



Text by Rachel Lee-Leong
Images courtesy of Wyn-Lyn Tan

SEEKING RESOLUTION



Abstract artist, Wyn-Lyn Tan, shares about her personal progress as an artist, and the journey that takes place with each piece of work she embarks upon.

Reading Wyn-Lyn's artist statement, one would imagine an angst-filled artist in a constant struggle to appease the civil war of emotions raging within her, as it reads of "an internal world that is often a contradiction of emotions and thoughts", and the "lack of words and the inability to verbalise emotions" as a personal frustration. But meeting her in person throws these notions out the door completely. In person, the soft-spoken artist is a complete sweetheart; a person who seems to be in a perpetual state of contentment, and quite possibly walks around with an invisible aura of butterflies and flowers. But really, still waters run deep.

Wyn-Lyn, though saccharine-sweet on the outside, is one tough cookie. She speaks about being a late-starter as an artist, having spent time taking a business degree which she never quite made use of, followed by a one-year stint as a writer. All the while during her studies and year in publishing, she contemplated going into art as a career until finally, she mustered the daring to plunge right in, enrolling into Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts for a three-year diploma course. "I decided that if I really wanted to pursue art, then I needed to go into a full-time course," Wyn-Lyn shares of the bold decision she made back then.



This steady determination is what set her on the artist's course, and it is the same innate ability to commit that has seen her living out her ideal of being a full-time artist. "It will always be a constant struggle," Wyn-Lyn says. "Not just with family, but emotionally also. There is a full time needed to create your work and during this lull period, when there is no income coming in, the [emotional] struggle is even greater," she says candidly. "Ultimately, how much the government is doing is inconsequential. At the end of the day, it's a personal fight and a commitment made by yourself."

On the subject of her works themselves, they started off as figurative drawings, but as time progressed, she started abstracting the figures until finally, they became fully abstract pieces that bank on the bold interplay of colour, light, texture and contrast. "It's just that the work has progressed, and not necessarily because of a conscious decision to do things differently," she says of the difference in her works over time. Now, her abstract works deal with "a union of opposites struggling to find some sort of lyrical madness", a constant seeking to resolve antitheses of hope and despair, anger and love, nice and nasty, etc.

She speaks of her works as individual journeys based on both spontaneity and reflection. "Each

work is a sum of random mark makings," she explains of the spontaneity she speaks about. "But there is also the stepping back to assess what has been done on technical, visual and emotional levels." Her works seem to hint at Chinese ink painting influences and while she reveals that it is true and that she sometimes uses traditional Chinese mediums of ink and rice paper, the school of thought behind the art is still a largely western one, seeing how abstraction originated from the west.

When asked what one of the greatest misconceptions about abstract art is, Wyn-Lyn laughingly repeats the oft-pronounced statement, "My three year old could do that!" She begs to differ, saying that splashing a blob of paint may not be as easy as it looks. "With abstract art, there's no sense of knowing. You start with a blank canvas and you don't know when it will lead you and when it'll be complete. Unlike still life, where there is an obvious start and finish."

In many ways, Wyn-Lyn's venture into the unknown with each piece of abstraction points to a bigger picture where her life as an artist is the greater artwork and with every decision she makes, one more "random mark" is made, adding and enriching the art piece that is her life. ■

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