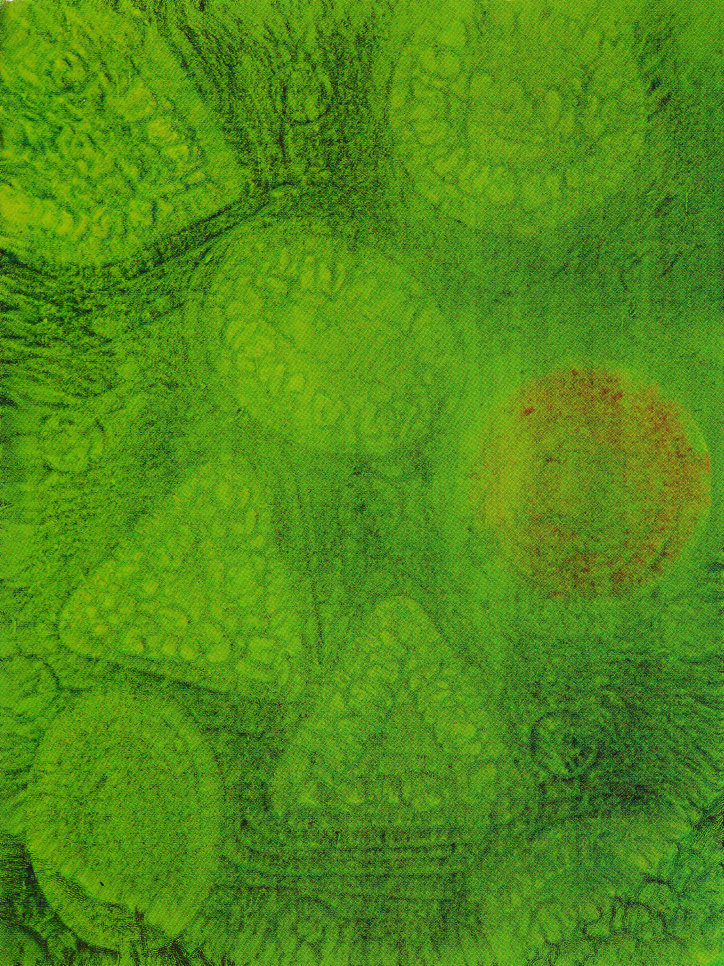


RAYMOND YAP
Crossing Boundaries





Dissolving Identity
2005
Gloss paint on MDF board
122 x 92 cm

The Traceries of Time: The Paintings of Raymond Yap

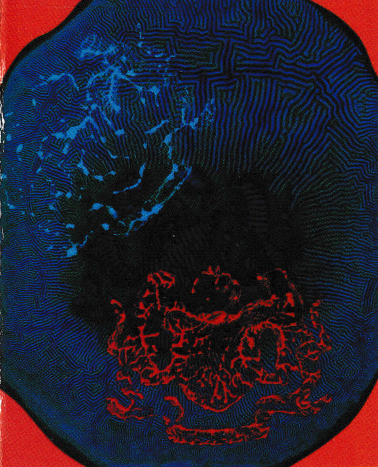
The figurative daubs and smears of pigment, found deep within the caves of Lascaux in Southern France, that represent the animals around which the lives of those early artists revolved, are vivid traces of physical evidence that man has been striving to pictorially represent his environment and its events – to rescue them from the relentless tides of time – for more than thirty thousand years. Painting as historical evidence can work on many and diverse levels and scales. Each touch of its surface by a loaded paintbrush on a painting is a piece of historical evidence. Each addition and movement of paint on a painting records traces of the process, a momentary glimpse into the artist's decisions and strategies. The strategies of process painting and its inherent spontaneity have a way of taking painters back to their roots where unpremeditated invention drives the creative process, where the action of painting continually asks questions, prompting the painter to make on-the-spot decisions, where driving by the seat of your pants becomes the norm. During the last century the Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston and Franz Kline enthusiastically explored this genre in an adrenaline-charged gestural sort of way, creating their large, energetic, action paintings. More recently, process painting has been steered more soberly into the 21st Century by such European painters as Callum Innes, Jason Martin, Alexis Harding, Bernard Frize and Gerhard Richter. The works of these artists express a more relaxed, laid-back relationship to time's progression, suggesting a more meditative approach. One time-based element of the process acts as a catalyst



