, each very literal vignette is designed to appeal to the senses.

And Lam does not paint movement but rather stillness.

In a work like “The Beginning is the End The End is the Beginning” (2009), the frantic pace of city life is a given – he leaves it to the audience to fill that in - but at the same time, the stillness of the scene seems to be at odds with the frustrations of the grunge of daily urban existence. The soft glow of the tactile white clouds on their bed of deep, tranquil blue ping like a Turner-esque mantra of the acceptance of life as it is.

While the narrative moves through places that are unavoidably entwined in our everyday suburban lives - transport, traffic, development, sustenance, entertainment – the path provided by the artist lead you through these paintings only pausing at moments of possible dramatic action.

“The Machine That Walks The Earth” (2008) is a depiction of part of a piling crane in a housing development near where the artist lives. It has become part of his daily trek to and from home. From morning to night, the monolith pounds the earth – testimony to the unstoppable march of development. – captured in the traditional stark light and shadow contrasts that remember Dutch painting.

There is a weight to this piece that “The Beginning is the End The End is the Beginning,” with its opening skies avoid. In this painting of the machine that walks, the object is anchored within the centre and beyond the picture frame. Its monumentality is threatening – its place within the modern landscape non-negotiable.

These scenarios that seem mundane but are so salient because of that very ordinariness are executed with obsessive deliberation. Lam’s panoramas are deliberately frank paintings with no startling revelations, an art of technical prowess, intricate composition, brilliantly tactile surfaces and an undercurrent of social comment.

In “There is no Certainty Within The Wheel of Time” (2009), Lam captures a broad vista of the KL Eye fronted by a fair, carousel and the promise of fun and frolic. Painted around the time of the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the park is devoid of laughter or the babble of children. Even without that direct reference the stillness suggests a dire narrative. It is these undercurrents of emotion that make these works so engaging.

While Lam remains involved in what some might consider the questionable enterprise of painting photographically accurate likenesses, he also reveals a state of mind. The artist's capacity for minute description disguises a more private vision. Neither romantic nor glamorous, Lam's closely observed naturalism – served cold - has the capacity to arrest our attention and persuades us to immediately relate to the subject as well as their latent content. His images are so rich in detail and design and immediacy that the inclination is to ignore his more formal accomplishments.

For Ivan Lam is an extremely gifted painter.

Ivan Lam understands his medium completely and it is obvious in paintings like “The Urgency of Inside Looking Out” (2009) where the contemplation of the panorama of the Chinese red-table-cloth restaurant is more important than the emotionality of the place at its busiest times of business. The purposeful flatness of the decorative forms and cool paint surface seem to drive home the point that even if it were full of people – as with the LCCT painting - the viewer, like the artist would find himself alone.

Lam also understands the tools he has at his disposal and is conscious of that which photography has made redundant in modern painting.

In a work like “The Urgency of Inside Looking Out” or in “Waiting for a Better Future, Hoping for a Better Life” the camera has made images like this one useless unless the artist can draw us into the mysteries of representation and develop a statement about the human condition. In spite of the objectivity and the methodically precise arrangement of the setting, the artist's concentrated view of what appears to be an everyday event aspires to do more than record people and places.

As an artist, Lam finds in each of these paintings, a moment when the factual storytelling ends and form, atmosphere and social context become central issues. Lam's realism does not

debate the nature of reality, but simply confines itself to panoramic, highly selective views of the social environment we share.

The content of these paintings, more than ever, present not only the reality of objects, but a measure of the artist's perception of the distances we place between ourselves in contemporary relationships.

And through these paintings, he has the ability to make us feel it.

Therein lies their power.

Like backdrops to our lives, the artist presents scenarios in which we are – unavoidably – the protagonists – not outside the picture but within its foreground – but only as observers not participants, and so we are inevitably alone.

But, if these new paintings are anything to go by, it is a bleak world we live in but it is nevertheless, still extremely beautiful ... at least according to Ivan.

Colour is life; for a world without colours appears to us as dead. — Johannes Itten¹

2 years after “Ivan Lam: after all these years...,” we welcome a Panorama of idyllic images. The dictionary definition of ‘Panorama’ reads as, “An unbroken view of surrounding region, picture or photograph containing wide view.”² In Ivan Lam’s hands, the aforesaid is elevated to a more complex and sophisticated level.

