

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 22 SEPTEMBER 2020

Still Lives by Tan Choh Tee

10 - 25 October 2020

artcommune gallery is pleased to present *Still Lives by Tan Choh Tee*, which features over 25 oil works by the 2nd-generation master dating from the 1990s to the present, with a particular focus on a new series of still lifes completed in the period of 2019-2020. Though best known for his plein air oil paintings of Singapore and Malaysian street scenes, Southeast Asian villages and Chinese water towns, still life paintings have featured prominently in Choh Tee's practice since the 1990s. This is the first exhibition dedicated entirely to the artist's still life work and provides a broad survey of his distinctive treatment of this classical theme.

The still life genre allows Choh Tee to experiment more freely with composition, technique and colour. To capture a landscape the artist must process a multitude of variable and invariable information characterising its physical environment - buildings, terrains, fleeting weather conditions, changing light and shadow, among others. On the other hand, composing a still life entails less of such restrictions since the artist has almost total control over the setting - from the selection and arrangement of objects, to the orchestration of their relationships, lines, shapes and colours. This provides the artist more room for pure aesthetic inquiry.

Recognisable for his brushwork and delicate colour movement, Choh Tee's mastery of still life has undoubtedly born into a style of his own. Often, the paintings feature a flat plane with objects characterised by bold, compelling forms and colours. Also noteworthy is his deft, expressive use of the palette knife in recent years, which elevates his expression with spontaneous gestures reminiscent of Chinese ink painting. In addition to antique vessels (from his personal collection) and effervescent flowers, he orchestrates commonplace objects and natural foods as vital actors in this new series, revealing his appreciation for the beauty and simplicity of everyday life. The familiar fruits of Southeast Asia - bananas, rambutans,

mangosteens, durians - are treated with such dynamic and lively quality that we are inspired to examine their forms and essence with new understanding and fresh eyes. Likewise, vegetables and spices like cabbages, corns, bell peppers and garlics transcend their everyday mundanity and perishable status, and are accorded a monumentality that reminds us to enjoy the wondrous yet purposeful forms evolved from nature.



Garlics, 2008, Oil on canvas, 61 x 146 cm

Tan Choh Tee (b. 1942) studied at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts where he was taught by pioneer artists such as Cheong Soo Pieng, Liu Kang and Georgette Chen. As a student, he was deeply influenced by Western modern art, particularly Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. His pictorial language inclines toward a realist-impressionist style; characterised by solid yet gestural brushwork, and a dynamic palette. For his artistic accomplishments and contributions to the Singapore art scene, he was awarded the Cultural Medallion by the Singapore Government in 2006. Choh Tee is considered one of Singapore's finest oil painters and his works are highly sought-after in Southeast Asia.

Still Lifes by Tan Choh Tee was originally slated to open earlier this year, but was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Having spent the lockdown period undisturbed and entirely focussed on his painting, Choh Tee has added even more works to this remarkable series of still lifes that will now be unveiled for the first time!

Exhibition Period

Date: 10 - 25 October 2020

Time: 12 - 7pm daily

Venue: artcommune gallery (address below)

Contact Information

artcommune gallery

76 Bras Basah Road

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Here are the images to some of the artworks on exhibit:



Wild Chrysanthemum, 1994, Oil on canvas, 53 x 46 cm



Mangosteens and Red Bananas, 2020, Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 cm



Untitled, 2020, Oil on canvas, 60 x 72 cm



artcommune
gallery

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Harvest, 2020, Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 60.5 cm



Lilies, 2019, Oil on canvas, 60 x 72.5 cm



Durians and Mangosteens, 2020, Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 72.5 cm



Tools of the Trade, 2020, Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 72.5 cm