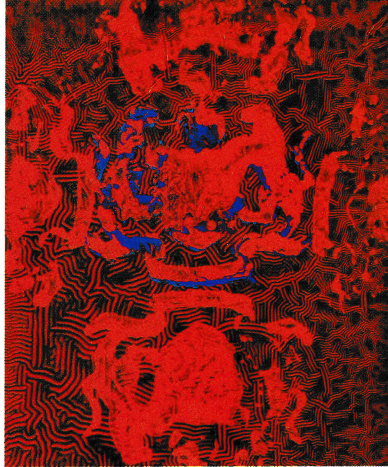
First Step To Another Place
2005
Gloss paint on MDF board
122 x 92 cm

for the next but this catalytic process may take days, weeks – or even months in the case of Alexis Harding. It is into this genre of process painting that the work of Raymond Yap falls.

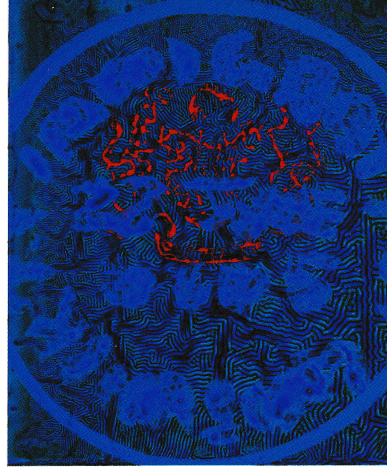
As a process painter, Raymond Yap allows time and entropy to have their way with the surfaces of his paintings. After applying the initial layer of paint he abandons it to the element of chance as the drying process causes the surface to shrink and craze into an intricately patterned network of lines – the traceries of time – that maps out the unpredictable play of serendipity. The asymmetrical but even spread of this patterning displays all the hallmarks of labour-intensive deliberation on Yap's part, but all he has done here is simply give free-reign to time and the elements. The American Art Historian James Elkins compares painting to alchemy, and writes in his seminal book, 'What Painting Is', "The studio is a necessary insanity... Alchemy is the best model for this plague of paint, for the self-imprisonment of the studio and for the allure of insanity"[1]. This is not to suggest that Yap's mental stability is in question but it is easy to see the parallels between what he does and the ways of the alchemists of old, waiting for the transformation of a layer of paint into a thing of beauty. Despite the resistance to beauty in the contemporary art world, there is no denying that the surfaces that Yap creates on his paintings possess a beauty all of their own. Each of his paintings is a unique event, each one a singular expression of the aleatory meanderings of chance, which at the same time creates an armature for the final form of the painting, offering a foundation for the subsequent layers that Yap adds to the painting before its completion. Just as



