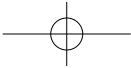
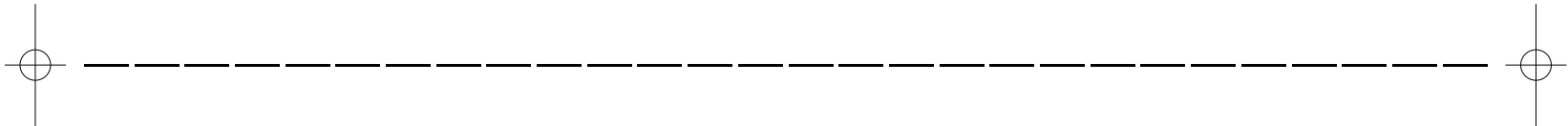


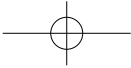
Chong Siew Ying

Chong Siew Ying



Chong Siew Ying





Contents

Introduction

Paris: The Early Years
Works 1996 – 1998

Rimbun Dahan
Works 1998 – 2001

Going Away, Coming Home
Works 2001 – 2004

Many Splendoured Things
Works 2006 – 2008

Artist's Profile
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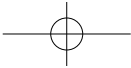
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Introduction

Beverly Yong

The work of Chong Siew Ying comes from a unique place. Siew Ying was born in 1969 in post-Independence Malaysia to Chinese parents. As a young graduate of a local art college, she sent herself to Paris with practically no spoken English or French, chasing dreams of becoming a “grande artiste” in that famous capital of the arts. Armed with a Beaux-Arts education and the rich and liberating experience of years of practicing as an artist in Paris, she returned to Malaysia in 1998, and has since built a life and career across the two very different contexts of Southeast Asia and Western Europe.

While many artists would focus on the conflicts and uncertainties of such a position — being Chinese, and Chinese-educated, in multi-ethnic Malaysia, living a life literally and consciously split between East and West, Siew Ying builds on its positive aspects, binding diverse philosophies and experiences into a personal artistic vision, which has laid the grounds for the universality of her work and its appeal.

This monograph traces the development of that vision over the past ten years and beyond, following a chronological path through changes of place and sensibility as well as a continuing exploration into different approaches to the human subject. A bold, lyrical and elegant painter, Siew Ying’s work is profoundly emotive, embracing broad themes such as nature, human relationships and the search for meaning in life. The expressive qualities of the human form — its spontaneity, its mystery, its ability to relate joy, pain, ecstasy and loss are central to her painting.

Surveying the course of Siew Ying’s practice, we find the artist exploring in depth the scale of the human emotional register.

Her early years in Paris mark a period of introspection and loneliness, of anonymous faces and figures, imagined landscapes shaped by subtle changes of mood. We see an early interest in Chinese philosophy and classical poetry married with existentialist queries. It is also for the artist a time of experiment in various media — printmaking, collage, and charcoal as well as painting in oil.

From the time of her return to Malaysia, Siew Ying embarks on an investigation of laughter, as Gary Proctor eloquently puts it, “laughter as a continuous event... an opening to forgiveness”. Laughing faces people a local environment, later developing into large scale portraits of bald, almost androgynous heads laughing, crying out, holding an inner smile. Painting becomes clearly a cathartic experience for the painter and the viewer, a release from the constraints of social identification and negotiation. An important quality of Siew Ying’s work is its conscious rejection of the detachment and cynicism central to much of contemporary figurative painting; even her sense of satire is light and infused with a prevailing humanism. Later on, she explores the nude, or rather naked, figure, stripping it of specific cultural or sexual references. The moments of intimacy, self-reflection, vulnerability and freedom expressed in her work pose a direct challenge to the coyness and smugness with which modern man is wont to barricade himself against a frightening world.

In her most recent work, Siew Ying takes on the problem of beauty, and by extension exoticism. In late 2006 she made a series of charcoal drawings of largely Malaysian flora and fauna, of an almost forgotten life in nature which prevails in the background of modern urbanism, moving on to a body of portraits of imagined Oriental beauties adorning her compositions with classical Chinese motifs — flowers, blossoms, goldfish, distant mountainscapes. Here is a dream of beauty that emerges from the ancient art and poetry and more current epic historical movies of a “lost” Chinese past, at once magnifying and re-inventing a stereotype, facing us with questions of where our ideal of the beautiful comes from. A new series of paintings creates an Eastern arcadia, fusing laughter and play with classical elements that take on a new colour and energy in oil.

Fully aware of the complex environment she operates in, Chong Siew Ying’s work does not intend merely to provide a pleasurable escape from its difficulties. Rather, it attempts to liberate human emotion from the burden of the world’s expectations. In a context where we are drowning in, or hiding from, our failings as a human society, Siew Ying has the audacity to pronounce a rare sense of belief in a universal humanity — to retrieve for us our nakedness, our wonder at ourselves before the Fall.

Paris: The Early Years

1996
1998

Chong Siew Ying
An interview with Joël Couloigner

Kuala Lumpur, March – April 2008

Translated from the French by Kim and Benjamin Bergery

This book traces your career as a painter during the past ten years or more. There are some strong continuities and recurring themes through different series of works, as well as radical changes in technique and temperament over time. Do you see your work as a progression through different periods?

The internal logic of my work comes to me in retrospect. If there is a progression, it’s not intentional, it came by itself. I don’t really think that you can break down the work into separate periods. Perhaps you can define a series of themes, but for me, a creation is the result of one thing following another in continuity, one painting leading into another.

Is there a subtle autobiographical link to the paintings in your work?

As with any artist, there is necessarily an autobiographical element in my work, especially since I work from an emotional place. There is no doubt that each painting is impregnated with what I am, what I see, what surrounds me. My personal journey has left its stamp on my work.

1996 also saw the emergence of her Poem Series and other related paintings which draw upon her Chinese heritage and enduring interest in literature. The Poem Series incorporates writings by Chinese poet Zhou Mung Dye, poems which ask questions such as “Who hides a mirror in his heart? Who can walk through his entire life with unshod feet?” [1]

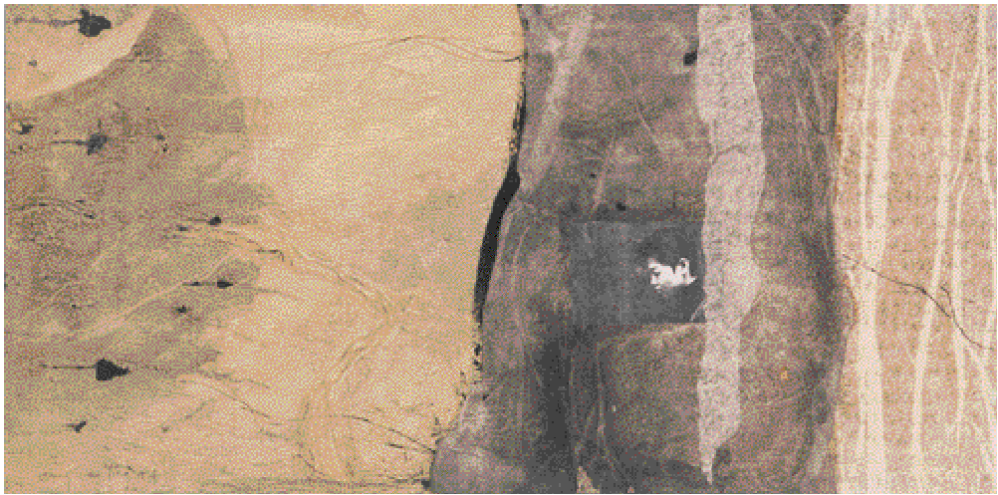
Your Parisian period is characterized by apprenticeship and a mastering of your profession. Why Paris in particular?

It started as a very romantic idea, a youthful dream. I had an image of Paris as the city of artists: Picasso, Matisse, but also painters’ easels on the banks of the Seine. But as we know, in real life things are not as easy as in dreams.

Going to Paris was the first transition in my life, it was like a rebirth, an opening on the world, I not only learned about art, but about a different lifestyle, I learned to think for myself, I became more conscious of my identity, and questioned myself about my existence.

...lyrical and painterly qualities gave way to a harder-edge sensibility seen in her linoprints Eclipse I, Eclipse II, and Murmurs. Their irregular edges, repeated frames and monochromatic colours lend the work a gritty, experimental, Super-8 cinematic quality. Their grid-like pattern implies a mechanical process, even as the frames have been individually laid down and printed. Even the subject matter isn’t spelled out for us, the relationship between the figures could be affectionate or threatening, voyeuristic or consensually erotic. The contrasts between film and painting, machine versus hand-made, the explicit versus the implicit provide the series an edge and tension that a more direct work would not have. [2]

[1] [2] Laura Fan, Chong Siew Ying: A Reflective Life, Chong Siew Ying Selected Works 1996–1997, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, 1998.

