

ARTIST OF THE FLEETING WORLD

Laura Fan

Eric Chan's paintings arouse a fugitive pleasure. Collectors seclude them in their bedrooms, refuse to pass them to their rightful owners and cling to the memory of the one painting that slipped out of their grasp.

I should know. There's a birthday present to a friend that sits in my living room, reminding me daily of my negligence. Still, I can't bear to see it leave.

Conversations with others reassure me that I am not alone in my guilty addiction to Eric's work. His paintings fulfill a hunger for pure visual pleasure that has become unfashionable to admit to. In our age of anxiety, political issues, urbanism and history dominate the work in museums and the ranks of competition winners. It's so passé to be seduced by something pretty.

But what can you do against it? Eric's work compels an immediate response that reveals how your heart works. For this exhibition, he has moved away from the extremes of rapture and desolation and into a more contemplative vein.

Reflection, speed, boldness and a cool beauty permeate these works. The most unexpected objects become the vehicles to convey his emotions. Flowers, shadows, labradors, and planes fill his canvasses.

A romantic lyricism infuses his works *Cannonball* and *Slight*. His single Cannonball tree blossom explodes in a voluptuous riot. The lush pink flower perches on a spiky, barren branch, embodying the loneliness expressed in Tang Dynasty poems. The idea of romantic isolation, fuelled by the movie *In the Mood for Love*, forms an emotional theme that recurs in Eric's work. Yet there is no musty sentimentality here. The painting's electric powder blues and gentle pinks, the colours of Japanese animation and rave party wear, place the painting firmly in our times.



CANNONBALL



SUGAR

Kitsch and the cult of materialism also make an appearance here. *Fray* and *Rend* are paintings of floral wallpaper: Their saccharine colours and designed stiffness comment on artificiality, control and manufactured beauty. Superficially pretty, the paintings have an aggressive edge in their colours and confrontational perspective, a perspective that presses the wall paper right into your face.

For the first time, Eric also places himself in his paintings, albeit in oblique ways. *Sugar* is based on a photograph of Eric photographing his shadow. This picture of a picture of a shadow removes him from the work several times even as it places him within the image. Similarly, *Monsoon* features a translucent view of the artist waiting out a storm.

Several works in this exhibition explore the more formal rather than emotive dimensions of painting. His looming *Begonia Black*, *Sky Palm*, and *The Hanger* look at shape relationship, perspective, space and line quality in dynamic ways. In these works, their subject matter really could be anything. What lingers in the mind is an impression of a bold yet fragile, strength.

By reaching into a cultural memory and making visible his own emotional range, Eric's work confronts us with our own vulnerabilities. By making his feelings visible we too are comforted by the recognition of their existence.



HANGER

The work has a very painterly quality but a contemporary sensibility. Much of this can be attributed to the process the artist applies to making his work. Using his own photographs, Eric then processes them in the computer, by cropping the image or changing the colours and paints the composition that he has structured.

"The images complete a full circle. After selecting the image, it goes through the camera, computer and then my head again," says the artist.

In this way, the work possess an immediacy that traditional still life paintings lack. At the same time, a traditional respect for practice underpins Eric's approach to painting. His signature blurred quality remind viewers continually of the brushstroke.

Additional comment on the practice of painting can be found in his insistent on a silky, superflat surface.

Despite the painterly appearance of the images, all of his canvasses are level, without a hint of impasto. The only brushstrokes seen are the fine horizontal or vertical strokes that make his blurred effects possible.



FRAY

In an interview with Lee Weng Choy, Eric mentioned that he wanted his work to appear "like box cubes with paint on one surface." This deliberate flatness evokes the glossy quality of magazine pictures. Multiple dimensions of Eric practice, from his process of making the images to the way that he paints keep the balance between the traditional and contemporary. This tension renders his work so very compelling.