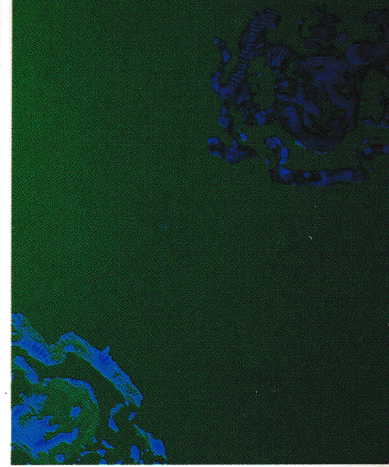
I



II



III

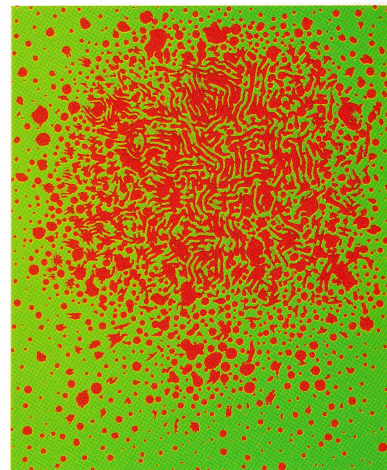


IV

Cascade I - V

2005

Gloss paint on MDF board
31 x 27 cm



I

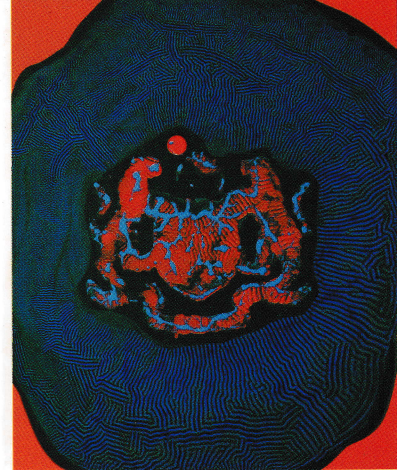
Ariadne's thread, laid down through its maze of tunnels, provided an escape from the Labyrinth, so the reticulated surfaces of his paintings guide the painting process that brings Yap's works to a conclusion. It is the balance between the elements of control and chance that gives these paintings their claim to uniqueness, they become the epitome of Immanuel Kant's *ding an sich*, things in themselves, that sit within their own event horizons. To quote the English painter, Jason Martin:-

"There are so many factors involved in making a painting that you have control over, yet the very things that make it interesting are the things that you don't have control over" [2].

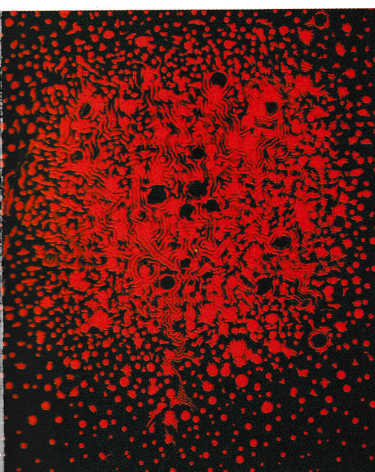
Accidents have, historically, of course, provided many doorways into invention, and creative artists have always been open to those opportunities that accidents offer. Giving full reign to the diversions that chance brings about is acknowledging the ineffability of the moment and surrendering to the hegemony of the creative accident. Western culture no longer knows how to live in the moment, and accidents are to be avoided at all costs. By rescinding the necessity to control, Yap is releasing himself to passively observe that extended moment where *sunyata* reigns and denies the influence of the cultural prerogative – serendipity not only serves the Buddhist concept of *sunyata* but also Freud's concept of the oceanic. These ideas run decidedly counter to all the ideals and aspirations of the capitalist consumer society and it is interesting that many of Yap's paintings are barely veiled critiques of the modern state and its all-pervasive influences.

Figuration makes an appearance in Yap's paintings as a secondary element, superimposed upon the primary process of desiccation and reticulation, sometimes it is driven by the pre-existing patterns on the wrinkled surface which suggest shapes and forms in the same way that a seer might divine pictures and images from thrown sticks or tea-leaves in the bottom of a tea-cup, at other times, he uses templates to actually influence the final stages of the primary process. The colours, always vibrant and often used in complementary combinations and juxtapositions, optically fizz and sizzle adding to the effect of unearthliness, of transcendence, that permeates these paintings. Colour is not only seductive but transcends language, as acknowledged by the American Art Critic Dave Hickey when he writes, "The condition of being ravished by colour was my principal disability as a writer, since colour for a writer is less an attribute of language than a cure for it" [3]. In Yap's paintings, we are aware of quasi-figurative shapes and forms rising and falling as if only momentarily crystallizing before dissolving, once again, back into the cauldron of colour. The subject matter of these forms, however, anchors us firmly to reality, the passport stamp, a favourite motif of Yap's, conveys the heavy hand of officialdom and bureaucracy. Here, Yap frees these symbolic signs from their context of angular formality, releasing them into a realm where they become aesthetic icons, where they are given a seductive quality that subverts their formerly autocratic demeanour, so they, in effect become disarmed and neutralized. These are symbols that are emotively charged swinging between the poles of repression and release – reminiscent either of those seals of approval, as part of the acceptable rituals that mark arrival and

