

Pioneer's artistic journey

Exhibition documents how artist Lim Tze Peng's style has evolved through more than 30 works

cheryl faith wee

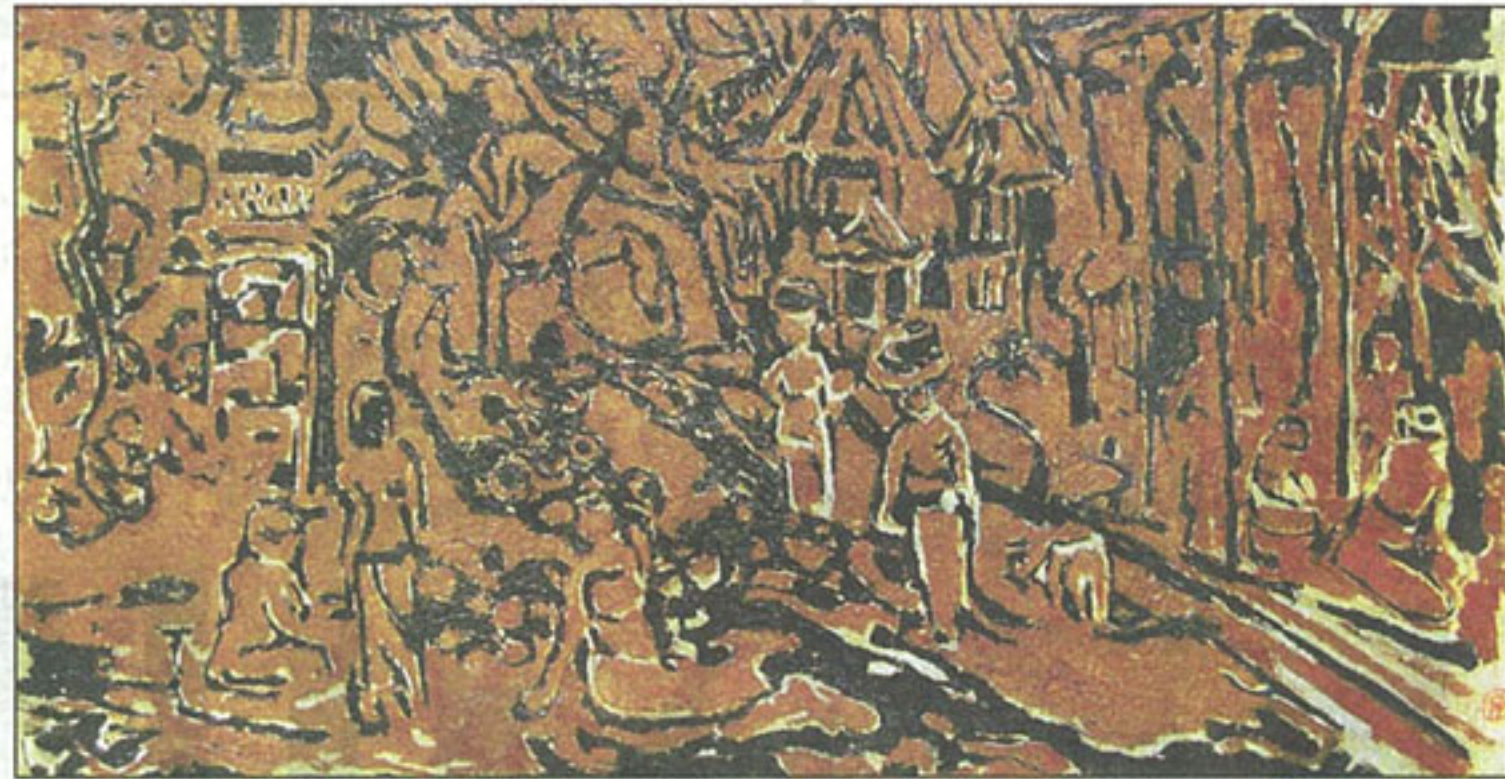
When veteran Singaporean artist Lim Tze Peng, 90, first started selling his works, they cost less than \$100.

Now, his pieces sell for between \$20,000 and \$60,000.

The self-taught artist, the oldest living second-generation pioneer artist, has a new show, *The Old And New: An Exhibition Of Lim Tze Peng*, which opened yesterday at Artcommune Gallery in Bain Street.

The collection of 33 works spanning his prolific career will be on show till Nov 20. Many of them were contributed by loyal followers of the artist's works and around 28 pieces will be available for sale.

Lim says: "I am honoured that some collectors



The works of Lim Tze Peng (right) that are on show include *Bali Village*, oil on canvas (1960s, left), as well as *Singapore River*, Chinese ink and colour on paper (2010, below).

have kept my works for all these years and now we are able to let people see them."

There is even an oil painting that the artist had forgotten because it was sold during the 1960s. In order to jog his memory, he had to go to the gallery to look at it.

Such oil paintings are rare because the Cultural Medallion recipient is better known for his signature ink landscapes of street scenes in Singapore during the 1980s as well as his calligraphy.

In the collection, there are also about five pieces from the artist's recent series incorporating a style of

calligraphy he calls Muddled Writing.

It is a new style he came up with around 2005. It focuses on the expressiveness of brushstrokes rather than legibility. In some of these works, layers of words were written over one another until the characters can no longer be recognised.

Through a mixture of more than 30 old and new paintings, the two curators of the show trace Lim's artistic development through the decades.

Ms Ma Peiyi, 24, one of the curators, says: "We hope to show Lim's artistic journey and how he has transformed beyond mere documentation to abstract renditions at a high level.

"It's not easy for a man who is 90 years old to take that step of experimenting with something so bold in the past few years."

Lim is still a dedicated practitioner of his art, sometimes spending up to 10 hours a day and seven days a week painting in his three-storey semi-detached house in Telok Kurau.

Works that do not match up to his standards are discarded without a second thought. Out of 10 pieces, only two or three pass his critical scrutiny.

He feels that it is his duty to produce good paintings. He says: "You must be responsible. Your work will be seen by future generations."

While his daily routine is set in stone, his art practice is not.

He says: "Your style cannot remain the same always, you have to take painting seriously. Art must change and you cannot be holding on to the old things forever."

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Lim Tze Peng



view it

OLD AND NEW: AN EXHIBITION OF LIM TZE PENG

Where: Artcommune Gallery, Bras Basah Complex, 02-43, 231 Bain Street

When: Till Nov 20, noon to 7pm

Admission: Free

Info: www.artcommune.com.sg