

From hand to heart

Former graphic artist Siund Tan finds great satisfaction in getting his hands dirty with oil paints, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

SURF the Internet and you'll find a few articles on how to choose a pseudonym. The advice ranges from using a similar name to your own, using a name that fits the genre in which you work, mixing and matching, or even using a "name generator". Then you meet Tan Hong Shiun, who tells a curious story about how he chose his pseudonym: Siund. "It started out as a joke," says the 33-year-old from Aior Setar, Kedah.

"It has more to do with the word 'sound'. I replaced the 'o' with an 'i' and got 'Siund'. I think it sounds cool."

Siund is showcasing his latest works at his inaugural solo exhibi-

tion Sometime.

Heid at G13 Gallery, Keiana Jaya, it features nine oil-on-canvas paintings of various sizes produced within a span of a year. Such aggressive productivity gives the impression that here's an artist who's making up for lost time.

He concurs. "When I first started, I was still a graphic designer. Being a painter was my secret identity. I wanted to avoid the embarrassment."

Embarrassed of what, though? Siund can't provide a comprehensive answer, but says that maybe, since he decided to do figurative painting from day one, what (or whom) he paints, "may be like someone close to you. They may not like what I paint."

Although his work and vocation as a painter are no longer a secret, Siund remains reluctant to discuss his art with his family and friends. "It's sad, but true," he says. "They don't really appreciate it and I don't want to force them to like or buy my work. Maybe they will think it's not solid enough, not professional enough."

I find this even more surprising since Siund admits that his father had always wanted to become an artist but, "...He had to become a professional — an engineer — to sustain

a living."

FROM SCIENCE TO ART

Nonetheless, now that he's started painting full-time, he's never going to stop. Especially since he now says that Siund is just a name. He adds: "I want to use it to share my work. This is a natural thing. Sooner or later, this will happen."

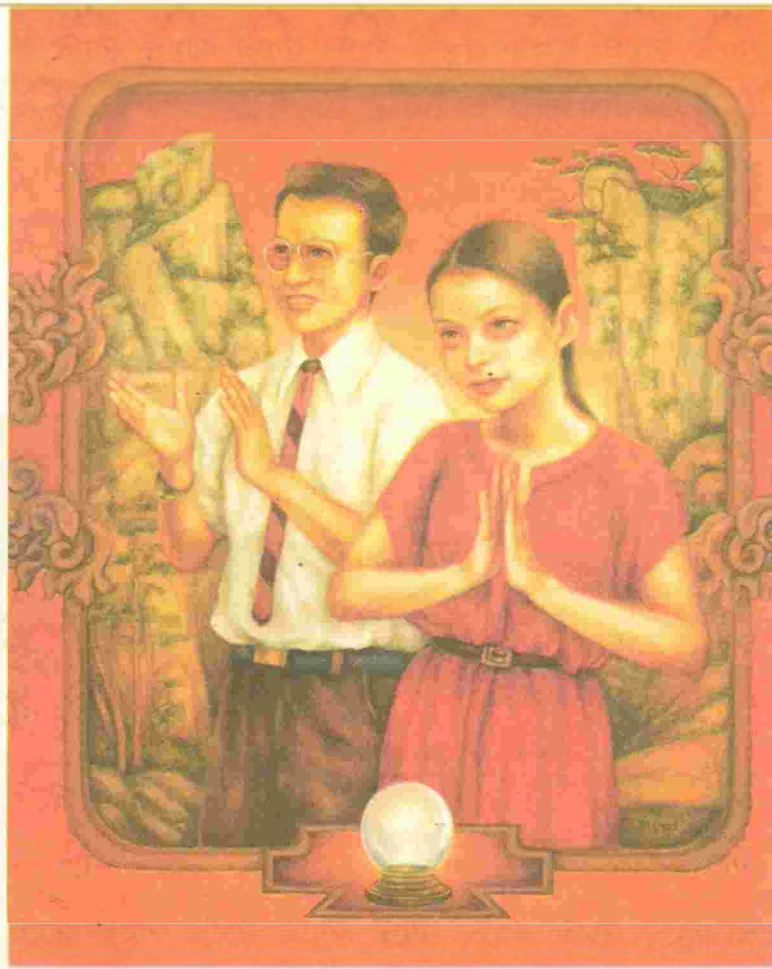
Although today Siund can work on two or three pieces at any one time from his studio in Kota Damansara, he didn't start out this way. Like most 17-year-olds, when he first completed school, he was, in his words, "blur" about what to study next. "I was in the Science stream and knew that I wanted to do art. At the time, design was the way to go. So, I went and studied graphic design." Upon his graduation from Curtin University, Perth, he joined the workforce and became a graphic designer in the advertising industry.

"But I was bored," he says. "In private, I used to buy the canvas, read books and search the Internet. I had to learn about Fine Art." The first few pieces he created were exhibited in group exhibitions at private galleries and, in 2012, he emerged as the winner in Malaysia's Emerging Artist (MEA) competition. With that came a newfound confidence and he left his day job to become a full-time painter.

UNDERSTANDING SELF THROUGH PAINTING

"I like the process of painting," confides Siund before adding: "It's handmade, as opposed to graphic designing which is all to do with computers. With art, I work as an individual. It's natural and I mix the colours by hand. I get very excited from the start. Like an engineer who sees the blueprint and has the urge to see the final construction, I, too, look forward to seeing how my ideas are transformed. Along the way, I understand myself better."

