

BLOOMS BY TANG JUEY LEE



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Supported by



Blooms

by TANG JUEY LEE

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by **TANG JUEY LEE**

PREVIEW

19 APRIL 2017
7 PM

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

20 APRIL — 5 MAY 2017
11 AM - 7 PM

(CLOSED ON MONDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS)

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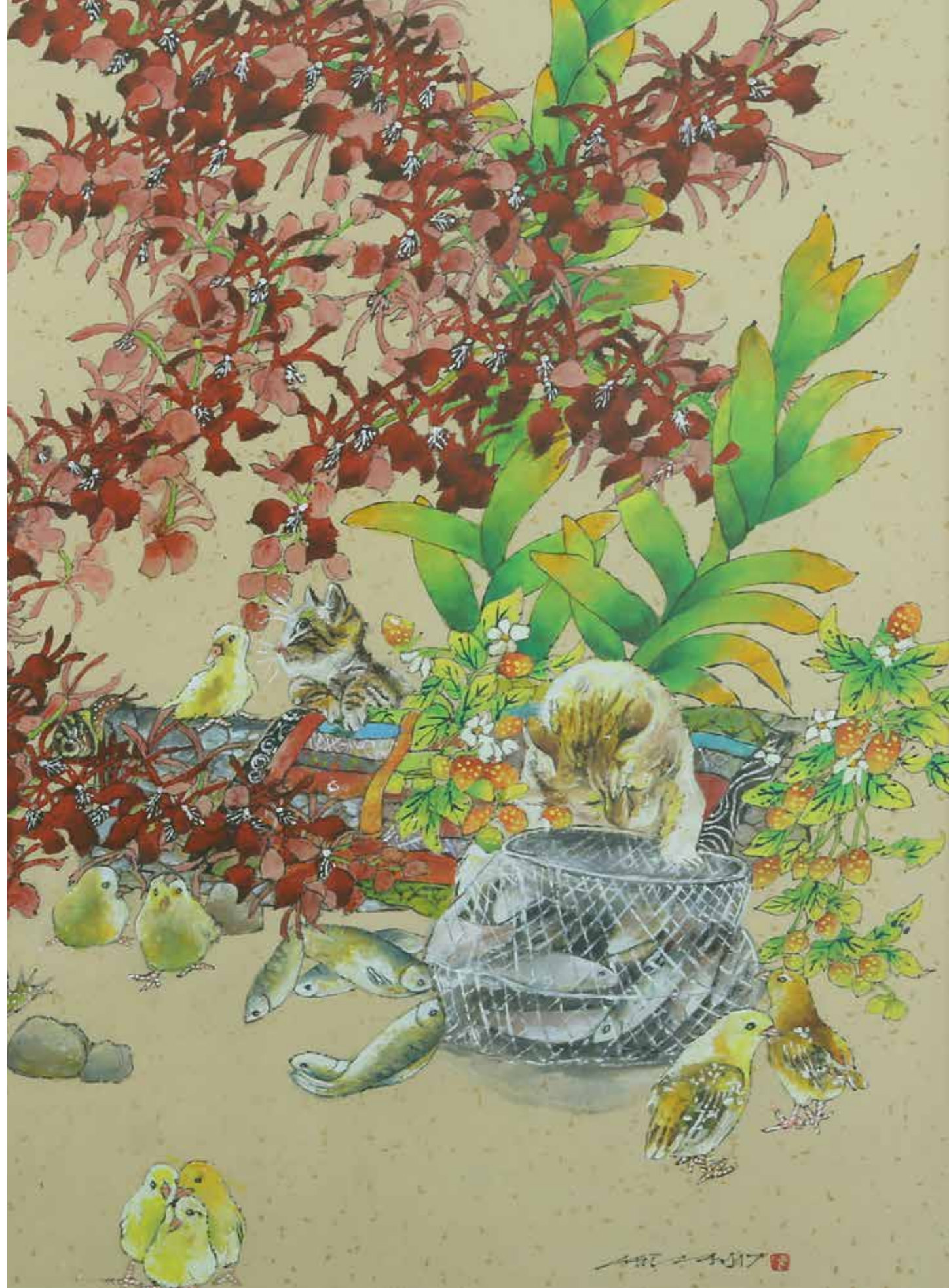
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Artwork detail from
Lazy Afternoon,
2017



FOREWORD

Blooms by Tang Juey Lee

Malaysian artist Tang Juey Lee has been painting orchids for the past 40 years and is better known on the Singapore art scene where the press has dubbed him “Singapore’s Orchid Artist”.

