

For immediate release

7 August 2009

Exhibition : Lucky Plazas
Venue : Mulan Gallery
No. 19 Tanglin Road
#02-33 Tanglin Shopping Centre
Singapore 247909
Date : 4 – 25 September 2009

‘Lucky Plazas’, a two-man show at Mulan Gallery, presents the works of noted comic artists Sonny Liew and Koh Hong Teng, in a reflective mood, exploring aspects of their homeland, Singapore. The artworks are not just complementary in style but also subject matter, indeed both artists offer narratives that grapple with Singaporean issues both subtle and deep, yet offering engaging visuals that proliferate with minute observations. While the views of the unseen parts of Singapore in Hong Teng’s portrayals are both lingering and nostalgic, the crisp commentary on politics and politicians in Sonny Liew’s works are delightful, with the clever humour of classic political cartoons.

Both artists exhibit a strong control over lines and easy familiarity with the tropes of the comic genre that has been seamlessly carried over to the paint canvases. It is worth noting that they have valuable working in the field of illustration, particularly with comic books. Their paintings too present a similar rigor of draughtsmanship that carries the eye swiftly into the imagery. The artworks hence appear suggestive, imbued as they are with analogic possibilities.

Hong Teng tellingly fills his canvases with broad areas of colour, along-with rich detail that at once dissimulates its own imagery. They do not exist, even as they appear real. Part of this effect is indebted to the forgotten landscape of Singapore, one that is both hidden from view in usual presentations of Singapore, and also constantly being erased to make way for something contemporary. Pictures reveal store-fronts of local shops, stacked with colourful sweets - a rare sight among burgeoning malls, old men gathered over a game of mahjong at a HDB hub and many such local vignettes. That these are rendered in interesting perspectives adds to the charm and poignancy of Hong Teng’s paintings.

Sonny's work on the other hand comprises of a carefully rendered triptych showing a hawker center that seems to be uncommonly visited upon by the stalwarts of the Singapore socio-political scene. The rest is there for the viewer to read, understand and interpret. Part of the series titled, "Erik Khoo is a Social Magnate," these also require a keen knowledge of Singapore, its political, economic environment and social conditions. Stylistically, Sonny's work is closer to his comic book format with speech bubbles and attention to characterisation. And also depicts a meticulous control of composition and attention to detail that is also seen in Hong Teng's work.

Following the group exhibition at Black Earth Art Museum in Nov 2008 which showed the works of four illustrators, this will be second major showcase of the works of these artists, to be shown in Singapore- an event significant in itself and marking an important step in art curation in Singapore. As Patricia Liang, the Managing Director of Mulan Gallery puts it, "Both Hong Teng and Sonny Liew are gifted illustrators and these works are testament to the unique and rich possibilities that they have to offer the world of fine art."

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