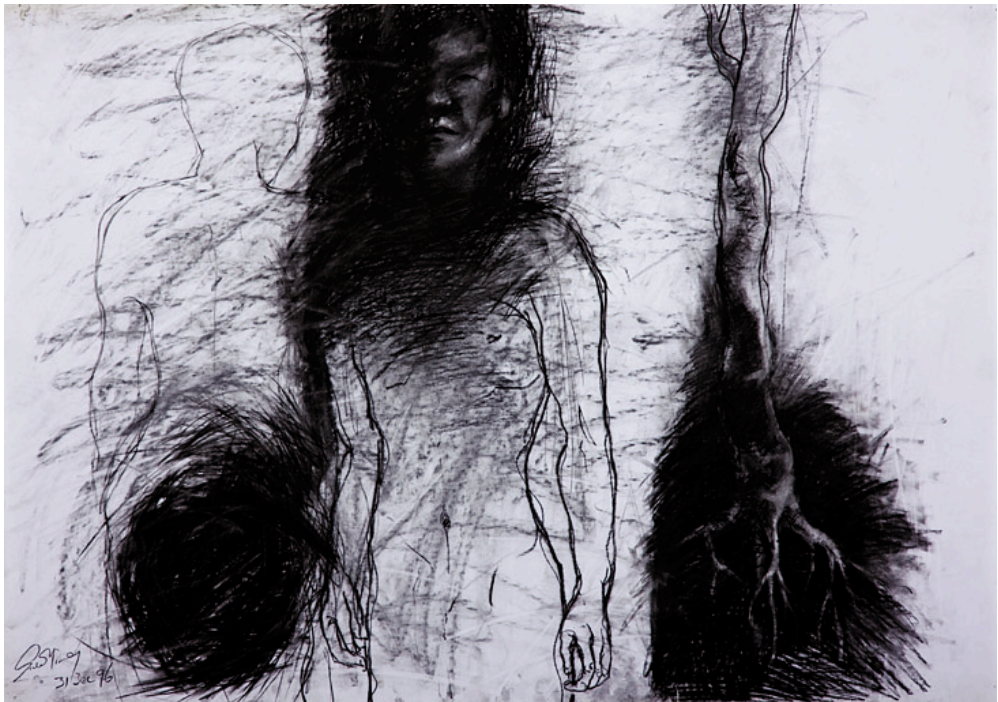


AUTOPORTAIT (POEM SERIES), 1996, PARIS



UNTITLED (POEM SERIES), 1996, PARIS
EMPREINTE, 1996, PARIS





ROOTS, 1996, PARIS



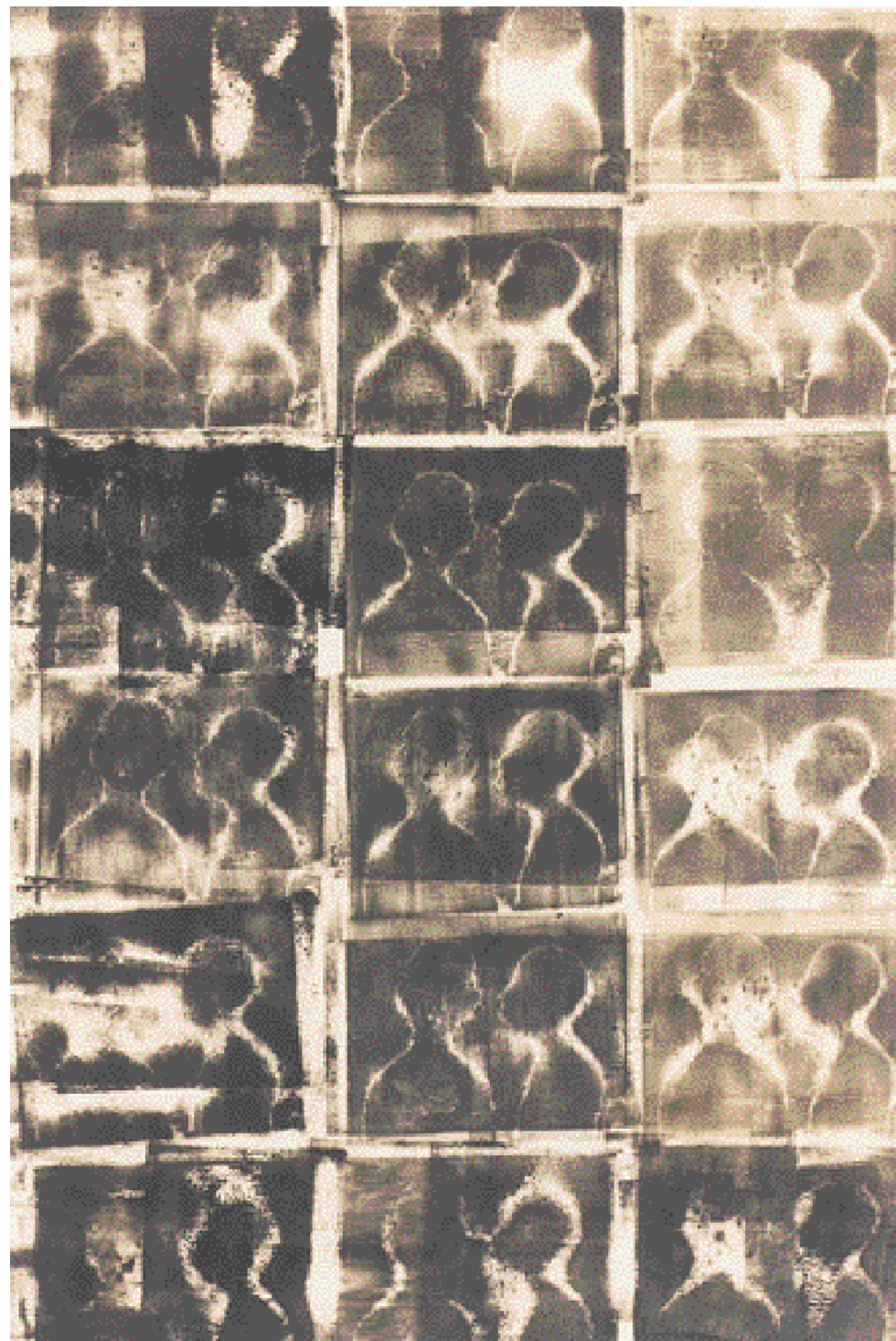
THE WAITING, 1996, PARIS



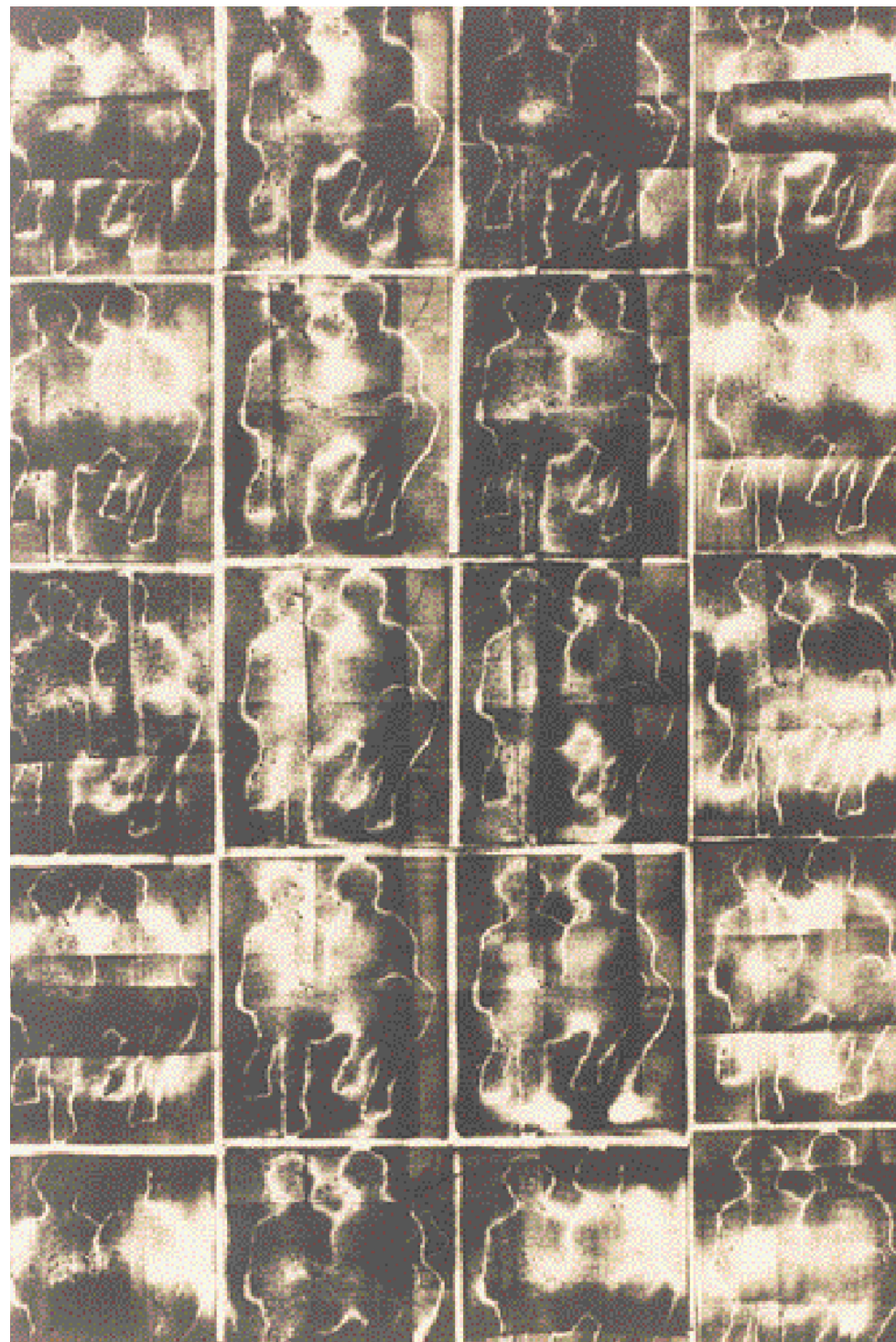
FALLING, 1997, PARIS



URBAN LIFE SERIES: INTRODUCTION, 1997, PARIS



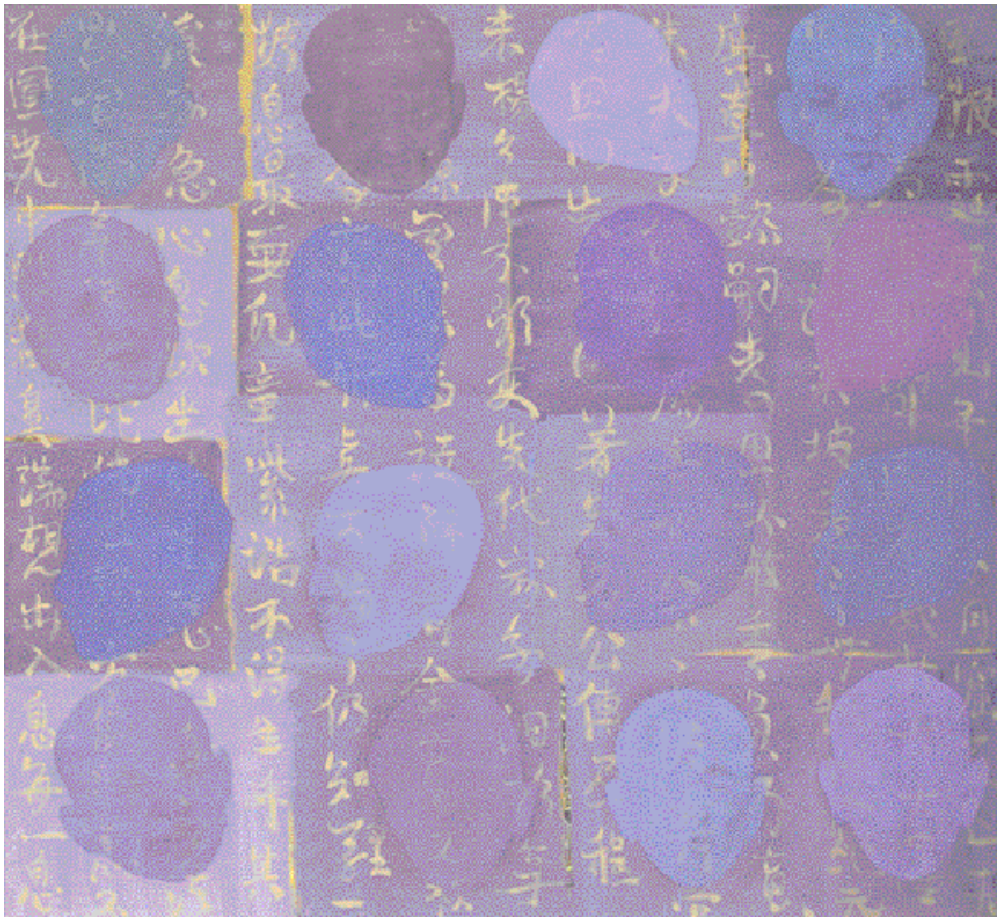
MURMURS, 1997, PARIS



ECLIPSE I, 1997, PARIS



ECLIPSE II, 1997, PARIS



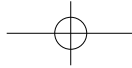
UNDER THE PUTI TREE II, 1997-1998, PARIS - KUALA LUMPUR



UNDER THE PUTI TREE IV, 1997-1998, PARIS - KUALA LUMPUR

Rimbun Dahan

1998
2001



The real start of your career seems to be your artist residency at Rimbun Dahan in 1999?

