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KETNA PATEL'S ASIA POP!

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# truly asia

BY RONALD WAN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX HENG

**ASIA POP! Art + Furniture By Ketna Patel**  
the coffee connoisseur (tcc) 'The Gallery'  
51 Circular Road  
Feb 3 to Mar 31



Ketna Patel

**A**sia lights up and comes alive amidst the kaleidoscope of psychedelic colours and icons in the latest solo exhibition by celebrated mixed media artist Ketna Patel. Asia Pop! is a collection of Asian street narratives articulated in collages, paintings and furniture, presented by Art-Management in a café-cum-gallery setting at the coffee connoisseur (tcc).

Patel and her amazing technicolour exhibition have an immediate and swift effect on the senses. There is urgency and energy pulsating in her colourful narratives. An ah pek (old man) scratches his belly. A monk begs for money. An Indian lady calls you a loser. And the pop-centric artworks, which jolt one's senses and trigger a spontaneous reaction akin to the effects of advertising, encapsulate layers of meanings waiting to be deconstructed.

'Humanity is so condensed in Asian cities like China and India, which are growing very fast. Everyone is so close to each other. An Indian lady hangs her clothes while a prostitute walks in the street below. And this is what I do. I look at the subtext behind every scene and go 10 feet deeper into deconstructing the meaning,' reveals Patel, who has been a permanent resident in Singapore for the past 15 years.



Patel's ASIA POP! art and furniture at tcc The Gallery on 51, Circular Road



'Sound OK Horn Please'



'Drive Slow Village Ahead'



'The Return Of The Dragon'

IMAGES OF PAINTINGS COURTESY KETNA PATEL



'Nasi Boboko'

In fact, Patel is the best person for the job – to observe and extrapolate the myriad of cultures and the way we live. The artist, who was born in Africa and educated in London, has travelled to many far-flung places. 'I guess I don't really belong anywhere and I kinda like that idea. It gives me the opportunity to be voyeuristic. And I'm especially keen in observing third world situations,' says Patel. Hence, Patel started taking photographs – her favourite medium – of the people and society at large in Asia and weaved a brilliant tapestry of forgotten shophouses, misspelled signs, peddling hawkers and Rajasthan doorways.

Another evident part of Patel's artworks is the palette of strong and vibrant chromatic hues and shades, which perhaps heighten the senses and dramatic exposition. Patel explains further: 'These colours represent the real Asia. Yellow tissue papers. Bright pink taxis. These colours are not exaggerated. They are right here in Asia and I want to acknowledge them.'

Patel, who previously worked as an architect in Singapore, shares how design and architecture shaped her art: 'I studied at the Architectural Association in London and it was famous for teaching you everything but architecture! It was great in a way. I learnt the language of people. I learnt sociology and how people live in a space and what happens to a temporal space. In the end, I was taught to be very sensitive to the built environment.'

No wonder one can find Patel's enlightening values and ideals upon closer inspection of the exhibition. From the colourful imagery of ordinary folk in everyday situations to the plurality of nuances seen in the facial expressions and objects of affection, this is what Patel the artist, architect and anthropologist strives to do – to tell a story we might have missed. →