



Violence and Sorrow, 2016 (Intaglio Print), Ru Yi Tan.

CULTURE CONNOISSEUR:

OUR ARTS KINGDOM

THERE ONCE WAS A COMMUNITY WITH RICH AND THRIVING CULTURAL PRACTISES - OF MAKING BY HAND. ARTESANS WORKED WITH WOOD, CERAMIC, THREADS, STONE, SILVER AND PEWTER, AS RESPECTED PROFESSIONALS CREATING FOR LIFESTYLE AND APPRECIATION. THERE WAS GREAT SUPPORT AND PATRONAGE WITH PALACES AND GRAND SPACES INCORPORATING THESE FINE WORKS, OFTEN SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED, INTO STRUCTURES AND AS OBJECTS D'ART. ALL ASPIRED TO BE ABLE TO COMMISSION UNIQUE PIECES AS THAT WAS A SIGN OF STATUS, OF SUCCESS, OF CONNOISSEURSHIP.



W | Datin Shalini Ganendra



Landed 1 (Watercolor on paper), Bibi Chew



Fighting Piece (oil on jute), Zac Lee



Union (marble), Jasmine Kok

This tale is at once historic and contemporary – with contemporary practise utilising different materials and perhaps established brands. Terms like couture and bespoke come to mind.

Economies develop, and though communities may shift from feudal to egalitarian/democracy, the practise of bespoke continues to be precious. What we perhaps need to recognise is that bespoke does not necessarily mean wildly expensive or exclusive. Knowing and appreciating what we have and are, whilst at the same time engaging with the contemporary creates a healthy balance.

Well made and designed craft balanced with well crafted contemporary works – eclectic and sophisticated – with enduring narrative. A story of appreciation, of the past and the now.

Often, when the Contemporary is desired, past skills become obsolete. We misunderstand their value. There is expansion into different mediums and formats, in a valiant effort to become part of a ‘trendy’ global conversation. But international recognition is harder to secure than is the desire to be international. SO - why the Disconnect?

A community’s Art and Culture serve not only as voices for group

and individual practioners, but also reflections of a local community to the world. What are our strengths, freedoms, restrictions, concerns, uniquenesses, weaknesses? What do our voices say? What is important to us? What do we ignore? Who are we? Who do we want to become? Who could we be?

And just as with most life principles, the more honest, informed and responsible we are with what we say and how we say it, the more likely that it will make sense and that people will listen. Quality distinction is the only way forward in this incredibly challenging, global environment. But – we also need to

present in meaningful and impactful ways – ways that invite people to dance with us, on our floor, to our music and then start the two-way conversation to extend to shores beyond. For a progressive Arts scene, key factors are: good vision, professional practises, creativity, and patronage (government and private).

Creating credible platforms for contemporary practise and local culture is a welcome challenge. There are so many BIG projects that try to secure attention – with few gaining traction – anywhere. We have heard of Frieze, Art Basel, the Armory Show – but there are so many others that go un-noticed.

If we love what we do, we will do it better. It is easier to love if there is meaningful/sustainable support. Strong projects with impactful deliverables, supporting community and vision – strengthened by involvement, patronage, and commentary. THAT is the way forward.

It is our turn. November will see a golden nugget of a project unfold in our kingdom, The Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur 2016 (www.gw-kl.com). GWKL is a curated, annual event, applauding community talent, aiming to create a multidisciplinary platform with global reach. The event will showcase aspects of

Malaysiana, with quality distinction and emphasis on multidisciplinary aesthetics – art, design and architecture – all related. Such initiatives should make the world look at us differently, with a smile of sophisticated understanding. Invaluable anchor supporters include The Majestic Hotel and Marini’s Group, as well as the Aga Khan Architecture Awards – all premiere partners. Through the GWKL platform, we will emphasise the positive and creative, the gifted and thoughtful, the professional and aspirational. This is, after all, our kingdom and we are ready to present. Let’s have a Ball.