I returned to Malaysia from France in 1998, not knowing what was waiting for me after such a long absence. I decided to take my time and returned via the Silk Road, which took four months. Going back to living with my parents was rather difficult. I was like a bird who has been put back into a cage. I felt closed in, stifled and I had to face my family's incomprehension in relation to my life choices.

Shortly after my return I presented my work to Valentine Willie Fine Art, who gave me my first solo exhibition in Kuala Lumpur. At the same time, Angela and Hijjas Kasturi invited me to participate in the Rimbun Dahan* program for 1999.

After a seven year absence, I re-discovered Malaysia. During my year at Rimbun Dahan I was able to discover aspects of the country and the people that I had not experienced before, and that I had little opportunity to experience within my family circle.

For me it was a year full of prospects, I was in an element that suited me, surrounded by nature, and with a real atelier. I wasn't harassed by financial worries, I was able to completely concentrate on painting. It was truly a joyful time, and that joy can be found in the paintings. All the figures that I painted are smiling or laughing, just like the people in the Malaysian countryside: they laugh all the time, in fun, but also because they are timid. This is the whole ambience that I put into my paintings of the time.

The presence of faces and the body, while undergoing variations, are almost constant in your paintings. Why the choice of the human figure?

I made the choice to paint figuratively because I wanted to tell stories of humanity. The complexity of the world is contained in man. It's like the movies — almost all films tell human stories — even if the film is about penguins, the underlying story speaks to our humanity. Human emotions are at the center of my interest in narrative. If I had not been a painter I would have liked to have been a film director.

You chose painting of course, which has its own special considerations and challenges. Let's speak a little about your approach to the painting process, and how you use it to express your concerns and interests.

What role do you give to process in making your paintings?

I work a lot with emotion and instinct. When I start a painting I have a vague idea of what I will do, but it's my actual work on the canvas that builds the painting. I can pass days in contemplation in front of a blank canvas before I start working, which is why I don't do any preparatory work, I work directly on the canvas. I try to express a certain emotion, sometimes without even really knowing what emotion or why. There is always an intention at the beginning, but the painting develops its own narrative, telling its own story.

With this kind of creative process when do you consider that a painting is finished?

I just know it. For me it's obvious when the canvas seems finished. Each painting is different, some are finished because the intention has been made clear; for others it's a matter of balance, of harmony.

You often work on a big scale. Why is this?

I love working on a big scale. On a large format canvas, say larger than 5 feet by 5 feet, I feel a freedom of movement that comes out in the way I use the brush, and the way I build up the painting. The impact is definitely different for the viewer who will see the work, and for myself at the moment of painting. There's a very real physical relation to the canvas. I feel a great sensation and an intense pleasure in painting works that are bigger than I am.

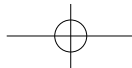
You use mainly oil on canvas, what does this medium bring you in comparison to others?

During my Parisian apprenticeship I experimented with all kinds of different techniques and materials, and discovered that I am most at ease with oil on canvas — its transparency, its intensity, its voluptuousness corresponded best to my work. Over time I continue to be attracted to the transparency that comes with oil, (which is totally different from that of watercolor), and also the impact of the brush on the canvas, the energy that I can communicate in the movement of strokes; at present, it's a medium that I am truly attuned to.

What is your approach to colour?

At the outset of a painting I more or less know the shapes I will make, but the colour comes of its own accord. I have come to realize over time that my choices of colours depend a lot on where I do the work. The quality of the light is the greatest influence. I used different hues in the paintings I did in the US, than in those made in France or Malaysia; but this is something that I am not conscious of when I paint, it comes after the fact. In the same way, if I paint faces or bodies in gray it is more for aesthetic than intellectual reasons, it imposes itself during the act of painting.

* Rimbun Dahan — a "leafy branch" giving shelter. The Rimbun Dahan residency program has been supporting artists and writers since 1994.



Siew Ying’s paintings of laughing people uncover the ephemeral nature of these subjects, and hold them. This is not easy, as the ephemeral is always in motion, representations of it risk becoming sentimental or simply nostalgic. This spontaneous moment of expressive joy highlights a common reaction when one wants neither to compromise, nor to jeopardize a possible outcome. Siew Ying chooses to freeze this moment at the point where she cannot compromise, and in this way her paintings produce a unique space, as these are literally the moments in which we determine the nature and production of space, and indeed life.

We make a choice here, in the way we embrace the phenomenon of such openness. This is life fully lived across all its oppositions, pain and joy, life and death, validating and acknowledging all as essential to being. The works accentuate a realisation and resolution about where the important moments in life can be found. As well as being an expression of joy and happiness, it is also an act of opening to forgiveness. Not least is the fact that these paintings express laughter as a continuous event, active and sustained rather than passive and momentary.

These paintings are often dominated by enormous laughing faces. Most of them appear in monochromatic colours with the softness and the transparency of shadow, as if emerging from a dream. Progressively, these faces are surrounded by colourful images, as the laughter bursts beyond its own world, into one of light and colour.

Some of the work profoundly contrasts different forms of lived, human space, against how that space is felt or thought about. The first is a routine social space which is the background to daily life, a domain of agreed and fixed points where discourse and narrative occur. The other is a more radical, charged space, almost where the personal elements of social narrative first take form. Always immanent, able to press upon us at any moment, it is where the world fuses to us in spontaneous, expanding moments of awareness. These are instances when the connection between self and other is intrinsic and impulsive, drawing the world and ourselves together.

Such transitory and involuntary expressions of life recall a crucial simultaneous condition of self/other; and this primary space of radical openness is often present in Siew Ying’s paintings. Ecstatic and illuminated, her works are able to emancipate a world of routine, because here life may be re-imagined, and new situations uncovered, offering new reasons to create. Narrative outcomes are side-lined in this play of spatial subjectivities, emphasising resistance to all closures.

Here is a choice about how such openness is conceived and attracted in life. To invite such experiences is often a point of compromise, the point at which routine should properly be put aside. It suggests terrain between centres and margins, velocities as we transverse space between the personal/peripheral and the social/centre, and the way these collide and turn on an instant. It allows for a construction of empathies and common commitment, and is a nice reminder of how large the history of the human body can become.

A fascination for the moment when one laughs is itself a highly nomadic subject: in our own lives the re-entry of the charged ‘allspace’ within us is profoundly irreversible, an emanation of magic by which life is awakened. ^[3]

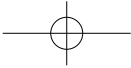
[3] Gary Proctor and Angela Hijjas, “Chong Siew Ying”, Rimbun Dahan, Selangor, 2000.

RAMBUTAN-RAMBUTAN, 1998, KUALA LUMPUR





KELAPA, KEPALA, 1998, KUALA LUMPUR

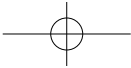


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THE BIG BLUE, 1998, KUALA LUMPUR