In a way, Ivan has said that “Panorama” was something which he always wanted to do. Prodding and poking into his artistic mind provided a richer and deeper inquiry into the processes, concerns and subjects close to his heart. So much so, that it invoked a rush of recollections from this talented artist. A plunge into the depths of his memory gave interesting methodologies and deeper insight into the subjects of concern. From his printmaking days, Ivan has redirected his energies to the realm of painting. What we see today, is an extension from the contextual and conceptual ideas initiated in 2005. Earlier subject matter or themes featured in “Ivan Lam, after all these years...,” came in the form of love or star-crossed lovers. Images seen then, were akin to looking at distilled pictures derived from romantic movies. In the coming exhibition, Ivan invites the audience to look deeper, reminiscing familiar settings and scenes. We feel a sense of nostalgia, where images are even more personalized as compared to the somewhat linked imagery with a sense of unification as seen in the previous solo exhibition. This time round, the sensitive observer may notice the standardized works of art in shape and size.

Nowadays, popular culture reinvents and configures traditional coffee shops into chic cafes, re-enacting the acquired taste in an ultra-modern setting. With localized flavours making a comeback, albeit with new presentations, how do we perceive Ivan’s work? Are we perchance transported back in time to the era of our forefathers, experiencing an atmosphere and mood of peace and serenity? Ivan’s penchant for the past, to remind us of memories in hand-picked images, vigorously selected and straddled in the present bestows upon us the best of both worlds. The artist also suggested that the timeline eluding from the paintings may be due to the tonal values and colours layered onto the paintings. Derived from a personal visual language, his narration and influences by contemporary issues and popular icons has progressed into a vista of evocative scenes. Progressively, Ivan has developed and pushed his ideas further. There is nothing neither beatific nor quixotic in the scenes. Rather the current showcase marked specific moments we may all share or experience. Such portrayals are illustrated by means of reinventing painting based on meticulous application of a spectrum of colours. As a continuation of this genre of painting, Ivan has ventured beyond the confines of experimentation. With subject matter closer to his heart, the new found confidence and familiarity of medium resulted in a diorama-like setting of pictures with maturity abundant.

Ivan himself acceded to a new found self-assurance in the application of polymer synthetic paint.

Highly disciplined, Ivan has spent the previous 2 years developing his conceptual and contextual framework. He attempted to portray the visual in a way that conveyed his intentions and the way he wanted to see it. Trained as a designer, I am assertive of Ivan's understanding towards Marshall McLuhan's seminal work, 'The Medium is the Message'. "McLuhan warns us that we are often distracted by the content of a medium (which, in almost all cases, is another distinct medium in itself.) He writes, "it is only too typical that the "content" of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium." (McLuhan 9) And it is the character of the medium that is its potency or effect - its message. In other words, "This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium - that is, of any extension of ourselves - result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology."³

The process, hence, became an important configuration in the final product. Ivan acquiesced to the whole process (preparatory to actual painting) being highly critical to the outcome of the art works. He recalled thinking that it would be an easier transition to "Panorama" than with "Ivan Lam: after all these years." The laborious process still marked the need to maintain a high level of consistency. Indeed, he had to move beyond a similar framework of layering paint. Already inclined towards the texture and fabric of material qualities, Ivan pushed the paint boundaries to exceed expectations. Such is his control of layering, stroke and modulation, daily painting routine led to new discoveries. Colours are thus utilized in less imagined or conventional principles as compared to previously.

Ivan was also keen to reiterate that not many more of such lyrical paintings would be produced. The reason he said is his inclination to move away from the comfort zone, having exerted his efforts in this direction for a while now. Due to his familiarity with certain mediums, he even 'reinvented' certain methods. From printmaking to polymer painting, the

artist has merged certain techniques and methods into his own peculiar comporment. The artist said that 'print' is always innate to him. An instantaneous outcome of print (with its consuming preparatory work) is totally different from painting. Consequently, the tediousness and protracted process of painting resulted in a slow output of 1 painting every 2 months.

