



**SIEW HOCK MENG**  
 Far Away, 1989  
 Pastel on paper 48 x 66 cm  
**SOLD - RM 30,434.40**  
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## SIEW HOCK MENG

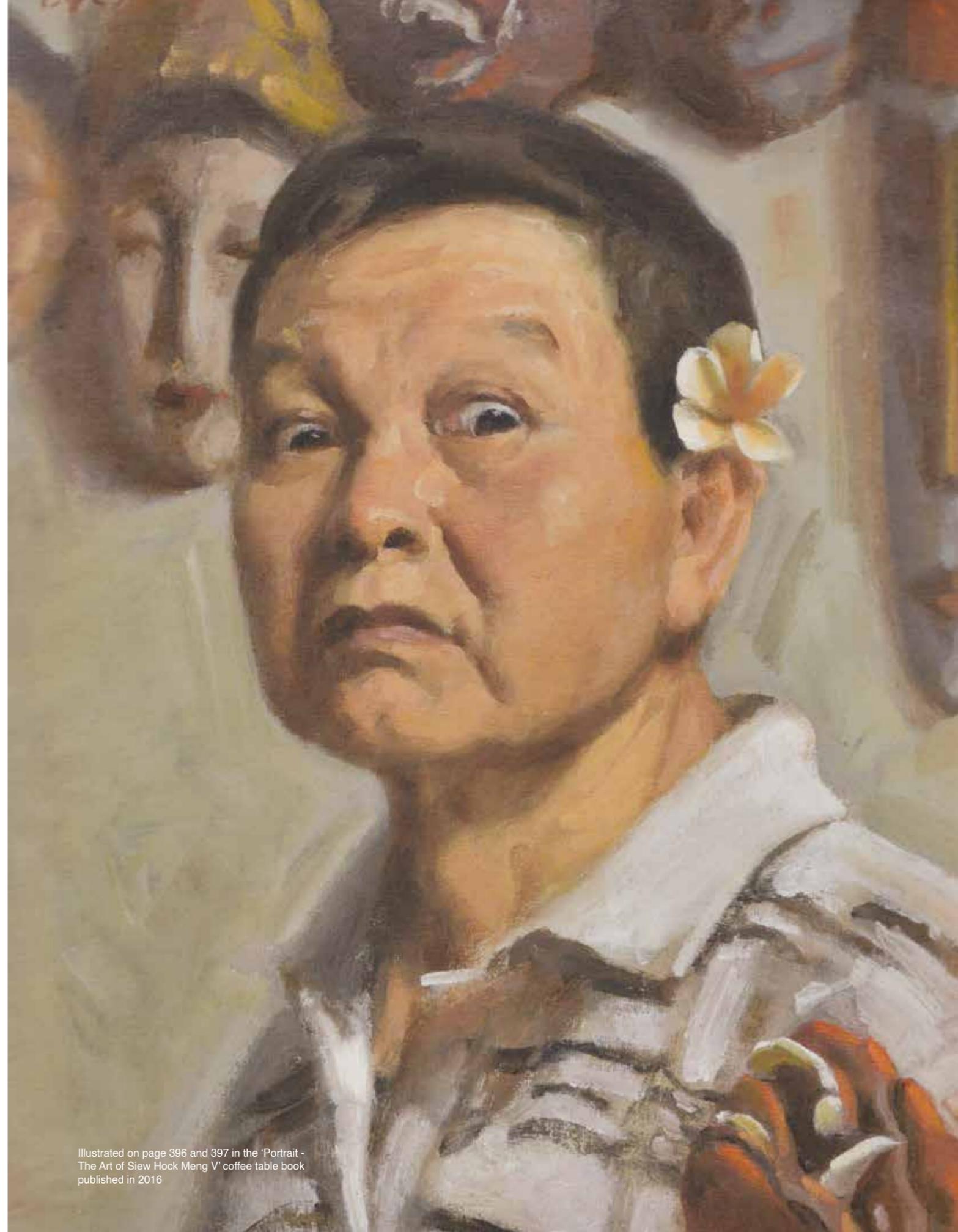
Timelessness Through Canvas

BY HIRANMAYI AWLI MOHANAN

**S**iew Hock Meng was born on April 3, 1942, in Johor. He graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore in 1961 and has been painting ever since. The artist is based in Singapore and he was awarded the National Day Medal for Fine Arts in 1971 and the award for Visual Arts Creation, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts Alumni Association Singapore in 1981 and 1984.