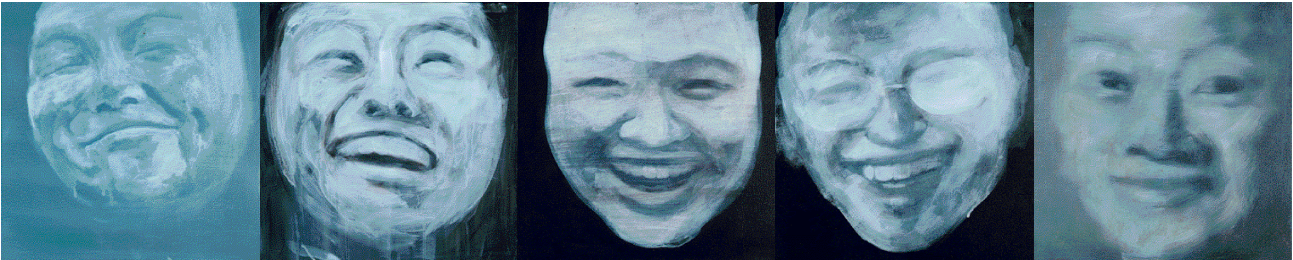


PURPLE LINE, 1998, KUALA LUMPUR

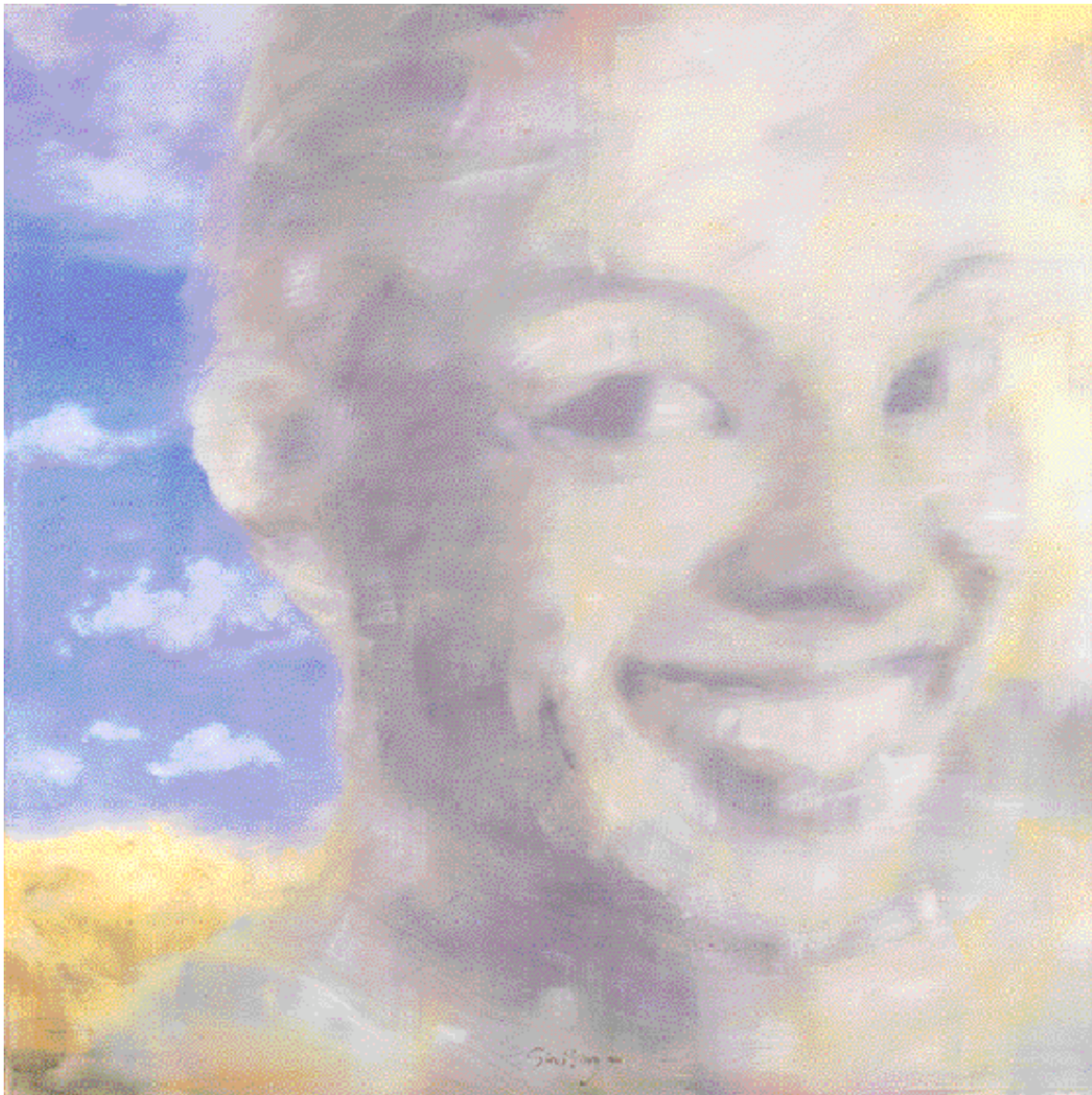




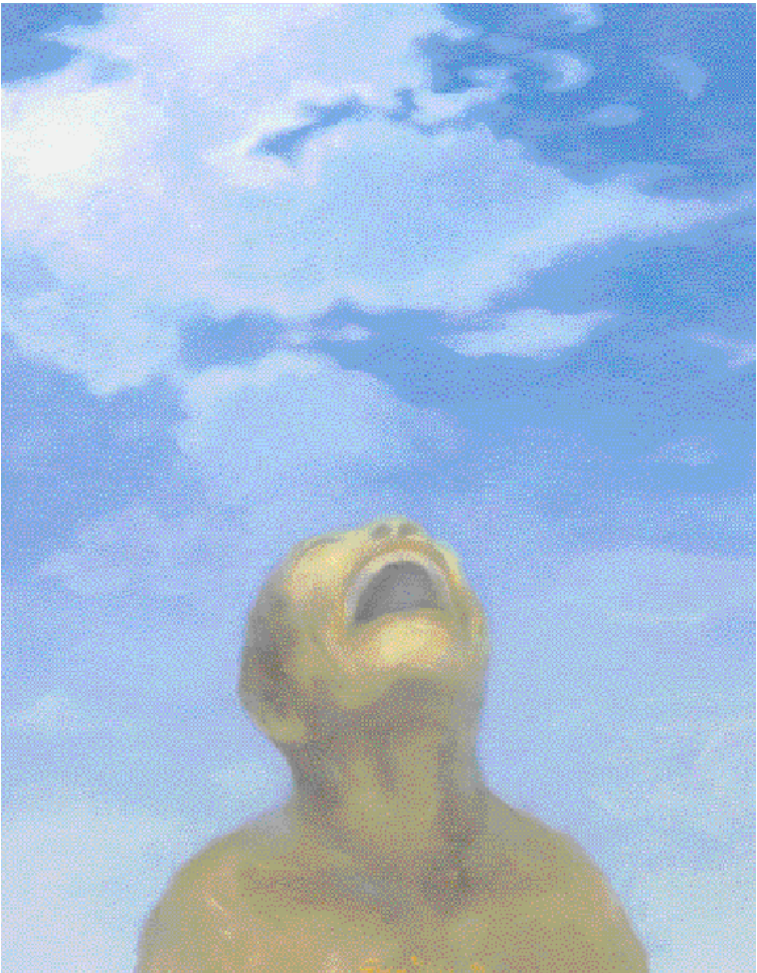
THE JOKE, 1998-1999, RIMBUN DAHAN



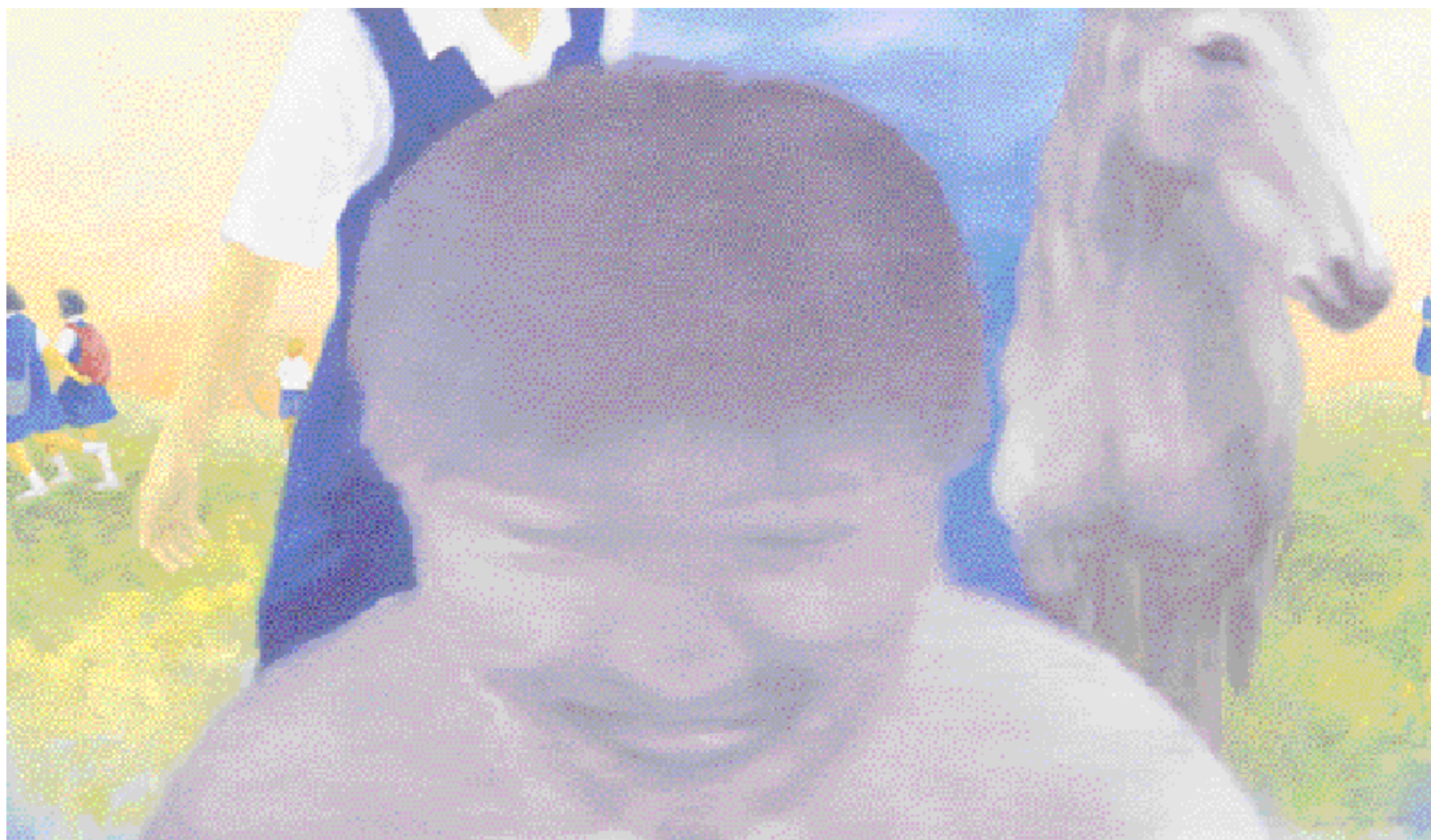
UNTITLED, 2000, RIMBUN DAHAN



BIG BLUE SKY, 1999, RIMBUN DAHAN



EXILE, 1999, RIMBUN DAHAN



AFTER SCHOOL, 1999, RIMBUN DAHAN



FRANGIPANI, 1999,
RIMBUN DAHAN



WAITING, 2000, KUALA LUMPUR



THE ART OF LIVING, 2000, KUALA LUMPUR



GRACE, 2000, KUALA LUMPUR



SLEEPERS, 2001, PARIS

Going Away, Coming Home

2001
2004

Your return to Malaysia would seem to have laid strong foundations for your artistic career. Why then in the year after your residency at Rimbun Dahan did you leave for the USA and then France?

This isn't so easy to answer — I don't really know why I needed to go away again. I felt that there was something not quite complete in my life. I needed changes, I was looking to live in a different place, meet different people, new challenges.

“Siew Ying is the classic itinerant, leaving to find the path of return, circumambulating the earth to locate herself. At the same time her access to place is always through people, and as a painter she is most attracted to the human form and the human face, the emotional nuances of posture and expression.” ^[4]

So, in 2000, I went through the difficult process of getting a visa to enable me to stay in New York for six months to paint. After this I obtained a two-month residency grant to work at the Vermont Studio Center, and then spent another six months painting in Paris before coming back to Malaysia in 2002. The works created during this period don't really have a common theme. It was a time of not knowing where I belonged, not knowing where I was going to, and we brought the works together in a show called *Going Away, Coming Home*.

In 2004, your first solo exhibition in Singapore, *Mirror's Edge*, seems to mark a turning point for you, focusing more fully on the nude figure. Can you tell us more about this development?

In *Mirror's Edge*, I explored the theme of human body, as an expression of human relationships, and the bond between the human being and space. Here, I meant not simply physical space but also emotional and spiritual space.

The word 'nude' in the Western art context means being naked or bare. I had no intention of simply repeating the convention of glorifying the beauty of the human body, but rather sought to express the spiritual side of it. Metaphorically speaking, all humans are born naked, we faced the world naked. Gender is of little significance. The figures in my paintings often carry a sense of loneliness, perhaps in some way or another reflecting my state of mind — he/she can be described as the reflection of my inner self.