Such an accolade is in recognition of his prowess in painting orchids reminiscent of the Chinese “gongbi” or meticulous style but imbued with Western realism. Tang’s approach emphasises the importance of the foreground and background in a composition.

Tang began painting seriously after he enrolled in Singapore’s Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in 1974 and was privileged to be guided by renowned Singaporean pioneer artist Georgette Chen when he was a diploma student in Western art.

One of Tang’s unique qualities is his ability to render a wide range of orchids with precision. His incorporation of animals to complement the flowers enhances the viewing pleasure.

Our exhibition, *Blooms by Tang Juey Lee*, at The Edge Galerie showcases 20 charming paintings by the artist who often visits the Singapore Botanic Gardens for “life sketching” of the flowers.

This show also marks the 30th year since Tang’s first exhibition in Kuala Lumpur in 1986. At the time, the artist painted mainly with watercolour on rice paper. He has since progressed to acrylic paint as his preferred medium on Chinese rice paper with gold flecks.

In 2013, Tang introduced animals to his creative oeuvre to heighten the visual effect of his work. For example, in *Lazy Afternoon*, one is captivated by the beauty of the red Renantanda orchid and a pair of geese and goslings. When examined closely, one sees kittens playfully portrayed near a strawberry plant, one of which is trying to catch a fish from a net.

Such detailed renditions set Tang apart from other artists whose work has the traditional bird-and-flower theme.

I would like to thank Matrix Concepts for supporting our 2017 art programme. Thanks to its assistance, we are able to better organise and share our events with the public, especially discerning art lovers.

HO KAY TAT
Publisher and CEO
The Edge Media Group

INTRODUCTION

A passion for orchids

By Sarah Abu Bakar

Dubbed “Singapore’s Orchid Artist”, 63-year-old Malaysian artist Tang Juey Lee is better known in the city state as he graduated from its Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in the 1970s.

Tang held most of his exhibitions in Singapore, where his meticulous style of painting orchids earned him many accolades. Moreover, the orchid is Singapore’s national flower. But the artist took a 23-year hiatus in the 1990s to establish his own art school and only resumed exhibiting in 2014. Collectors welcomed him with open arms, buying up all his work.

His exquisite paintings of orchid blooms, typically matched with parrots, geese, roosters and ducks, can be said to belong to the flower-and-bird genre of Chinese paintings but combined with Western Realism. Such works have a following among collectors who particularly favour the gongbi style of Chinese art, which focuses on Realist techniques.

Tang initially painted with watercolour on rice paper but progressed to acrylic paint diluted with water to achieve more vibrant and colourful compositions. In his only second one-man show in Kuala Lumpur since 1986, Tang will showcase 20 paintings at The Edge Galerie. Their prices range from RM5,000 to RM21,000 each.

“I paint what I see,” says the veteran artist, adding that he prefers to observe flowers in full bloom, particularly in the Singapore Botanic Gardens, where he practises life sketching to hone his skills in rendering lifelike compositions.

Tang’s body of work comprises a variety of orchids — Dendrobium; Cymbidium or boat orchid; Oncidium, commonly known as the Golden Shower or Dancing Lady; Renantanda; Phalaenopsis Blume or moth orchid; and more.

“I have painted over 300 different orchid species in the past 40 years,” remarks Tang.

In addition to these blossoms, the artist incorporates koi, squirrels, kittens and chicks, among other things, as well as insects such as bees and butterflies into his work.

“I recently included animals in my paintings to complement the orchids,” explains Tang, who began pairing his works of flora with fauna in 2013 and using acrylic in 2015.

TECHNIQUES

Tang embraced the traditional bird-and-flower theme and enhanced his subject matter by using acrylic paint on rice paper instead of the conventional ink or watercolour.

“The materials I use are high-quality acrylic paints by Daler-Rowney and rice paper dusted with gold flecks imported from China,” he explains.

“I chose acrylic over watercolour because of its lasting quality. Its fast-drying effect, which is similar to that of watercolour, allows me to work on several paintings at one time. The vibrancy of acrylic paint works best for my subject matter.”