PLATES



STILL BREEZE
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



CANNONBALL
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



GETTING ACROSS
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



SPILLS AND SPOTS
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



WINDOW LIGHT
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



SKY PALM
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



BEGONIA BLACK
oil on canvas
120 x 120 cm
2002



HANGER
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



LIGHT
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



HOME SHOW
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



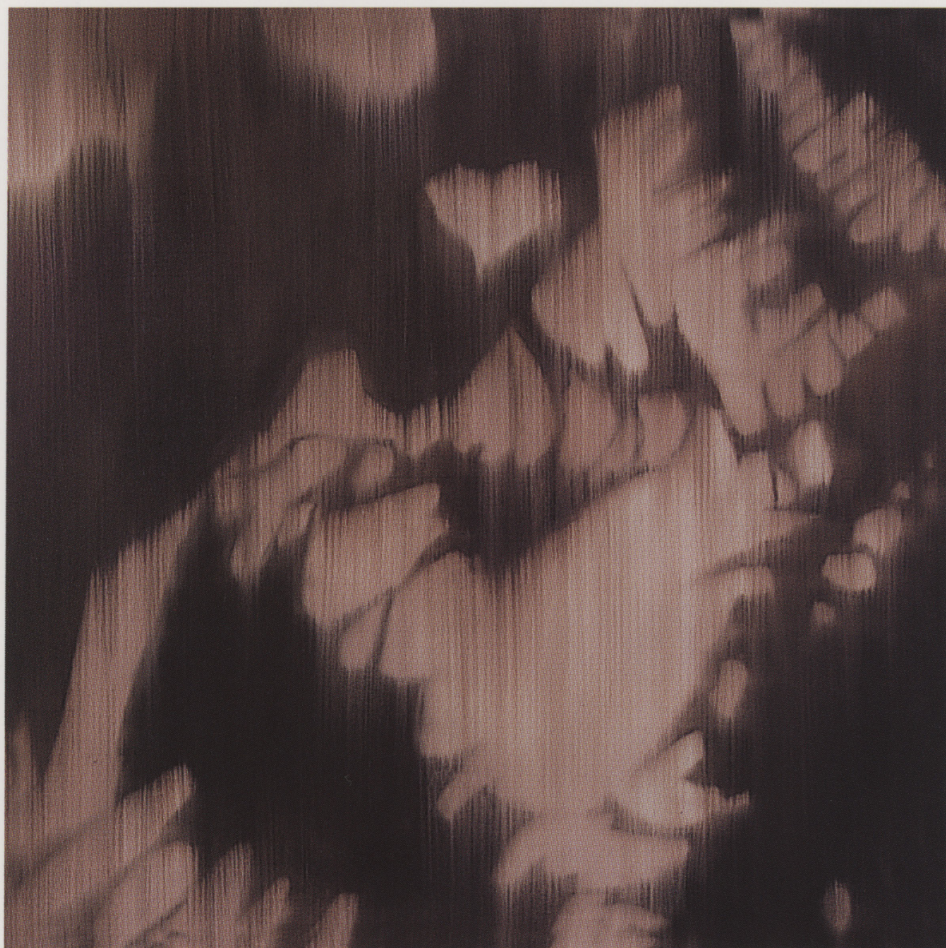
REND
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



