



LAMPU KANSANOH

(b.1983) received her BFA and MFA from Silpakorn University, Bangkok. She has been exhibiting in numerous exhibitions since 2004 and her solo shows include *Bitter Sweet*, ARDEL Gallery of Modern Art, Bangkok, 2011 and *Nonsense: No-nonsense*, ARDEL Gallery of Modern Art, 2009. Group shows include *Colours of Beijing*, Krung Thai Bank Art Gallery, Bangkok, 2010; *Young Female Artists of the Year by Bann Lee Suann*, ARDEL Gallery, 2009; *Dark and Light*, Teo Nam Fah Gallery, 2007 and *Wiz Women Work*, Playground Gallery, Bangkok, 2006. A rising talent on the Thai art scene she has received numerous awards of excellence for her practice to date and was selected to participate in 4th Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale in 2009.

right
1...2...3!!
2011, oil on canvas,, 190 x 170 cm

opposite left page top
No Fear, Son!
2011, oil on canvas,, 170 x 190 cm

opposite left page bottom
I'm Home!
2011, oil on canvas,, 170 x 190 cm

front cover
My Close Friend's Family (detail)
2011, oil on canvas,, 170 x 190 cm



EXHIBITION DATES: 8 - 30 OCTOBER 2011

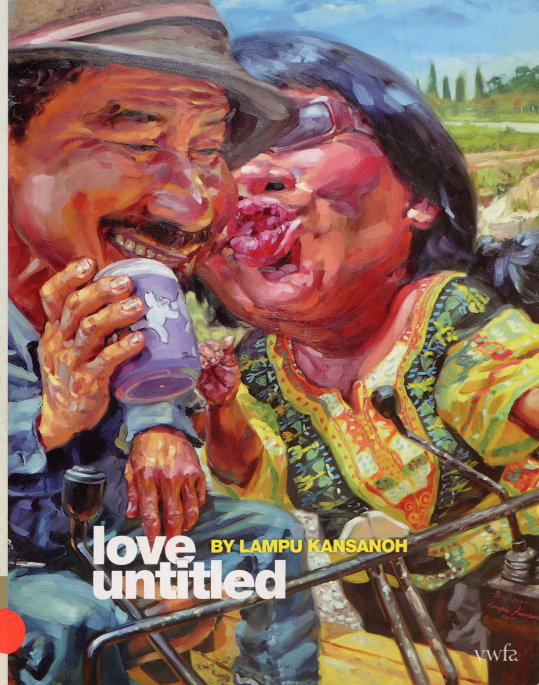
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love BY LAMPU KANSANOH
untitled

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Lampu Kansanoh: The Many Faces of Love

by eva mcgovern

Love is a fundamental human emotion and many say life is not complete without it. It appears in various guises based upon our relationships to the people, places and things that come into our worlds. Whether romantic, filial or platonic it is founded on levels of appreciation and acceptance expressed through a myriad of forms from the profound to the fleeting. These contrasting experiences of such a rich and textured sensation are presented across the works of Thai artist Lampu Kansanoh's first solo show *Love Untitled* at VWFA Singapore. Informed by a cultural and spiritual sensibility rooted within Buddhist thought, Kansanoh's practice embraces the emotional devotion and psychological connection that love evokes. Selecting scenes from her own life as well as those around her through a complex form of painterly caricature she blends optimism and realism to comment on the many facets of love. Whether families sharing time together or those mourning the illness of a loved one or simply the pleasure of dogs enthusiastically greeting a visitor at the house, each scene evokes the depth of this complex emotion. Embracing the sensual and visceral quality of painting itself Kansanoh's style blends humour, pathos and philosophy through her keen observations on the human spirit during everyday moments. Creating a hybrid aesthetic of caricature, exaggeration and painterly indulgence she presents a wry form of genre and tableau painting that observes Thai culture and the universal human qualities of unconditional love.

The subject of love has been an enduring and popular subject in Art for centuries. Numerous romantic love stories fuelled with longing, lust and obsession as well as beautiful and charismatic protagonists have all found their way into the great histories of visual culture. Curiously, it is the drama and

suffering of romantic love that fascinates artists and audiences above all else, not its kindness or generosity. However, this type of selfish attachment is of no interest to Lampu Kansanoh. The moral values of her family and Buddhist philosophical influences, instead compels her to present a different more compassionate side of love. What she shares are the quiet, often overlooked moments of happiness and support within meaningful relationships. For the artist, it is through understanding, patience and respect that we create stability, comfort and true love in life. *My Close Friend's Family* reflects the affection between a husband, wife and their children. Kansanoh has observed her friend and her family's never ending support for one another throughout the years and pays homage to their close knit dedication. The father appears to be sitting on a tractor in the process of building a house. During a break, his wife steals a kiss for moral support, with her children in the background. Although an ephemeral moment, it shows their easy tenderness, reminding viewers of the importance of family bonds. *Wash Them Quickly!* presents Kansanoh's neighbours a couple that have lived near the artist's house for nearly 30 years. As another testament to love that grows and strengthens over time, she depicts the older husband and wife going through their daily chores. Throughout their long relationship, the artist has continued to observe the man helping his wife without complaint in all the household tasks. Despite the duration of time, or monotony of routine, they continue to love, honour and support one another. An unremarkable moment from human life it nevertheless shows the reassurance and stability between couples even when clipping toe nails or washing clothes. This sense of devotion is echoed throughout her works in *Love Untitled* and is playfully repeated in *I'm Home!* where the artist's dogs enthusiastically greet her and members of the family when they return to

