

Confabulation





Retracing Steps.

Text: Stephanie Seet

Feng Ye's second solo exhibition of 12 paintings consisting of 11 monochromes and 1 red piece at Y2ARTS (situated in MICA Building) showcases his audacious approach of representing a China historical moment through articulating movements of renowned Peking opera master, Mei Lanfang.

Mei, a premeditated subject Feng Ye portrays is a renowned Peking opera master who played over 180 female roles during his art career in the early 20th century, and was also an ardent cultural leader and socialist. Keeping the limitations and the impossibility of forming the past from the present in mind, Feng Ye stressed that his intention is not to stir viewers' acts of recollection and reminiscence of Chinese opera master but to broadcast his thoughts of the growth in China and the spirit of the times by re-staging the impression of a legendary figure.

Feng Ye, a talented contemporary Chinese artist, born in 1974 in Huludao, Liaoning province, graduated with a master degree (Oil Painting) in Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in 2006. He lectured in Lu Xun Fine Arts Middle School till 2007 before committing himself full-time as a practicing artist since then. In recent 2008, Feng Ye was selected for the 3rd International Art Biennale in Beijing, held

Simple Glamour 10, 2007 Oil on Canvas, 150 x 220 cm



Moment of Passion, 2009 Oil on Canvas, 100 x 200 cm

in conjunction with the Olympics in Beijing, and participated in various group exhibitions in Beijing, Shanghai, Malaysia and Singapore.

The structure of interpenetration and articulation in the flux of time, retracing steps from Mei Lanfang's staged performances present the perception between past and present. Feng Ye re-examines the dimensions of time, transition of the generation, and relations between traditional Chinese calligraphy and the contemporary methods of painting –Feng Ye ingeniously translates the progression of cultural and political climate, current age of globalization in China and heightening charismatic of the Chinese classical into an exuberant figurative oil painting on large canvases solely with the palette knife.

*Her tactful smile charms;
Her eyes, fine and clear,
Beautiful without accessories
A painting is done on plain white
paper.*

Confucius's Analects



Intoxicated, 2008 Oil on Canvas, 200 x 100 cm



Feng Ye Mei Lanfang Beijing 1, 2008 Oil on Canvas, 225 x 150 cm

Tzu Hsia responded, ‘Then are rituals a secondary thing?’ From this, it became a main source of inspiration and indulgence for Feng Ye, a visual language challenge to narrate costumes’ exquisiteness and theatrical moods by relying on minimal colors keeping to black and white oils since early 2006.

Monochrome portraits mediate nostalgia, a memory of the immediate past, and an attempt to execute stills of Mei’s performing highly acrobatic moves (See *Mei Lanfang Beijing 1* and *Simple Glamour*) and elegant poises were visually displayed through the application of spontaneity and precise strokes, composition of positive spaces from negative spaces (and vice-versa) were marked tactfully with layering of paints from the palette knife, also constructs a surface texture, a three-dimensional illusion which then evokes a sense of volume. The black-and-white paints enhance the intensity of the theatre stage, forthright addresses a sensation of sight, sophistication and beauty.

In late 2008, Feng Ye marks a radical departure from the comfort of working in monochrome; boldly pursue a dramatic juxtaposition of brilliantly contrasting hues. For red being the color of power, life and light, overwhelmed by cadmium red on the 1.85meters tall background in *Red* (2008) stands out from the 11 monochromes, mirroring a breakthrough in reality and envisioning new social-political systems in China. Albeit that such concern of subject matter never deviates from the early monochrome series, this inaugural step of putting colors on canvas had imposed additional perspectives and different intensities aesthetically for Feng Ye to look beyond.

Retracing Steps takes you on a journey of integrated culture experience of Chinese painting and the historical moment in Chinese classical of opera to Singapore. His solo exhibition runs from the 22nd February to 21st March at Y2ARTS. Feng Ye’s artworks are exclusively available at Y2ARTS and Lukisan Art Gallery. //