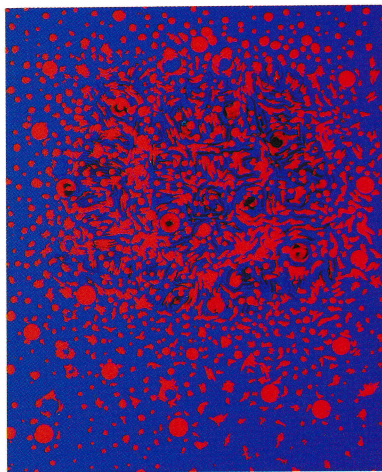
Passport I - V
2005
Gloss paint on MDF board
31 x 27 cm



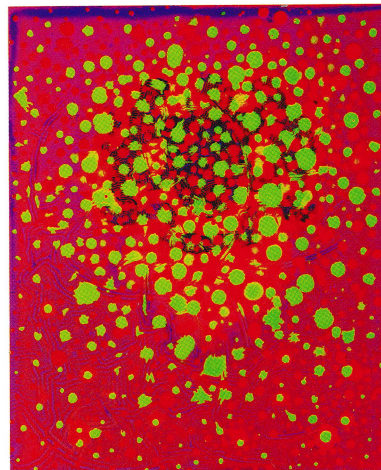
V



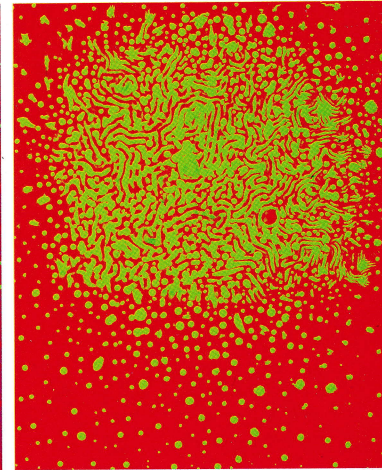
II



III



IV



V

departure from exotic holidays, which act as bookends to times of freedom and pleasure, or of big brother oppressively monitoring cross-border movements poised to pounce on the slightest contravention of extensive and often obscure laws, fear of which is always present.

State and Royal coats-of-arms and crests that are all a part of this symbolism of officialdom pervade this series of Yap's images. Sometimes they are magnified to fill the whole picture-plane where, diffused into the surface pattern, they barely hang onto their form, where abstraction lures them into its grip. At other times, scaled down, they jostle with others of their kind, as they might on the pages of a passport, where they fade into the realms of memory, into the mists of times now passed.

The paintings of Raymond Yap can be perceived from several standpoints. They can be seen purely as semi-abstract process paintings whose vibrant swarms of colour are undoubtedly visually compelling. They can be seen, through their symbolism as a critique of political oppression and all its connotations, and they can also be seen as expressions of those painterly transitions from figuration to abstraction that he continually visits, where that threshold between form and flux arcs in sinuous traceries across the picture plane. For three or four years Yap has been exploring the questions that this series of images raises, the challenges that it poses, each painting a resolution of previous questions and problems but each painting in turn throwing up its own questions. In giving rein to the aleatory – the whims of

chance – through the processes he uses, he optimises the opportunities for innovation and imbues his work with a feeling of freshness. Given the visual presence and power of these paintings which transcends their modest size and given their seductive and visually engaging qualities it can only be hoped that Yap continues to explore and resolve the questions posed by these works for many years to come. Such a slow-burning but intense evolution takes both the artist and the viewer deeper and deeper into the painting process and given this fact it is no surprise that painting has forged a fresh credibility for itself in the pantheon of contemporary art, having been repeatedly written off, in recent years, as an irrelevant and anachronistic art form. Maybe the fluctuations in the fortunes of painting have afforded it a new toughness and vigour through which it can impose itself, and be seen as more provocative than decorative, more incisive than emollient, more vibrant than polite.

1] James Elkins, *What Painting Is*, Routledge, New York, 1999. Page 149.