Certain postures in my painting are recurring: a little girl on her toes, or a man looking up at the sky. As a child, I always dreamt of exploring the world, to experience people, and from their faces probe into human emotions. This is why I choose the human being as my subject. ^[5]

In general, my paintings are more inclined to the spiritual or psychological aspects of expression, which are tied to aesthetic concerns.

Here, also you begin to make use of “floating” shapes of flowers on the painting's surface...

Placing another layer of shapes on the human figures enhances the dimensionality of the painting. I wanted to create another space and time, and this is about memory.

Memory plays a strong role in my work. When we recollect things, fragments of our memories flash through our minds like film footage. I see these images as transparent. They are there, yet they are not quite there.

Often, the composition of your works makes no specific references to a time or place. They are minimal, yet rich in visual effect. What is your intention here?

I've traveled through deserts, mountains and long beaches, and that feeling of space always finds its way subconsciously into the paintings. I intend to reduce space and time to the level of nothingness — so that a place could be anywhere, located in any time, a space for the imagination.

“Human figures in “placelessness” and timelessness; enigmatic as always. Austerity of bareness and baldness, punctuated by occasional smiles and softened by soft impressionistic hues and tone, gives rise to pleasurable aesthetic sensation. The blurring and merging of male and female, scream and laughter, contemplation and observation, set up an immediate investigation of duality. However, should one invest in a longer pause, the images may take the viewer past the surface to engage in the artist's exploration into identity and displacement, tradition and belief, hope and experience. Following that, or simultaneously, these may reflect on the viewer and instigate him or her to question him- or herself on similar concerns.” ^[6]

[4] Beverly Yong, *Going Away, Coming Home*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur 2002.

[5] Chai Chang Hwang & Ooik Kooi Hin, *Stripping Down: In Conversation with Chong Siew Ying, Mirror's Edge* (at The Substation, Singapore), Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur 2004.

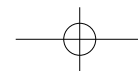
[6] Frank Ling, *Chong Siew Ying: Silent Provocateur, Mirror's Edge* (at The Substation, Singapore), Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur 2004.



TIMES SQUARE NEW YORK, 2001, NEW YORK

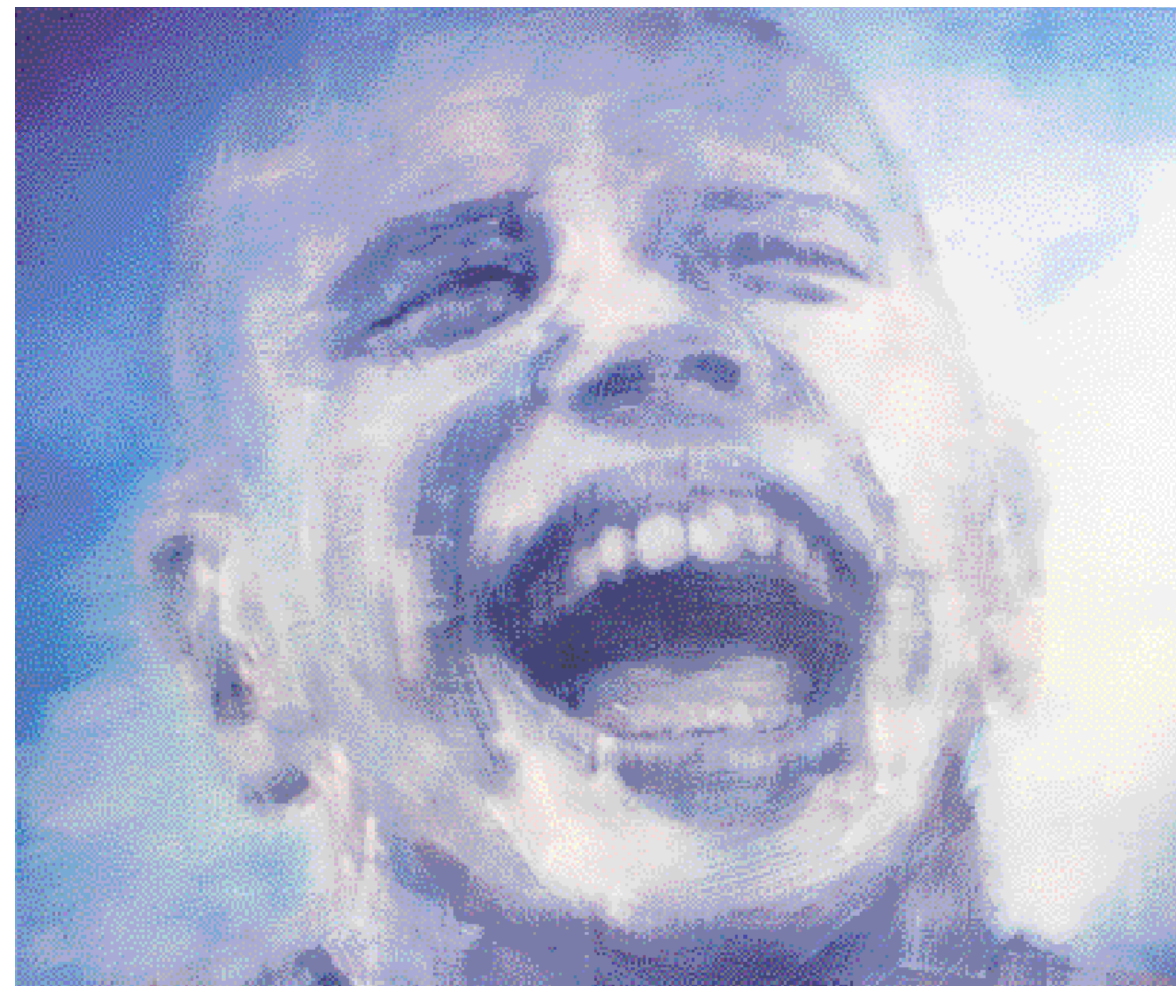


PASAR MALAM, 2002, PARIS

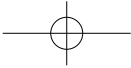


LE CRI, 2002, PARIS

48 49



UNTITLED (MONSIEUR CHONG), 2001, PARIS

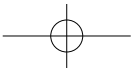


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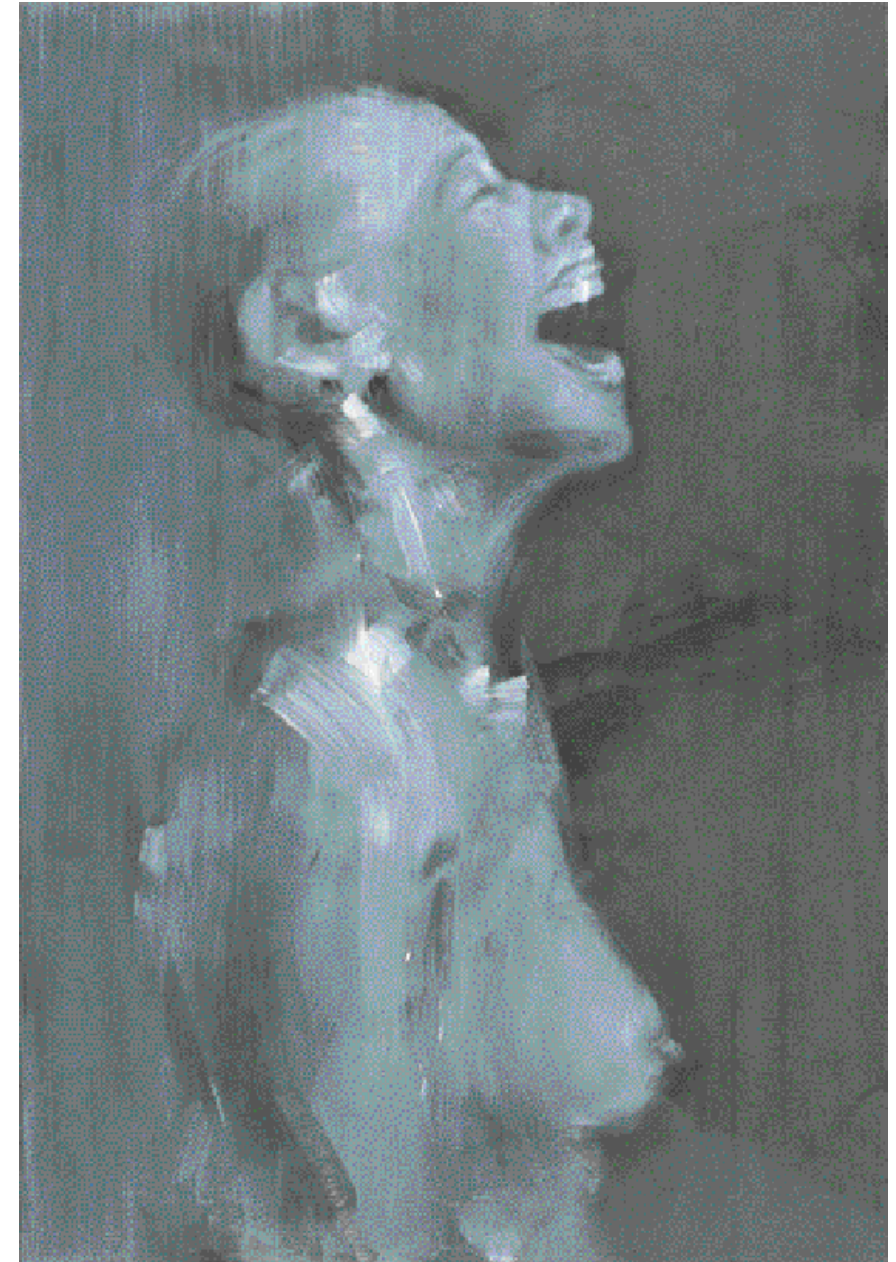
THE CONCERT, 2001, NEW YORK

THE PARTY, 2002, PARIS

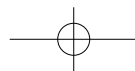




DUO, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR



INK BLAST, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR

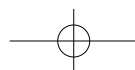


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UNTITLED, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR

