

ROOTING MARK/

A SOLO EXHIBITION BY MARK LEE SEE TECK

MARK LEE /EE TECK

ROOTING MARK/





MOVING MOUNTAIN/...

by Ooi Kok Chuen

Is it a painting or a relief sculpture, with its gravity-defying amalgam of paint and pulp, clinging on to the canvas like barnacles on a ship's hull, hanging on precariously like a cliffhanger trapeze act, and exuding all the coarse tactility and surface tensions?

Mark Lee See Teck's 'Kintascape' approximations of hilly totems are inspired by highland areas with the sheer grandeur of height and a greater emphasis on crumpled mass of textural obduracy.

The works derive sensibilities mainly from the Kinta Valley hills including the Kanthan quarries and limestone outcrops, which have got increasingly denuded and bald in large parts, as passing motorists on the North-South Highway not so far from the madding crowd would not fail to notice. But Nature is resilient and rejuvenates itself in ways that beguile and celebrate faith.

In Mark Lee's present body of works, there is this overpowering dominance of the obdurate crusty exteriors of the purported hills, sticking out like an epidermy of silicon prosthetics.

Not for Mark Lee the realism renditions of any particular hill, but rather one woven together from a composite aggregate of several facets of hilly terrains encompassing mostly both West Malaysia and Borneo, and even he claims, the Huka Falls on the Waikato River in North Island in New Zealand.

His rarefied repertoire also includes the Merisuli forest reserve in Sabah, and Bukit Limau and Pulau Tokong Burung in Pulau Perhentian. All of which he has experienced in the course of his commercial film-making work and also at play, half as an exercise regime.

These places are studiously studied as visual transitions as well with whiffs of the experiential, as the hiking footpaths trampled upon, done mostly by Mark Lee in solitary, in a ritual of embracing Nature and vice versa.

Since 2016, these visual escapades have also become part of his data gathering – resourcing, accumulating and analyzing, for his ongoing PhD studies on Environmental Conservation at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

The experiences, physical and visual, titillate the intellect and evoke various shades of emotions at different times and conditions of the day, sometimes with an odd acquiescence of poetic empathy, which are interpreted and translated into an array of colours, with differences of application, and forms.

This slew of works of Kinta perspicacity veers abruptly, and dramatically, from those conventional and more painterly abstract expressionist pieces that marked his debut solo entitled Her at the The Art People Gallery in 2017.

Whilst the thrust of escapism is there, the Kinta kaleidoscope marks a foray into using paint and pulp as verisimilitude of object-building, with the infusion of bamboo sticks both as artificial 'brush' lines and stanchion props as well as mock infrastructure, simulating trees perhaps and other vine-like things and also stalactites and stalagmites, and all buttressed by concealed clay as 'sealants.' Cement sack wrappers with printed letterings et al are also added into the intriguing surface repertoire.

The acrylic paint, both brushed and sprayed over and sometimes rendered as if with an adamantine sheen, animates the whole composition. Because of the resultant undulating mortar-like crumpled morass of mixed paint encrusted with thick vegetation or organic protuberances, there are discernible or imaginary crevices and craters, yielding an air of mystery in pockets of areas cavernous portals, darkened and ominous.

With such dark veneer, little is made of the play of the intricacies of light though exuded in shimmers and glimmers.

Interestingly, the backdrop is couched in more endearing colours, of pastel shades, providing contrast of the smooth and sensual as well as a blanket base to push out and propel the highlight: the hills and mountains. In the ambience is a sense of swirling clouds, a misty cloak, meandering streams and/or placid pond.

Mark Lee's tools of the trade include acrylic, charcoal, pulp, oil pastel, chalk, clay, cement wrappers (as collages) and bamboo sticks, and even eraser, which is used to snuff out and obliterate parts of the vestigial elements, to signify immateriality and fragility and transiency though the 'presence' is not heralded.

As John Ruskin noted in his book, Mountain Painters: "Mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery."

Yet, this tour de force came about only because of a sudden flood that tragically engulfed Mark Lee's studio in Kampung Bukit Lanchong in Shah Alam in 2021, damaging a large body of 20 works meant for this self-same solo exhibition. They had a consistent format size of 8 feet by 8 feet.

But fortuitously, this crushing misadventure had a sort of catharsis moment. Instead of trying to rework and rewind the process of his erstwhile efforts, Mark Lee was inspired to start on a completely clean slate, with a drastically different tangent of creativity.