In 1975, Siew was invited to run an art gallery in Singapore by a businessman for whom he had painted a portrait in Kemaman. His fame as a portrait painter gradually grew and spread in the region, especially in Taiwan where he often spent months painting on commission. Not content to restrict himself to portraiture, Siew began to explore a wider range of subjects and themes such as human figures and life and culture of places like Malaysia, Indonesia including Bali, India, Myanmar and Cambodia.

This great master of super-realist figurative painting is also the first mentor of Malaysian watercolourist Chang Fee Ming, who spent a fair amount of his time in his early years painting with him. Apart from his fascination for human forms, vibrant tropical colours and artistic and cultural diversity of the region, Siew often shows a deeper concern for the social, cultural and environmental realities that people in the region must face.



Illustrated on page 396 and 397 in the 'Portrait - The Art of Siew Hock Meng V' coffee table book published in 2016



Siew Hock Meng posing with maestro, Lee Man Fong's painting entitled, "Long Journey", an oil on canvas from 1977, exhibited in Siew's gallery in Singapore.

"It takes great skills and practice to become a great portrait artist," said Siew. The artist was 33 years old when he started painting portraits for people from all walks of life. He earned his fame and recognition for his works in portraiture. His collective record of commissioned portrait works spanning Singapore, Taiwan and Indonesia run into the hundreds. Each creation is authentic and pure, owed to the stilted academic portrait techniques – Siew's portraits capture the presence of the person and the exact moment it was taken.

The hallmark of a good portrait of a person should firstly resemble the person in real life. Secondly, the painting should look alive and lastly, it has to be beautiful. Regarded as one of the most important artists in the region, Siew dabbles in oils, acrylic and pastels in his work, and he is believed to be most adept at painting with pastels. His expertise in portrait painting also showcases his proficiency in using pastels with very precise and skilled application of colours. Like a magician,

he creates vivid portraits with just a few dabs and strokes, leaving the spectators in awe of the lifelike rendition.

Siew's figure paintings are evidence of his maturity, mastery and superb control. His creations in this area comes with a high degree of technical proficiency and translates his visions. Apart from his fascination for the vibrant colours and cultural diversity of the tropics, he expresses a deep concern for the social and environmental realities behind them. His observations and reflections are especially poignant in the many thoughtful and contemplative landscapes.

Anyone who views Siew Hock Meng's figurative art will be immediately overwhelmed by its stunning beauty. His figurative art emerges from intensive explorations of two of the most demanding realms in the artistic repertoire – portraiture art and figurative art. What stirs the imagination of the viewer is Siew's achievements of flawlessness, purity, enchantment, vitality and mystery.



Siew Hock Meng (left) and the late artist, Lee Man Fong

#### FRIENDSHIP WITH LEE MAN FONG

Theirs was a celebration of friendship, forged through art. Singapore artist Siew Hock Meng has great admiration for Lee's technique. Even if he had not established his Eastern style of oil painting, he would still have achieved much.

The artist was introduced to the venerable Lee through a mutual friend, in his own, Grace Art Gallery, established in 1975 in Singapore. Lee's popularity was on the rise at the time, which spurred Siew to acquire and showcase Lee's works in his gallery. During that period, there were only two galleries in Singapore, one owned by him (Grace Art Gallery) while the other was owned by Gerard Butcher.

Siew was drawn to Lee's artworks for his relaxed style of painting, which they shared an affinity for. The fondness for each other's works developed naturally, and so was their friendship. Siew had a high regard for Lee that when the late artist wanted to gift him a few paintings, he refused on the basis that they were very valuable and shouldn't be given out as gifts.