Viewers of Tang’s expressive paintings will feel a great sense of joy. He creates pleasant compositions by carefully placing his choice of flowers with selected animals.

In *Lazy Afternoon*, created specifically for the show and measuring 86cm by 96cm, Tang illustrates the red Renantanda orchid dispersed across the picture plane in harmony with kittens playing with chicks in the foreground. One of the kittens near a strawberry plant is depicted trying to catch a fish in a net. A snail is seen slithering on the ground.

Such details distinguish Tang as an imaginative and meticulous painter who not only focuses on portraying orchids in their truest form but also adds simple touches to evoke happiness and positive vibes.

The yellow-green leaves that frame the deep red blooms, which dominate the painting, offer a balanced configuration.

“One of the important elements of my work, besides colour, is composition. My aim is to create harmonious paintings that make people happy,” says the artist.

Prosperity Koi illustrates a school of nine of the fish, which have symbolic significance in Chinese culture. The offering of nine koi to new parents is considered the most meaningful gift of all because it will bless the child with two secrets of success — determination and flexibility — which are traits believed to be found in koi.

But the importance of nine koi extends beyond the story of success and harmony to include luck, wealth and protection. The number nine represents completeness and eternity in Chinese culture.

Fluttering Grace depicts an intriguing combination of the Vanda “Miss Joaquim” orchid, banana trees and a company of macaw parrots perched on tree branches. Measuring 68cm by 106cm, the artwork illustrates the landscape of Southeast Asia.

Also apparent in Tang’s body of work are visually stimulating lines and shapes. Illustrated in the 90cm by 68cm *Joyful Bliss* is the alluring Phalaenopsis Blume orchid with a company of budgerigar parrots either fluttering in the air or perched on a tree branch. The common pet parakeets are illustrated in pastel blue and green.

Traditionally, owning or gifting such a painting reflects a cultured mind or a person schooled in Chinese aesthetic and customs. It goes beyond displaying something that is symbolic of prosperity or merely wishing good luck.

EDUCATION

Born in Johor Baru, Tang studied at Singapore’s Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts from 1974 to 1976 and graduated with a diploma in Western art.

Under the tutelage of renowned Singaporean pioneer artist, Georgette Chen (1906-1993), Tang learnt to incorporate into his paintings Eastern sentiments with Western techniques.

Paris-trained Chen, who painted in the post-Impressionism style, taught Tang the fundamentals of Western compositions, such as perspective.

Tang himself taught at a college that he founded — Raphael Academy of Art — in Johor Baru between 1991 and 1998.

“I was the principal of the now defunct college and taught watercolour to diploma students for seven years. At the same time, I was creating artworks to sell to collectors in Singapore and Australia,” he says.

Although his passion for producing orchid paintings is immeasurable, Tang claims to not have any emotional attachment to his work.

“All of my paintings are sold upon completion. I do not keep any of my old work,” he says when asked if he has an inventory of artworks created over the years.

His tutor Chen had kept most of her paintings until her death in 1993, when the Lee Foundation took custody of her collection. Most of her paintings were then donated to the Singapore Art Museum in 1994.

GLOBAL PRESENCE

According to Tang, who has held international exhibitions since 1977, his artworks are well received in Singapore, Australia and Taiwan.

“My first and only exhibition in Kuala Lumpur was in 1986. Now, 30 years later, I have returned to show my new work,” he says.

Held at Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, the 1986 exhibition was said by the artist to have been supported by Joyce Kuok, then wife of business tycoon Robert Kuok.

Entitled *The Dream Landscape Series*, the show comprised around 30 watercolour orchid paintings and was officiated at by the then Urban Development Authority chairman Tan Sri Murad Mohd Noor.

Tang was also commissioned by hotels and restaurants in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia to paint for them.

His artworks are in various private collections abroad as well as in the hands of public institutions and corporations, including the Singapore Art Museum, Singapore Changi Airport, Citibank, Gulf International Bank, Shangri-La Group and Royal Holiday Inn in Singapore.

