

For immediate release

11 February 2010

**Exhibition** : **Masquerade**  
**Venue** : **Mulan Gallery**  
19 Tanglin Road  
#02-33 Tanglin Shopping Centre  
Singapore 247909  
**Date** : **24 April – 22 May 2010**  
(Opening Reception: 23 April 2010)

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*Clear faces painted in lurid colours. Light glints off the smooth painted surfaces. But the limpid forms devolve into disturbing reveries.*

Shiew Eng's canvases are vivid and arresting. The imposing sizes of the paintings and the uncomfortable framing of faces that she depicts add to the strong visual impact. Her new series of works is a continued exploration of the theme of androgynous faces- in 'Masquerade' Shiew Eng studies the faces of children. Pre-pubescent young kids are not a novel subject in art or literature. But Shiew Eng renders the forms in deliberately garish light and with saturated hues, cropping and composing them carefully so that seeing them becomes perturbing for the viewer. These images are clearly not the run of the mill joyous faces of children that we see in commercials that surround us or the images glimpsed in a family album somewhere. They have instead a more haunting, sombre quality that persists afterwards.

This deliberate distortion and management of the images by the artist has a clear motive. Shiew Eng is interested in the gaze of the viewer, she makes the person self-conscious so as to reveal something about our seeing habits – the way we see gender in particular. Her artistic practice have for the past four years centred on this issue, and this has over time acquired a more nuanced conceptual understanding and subtle exposition in her work. Recognition of our own image-fetishism, perversions existing in our culture and the effects these have on the young, reflective faces and minds of children, surfaces through these paintings. Yet none of these are aspects are overt or over-stated.

Shiew Eng's artistic process is possibly responsible for the control that one sees in her compositions. Her works are meticulously detailed and layered. Aside from the choosing of the appropriate image, manipulation and cropping of the photograph used for each painting, she undertakes a series of studies in acrylic that refine composition and colour. The final painting is completed in concentrated stints of 24 hours each. This brings about the smooth texture and air-brush quality of the finished

work. Each of these steps in the creation of the work is clearly thought out and considered, revealing a maturity that belies the age of the artist and speaks of her innate proclivity for art.

'Masquerade' is the first solo exhibition of the 24-year old NAFA graduate who has done numerous group exhibitions in six years in galleries including Sculpture Square. Apart from the awards given in her institutions of study, Shiew Eng has also enjoyed commercial success. Her paintings are part of private and corporate collections in Singapore, Korea and the United States.

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