



▲ Patrice and Hermès

Artful Endeavours

THE APPRECIATION OF CONTEMPORARY ART IS GROWING WORLDWIDE, BUT AS EDITOR **CHAD MERCHANT** DISCOVERS ON A VISIT TO VALLETTE GALLERY, SOME OF THE BRIGHTEST NEW ARTISTS ARE HOME-GROWN RIGHT IN MALAYSIA.

It's not every day your arrival at an art gallery is heralded by a brand-name dog, but that's exactly what I encountered at Vallette Gallery. As the gallery is located in the leafy residential solace of Damansara Heights, I mistakenly went to the gate of the main house, rather than to the side entrance that leads to the gallery itself. And it was there I was welcomed by a large yellow

Labrador Retriever named Hermès, a gregarious, outgoing young dog who belongs to the gallery's equally energetic – if perhaps not quite as young – director, Mr Patrice Vallette, who, along with his team, was in the thick of planning the events of the 2015 Art Economy Conference that was held at KLCC in late March, which the gallery co-organised.

As foreshadowed by the friendly canine greeting, Vallette Gallery is a space at once engaging and unconventional, a venue that represents both Malaysian and international artists in paintings, sculptures, photography, and art installations, and has successfully worked to build a trusting and strong relationship between artists and art lovers. The gallery, as Patrice described, has the objective of creating a real link between continents. It encourages creative excellence by providing an environment for communication, expertise, sharing, and mentoring within the community of artists. Beyond that, however, Vallette Gallery promotes Malaysian artists in Kuala Lumpur as a first step of recognition in their own country, but also makes a point of showcasing the artwork in France in order to expose the most established Malaysian artists to the broader art community of continental Europe.

The dedication shown to local artists here is as impressive as the works of art themselves. Some of the pieces displayed when I visited were truly remarkable in their depth and power, and with talent such as this being celebrated, it's of little wonder that Vallette Gallery is taking such a prominent place in the Malaysian art scene. With a minimum of six exhibitions a year, the gallery's staff labours to promote the development of the artists represented and to showcase their works to the general public, the press, and private collectors.



▲ Rafiee Ghani, Braveheart 2010, oil on canvas 172cm x 172cm



▼ Chiang Shih Wen, Clock Tower Melaka 2010, oil on canvas



of space for people to take in the art, and then enjoy the company of like-minded people, everyone having plenty of time and space to appreciate the art.

This sense of comfort and space isn't an accident, as Vallette Gallery seeks not only to back current events that bring artists and art lovers together, but just as importantly to become a centre of choice for people who simply desire to devote

some time relishing art. The interest for contemporary art has strengthened during recent years as general appreciation for contemporary art has evolved, Patrice explained to me, both in Malaysia and overseas. Accordingly, the gallery aspires to act as a facilitator for young artists to launch their work to the public.

Patrice and his staff are delighted by the reception for the many works of art

which the gallery has exhibited, and by the gallery's role in connecting art aficionados with a new generation of talented local artists. And that, as Patrice explained as we walked outside and I reacquainted myself with Hermès, is what makes it worthwhile. "Art is not just decoration for our walls," he smiled, "but a connection with our deep inner selves and the world around us."

www.vallettegallery.com



Vallette Gallery also aims to offer a forum for contemporary art, presenting works by both emerging young Malaysian artists and international artists whose work has rarely or never been exhibited in Malaysia.

The gallery also attracts big names and benefactors, as evidenced by the exclusive launch of Absolut Warhol held at the gallery back in December. A collaboration between Absolut Vodka and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the launch was not only a celebration of the new limited edition Absolut Warhol bottle, but an affirmation of the brand's key role in inspiring creativity via the Absolut Art Exchange, along with the collaborative role of the Warhol Foundation, a synergised vision committed to providing upcoming Malaysian artists with a platform to express their creativity.

Patrice sees the gallery playing a part in a larger conversation about contemporary art's increasing value in Malaysia. "We are committed to promoting the Malaysian art scene," he explained, "by showing works of art that can expand horizons, open minds, and showcase the world and life in general through different eyes."

To that end, Vallette Gallery has established and nurtured relationships with universities, art schools, and other learning institutions for events in the gallery with pupils and artists, all with a stated goal of sharing ideas and learning from each other.

"Vallette Gallery is not only a wall with works of art," Patrice said enthusiastically. "It is an organic place between the artists and the art lovers. Furthermore, in order to be a real support to local art, the gallery has developed several programs to involve the local community and also projects abroad."

This commitment to Malaysian artists is underscored by the enthusiastic attendance at the gallery's regular exhibitions. "We can see as many as 250 art lovers at the exhibitions," Patrice told me. "There's a growing appreciation for these talented local artists." And the space in which the art is displayed is remarkably well-suited for the task, a space far more inviting and comfortable than a vast, impersonal urban gallery. The spacious viewing salons are buttressed by a social area and further complemented by a lovely garden and pool, with plenty



▲ Donald Abraham, 10 years weekend 2014, acrylic on canvas 182cm x 122cm



▲ Mahen Bala Japan - 17, 2012 35.1cm x 52.8cm