Lazy Afternoon
2017
86cm x 96cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Cattleya
2017
34cm x 34cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Splashing
2017
106cm x 68cm
Acrylic on rice paper



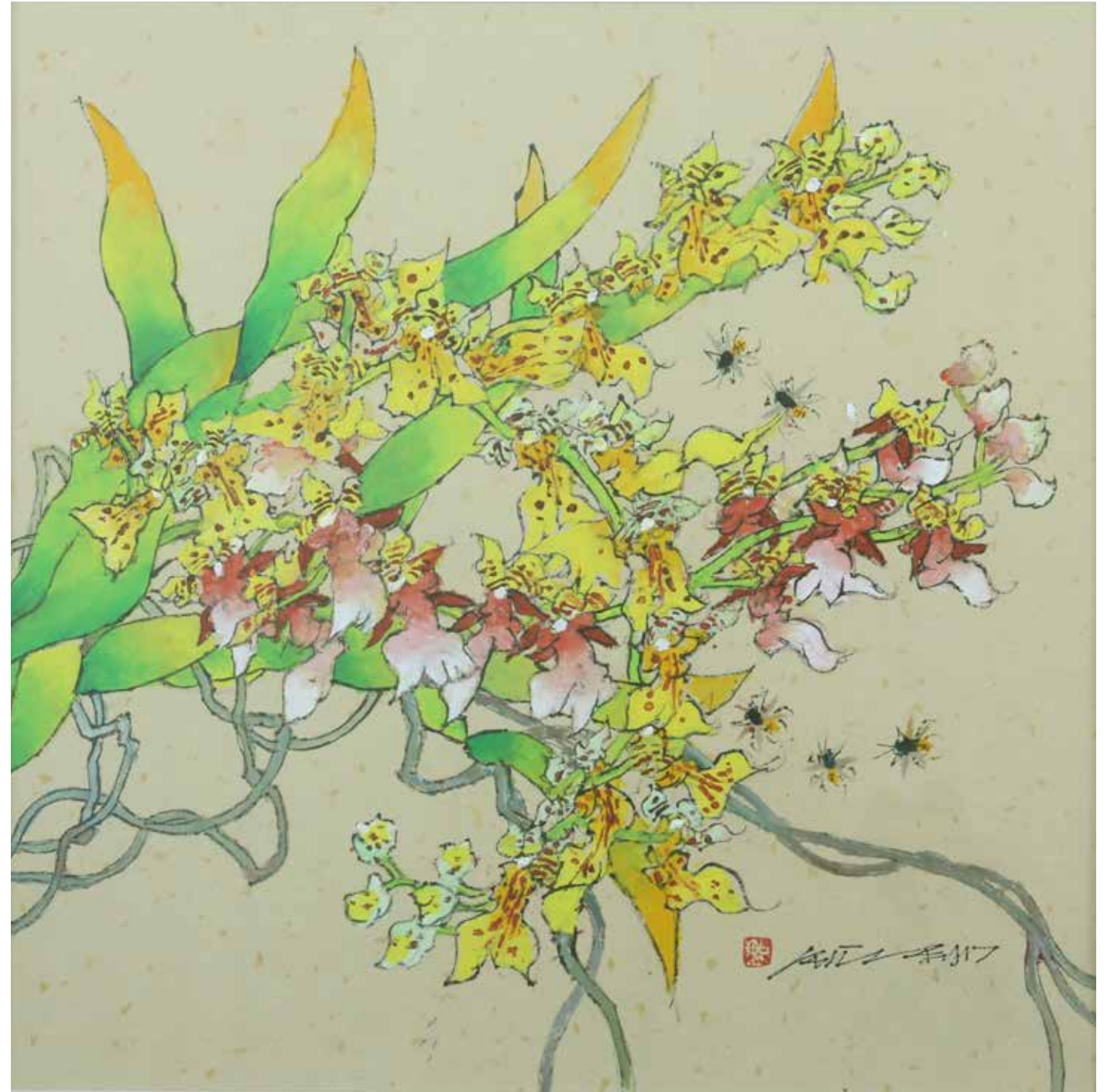
Elegant Grace
2017
45cm x 68cm
Acrylic on rice paper