His strong foundation in Western Art History enabled Ivan to refer and apply different methodologies into his own work. Renaissance (skin tones) and Pop Art (graphic elements) were important influences on the artist. While Impressionism and Post-Impressionism offered lessons on vague colour impressions. "All things fast, past, shiny and glittery is not gold" is a chiaroscuro exemplary on Caravaggio on the artist. Ivan's inclination to history facilitated his references to different topics and subject matter. I enquired in regards to his orientation with Johannes Itten and Piet Mondrian, 2 iconic figures of art.⁴ Ivan replied with his fascination of their processes. In fact, he went one step further, reflecting on such influential figures in art history which gave new meaning to art works produced today. His view of art history in contemporary context is indeed refreshing. How do you describe photo realists or colourists today, questions Ivan. Such pertinent issues are what make this artist reflect on his position as a contemporary artist. He said that:

"Contemporary art today, includes everything and excludes nothing. Everyone have a voice. This is a great time to be an artist (postmodern era). The usage of colours is less restricted and stringent. I try to look at things differently, or be sensible to what's going on. How do I see myself in the scene, be it groups of people or localities? I want to be different, to have an Ivan Lam signature. Like a trademark and ability to be myself and not someone else."

At the end of the day, Ivan wants to be known as a painter. He looks up to artists who dedicated their lives to painting, like Lucian Freud, Morandi, Monet and Manet. He is extremely disciplined in his studio practice, be it preparatory work or actual painting. From taking photographs to sketching and visualization, Ivan developed and refined his images until

the very last touches of paint on canvas. Even though he knew what he wanted to do, 70% of the work can be modified, said the artist. He is not too rigid in doing things in a singular trajectory.

So, how many layers of paint are on a painting? Ivan replied that there is a contour on the surface, sort of like a concave and convex. It depended on the composition, as well as the layers needed in each area of the painting. It can be as thick as 7 to 8 layers to get the right tone. He also has a rhythm of painting, left to right and top to bottom (the reading of the paintings may perchance be similar to Chinese ink paintings). As a whole, Ivan related to the paintings as distilled layers of paint. The artist credited Nippon's consistency in product that allowed him to push the material further. He was humbled by his visit to the Nip - pon factory, witnessing the effort poured into the development of thousands of colours. How different was synthetic polymer paint to acrylic or oil? Ivan felt that the pigment was thinner. He started by using it as a primer. Why not use it on the surface, thought the artist. The ready availability of pre-mix colours ensured consistency in quantity. Also, the plasticity of the medium withstood any concern of cracks (if applied thinly). This is a 'boy' who found a new toy and is not afraid to get his hands dirty.

Coming to the current exhibition, "Panorama," Ivan looked beyond the square or rectangle of a canvas frame. He formatted our visual optics to 170 degrees from the natural 120, unlike distilled movie frames. The discerning Ivan Lam follower would notice that this is the first time the artist is adhering to such a guideline. Such a regulation also impinged on the choice of subject matter. In "Ivan Lam: after all these years," the artist created a 'Preview' piece as a visual promise to viewers and collectors of what is to come in 2 years time. Ivan reminisced that it was an idealistic thought then as 2 years is a long time, where many things may occur. The artist concurred that the "Preview" piece brought along a baggage of memories and emotions, going back to the mentality and concerns of the day. He said that there will not be any more preview pieces, as he will not revisit this experience as time distilled again. Ivan would complete the second half of the "Preview" piece in this sequel showcase (entitled "Opening"). In fact, the artist has produced 2 diptychs in this sequel, with the other being '3

Buses.’ Notably, his ‘earlier’ painting of the Three Buses received a final bid of HKD120,000 three times the higher estimate from Christie’s Hong Kong Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art May 2008 auction. For the “Panorama” exhibition, Ivan would entice us with a teaser, a glimpse of what is to come for the final part of the trilogy. After much coercion, he said that it would still be painting, albeit content laden. However, viewers would be treated to a totally different oeuvre as compared to the “Panorama series.”

It is an open ended beginning to the coming exhibition. Beginning with “Ivan Lam: after all these years” and “Panorama” as the sequel, Ivan considers himself a novice who is learning to paint seriously. He is taking “Panorama” as an impetus to the next course of action. Although the 3rd show may come as a sharp break from the 1st and 2nd, he considers the former two as learning stages. Without them, there will not be a 3rd, though the last may stand alone. Ivan is bent on bringing the platform to the viewer. No longer looking back to the past, it is now your place and your interaction.