To illustrate, the left-handed



Future Perfect.

artist refers to one of his paintings, *Forever Past*. "This painting is about letting go of the past. But, at the same time, we still have a longing for it. I used an hourglass because I see it as a measurement of time. Something from the past. Something cryptic. Like looking at a photo album that's full of memories. Look at the gestures — they hint at the concept of letting go."

In *Behold Present*, Siund has painted an abacus. "This represents the present for me. Many times, people think that the female figures are my wife Pui Chai Fun. But they're not. I don't use live models either. But, I suppose, since she's there every day in my life, you can say that, yes, she is my muse. She encourages me. I sometimes ask her to pose to get the angle correct. But I see the three sets of people in these works not as one couple in three dif-

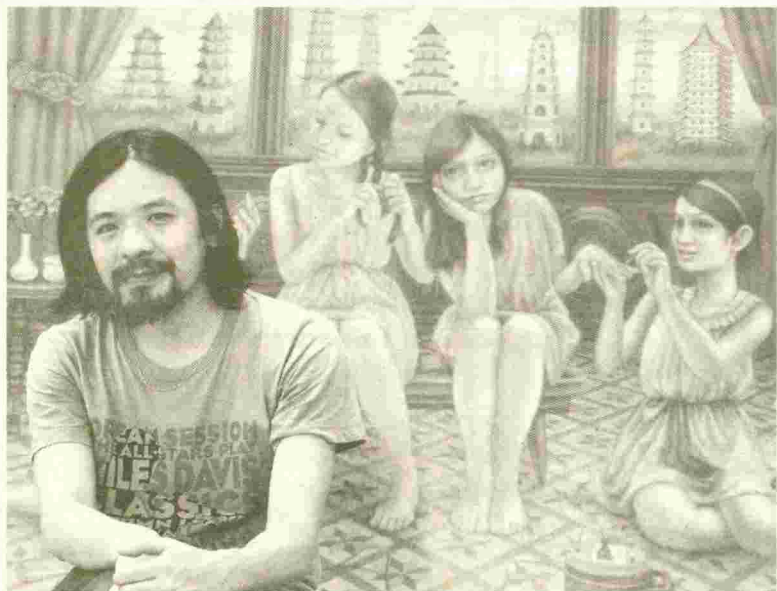
ferent times. They are three couples from the same family, perhaps."

The third couple Siund is referring to is from another painting, *Future Perfect*. "In this painting, the action of the couple is to bless someone younger. Maybe someone from the next generation."

Although he uses oil paints, Siund says something that gives the impression that he hasn't left behind the world of graphic designing and advertising altogether: "I will not say that my work is completely Fine Art because it's not formal and there are differences in technical execution. I haven't followed all the principles. Neither have I made the colours reflect reality exactly. I prefer to do illustrations. Like a hybrid of sorts."

Indeed, there's a sense that his paintings are influenced by images and illustrations on commercial packaging and posters of yesteryear.

Determined to infuse each piece of art with something positive, he shares: "In *Future Perfect*, there's a peach. This is supposed to be a good thing. So, I included it here in the border."



Siund learns more about himself through his art.

What: Sometime, a solo exhibition by Siund Tan

When: Until Nov 1
Where: G13 Gallery, G13, Ground Floor, Block B, Kelana Square, Jalan SS7/26, Kelana Jaya, Selangor
Details at: www.g13gallery.com

THE A-LIST

BY KERRY-ANN AUGUSTIN

UP YOUR ALLEY

Where: The Print Room, 49 Lorong 16/9E, Seksyen 16, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

When: Ends today, 2pm to 7pm. By appointment only.

Admission: Free
Contact: 03-79312227/ 012-337 2903
FEATURES street photography from England, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Bangladesh and Switzerland, with works by professional and amateur photographers.

OBSCURED LUCIDITY

Where: Richard Koh Fine Art 2F-3

Level 2, Bangsar Village II, Jalan Telawi, Bangsar, KL

When: Weekends until Oct 21, 10am to 10pm.

Admission: Free
Contact: 03-2283 3677

LOCAL artists Saifui Razman, Fendy Zakri and Raduan Man employ the expressionist style in these abstract paintings with vivid colours.

TALES OF TWO CITIES: PAINTINGS OF MALACCA AND GEORGE TOWN

Where: Atelier Art Space and Gallery, 3rd Floor, Jaya One, 72A Jalan Universiti, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

When: Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm; Sat, 10am-2pm until Oct 31

Admission: Free
Contact: 03-7960 7253

KOH Shim Luen hopes her depictions of the architecture of Malacca and George Town will spark discussions on the role of heritage in sustainable urban development.

UNTAMED BLOOM EXHIBITION

Where: Balai Berita NSTP, 31 Jalan Riong, Bangsar, KL

When: Daily, until Oct 31

Admission: Free
Contact: 1300 22 6787



Untamed Bloom

FEATURES paintings, mixed-media and digital works by Haris Rashid, Ajim Juxta, Dura, Manje

and Sarah Ameera who display their artistic interpretations of the wild side of nature.