

## CHUAH SEOW KENG

Chuah Seow Keng is recognized as one of Malaysia's leading artists and is very well known for his batik and watercolour paintings. Born in 1945 in Kelantan, Malaysia, Seow Keng now makes his home in Penang. In 1968 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Suddeutsche Kunststoff-Zentrum in Wurzburg, Germany. While attending this academy he specialized in fiberglass sculpture, a difficult, but rewarding art medium.

While being recognized as an accomplished sculptor, Seow Keng is also acknowledged as a masterful batik artist. His abilities as an artist were noticed at a very early age. He was exposed to the art of batik painting by his father, the renowned artist Chuah Thean Teng, who pioneered batik painting as a fine art form. Seow Keng excels in this intricate art technique and was chosen to demonstrate his batik skills at the International Freundschaftsheim in Buckeburg, Germany. During 1974 Germany's Television Channel Zweites-Deutsches-Fernsehen-Trans-Tel made a documentary film of Seow Keng and his brothers who demonstrated the art of batik painting for German viewers.

Seow Keng returned to Malaysia after completing his studies in Germany. Soon thereafter, in 1970, the Malaysian Singapore Airline (M.S.A.) commissioned him to do a fibre-glass relief sculpture entitled "Space" for their Ipoh office. The following year M.S.A. commissioned another fibre-glass sculpture entitled "Time & Space" for its Penang office. Seow Keng also created the "Bank Crest", a fiberglass sculpture commissioned by the Bank Negara of Malaysia and that sculpture is currently being displayed at the entrance of the Bank Negara in Penang. Another fibre-glass sculpture entitled "COMPOSITION" is on permanent display at the Yahong Art Gallery in Penang, Malaysia.

The excellence of Seow Keng's mastery in both batik and watercolour paintings has been internationally acknowledged. The art world's publications frequently feature his work and his thoughts in both local and foreign journals. His art reviews have appeared in "Asia Magazine" (1982, 1983), "La Jolla Light", California, U.S.A. (1986), "The Asian Expo", Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. (1986), "Artist" (1989), "Yazhou Zhoukan" (Asiaweek's Mandarin Issues) (No: 47, 1989), "Impression" (The American Express Magazine), "Malaysian Tatler" (August, 1991), and "Wings Of Gold" (Malaysian Airline System in-flight magazine) (June, 1992).

In 1988 two batik paintings by Seow Keng entitled "Fish" and "Rural Life" were selected by the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their greeting card selection. This is a prestigious honour for the country, Malaysia, as well as for the artist, Seow Keng.

In 1989 Seow Keng was awarded the Certificate of Excellence for Outstanding Achievement at the Artitudes 7th International Art Competition in New York, U.S.A.

Seow Keng's art is much sought after by international art collectors as well as by patrons of the local art circles.

Exhibitions of his works include:

### **Solo Exhibition**

- 1973 Batik Art Exhibition, Fuchu and Tachikawa, Japan  
Batik Art Exhibition, Tokyo, Japan
- 1975 Batik Art Exhibition Kanda Gallery Tokyo, Osaka, Okinawa, Japan
- 1986 Eva Chan Gallery, San Diego, California, USA

## Group Exhibition

- 1972 Dewan Sri Pulau Pinang
- 1974 International Art Exhibition, Basel, Switzerland
- 1975 Art Exhibition in Melbourne, Sydney, Perth(Fremantle Art Centre), Australia  
International Kunstmesse, Basel, Switzerland
- 1976 Penang Week, Singapore
- 1981 Georgetown Gallery, B.C., Canada
- 1986 Asian Expo '86 Los Angeles, California, USA
- 1988 Alam Seni Fabrik Malaysia, National Gallery, Malaysia
- 1993 The Second Generation Penang Painters' Exhibition, Penang
- 1998 Warna-warna Ilham Batik by Money Museum & Archives, Corp. Bank Negara
- 1999 Daiichi Modern Art Gallery, Kedah
- 2001 In Praise of Hope, The Art Gallery, Penang, Malaysia.  
Penang Art Society New Century Art Exhibition, Penang State Art Gallery
- 2004 The Renowned Chinese Malaysian Artists: Over Thirty Years of Practice
- 2005 Three Generations of Batik Painting (organized by SIEMEN)
- 2008 Recalling of Penang Art Studio Art Exhibition  
The 4<sup>th</sup> China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair
- 2009 Stretch Your Imagination, Malaysia and Singapore Contemporary Artists Selection
- 2010 World Expo in Shanghai
- 2010 MIA International Art Exhibition
- 2011 Genting Arts Festival

## Awards

- 1988 Two paintings entitled "Fish" and "Rural Life" were selected by UNICEF for their greeting card selection.
- 1989 Awarded a Certificate of Excellence for Outstanding Achievement at the Artitudes 7<sup>th</sup> International Art Competition, New York, USA
- 1992 Another two paintings entitled "Fish" (watercolour) and "Sunrise" were selected by UNICEF for their greeting card selection.

## Honours

- 1970 Commissioned by M.S.A (Malaysia, Singapore Airlines) to do a fibre-glass relief sculpture (8' x 5')
- 1971 Commissioned by M.S.A (Malaysia, Singapore Airlines) to do another fibre-glass sculpture (7' x 6.5')
- 1972 Commissioned by Bank Negara, Malaysia to do a "Bank Crest" in fibre-glass (8' x 8')

Seow Keng's depictions of the Malaysian culture in batik painting portrays his style in a contemporary manner; the elegance in his paintings demonstrate the artist's versatile abilities. Seow Keng integrates the serenity, harmony and gentle way of life of the Malaysian people in addition to the peaceful beauty of the Malaysian countryside. He also employs an exciting contrast in myriad of urban activities occur seemingly independently, yet interwoven with a strong thread of commonality in the Malaysian way of life. Seow Keng utilizes colours with orchestrated care to create a style that is genuinely unique to his batik paintings.

Seow Keng's batik paintings are of simple, daily life; and his harmonic scenes reveal his perceptive treatment of colours and light. He is constantly experimenting and expanding the boundaries of expression; accentuating a skilful treatment of forms and shapes. He combines a rich, harmonic blend of colours into bold, rhythmical patterns showing an understanding for spatial depth and vertical perspective.