

chan thim choy



firstSOLO

This year's debut soloist at Valentine Willie Fine Art is **Chan Thim Choy**. This unique artist's figurative work probes and exposes the essence of basic human emotions, untangling them from the complicated and hectic lives we have come to live. The joys and obstacles a parent and child go through, the playful affection and bond between siblings and the bittersweet relationship shared between a man and a woman - these things are universal, they influence the paths we take and with whom we take those paths.

Thim Choy has exhibited sporadically in numerous group exhibitions since 1991, notably gaining a Major Award at the Philip Morris Malaysia Art Awards in 1999. He took his diploma from the Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA) in 1995, at a relatively mature age. By and large, however, the artist has pursued his development quietly and in isolation over the years and this will be a first opportunity to appraise a significant body of his work as a whole.

The artist's training at MIA has provided him a solid grounding in traditional and modern Chinese ink painting, but it is his fresh and deeply personal interpretation of the genre which gives his work drive and impact. In Thim Choy's hands, the intuitive and expressive strokes of Chinese brush are channeled into a raw and powerful drawing line; he breaks from the concerns and aspirations of traditional painting, harnessing its power to an almost more Western tradition of narrative figuration.

Thim Choy's earlier works, before his education at MIA, tend towards tight structures and pastel colours. By this stage the content and even the "characters" in his work are already being established - revolving around family, romance and children. Already we see him striving towards an emotional pathos and intimacy, the start of a journey towards self-revelation.

His development thereon is marked by a will to experiment with different media, and stylistic and compositional effects, all the while searching for the right form to render forth his particular inner world. While the use of Chinese ink prevails throughout, strong links to childhood prod him to play with collage, poster colours, and other tools of children's art. In an award-winning early work, a whole panoply of local experience is laid out in a giant grid of crayon, biro and ink drawings, interspersed with found objects and even a home-made greeting card. More recently, he has begun to work with batik painting.

Key symbols and motifs, like his human subjects, recur throughout his development, and these are also shaped by childhood or 'local' experience. While animal and plant metaphors are a staple of traditional Chinese painting, here they are heavily invested with personal emotion. Child's play being a crucial element of his work, the artist also introduces TV cartoon heroes, particularly Batman and

Ultraman. At this point, childhood is not only used as an entry point into basic universal emotions, but also to explore more complex issues like awkwardness, the use of disguise, and the role of fantasy in the artist's life.

After MIA, the greater body of the artist's work has consisted of Chinese ink on paper. The freedom afforded by the medium has encouraged him to take bolder approaches to perspective and figurative interpretation. Often he brings his subject up very close to us, for example focusing on human hands, holding and touching to show affection or to protect; or a family in a close embrace. Smaller compositions grow steadily more abstract, so that an image of pups feeding, or a hand catching the early bird only reveals itself after some concentration.

The most simplified of his images express most poignantly the artist's sense of longing. The use of red paper throughout the late 90's is in part symbolic of his Chinese roots, but also serves to heighten emotional force.

When he moves on to batik painting, he goes through a similar process of gradual simplification. Early trials with batik based on large and busy compositions appear flat and decorative, but the most recent paintings have achieved rare and peculiar effects. In these works, all heaviness has lifted. Dyes are used as ink washes, images are blurred and become distanced from the viewer. There is a new and interesting ambiguity in this approach, which yet maintains the raw innocence of all that has come before.

Valentine Willie Fine Art

Exhibition dates: 4 July to 27 July 2002

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BORN 1963, Johor

EDUCATION

1995 Diploma in Fine Art (major in ink painting), Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), Kuala Lumpur

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1991 *Johor Artist Association Exhibition*, Johor
- 1992 *Collection of Asian Watercolour Works*, Korea
Open Show, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (KL)
- 1993 *"Hijau" Group Show*, Bank Negara Malaysia, KL
Young Talents, Gallery Bank Negara Malaysia, KL
- 1994 *Young Talents*, Gallery Bank Negara Malaysia, KL
- 1995 *New Voices*, Malaysian Institute of Art, KL
- 1996 *Fresh Faces*, Pelita Hati Gallery, KL
Malaysian Art Exhibition, Beijing, China
"Living a Meaningful Life", Sin Chew Jit Poh, Petaling Jaya
- 1997 *The Phillip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Awards*, National Art Gallery, KL
Malaysian Drawings, National Art Gallery, KL
Family, Home & Hope, Pelita Hati Gallery, KL
- 1998 *Coming Together*, Pelita Hati Gallery, KL
Phillip Morris (Malaysia) Art Awards, National Art Gallery, KL
- 1999 *Unity in Diversity*, Creative Centre, National Art Gallery, KL
Potret Diri Aku 99, Petronas Art Gallery, KL
Philip Morris (Malaysia) Art Awards, National Art Gallery, KL
- 2000 *Philip Morris (Malaysia) Art Awards*, National Art Gallery, KL
Love on Paper, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
- 2001 *Philip Morris (Malaysia) Art Awards*, National Art Gallery, KL
Open Show, National Art Gallery, KL

AWARDS

- 1995 Merit Award, Young Artists Contemporary Ink Painting Competition
- 1997 Honorable Mention, The Phillip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Award
- 1999 Major Award, The Phillip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Award
- 2000 Honorable Mention, The Phillip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Award
- 2001 Honorable Mention, The Phillip Morris Group of Companies Malaysia Art Award



ABOVE

...just the three of us...?

2002

Poster colour and chinese ink on rice paper

69 x 69 cm

FRONT COVER

...protect....?

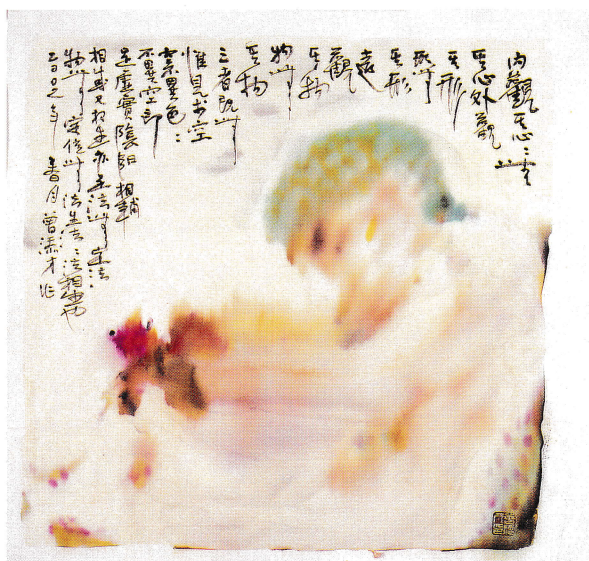
2001

Poster colour and chinese ink on rice paper

69 x 69 cm



TOP
...touch...?
2002
Batik painting
35 x 39cm



ABOVE
...play...?
2002
Batik painting
35 x 39 cm