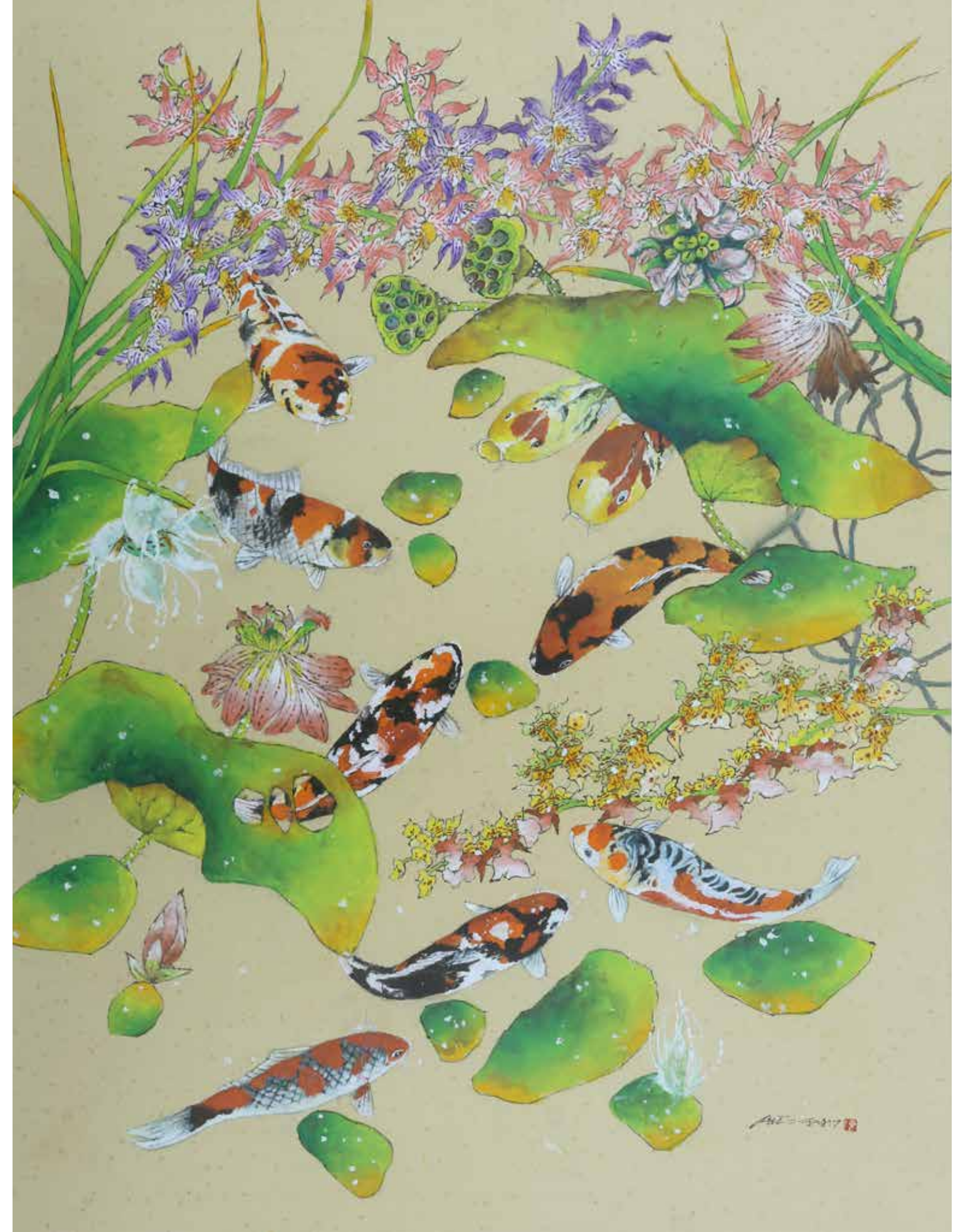
Fluttering Grace
2017
68cm x 106cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Busy at Work
2017
34cm x 34cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Prosperity Koi
 2017
 90cm x 68cm
 Acrylic on rice paper



Intimate Talk
 2016
 34cm x 34cm
 Acrylic on rice paper



Breaking Dawn
2017
90cm x 68cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Carefree
 2017
 45cm x 68cm
 Acrylic on rice paper



Joyful Bliss
 2017
 90cm x 68cm
 Acrylic on rice paper



Happy Gathering

2017

45cm x 68cm

Acrylic on rice paper



Motherly Love
2017
45cm x 68cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Deep Love
2017
34cm x 34cm
Acrylic on rice paper



Leisure
2016
45cm x 68cm
Acrylic on rice paper



TANG JUEY LEE

Born : October 14, 1953, Johor Baru, Johor, Malaysia

EDUCATION

1976 Diploma in Western Art, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore.

PROJECTS

1984 Singapore Tourist Promotion Board, participated in “Singapore Orchid Affair” demonstration, Melbourne, Australia.

1991-1998 Principal of Raphael Academy of Art, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

AWARD

1977 Medal Award, Singapore Ministry of Culture, National Day Art Exhibition, Singapore.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 *Masterpieces 2016*, Southern University Museum & Art Gallery, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

2015 *Home*, Hotel Jen Puteri Harbour, Johor, Malaysia.