In his new works, he has extended his canvas to a format of 8 feet by 10 feet, and went gung-ho into a voluptuary of thick skeins of paint, curdled and muddled.

The hills are alive, silent and slumberous perhaps, but with a resonating ebullience. At times, they stand like passive sentinels in the buffets of Nature's unpredictable weather patterns or rock-solid like daunting warriors over time unless disfigured and dislodged by Man for development.

The natural entity also exists as a refuge and a sanctuary of the ecosystem balancing wildlife, insects, geological terrain and vegetation.

Apart from this self-generated works, Mark Lee has also done several commissions like the Johnnie Walker First Striding Man statue (2021), and for the Alunan Beach Resort in Pulau Perhentian in Terengganu (seven pieces) in 2022, Linaco Bhd (six pieces) in 2018 and the WASTech Group (2019).

He had also been selected by The Art People Gallery (TAPG) to take part in Art Moments, Jakarta Art Fair, Indonesia in 2022, and the

AAF Singapore in November 2023.

Mark Lee's tutelage is not intrinsically in Art. His academic redentials were: Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication (University of Southern Queensland, Australia, 2006); Masters of Arts in Media Studies (University of Auckland, New Zealand, 2013) and Diploma in Advertising (SEGI University College, formerly MSC, 2004), where he had a spell under Dr Jolly Koh, who had a strong impact on him.

Before his present serious foray into visual art, Mark Lee first etched his reputation in commercial and documentary film-making on the humanitarian and the environmental. He founded HUG Pictures on April 19, 2018 and Fiery Films, which produced Eraser a drama on inter-racial tensions, unconditional love and patriotism. It stars Adibah Noor in her final film, Namron, Lee Wan Shuen Alyssa, Dhiya Ariffin and Angela Chan.

His first two documentaries, Rainbow's End 1 and Rainbow's End 2 centred on the AIDS crisis, first on those living with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and then on the 'stateless' youthful victims of the stigmatized disease. He had also directed Mr Garbage, which spotlights on an individual mopping up garbage from the water's edge in Pulau Ketam.

Mark Lee had also collaborated with fashion-designer Dominique Chan in his couture dresses, combining Fashion with Fine Art.

Mark Lee's Kintascapes called Rooting Marks come, consciously or unknowingly to him, from the varying 'rock' templates of predecessors like Dr Chew Teng Beng, Dr Choong Kam Kow, Joseph Tan Chan Jin, Cheong Lai-tong, 'Mountain Man' Richard Wong Chin Kim, Peter Liew, James Sum, Eston Tan and C.N. Liew (western art component).

'Rooting Marks' has given hills and mountains a protruding crusty exterior and embellishes a technicolour dreamcoat inspiring both eye-opening awe and a sense of therapeutic delight.

So, can Mark Lee's Kintascape transformations be construed as a landscape or a mountain 'still-life,' perhaps? ■



RUMAH

mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 91 cm 2023



DEAR KANTHAN

mixed media on canvas 84 cm x 100 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 91 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 91 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 122 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 122 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 70 cm x 79 cm 2023



ARIA

mixed media on canvas 61 cm x 76 cm 2023



WELCOME DRINK

mixed media on canvas 85 cm x 106 cm 2023



TIPSY

mixed media on canvas 70 cm x 79 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 91 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 91 cm 2021