SLIGHT
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



BONE
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



SUGAR
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



CLIPPINGS AND CRAVINGS

oil on canvas
120 x 120 cm
2002



FLEE
oil on canvas
94 x 94 cm
2002



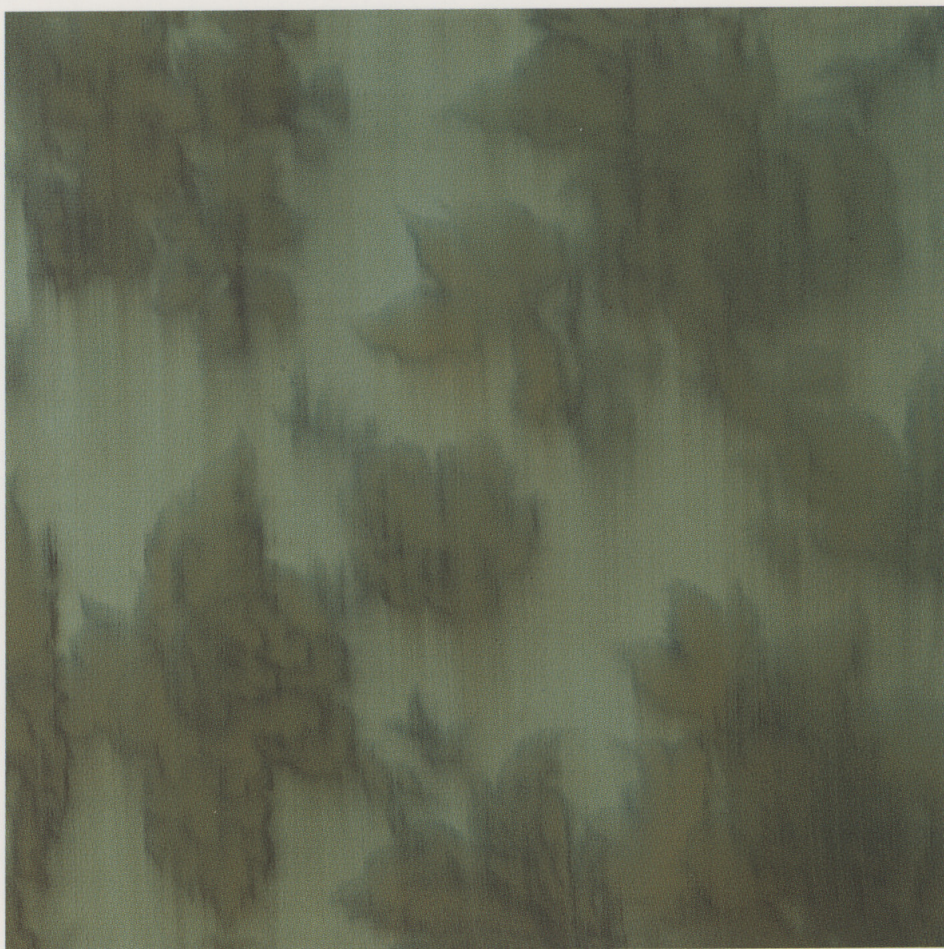
SKY BLUE
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



MONSOON
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



RIDING ALONG
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



PAPER AND PASTE
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



AFTERNOON TRIPS

oil on canvas

100 x 100 cm

2002



FRAY
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
2002



LUNA ON THAT DAY
oil on canvas
120 x 65 cm
2002



OF SHAPES AND EGGS
oil on canvas
120 x 65 cm
2002



BORN 1975, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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EDUCATION

- 1999 - 2000
 - Master of Fine Art (Painting)
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore
- 1996 - 1997
 - Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (Painting) with Distinction
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore
- 1993 - 1996
 - Diploma in Fine Art (Painting) with Distinction
LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore

SELECTED AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2002
 - Jurors' Choice Award
Philip Morris Group of Companies
Singapore Art Awards 2001/2002
- 1997
 - Outstanding Achievement Award
Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (Painting)
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)
LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2001
 - In Between Odds - New Works by Eric Chan
The Substation Gallery, Singapore
 - ERIC CHAN - Solo Exhibition
Valentine Wille Fine Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
The Gallery - Siemens Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2000
 - Flaunting - Paintings by Eric Chan
Art Forum Gallery, Singapore

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 2002
 - ASEAN ART AWARDS 2002
Philip Morris Group of Companies
Bali International Convention Centre, Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia
 - Singapore Art Awards 2001/2002
Philip Morris Group of Companies
The Gallery @ Paragon, Singapore
 - Painted: Recent Works by Contemporary Southeast Asian Painters
Valentine Wille Fine Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2001
 - ASEAN ART EXPO - Singapore
Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore
 - RMIT Master of Fine Art Graduate Show (Singapore)
LASALLE-SIA Gallery, Singapore
 - STRATA 2000 - RMIT Master of Fine Art Graduate Show
SPAN Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2000
 - Imagined Boundaries - Looking at New Model Communities
Marine Parade Theatre Festival 2000 (Visual Arts Exhibition)
Marine Parade Community Building, Singapore
 - Between - LASALLE School of Fine Art Faculty Show
Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore
- 1999
 - PRAXIS - LASALLE School of Fine Art Faculty Show
Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore
- 1998
 - New Generation Singapore Artist Exhibition
Art Forum Gallery, Singapore
 - A Refusal To Be Aware Of All Options;
Looking Into Contemporary Painting
The Substation Gallery, Singapore
 - VISUAL + - 5 Installation 5 Artist
LASALLE Gallery, Singapore

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Southeast Asian Paintings & Works of Art

design by ERIC CHAN

photography by HOYUE WENG

printing by CRAFT PRINT INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

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