

Art Stage: Faces to watch

Singapore's premier art fair Arts Stage opens next Thursday. A key highlight is its country platforms, featuring some of the hottest artists in the region. **HELMY YUSOF** checks out five of them.



Side story: For her show tonight, Lee has created thick blocks of paint that resemble desserts with their rich colours, texture and consistency. PHOTO: SUNDARAM TAGORE GALLERY

Global following for genre-defying artist

JANE LEE
Singapore

ASK collectors of Singapore art whose works they covet, and “Jane Lee” almost always pops up. Ask Lee in person what she thinks about that, and she looks genuinely surprised.

She says: “Most of my collectors are Americans and Europeans. I know very few Singaporeans who do.”

In fact, for her first solo exhibition here in four years, she’s asked her gallerist Sundaram Tagore to keep the works’ prices on the more affordable side – despite strong demand from Western collectors – so as to encourage Singapore-based collectors to purchase them.

Her new works, showing concurrently at Art Stage and Sundaram Tagore Gallery in Gillman Barracks, are priced from US\$21,760 for a wall painting to US\$126,920 for a large installation. Yet even as this writer was interviewing her at the latter space, the gallery phones were ringing frequently as buyers from the West were enquiring about her works’ availability.

For much of her artistic career, Lee, 50, has been trying to do one thing: “I’m always trying to challenge how people perceive painting.”

In the past, she broke all rules by creating paintings without canvases. The paint is piled on thickly enough that it can hang – as if by magic – without a canvas.

In 2008, she made a splash at the Singapore Biennale with a massive work – again a painting created without canvas – that covered the entire wall of a hall. Its sheer audacity caught the eye of New York gallerist Sundaram Tagore who invited her to exhibit in New York in 2012. The show sold every piece it exhibited and created a following for Lee in the West.

For her new show at Sundaram Tagore Gallery at Gillman tonight, she’s once again taken painting in a unique direction. She’s created thick blocks of paint that resemble desserts with their rich colours, texture and consistency. Works hung on the walls look like delectable blocks of creamy yoghurt, while stacks of brown blocks placed on the floor resemble chocolate bars.

Referring to the latter, she says: “People tend to look at paintings on walls. So in this case, I’ve stacked the pieces up so you only see the sides of the paintings. Of course, the owner of the painting gets to lift each one and see the details of the pieces, but the idea is that those details can only be viewed by the owner. Everyone else only see the sides of the painting. But the sides, I feel, tell their own story too.”

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Jane Lee’s works are shown at Sundaram Tagore Gallery starting today. Admission is free. They will also be shown at Art Stage’s SEA platform at Marina Bay Sands from Jan 16-19. Tickets from Sistic or at the door