



artistic obsessions

Text by Raja Jumira • Images courtesy of Ann Healey

Ann Healey's art is heavily layered, both literally and metaphorically as it presents a complex interweaving of social meaning, science and aesthetic.



AFTER leaving her country of birth and residence, London, England, in 1998, Ann Healey has since been residing and working as a full-time artist in Singapore. She attended London's prestigious Central St. Martins to complete her Art Foundation Course, and obtained a degree in Fine Art Painting and Mathematics. A bizarre combination indeed! "Just in case I could not get a job," she blurts out as if able to read my mind. Interestingly, she was actually broking for two years in London, which she describes as absolutely self-destructing. "It really re-affirmed my belief that you shouldn't be in a job that you don't enjoy even if it's paying you good money. Because eventually, it's your life, and you can't buy your life back," she adds.



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And so began Ann Healey's journey as a painter. Since 1999, she has had 11 solo exhibitions in Singapore and South-east Asia. "The response has been really good! I think I've been very lucky, maybe it's because I'm not from here." As London is saturated with a vast number of artists, Healey finds the art industry in Singapore relatively easier since it's such an up-and-coming market. "I think the art scene is really quite supported here," she praises, contrary to the lamentations of other local artists.

The cheerful artist admits to her fascination with architecture, graffiti, man-made marks on the industrial landscape, and conversations she had with people. "I like the constant renewal of things, making everything look shiny and new," expressed Healey. "I like questions and issues for us to know as human beings, and our obsession with all things new."

There is a striking auditory as well as visual quality to her work. Expressing her admiration for American artist Jean Michel Basquiat who started off his life as a graffiti artist, and the elusive Banksy, Healey makes known her fascination with the raw quality their works carry and the fact that she is most intrigued by the implicit messages they leave behind in their work. "Their works are very true; an expressive way of working," she shares. And interestingly enough, it shows in her art too.

Her works of art are layered labyrinths of pattern and colour – multiple layers that viewers excavate visually. When Ann Healey begins her paintings, she has no preconceived notion of what the final image will be. Her encounter with every new piece of work is very much like stepping into the unknown, filled with lines of hesitation and compulsions to go over contours repeatedly. Her art is very honest.

Healey's most recent project extends her interests directly into the realm of repetitions and obsessions. She begins by using acrylic to work on more than one layer. Having named the exhibition "C5O2H8" (the chemical compound of plastic), Healey plays with plastic to create slight shadows on her paintings. When she reveals that the notion of plastic surgery was one of the inspirations for this collection, the paintings start to take on new meaning. Two simultaneously visible layers – one the old, the other the new.

"I am toying with the idea of the constant masking of the old by allowing marks that have been scratched into the surface of the acrylic sheet to interact with the backdrop of the canvas underneath," she explains. It may just be a painting for some, but for Healey, it's more sculptural than anything else.

Healey arrived at this technique so as to create something a little bit different. She announces, "I've been here for 9 years now. So I'm just trying to push myself to be more creative with my work; creating something that I feel I haven't seen before."

The works of Ann Healey are being showcased at Taksu Gallery from 6th September to 20th September 2007. Inspired by architecture, graffiti and plastic surgery, this mixed media exhibition is Healey's 10th solo in Singapore.