2] Alan Woods – 'Interview with Jason Martin' in *Transcript* Vol 3, Issue 2. Page 48.

3] Dave Hickey, *Air Guitar: Essays on Art and Democracy*, Art Issues Press, Los Angeles, 1997.

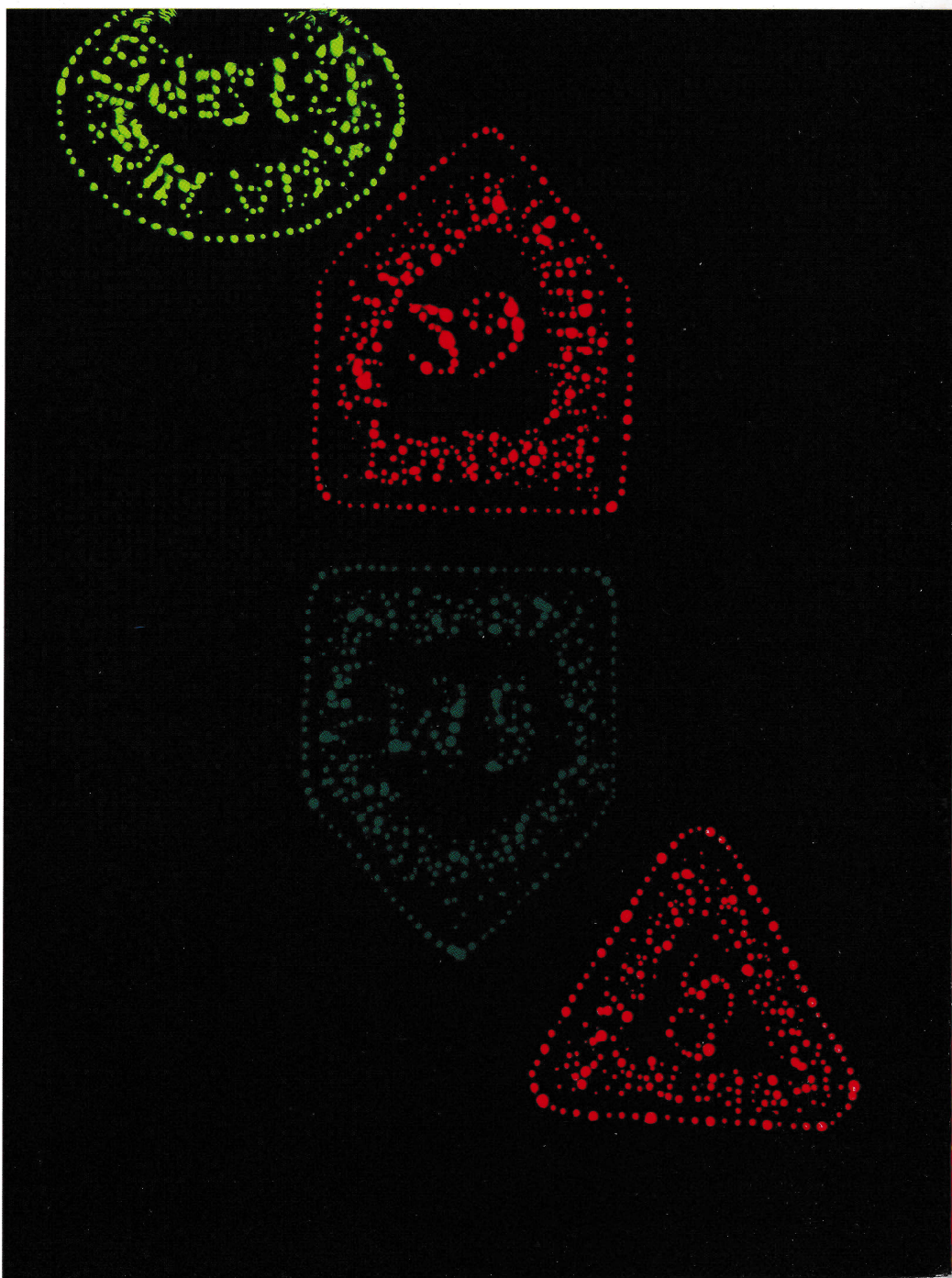
Roy Exley.