the house. An elderly neighbour waits behind the gate, as she helps to take care of the garden and home while they are away. Straining to get at their master, these loyal pets signify another form of unconditional love and devotion bringing happiness to their owners. However inversely *No Fear, Sire!* depicts a man and his son paddling a small boat to collect coconuts from his coconut orchard, a scene that Kansanoh witnesses almost every day. Here, the dogs on land bark furiously and are threatened by the presence of father and son. Afraid, the little boy seeks protection in his father's arms. Through a reassuring embrace he is sheltered from the confrontational animals. This shared exchange of dependence and trust is yet one more example of absolute love, between parent and child.

Love Untitled shares a type of observational diary on the scenes of love that occur during the artist's daily life in the Samut Songkhram province 60 kilometres outside of Bangkok. It is clear Kansanoh's a deep respect and admiration for those around her who love unconditionally and with compassion. However her work upsets straightforward sentimentality and Realist observation through her use of caricature, humour and treatment of form. Kansanoh's signature style to date has focused on the depiction of the human body through fleshy and sweeping brushstrokes. These then reveal forms of unusual proportions: enlarged heads and facial features whose mouths and eyes are contorted into amplified gestures of human expression. Flattering between humour and the grotesque this type of caricature, communicates the possibilities of painting to present an optimism and realism on the shifting nature of human life and emotion. Coming from the Italian 'caricare' meaning to charge or load, caricature is often rich with various signs and meanings. Traditionally, it is used as a type of mockery for newspaper editorials lampooning the current state of politics or as humorous tourist mementos drawn by local street artists. A mixture of cartoon like exaggeration and simplification through minimal use of lines, it is an underrated form of mimesis, since although comic in nature, caricature provides a striking and at times more potent commentary on the subject than straightforward portraiture. This is because it focuses on the face and head of the sitter, embellishing facial features and including certain attributes to overstate the personality or actions of the subject, whether positive or negative. Usually small and intimate, Kansanoh's approach to caricature is far more epic in nature enhancing the potential of this aesthetic approach. Her canvases

are large in scale and act as a mixture of portraiture, genre and tableau scenes. Any form of mockery is gentle and affectionate, since the artist is laughing with her subjects rather than at them, especially since many are lifted from her own personal biography. *1...2...3!!* is a playful interaction between a young couple. Riding a motorcycle and oblivious to world around them or the noodle stall they are about to crash into, they playfully pose in front of their I-Phone Camera. The comical absurdity of their distorted faces inflated by thick painterly marks and the anxiety of the noodle seller enhances the drama of lovers interested only in each other.

Kansanoh also paints those closest to her, including her father Suwan in the endearing *Family's Breakfast*. He is depicted cooking breakfast smiling broadly with luscious pearls of sweat streaming down his face and body. Light hearted and filled with colour, detail and atmosphere it is a skillfully rendered portrait, capturing the essence of this important figure in the artist's life. But perhaps it is unusual to see a man preparing food at home? Viewers may wonder why Kansanoh has not depicted her mother cooking instead. The answers lie in *An Appointment to the Doctor* and *Not to Cry, Mom!* Kansanoh's mother, Suwan's beloved wife lost her battle with cancer a few years ago. These two works chart trips to the hospital and her passing, with the artist herself, bereft and grief ridden at

her mother's bedside in the latter work. After the loss of his wife, Suwan took on the duties of both father and mother including making food for his children. Although her absence is deeply felt within the family and honoured in this exhibition Kansanoh depicts her father's love and happiness in providing simple pleasures for his family as life goes on. Nevertheless, her mother's presence is very much alive in the hearts of the family symbolised in the figure comforting the artist in *Not to Cry, Mom!* who is wearing the same blouse as the dying woman. In fact this figure is also the artist's mother, a ghostly version of her former healthy self, indicated by the transparency of her right arm who displays the love and care for the child she is leaving behind. Even though she is gone the memory of her love remains, providing comfort for her family, as seen in the smiling Suwan cooking breakfast for his family.

Love Untitled is an apt description of Lampu Kansanoh's commentary on the nature of human relationships. Although love is universal, we know when we are in love and what it feels like to be loved, it is nevertheless nuanced and difficult to define completely. There are many forms of love. It is found in the everyday moments of romantic tenderness and shared humour, in the embrace of a father or exuberance of pets welcoming home their owners. It is also a philosophical process of acceptance and appreciation even in moments of loss and separation. These are the virtues that Kansanoh shares in her own observations: patience, kindness, protection, perseverance, and the strength of human relationships. And importantly we are all capable of true unselfish, compassionate love regardless of material wealth, class or privilege. These are the many symbolic and actual faces of love the artist presents through an entertaining form of gentle caricature and exaggeration to provoke and stir our own understandings of love and a subtle reminder to always appreciate those closest to us.

below
Wash Them Quickly!
2011, oil on canvas,
190 x 170 cm

opposite right
Family's Breakfast
2011, oil on canvas,
170 x 190 cm



bottom left
An Appointment to the Doctor
2011, oil on canvas,
190 x 170 cm

bottom right
Not to Cry, Mom!
2011, oil on canvas,
190 x 170 cm

