



Voon standing next to one of his paintings which will be featured in his upcoming solo exhibition titled Cultural Exuberance. — Photos: LOW LAY PHON/The Star



Within bold hues and strokes, Voon incorporates cultural patterns for the observant viewer to appreciate.

Strokes of cultural exuberance

Artist hopes to share message of joy and harmony through solo exhibition



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SOAK up the colourful Malaysian culture and tradition through the eyes of local contemporary artist Voon Kim Cheong, who has been passionately working on his abstract masterpieces since 2013.

With a total of 36 pieces on display for his upcoming solo exhibition titled "Cultural Exuberance", Voon, 50, hopes to captivate visitors with his lively paintings.

His exhibition will be on from Nov 3 to 22, with the opening ceremony scheduled for 6pm on the first day at GS Arcade Fine Art Gallery along Jalan Gasing, Petaling Jaya.

Using only dynamic colours, Voon's paintings are of lively traditional dances, various drum performances, dragon boat racing, *wau*, paper planes and deers.

"If you look at my paintings you can see that the figures look like they are moving and dancing on the canvas," said Voon, who has been painting since 1991.

Voon explained that his technique involved the use of overlapping cultural elements by infusing certain cultural patterns and design into his painting.

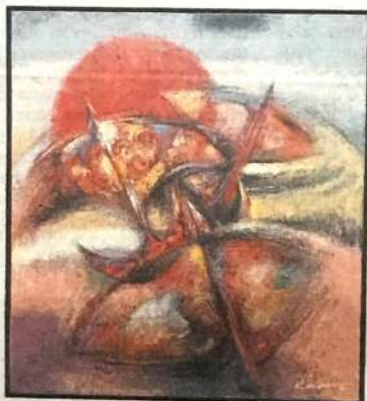
It isn't really obvious but if look at it closely, the elements in the painting will pop and tell a story about the origins and what is happening.

At first glance, the paintings might just be an energetic piece with bold colours but take a step back and slowly take in every shape and design.

Look closely and see the outlines of images telling a Malaysian cultural story with the precise flick of Voon's various brushstrokes.

Like in one of his paintings called "The Rhythm of Life", he was able to capture three cultures playing various drums all in one frame.

On the left is a performer playing the Chinese drums, on the right is another per-



One of Voon's *wau*-inspired paintings.

former with the *kompang* while in the center is a performer playing what resembles the *dholak*, an Indian folk musical instrument.

"I have always been very fascinated and inspired by the rich Malaysian culture and one day, I thought to myself, why not use it to create paintings," said Voon, whose paintings are all done with oil on canvas.

Using specific movement of strokes in his paintings, he is able to tell the story of how each performer moves or feels, by using both gentle and strong strokes of the brush.

He also splattered some paint onto the canvas to give it a more three dimensional effect.

Another of his favourites is called "Fly To Success", which portrays a childhood where the children are still playing with paper planes in the open field rather than holding electronic gadgets at home.

"We rarely see children gathering to play with paper planes anymore and this used to be what children play in most cultures growing up," he said.

Voon added that he loved recreating images of performances he had seen, even the cultural ones from Sabah and Sarawak which had a lot of cultural designs for him to incorporate into his paintings.

In another of his paintings titled "Drummers and Warriors Dance", he painted a Sarawak warrior in costume alongside two other drummers, also in costume.

A bright red sun in the background captures the energetic drum performance and the loudness of the music.

The interesting thing about Voon's paint-



A painting entitled 'Fly To Success' depicting children playing with paper planes, which harkens back to a simpler childhood, will also be on display at the solo exhibition.

ing is that he does not paint the people with facial features or expressions.

However, his brush strokes and incorporation of designs from the various cultures are enough to portray the mood and of the performer and origins of the painting.

"Personally, I like to develop ideas and concepts through random sketching to capture the composition, strokes, form and colour before proceeding to canvas.

"I prefer to have visual plains and geometric shapes intersecting and overlapping to

create a sense of visual distance and depth," he said.

Voon hopes to share his message of joy, strength, courage, harmony and the spirit of unity through this solo exhibition, which to him, captures the very essence of the Malaysian culture.

All his paintings will be on sale during the exhibition.

The gallery is open from Mondays to Saturdays from 9am to 7pm and closed on Sundays and public holidays.