Roy Exley is an art critic and writer based in the UK.



Illusion of Place
2005
Gloss paint on MDF board
122 x 92 cm

Passing Places
2005
Gloss paint on MDF board
122 x 92 cm



RAYMOND YAP

Born 15th June 1966; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

EDUCATION

- 1982 Trained and worked as car-body sprayer, Kuala Lumpur.
1990 Working and travelling in UK and Europe.
1990-1995 Foundation Course in Art and Design, South Thames College, Wandsworth.
1995-1998 B.A (Hons) Fine Art (Painting), Wimbledon School of Art.
Post Graduate Diploma, Royal Academy Schools.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
2003 New Work, The Agency Contemporary, London EC2A.
2002 Royal Academy of Art Selina Chenevière Fellowship Exhibition.
2002 "Bordercrossing" The Agency Contemporary, London EC2A.
1999 Norman Rea Gallery, Langwith College Summer Exhibition, University of York.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 Art 2006, Islington London.
2005 "Absolutely Secret" Royal College of Art.
"When in rome V" Portsmouth Arts Centre.
"First Steps", Chinese Art Centre, Manchester M4 1EU.
"When in rome IV" Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham.
"Lekka", APT Gallery, London.
2004 "Absolutely Secret" Royal College of Art.
"When in rome III" Castlefield Gallery, Manchester.
"Surface", The New Academy Gallery, London W1.
"Homeland", Organised by Spacex Gallery, Exeter.
Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
"In between", The British Red Cross, London.
2003 "Vanitas" Raid Projects, L.A.
"Momentum" Keller & Greene Gallery, L.A.
"Leave To Remain", Central Space Gallery, London W14.
Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
"What Happened Next?", Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, London W1K.
"When in Rome" Lewisham Art House, London SE14.
Cologne Art Fair, Germany.
"Absolutely Secret" Royal College of Art.
"Leave To Remain", BBC London.
2002 Art 2002, Islington London.
Hot off the press II, Curwen Gallery, London W1T.
Art Future, Contemporary Art Society.
"RA Flash" Alternative Space Exhibition, Belfast.
Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
Cologne Art Fair, Germany.
2001 Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
Royal Academy Schools Show.
"Rising to the Surface" Gallery Westland Place, London N1.
"PROCESSION" The Blue Gallery, London EC1V.
"Inside Space", Selfridges, Oxford Street, London W1.
2000 Hunting Art Prizes Exhibition, RCA, London SW7.
Premium Show, Royal Academy, London W1.
Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
International Student Print Exhibition, Falmouth College of Art, Cornwall and touring UK and Brussels.
Royal Academy of Art Summer Exhibition.
1998 Twin Images, Multiple Birth Foundation Charity Auction, Fine Art Society, Bond Street, W1.
Degree Show, Wimbledon School of Art.
Wimbledon Prize Winning Drawings, National Gallery of Mongolia, Ulan Bator.

- 1997 Hunting Art Prizes, Royal College of Art, London, SW7 & Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

AWARDS & RESIDENCY

- 2006 Whisper Residency, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester.
2001 Selina Chenevière Fellowship.
2000 Fenton Art Trust Prize.
2000 David Murray Travel Scholarship.
1998 Drawing Prize (Highly Commended), Wimbledon School of Art.
The Celia Walker Art Foundation.
Rio Tinto Plc.
The Leverhulme Trust.

INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTION

- IKB Deutsche Industriebank AG, London.
Department of Human Genetics, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland.
Great Northern Railway Hotel, Peterborough.
Debenhams, London.
A.T. Kearney, London.
Financial Service Authority, London.



Tiger Gold

2003

Gloss paint on MDF board

61 x 46 cm

Cover detail:

Changing Time

2005

Gloss paint on MDF board

122 x 92 cm

Exhibition dates: 1st March – 18th March 2005

VALENTINE
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fine ART

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Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art