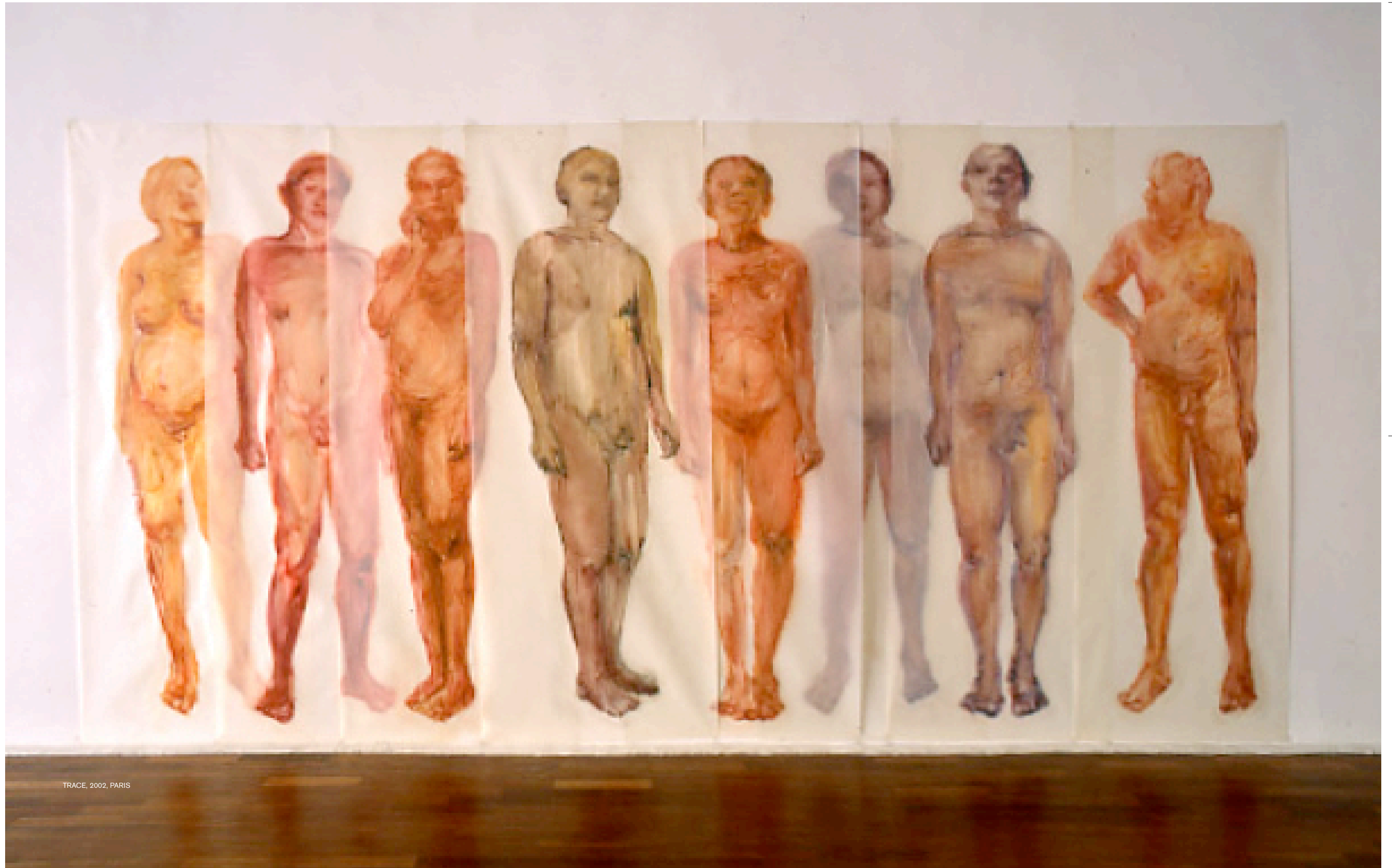


THE BIG SMILE, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR





THE WOMAN WITH THE RED SCARF, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR



TRACE, 2002, PARIS



ATTITUDE II, 2003, PARIS

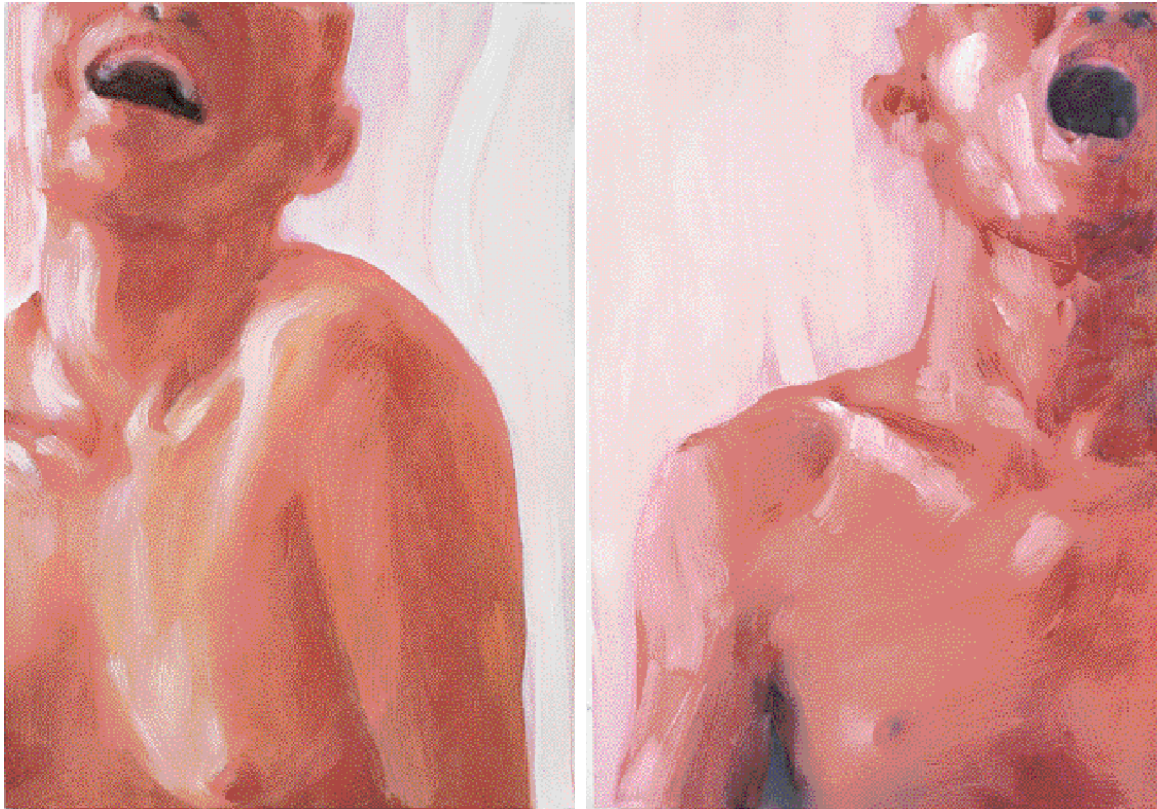


ATTITUDE III, 2003, PARIS

60 61



THE LOVE STORIES III, 2003, PARIS



FLIP, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR

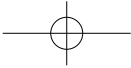
FLUX, 2003, KUALA LUMPUR



THE HERMIT, 2003–2004, KUALA LUMPUR

Many Splendoured Things

2006
2008



Your exhibition *Many Splendoured Things* in 2006 is different both in terms of subject matter and the choice of medium. It's about landscape, flora and fauna in Malaysia, and the entire show was made up of charcoal drawings on paper. Can you tell us how this came about?

At the time, I felt the need to break away into something different from working in oil. I began to take pictures of the many little things that I found beautiful in my immediate environment, around my apartment in KL — a tree on the roadside, flowers on my balcony, chickens running around the neighbourhood; and I also began to make drawings of these in my studio, in a playful way.

Working with charcoal on paper involves a strong and sensitive use of line, mark-making and it's also about finding a certain balance and harmony within the empty space — so it was natural for me to link this approach to Chinese ink painting. This helped to lead to my further developing ideas about the spiritual and artistic conceptions of classical Chinese painting and adapting these in my work in oil painting.

“Siew Ying’s skilful work combines the three-dimensional monumentality and mark-making of Western traditions with a lyrical play of space, depth and line that draws directly from classical Chinese painting. The specific subjects she depicts – from limestone formations and French roosters to old Chinese men thinking about youth, or the politics of mangosteen/durian dating rituals – all remind us of gentler times, the remnants of which are rapidly disappearing; the urban aspects are the threatened by renewal while the rural surroundings – the ponds, the rubber plantations, the lalang-covered hills, are deprived of their function by development.” [7]

Currently your work explores the themes of faces and bodies. There is a visible link, in the way the motifs are treated, to classical Chinese painting. Can you tell us about this?

In my latest work I paint faces or bodies that have the singularity of being “beautiful”. This beauty is somewhat forced, because it seems to me that beauty in contemporary art has almost become taboo. This approach was already present in the series of people laughing. There is no intended sarcasm, or other provocation, in my paintings, it's just beauty in the positive sense, and the perception that I have of classical Chinese painting that attracts me, is very close to that form of beauty and harmony.

I will admit that my reference to traditional Chinese paintings is not an “innocent” one — it's not just a matter of aesthetics, it is a way for me to dig into my cultural roots and to keep connected with them.

In your latest works, in addition to the “Chinese” treatment of the “scenery”, there are many flowers. Is there any particular reason for their presence?

Flowers and plants are a passion for me. At first I merely wanted to paint them, it was a desire that had been brewing in my head for years. When I began to introduce these motifs in my paintings I realized that it was not by accident. Human beings have always used flowers as symbols. The flower in itself already contains a whole world of perceptions and feelings. Each choice of flower is intimately involved in the creation of the ambience of each painting. What's more, plant elements introduce a freedom of form, which makes the composition very interesting. Blending people and flowers together gives me the opportunity to evoke a more restrained, and more fragile, range of moods. The title of my coming exhibition of new paintings, “*Idylle*” is the French word for a short poem often telling a gentle love story, in a pastoral setting.

What are the influences that have counted in your career? Can one compare your work with that of contemporary artists from The People's Republic of China?

There is always a tendency to compare me with them, because of the form and content of my paintings: the big faces, the hairless figures I suppose, but I don't think I have been influenced by them, at least not consciously. The intention in our work is not the same, I think they are working from a place of shock, they lived through a historical break that I have not experienced, not having lived in the same place.

We are basically from the same culture, I am comfortable reading Chinese novels, and that's part of what links us. But I really feel that, despite formal similarities, my paintings are very different from theirs. Art is a reflection of the identity of the artist. I have had a personal journey that has fed my work in a personal way. I am of Chinese culture, and the Chinese community in Malaysia is indeed steeped in tradition. In our family we speak the Hakka dialect, when I went to school we were taught in Mandarin, but Malaysia is a multicultural country, where Malay and English is spoken, and later I had another life in Paris, where I spoke French. And now, even in my dreams I speak a few languages...

Is there any artist in particular who has influenced you?

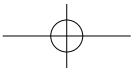
I've never had a “favourite” artist. I think that I wanted to paint because of the paint itself. Of course I have come across many admirable artists and works in my life, but I have never admired one artist in particular. When there has been influence, it hasn't been in relation to style; when I saw the paintings of Francis Bacon for the first time, I felt a shock at the impact his paintings had on me. It is an impact that I have strived to find again with my own style in my paintings.