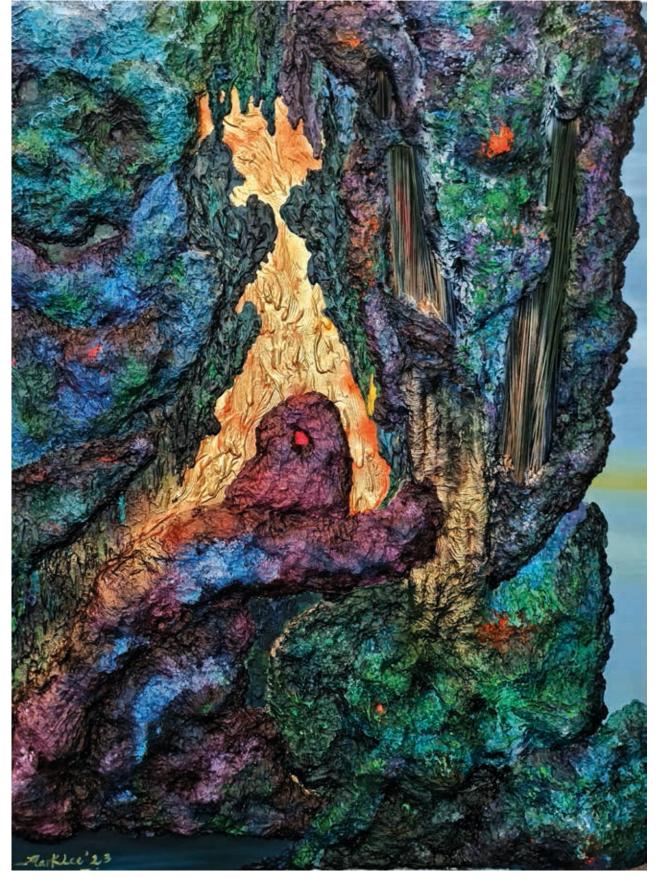
DOMINATION

mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 122 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 91 cm 2023