2014 *Reunion*, The Old Parliament, Singapore.

2001 *Retrospective 1975-2001*, Hing Wah Gallery, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

Lotus & Carps, Tan-Clan Hall, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

1988 & 1999 Sui Yuen & Cattleya Gallery, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

1988 Four Solo Exhibitions in Johor Baru, Malaysia.

1986 *The Dream Landscape Series*, Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1984 Galloway Galleries, Brisbane, Australia, Town Mount Gallery, Nambour, Queensland, Australia.

1980 Avant-Garde Gallery, Taipei, Taiwan.

1979 Charlton Gallery & La Sirena Gallery, San Antonio Texas, the US.

1978 & 1984 Churchill Gallery, Perth, Australia

1977-1990 Eleven One-Man Exhibitions in Singapore in Gallery Fine Art, Hilton Hotel, Ming Court Hotel, Goodwood Park Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel & Oriental Hotel.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014 *Celebration of Life*, Pan Pacific Hotel, Singapore.

2013 *For the Love Of* exhibition, Jada Art Gallery, Singapore. The Affordable Art Fair Singapore 2013, Jada Art Gallery, Singapore.

2010 6th International Artists Exhibition, Shantau, China.

2001 Malaysian Art Exhibition, The Legend Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1999 *Top Malaysia – China Artists*, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

1993 & 1994 Asian International Art Exhibition, Seoul Metropolitan Museum of Art, Korea.

MPMA Exhibition, Holiday Inn Hotel, Johor Baru, Malaysia.

1989 International Chao Zhao Artists, Macau.

1988 4th Asian Pacific Exhibition, Kanazawa, Japan.

Bak Koi & Juey Lee exhibition, Singapore Changi Airport.

1984 Queensland Impressions 84, Galloway Galleries, Brisbane, Australia.

Caloundra Art Festival 84, Caloundra, Queensland, Australia.

1983 Group Exhibition, Hyatt Hotel, Kuantan, Malaysia.

1982 Group Exhibition, Penaga Club, Negara Brunei Darussalam.

1981 *Hong Kong Festival of Art*, Hong Kong Art Centre, Hong Kong.

1980 *Singapore Festival of Art*, National Museum Art Gallery, Singapore.

3 International Artists, Galloway Galleries, Brisbane, Australia.

Singapore Art, Tel Aviv, Israel.

1979 *Singapore Art*, Hilton Hotel, Bahrain.

Singapore Art, Sheraton Hotel, Dubai.

1978 *3 Young Artists*, Munster Arm’s Gallery, Melbourne, Australia.

1977 *First Asian Arts* Exhibition, City Hall, Hong Kong.

Royal Overseas, Art Exhibition, London, the UK.

1976 National Museum Art Gallery Inaugural Exhibition, Singapore.

1975-1978 National Day Art Exhibition, Singapore.

AUCTIONS

2017 Southeast Asian Art, The Edge Auction, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

2013 Beijing Spring Auction, Zhong Han Auctions, Beijing, China.

1997 Dreweatts Bloomsbury Auctions, Newbury, Berkshire, the UK.

SELECTED COLLECTIONS & COMMISSIONS

Public and private collections locally and internationally, namely Southern University Museum & Art Gallery, Malaysia; institutions, hotels and corporations in Singapore; Singapore Art Museum, SIA-Singapore Changi Airport, Royal Holiday Inn Hotel, Westin Hotel, Novotel Orchid Inn, Marco Polo Hotel, Singapore Orchid Village restaurant, Singapore Cricket Club, Hong Kong Gulf International Bank, Long-Term Credit Bank of Japan; as well as the Royal Collection of Saudi Arabia.



Tang Juey Lee at The Edge Galerie, 2017

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COVER

Lazy Afternoon, 2017, 86cm x 96cm
Acrylic on rice paper

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