Rather than speaking of influence, I think it is more accurate to talk about inspiration, because it feeds into a lot of areas outside painting, such as dance, literature, cinema... For example, my hairless figures come from having seen a dance performance of the Sakai Jodo company. All the dancers had shaved heads, and were painted white from head to toe, and I thought it gave a lot of visual power to the piece, and this later showed up in my paintings.

My desire to tell a story is more inspired by film. I am passionate about cinema, and directors such as Andrei Tarkovsky, Peter Greenaway, and Wong Kar Wai, amongst many others, count a lot for me. I like the idea of telling a story that has no beginning or end, which stays unresolved, but makes us share a moment of emotion.

I think the idea which has had most influence on me is not about painting per se; rather it is the concept of the *métier* of the painter, which was conveyed to me by Korean artists who were in Paris at the same time I was. Some of them were already established artists in Korea, and they really taught me discipline. This discipline helped me to find the energy, and faith, to continually create.

[7] Anurendra Jegadeva, *Many Splendoured Things: Recent Drawings by Chong Siew Ying, Many Splendoured Things, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, 2006.*





ESSENCE, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



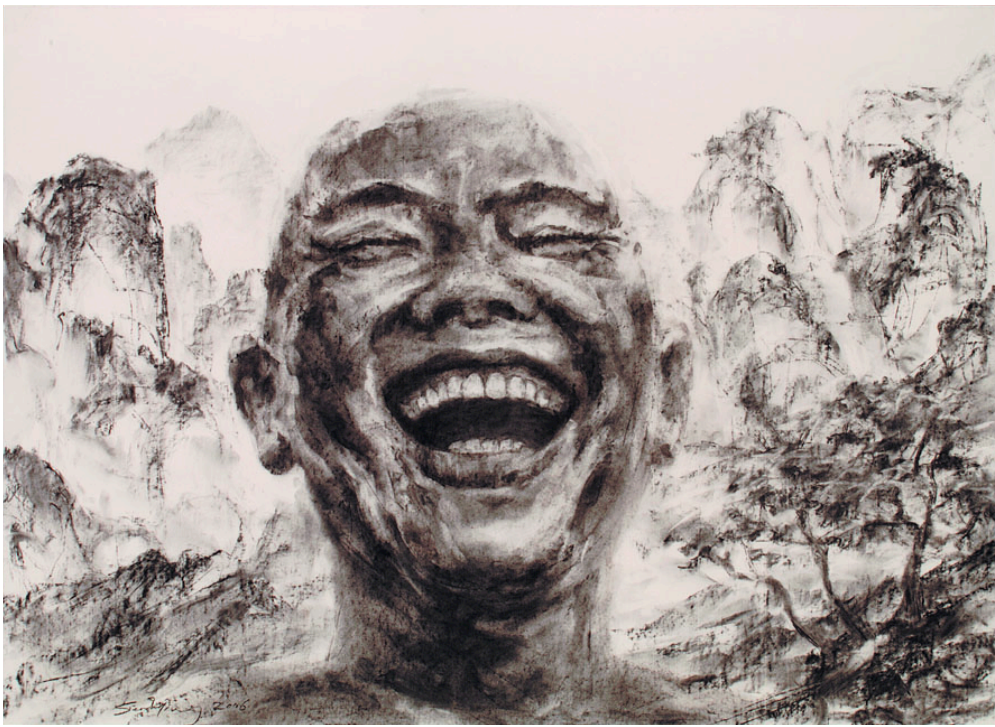
FISH TALK, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



UN COQ À PARIS, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



THOUSAND MOUNTAINS, MILLION SEAS, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



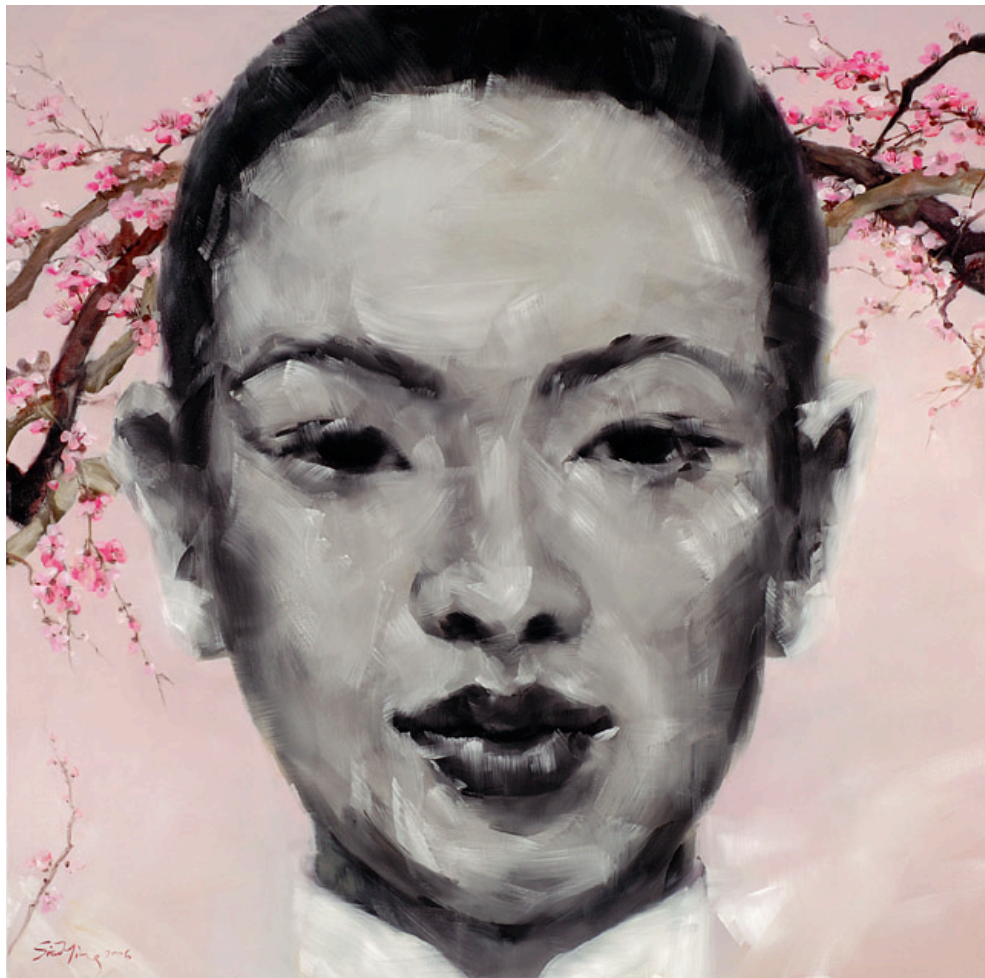
STANDING ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



AUTUMN, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



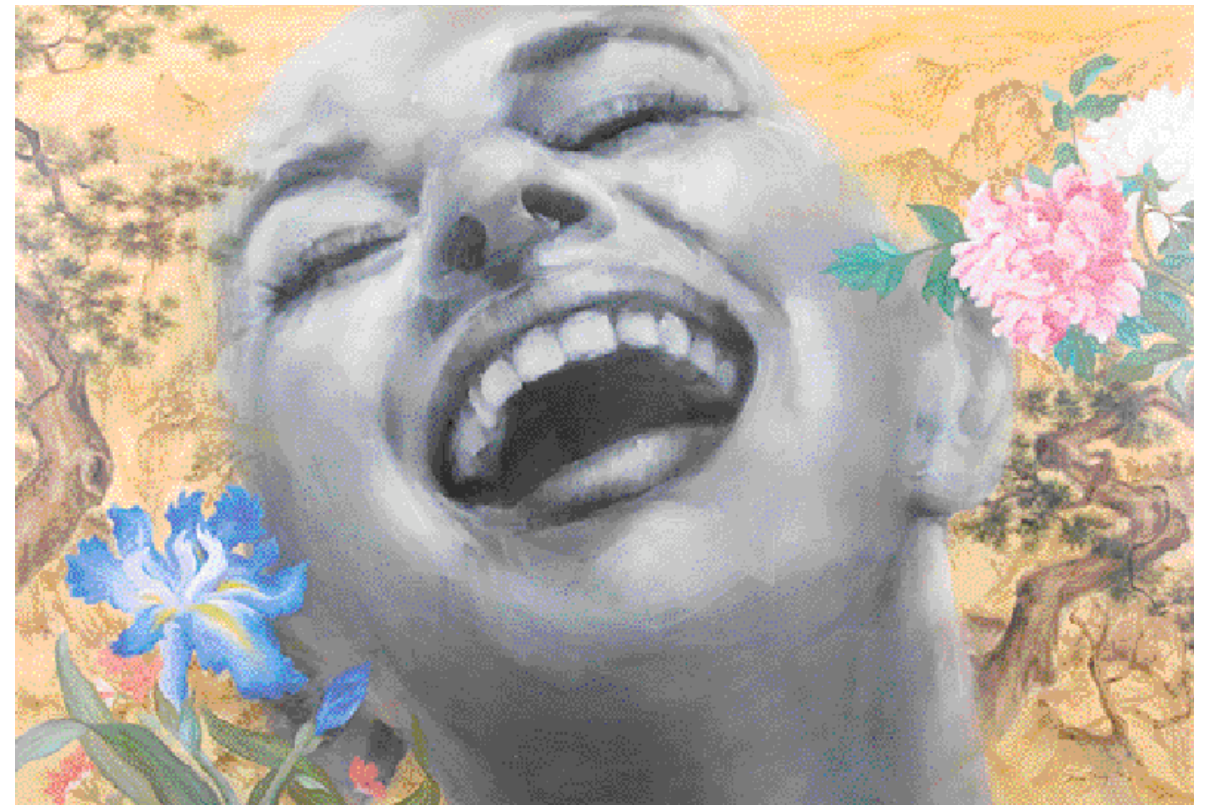
SPRING, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



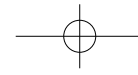
WINTER, 2006, KUALA LUMPUR



THOUSAND MOUNTAINS, MILLION SEAS II, 2006, BREST



IRIS, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



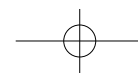
LANDSCAPE I, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR

78

79



LANDSCAPE II, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR





PLUM BLOSSOM, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



LOTUS, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



MODERN CHINESE (TURQUOISE), 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



MODERN CHINESE (BUTTERFLY'S DREAM), 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



ESPOIR, 2007, KUALA LUMPUR



WATER'S EDGE, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR



IDYLLE II, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR



IDYLLE III, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR



IDYLLE I, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR



SIEW YING IN WONDERLAND, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR



ENVOL, 2008, KUALA LUMPUR

90

91

AUTOPORTRAIT (POEM SERIES)

p. 10
1996, PARIS
MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS
50 X 100 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