THE KING

mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 122 cm 2023



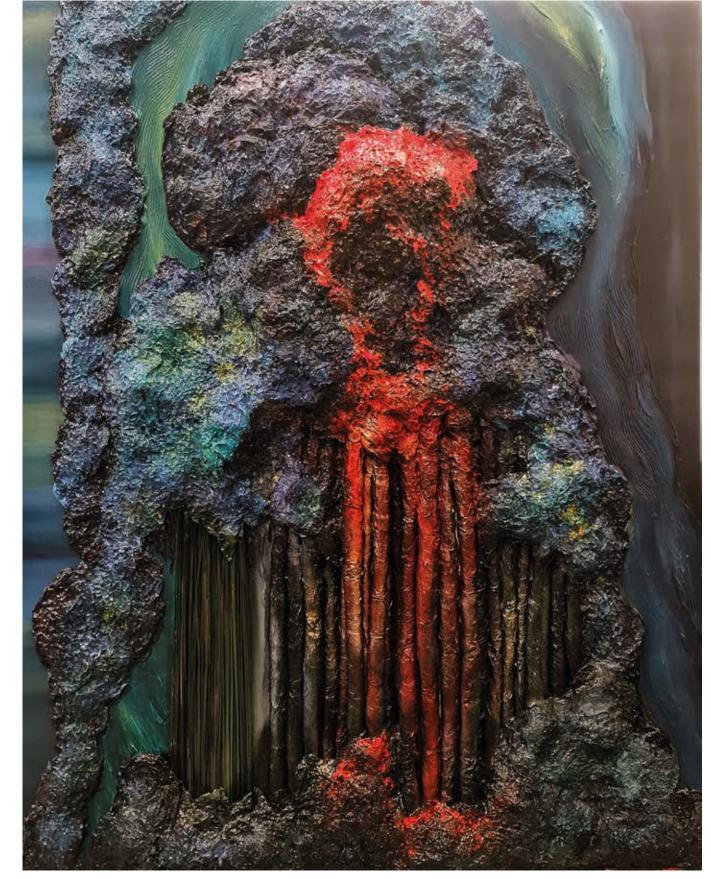
THE THRONE

mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 122 cm 2023





mixed media on canvas 106 cm x 84 cm 2023





THE MONK & THE BOSS

mixed media on canvas 100 cm x 143 cm 2023



mixed media on canvas 91 cm x 91 cm 2023



THE SCALE

mixed media on canvas 122 cm x 91 cm 2021

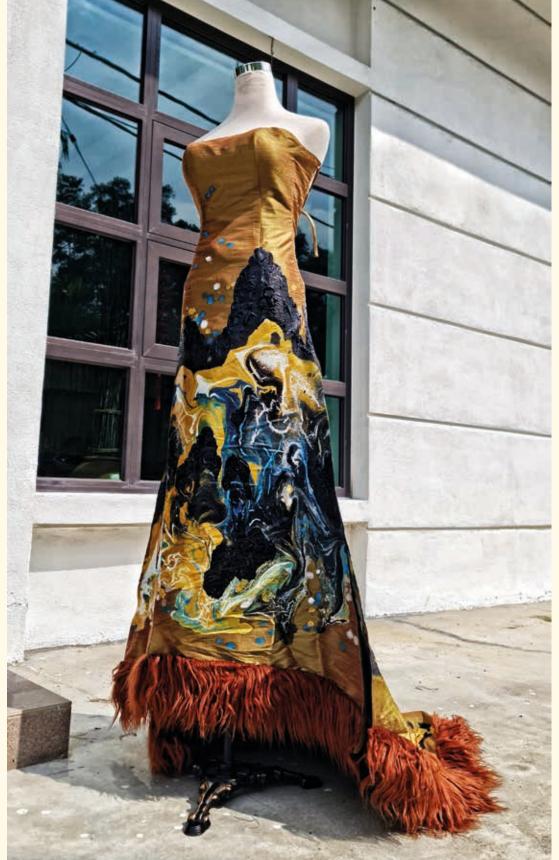


UNTITLED

Dress by Dominique Chan; Painting by Mark Lee

acrylic on fabric 2023





UNTITLED

Dress by Dominique Chan; Painting by Mark Lee

acrylic on fabric 2023





MARK LEE /EE TECK

/

+6011-2709 3281 leeseeteck@gmail.com



Everything that has made a visual appearance to our eyes marks an existence. It occupies a space no matter what form it arrives as; whether a pebble from the stream we grasp in our palm or the water that flows through our feet, they mark their arrival into this physical world.

Whether it creates interests to one or not, it is closely relatable to me that I respect and glorify them. One does not only experience its existence by physical but also psychological touch. We can't deny the connectivity of existence with elements around us to as much as the existence to our physical self.

Every existence has its standings providing one's physical and psychological balance. And that is simplified as The Beauty of Life.

Being a person that is passionately in love with nature, I became a contemporary landscape artist by nature. My works resemble the above statements by creating marks onto surfaces of my artwork. In which it could be identified from the textures that indicates (past), free flow of paint that indicates (present) and the space that indicates (future). It depends on how the scenery, landscape be it physical or imaginary connects to my state of mind at that particular moment.

I practice art in a daily manner, whether in my film directing or in my fine arts career. As I strongly believe that art serves as a strong tool that transports negative emotions, energy & social injustices that one absorbs in life and transforms them into positive energy. Art is a major part of our lives. Art is life. Residing in New Zealand for most of my adulthood, the choice of subjects and themes in my work has naturally revolving in glorifying Mother Nature at its most beauty.

I have extended my field of study and research not only through observations from traveling and hiking but also currently pursuing my Doctorate in Environmental Conservation. This has broaden my views by gaining knowledge in ways to extend my contribution to protect what I love most, Nature. Most importantly, it has enhanced my communication / visual skills in art form with my stakeholders.

"TO MY EXI/TENCE AND BALANCE IN THE BORROWED LAND I LIVE IN, MY WORK/ DEPICT WHO I AM."



EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Master of Arts in Media Studies University of Auckland, New Zealand

Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Conservation Universiti Putra Malaysia (Candidate)



2017 - Pigment of Passion Group Show

2017 - Group Show, Seni Mutiara Gallery, Penang

2018 - 6 Commissioned Works for Linaco Berhad

2019 - UK Affordable Art Fair, TAPG, HK

2019 - RACSArt, Group Exhibition, KL City Art Gallery

2021 - Art Aid Artist, Phase 1 & 2 Chetak & HOM Art Trans

2021 - Painted the 1st Striding Man statue in Malaysia, Represented by Johnnie Walker Blue Label

2022 - 7 Commissioned Works for Alunan Beach Resort, Pulau Perhentian, Terengganu

2022 - Art Moments Jakarta Art Fair, Indonesia, TAPG, HK

2022 - Group Show, Petals of Nationalism, Artas Galeri

2022 - Group Show, Lembaran, Artas Galeri

2023 - 2 Commissioned Works for WASTech Group, TAPG

Nov 2023 - AAF, Singapore, TAPG



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT/

The artist would like to thank the following people for making this show a success.

Datuk Vincent Sim Roger Lee
Lim Eng Chong Dr. Jolly Koh

Long Tian Chek
S. Indra Sathiabalan
Tang Chee Meng
Dominique Chan
Sim Polenn
KintaValley Watch
Sion Chang
Ching Boon Tat
Elizabeth Wong
Ooi Kok Chuen

Tan Rei Chei Stephen Lam

