

THE A-LIST

BY SYIDA LIZTA
AMIRUL IHSAN

Idylls — Om Mee Ai

Where: Richard Koh Fine Art, Level 2, Bangsar Village II, Jalan Telawi, Bangsar Baru, Kuala Lumpur**When:** Until Thursday**Admission:** Free**Call:** 03-2283 3677

KOREAN-BORN artist Om has been painting grids and geometric canvases for the last few years and has won awards for her efforts in Singapore where she is based. Her paintings are minimal but intricate, with hundreds of tiny boxes.

Ultra Flat

Where: NN Gallery, 53A & 56 Jalan Sulaiman I, Taman Ampang Hilir, Ampang, KL**When:** Until Dec 31**Admission:** Free**Call:** 03-4270 6588

THE show features 20 recent works inspired by popular culture and Japanese anime. Artist CK Koh has depicted superheroes and characters from well-known Japanese cartoons, with a local twist. The theme of the works is good versus evil. The proceeds from sale of 50 limited edition hand-painted prints will go to the earthquake victims in Japan.

The Prayer

Where: White Box, Level G2-01, Block A5, Solaris Dutamas 1, Jalan Dutamas 1, KL**When:** Until Jan 31, 2012**Admission:** Free**Call:** 03-6207 9732

NN Gallery's group exhibition. The Prayer portrays artists channeling their spiritual views and "their innermost intimate discourse with the Supreme Being". The artists include Datuk Sharifah Zubir, Ismail Latiff, Ahmad Zakii Anwar, Syed Thajudeen, Cheong Laitong, Tengku Sabri Ibrahim, Mastura Abdul Rahman, Soraya Yusof Talismail, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Yong Chien Chin, Rafiee Abdul Ghani, Jalaini Abu Hassan and Bayu Utomo Radjikin.

Growing With Affection

Where: House Of Matahati, 6A Jalan Cempaka 16, Taman Cempaka, Ampang, KL**When:** Until Saturday**Admission:** Free**Call:** 012-3736 004

THE exhibition explores the working dynamics between the artists who are raised under or who now live under the same roof. Featuring three husband-and-wife teams (Saharuddin Supar and Diana Ibrahim, Ilham Fadhli Shaimy and Azliza Ayob, Haslin Ismail and Deyanna Derman) and two sibling pairs (Daud and Ahmad Zuraimi Rahim, and Fadly and Kamal Sabran).

*Ultra Flat is an interesting take on popular culture and Japanese anime*

Art of the gallery

Art patron Michael Chin tells **Aneeta Sundararaj** the story behind the birth of The Malaysian Art Centre

HOW much courage do you think it will take to give up a "steady" job to pursue something you're passionate about? For the answer, look no further than Michael Chin, managing director of The Malaysian Art Centre SdnBhd

"Although I love art, I never got to study it," says Chin, 49. "After my schooling here, I went to Canada to study a management course. When I came back, I worked in the construction industry for about five years. Then, one day, an artist from China had to go back to her country because her visa had expired."

Chin bought her paintings and kept them in storage until the mid-1990s when he decided to open a gallery.

"When I left my job, everybody, except my mother, thought I was mad. I think she pitied

Beyond the paintings

The Malaysian Art Centre (MAC) is hosting an exhibition called Giving Art Exhibition. Launched by Deputy Home Minister Datuk Lee Chee Leong, last Wednesday, the exhibition is also sponsored by Melia Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

In line with its social responsibility programme, MAC has chosen the National Cancer Society Malaysia to benefit from the proceeds of the sale of the paintings in this exhibition. Here, its managing director Michael Chin tells the stories behind some of the works of art.

The Chicken Family by Kenneth Wong

"The style of this painting is called Naturalists. I like it because it's like a storybook," explains Chin. He points to the grasshopper, the mushrooms and the chicks and says: "It's how nature presents itself. Don't make the mistake of

*Michael Chin says artists appreciate criticism that is well thought out*

me, more than anything else," recalls Chin. "I didn't even know where to get these paintings framed or how to sell them."

One of the first places he decided to display his collection of paintings was in a shopping mall in Bangsar. "By myself, I put up 30 paintings, one on either side of the 15 easels I had bought. I didn't have help and I carried everything myself. I just prayed all the time that someone would buy the pieces. They were not expensive. When I sold the first one for RM140, I was so happy."

Then he opened his first gallery which, eventually, led to the inception of MAC some 18 years ago.

Artists, Chin explains, are not as sensitive as people make them out to be. Instead, they appreciate criticism that is well thought out. For instance, there's no point in making a blanket statement, "Your painting is bad". "You should be able to tell them why you think something is not right," he says. "Say, you think more lighting

is needed, you may want to tell the artist 'If you use brighter colours here, it may be better'."

His ability to give constructive criticisms has earned him enormous respect amongst the 50-odd artists-in-residence at MAC. Indeed, he knows these artists so well that he is able to accurately guess their mood by the kind of art they produced. "Usually, when they use dark colours, something has happened in the family, like someone died. When they use bright colours, they're happy," explains Chin.

When he set up MAC, his idea was to create a platform for artists so that their work could be showcased. Over the years, MAC has grown and is now housed in a six-storey building in The Strand at Kota Damansara with a total area 929.03 sq m where aspiring artists are given a chance to grow in the art world.

It does not guarantee success. "However, if they are willing to listen to us, we will not interfere with their styles, but help them improve their works and then help them display it. I look for a work that is balanced in terms of colour, perspective and object. It must have a symmetry of balance," he says.

As for his clientele, Chin says that many Malaysians fall into one of two categories: They are either the affluent (who buy paintings mainly for their decorative value and to enhance the look of their homes) or collectors (who invests in the art or follows the work of one particular artist).

With a smile that only someone who has realised his dream will recognise, Chin concludes: "If someone asks me 'What should I do?' I will tell him to do something he is passionate about. It's what's in your heart that's important. Don't worry about what others are saying or all the criticisms you'll get. After all, the cream will always float to the top."

*Padi View by Mohd Jalil***Semenyih Dam by Lim Weng Poh**

"Here, the artist's quiet personality is reflected in his work," says Chin. "It's the kind of painting that is suitable in the dining room. I don't know why people like to put still-life paintings of food in the dining room. There's already food on the table. Instead, I think this kind of painting will increase a person's appetite." Alternatively, because of the soothing tones, intensity and texture of this work, it's possible to mount it on a bedroom wall. Chin agrees and says: "Yes. What a peaceful scene to wake up to."

Colourful View by Rahmat Idris

"The artist has an unusual approach," explains Chin. "He has used blue and red to cut-off each other. But it works because I see it as contrast living in harmony. Just like fire and water that can co-exist."

Silat by C.T. Chia

The artist has used the dry brush technique which means that no linseed oil is used to dilute the paints.

"It's a mild form of an Impressionist style," explains Chin. The artist uses very rich colours and is accurate in his portrayal of figures. It is, therefore, not surprising to note that the artist idolises Vincent van Gogh.

*Semenyih Dam by Lim Weng Poh***Exhibition details****What:** Giving Art Exhibition**When:** Until Wednesday**Where:** Alhambra, Melia Hotel, 16 Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur (opposite Berjaya Times Square)**Call:** 03-2785 2828