UNTITLED (POEM SERIES)

p. 11 top
1996, PARIS
MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS
45 X 60 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION

EMPREINTE p. 11 bottom

1996, PARIS
MIXED MEDIA
33 X 22 X 15 CM (X3)
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

ROOTS p. 12

1996, PARIS
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
65 X 92 CM
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

THE WAITING p. 13

1996, PARIS
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
184 X 195 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, AUSTRALIA

FALLING p. 14

1997, PARIS
OIL ON PAPER
148 X 100 CM
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

URBAN LIFE SERIES: INTRODUCTION p. 15

1997, PARIS
OIL AND PAPER ON CANVAS
114 X 120 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

MURMURS p. 16

1997, PARIS
LINOPRINT, OIL ON PAPER
148 X 100 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, FRANCE

ECLIPSE I p. 16

1997, PARIS
LINOPRINT, OIL ON PAPER
148 X 100 CM
COLLECTION OF PATRICK CHIN, MALAYSIA

ECLIPSE II p. 17

1997, PARIS
LINOPRINT, OIL ON PAPER
148 X 100 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, USA

UNDER THE PUTI TREE II p. 18

1997-1998,
PARIS - KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
101 X 100 CM
ELEANOR & RUSSELL NOTIDES, USA

UNDER THE PUTI TREE IV p. 19

1997-1998,
PARIS - KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
101 X 100 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

RAMBUTAN-RAMBUTAN p. 25

1998, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON RICE PAPER
140 X 76 CM
COLLECTION OF JACQUELINE LOH, CANADA

KELAPA, KEPALA p. 26-27

1998, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON RICE PAPER
140 X 76 CM (X2)
COLLECTION OF MR & MRS CHAN SAU CHEE, MALAYSIA

THE BIG BLUE p. 28

1998, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
85 X 140 CM
COLLECTION OF JANICE YEAP, MALAYSIA

PURPLE LINE p. 29

1998, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
85 X 140 CM
COLLECTION OF ROSEMARY & DR STEVE WONG, MALAYSIA

THE JOKE p. 30

1998-1999, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
100 X 320 CM
COLLECTION OF RIMBUN DAHAN

UNTITLED p. 31

2000, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
30 X 30 CM (X 5)
COLLECTION OF ROSEMARY & DR STEVE WONG, MALAYSIA

BIG BLUE SKY p. 32

1999, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
200 X 200 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

EXILE p. 33

1999, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
137.5 X 107 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

AFTER SCHOOL p. 34-35

1999, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 255 CM
COLLECTION OF ROSEMARY & DR STEVE WONG, MALAYSIA

FRANGIPANI p. 36-37

1999, RIMBUN DAHAN
OIL ON CANVAS
230 X 290 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

WAITING p. 38

2000, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
80 X 180 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

THE ART OF LIVING p. 39

2000, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
80 X 180 CM
COLLECTION OF JANICE YEAP, MALAYSIA

GRACE p. 40

2000, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
91.5 X 76 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, SINGAPORE

SLEEPERS p. 41

2001, PARIS
CHARCOAL, ACRYLIC ON LINEN
46 X 38 CM (X3)
COLLECTION OF J & C KUPERHOLC-DURUEL, FRANCE

TIMES SQUARE NEW YORK p. 46

2001, NEW YORK
OIL ON CANVAS
114 X 146 CM
COLLECTION OF OLIVIA STZEPOURGINSKI, FRANCE

PASAR MALAM p. 47

2002, PARIS
OIL ON LINEN
130 X 97 CM (X3)
COLLECTION OF NATIONAL ART GALLERY

LE CRI p. 48

2002, PARIS
OIL ON LINEN
180 X 200 CM
COLLECTION OF ATELIER PHUONG, FRANCE

UNTITLED (MONSIEUR CHONG)

p. 49
2001, PARIS
OIL ON LINEN
170 X 200 CM
COLLECTION OF KIM & BENJAMIN BERGERY, FRANCE

THE CONCERT p. 50

2001, NEW YORK
OIL ON CANVAS
120 X 131 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

THE PARTY p. 51

2002, PARIS
OIL ON LINEN
106 X 130 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

DUO p. 52

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
100 X 100 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION

INK BLAST p. 53

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
130 X 97 CM
COLLECTION OF REGINA TAN, SINGAPORE

UNTITLED p. 54

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
145 X 173 CM
COLLECTION OF DATO' SERI STEPHEN & DATIN SERI IRENE YEAP, MALAYSIA

THE BIG SMILE p. 55

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
145 X 173 CM
COLLECTION OF MR & MRS MAH YONG SUN, MALAYSIA

THE WOMAN WITH THE RED SCARF p. 56-57

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 150 CM
COLLECTION OF MOHAN & MARYANNE, MALAYSIA

TRACE p. 58-59

2002, PARIS
OIL ON VELLUM
200 X 80 CM (X 8)
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

ATTITUDE II p. 60 left

2003, PARIS
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
120 X 65.5 CM

ATTITUDE III p. 60 right

2003, PARIS
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
120 X 65.5 CM

THE LOVE STORIES III p. 61

2003, PARIS
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
120 X 65.5 CM
COLLECTION OF LISA NGAN, MALAYSIA

FLIP p. 62 left

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CAVAS
89 X 63 CM
COLLECTION OF IMAYA WONG, MALAYSIA

FLUX p. 62 right

2003, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CAVAS
89 X 63 CM
COLLECTION OF IMAYA WONG, MALAYSIA

THE HERMIT p. 63

2003-2004, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
200 X 100 CM
COLLECTION OF TSAI MING LIANG, MALAYSIA-TAIWAN

ESSENCE p. 68-69

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
150 X 200 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

FISH TALK p. 70

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
107 X 142 CM
COLLECTION OF IMAYA WONG, MALAYSIA

UN COQ À PARIS p. 71

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
180 X 97 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, MALAYSIA

THOUSAND MOUNTAINS, MILLION SEAS p. 72

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
40 X 110 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, UK

STANDING ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN p. 73

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
80 X 110 CM
COLLECTION OF JOHNNI WONG, MALAYSIA

AUTUMN p. 74 left

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
150 X 150 CM
COLLECTION OF KIM & BENJAMIN BERGERY, FRANCE

SPRING p. 74 right

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
150 X 150 CM
PRIVATE COLLECTION, FRANCE

WINTER p. 75

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
150 X 150 CM
COLLECTION OF CHRIS & CECILIA TAN, MALAYSIA

THOUSAND MOUNTAINS, MILLION SEAS II p. 76

2006, BREST
OIL ON CANVAS
180 X 200 CM
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

IRIS p. 77

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
170 X 250 CM
COLLECTION OF MR & MRS FRANK WEWEERS, USA

LANDSCAPE I p. 78

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 175 CM
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST & BYRON C. COHEN GALLERY, USA

LANDSCAPE II p. 79

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 175 CM
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST & BYRON C. COHEN GALLERY, USA

PLUM BLOSSOM p. 80

2006, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 190 CM
COLLECTION OF THOMAS KANN, MONACO

LOTUS p. 81

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 190 CM
COLLECTION OF DR LAURENCE SOLOMON, USA

MODERN CHINESE (TURQUOISE) p. 82 left

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
82.5 X 82.5 CM

MODERN CHINESE (BUTTERFLY'S DREAM) p. 82 right

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
82.5 X 82.5 CM

ESPOIR p. 83

2007, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 175 CM

WATER'S EDGE p. 84

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
150 X 98 CM

IDYLLE II p. 85

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 190 CM

IDYLLE III p. 86

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 190 CM

IDYLLE I p. 87

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 190 CM

SIEW YING IN WONDERLAND p. 88-89

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON LINEN
200 X 240 CM

ENVOL p. 90

2008, KUALA LUMPUR
OIL ON CANVAS
173 X 145 CM



PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAMIEN KEO

Artist's Profile

Chong Siew Ying (b. 1969, Malaysia) is one of the Southeast Asian region's most powerful portrayers of the human face and figure. Siew Ying left Malaysia in 1990 and enrolled in the Ecole Des Beaux-Art in Versailles, France. After graduation, she studied and taught at international printmaking centre Atelier 63 in Paris, while working as an artist and exhibiting in the city.

Her career has since spanned solo and group exhibitions in Malaysia and around Southeast Asia, in Europe (France, Spain, Sweden, Holland, Australia) and the United States. Her solo exhibitions in the region include *Many Splendoured Things* (2006), *Going Away, Coming Home* (2002) and *Chong Siew Ying: Selected Works 1996–1997* (1998) in Kuala Lumpur, and *Mirror's Edge* (2004) in Singapore. Over the past year she has also held solo exhibitions in Paris and Kansas City.

Major group exhibitions include: *Jejak: Contemporary Art from Malaysia* (2007) at Galeri Nasional, Jakarta, *Footsteps* (2004) at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, and *Of Shadows and Images: Visual Art from Malaysia* (2003) at the Kunst Museum, Malmo, Sweden, which travelled to Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona, and Circulo de Bellas Arts, Madrid.

She was a finalist for the Sovereign Asian Art Prize in 2005. In 2002, she won the special award at The Young Contemporaries, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. She was the Freeman Asian Artist Fellowship Award recipient at The Vermont Studio Center, Vermont, USA in 2001. From 1999 to 2000, she was artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan, Kuang, Malaysia. Her works are in the collection of National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, and major private collections in Malaysia, Singapore, France and the USA. She is currently based in Kuala Lumpur and Paris.

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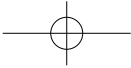
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Avenue Invest Berhad (AvIB), a member of the ECM Libra Group, is proud to support this publication celebrating the work of a leading Malaysian artist. The monograph *Chong Siew Ying* documents over ten years of the work of a gifted painter whose artistic vision of the human experience has made a strong impact on art audiences both at home and abroad. *Chong Siew Ying* is launched in conjunction with *Idylle*, the artist's first major painting show in Malaysia in six years, following a series of successful exhibitions in the United States, France and Singapore.

In a society very much in the process of building an infrastructure for the arts, general public awareness of homegrown artistic talent is still limited. Exhibitions and publications are key to building a greater appreciation of art practice in Malaysia. We hope our collaboration with Valentine Willie Fine Art in this project will be a small but meaningful step towards enabling the rising stars of the Malaysian art scene to reach out to a larger audience at home and abroad.

AvIB's relationship with the arts is an extension of what we offer — investments. As a well respected fund management company with its own niche clientele of sophisticated investors, our support of this publication and exhibition presents a wonderful opportunity for our clients, and the general public, to enjoy and appreciate a different type of valuable asset — art — to our society and our culture. By supporting Malaysian artists, AvIB is making an investment into the development of our nation's artistic heritage.

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