

Poesy's artistic foray

Though her artistic expressions started by “by accident”, as she puts it, Poesy Liang has found point and purpose with her art. SALEHA ALLEN ALI has the story.



LIANG SURROUNDED BY SOME OF HER WORKS OF ART



LIANG AND DR ULI SIGG

POESY Liang has indeed come a long way from when – during a philanthropic trek across 10 countries in 2011 – she ran out of funds and became a street artist to raise some pocket money.

Since then, there is no stopping Liang, who has fought hard to battle recurring spinal tumours in her earlier years, at ages 17 and 28. Undeterred, she forged forward to do a multitude of things, including putting colour to canvas.

In that area, she not only has produced an array of canvasses, but also launched her own gallery marked by a solo exhibition. The icing on the cake came when an internationally-renowned Swiss art collector Dr Uli Sigg showed interest in her works. *UNRESERVED* caught up with the plucky lass before she left for Hong Kong recently for the meeting and to attend Art Basel 2015.

How did your meeting with art collector Dr Uli Sigg come about?

I first met Dr Uli Sigg in January 2015 at a private function hosted by the Swiss Embassy of Singapore (called the Art Stage 2015) which featured his art collecting journey.

I find his life very intriguing. Starting out as a business journalist, he later became an entrepreneur before being made the Swiss ambassador to China.

He was the first European to do business with communist China bringing Schindler elevators into China in the 70s before his diplomatic appointment.

He thinks there is a rich story behind my work and is curious to see how I will evolve. He believes I could surpass the work of Japanese artist, Nara Yoshitomo (whom he compares my *anime* inspired styles too). That's the basis of our meeting, which went very well, by the way! He gets what I am trying to do and has asked many questions that will keep me wide awake for many weeks. Talking to him is crucial to my growth as an international artist.

How did you first get involved in art?

Although I had been trained in various genres of art

since I was a child, making it into a career happened unintentionally. In 2011, I went on a tour of 10 countries in what was called the Bald Empathy Movement for charity. I ran out of money two months before I was to shave my head (as is the pledge) in Cannes, France.

In a moment of madness, I decided to paint by the sidewalks of Paris, aiming to make about €30 (RM118) a day to get by in the following months. My plight went onto social media and people all over the world started to buy my works from a Facebook page I set up called Poesy's Art Studio. A London blogger wrote about me and bumped my prices up. Painting on the sidewalks saved my life; I even made enough money to fly home to check on my interior design business.

Eventually art played a bigger role in your life?

After these experiences, I decided that in the long run, carving a career in art would allow me the freedom to help others. Since then, I have been painting and sculpting to build up my reserves. Besides that, I have ventured into digital animation and composing music to tell my life story, so I can create multimedia that is sensationally engaging, not just 2D or 3D.

I have created a short animation film titled *Poesy Anime*. These last years, my earnings through art has helped pay off the medical bills from my last spine surgery in Stanford University, California and allowed me to take care of things at home.

I opened my first pop-up gallery in Kuala Lumpur this year. After 2015, I will probably pop-up in other cities, maybe Singapore or Los Angeles.

Could you share with us what inspired your art illustrations? You started using Chinese brush as your artistic style. Has this changed over time?

My work is often seen to be in art brut style, naive, childish. I am influenced by *manga* and *anime*, but I also enjoy impressionist oil painting. I was first trained in several classical traditional Chinese mediums. As I grew up with that exposure, my favourite genre was Chinese calligraphy and it still is something I do effortlessly. A lot of my work now features brush strokes. I use that energy for everything I do, in illustrating my *manga*-style *Poesy Anime*, modern paintings and even oils. A rather large body of my collection is in black and white. I use classical Chinese brush to paint *manga*. My oil painting was self-taught and I am skewed towards an impressionist approach.

The last few years I have produced art pieces in different styles and genres – I learnt how to weld, solder, carve metal, pour resin. I make art in a car workshop, the kitchen or a garden tool shed.

Art has played a very significant healing role in your life. Can you elaborate further?

Since my first paralysis, I have used my creative expression to channel my negative energies and churn them into cute and whimsical creations. I write poems, make music and create art. The creative process is a great form of therapy. Art and humour was the only thing I could turn to when life was hard, so a lot of my art tends to have humour, although my writing is serious.

What projects are close to your heart currently?

Before any measure of commercial success, I want to use my art to help others. I subscribe to the Helping Angels calling which is to practise kindness and help others with one's skills.

At the moment, I have an art project with young refugee children in the city's Chow Kit area. I am also developing an art project for United Nations Women in Singapore.

How would you describe your life's journey in a nutshell?

It has been a challenging two decades but it has also been extremely colourful and slightly enchanted. Despite the hardships, I have found many of these life experiences to be blessings in hindsight, although I would never wish my most difficult journey on an enemy. I have existed in both worlds, a realm of gods as well as a penniless pauper. In my journey, I always stumble upon great people, or they find me. Many of them become mentors and some are my wonderful Samaritans.

What words do you have to inspire others to remain positive in adversity?

Anything that can be solved with money is not a big problem – you just have to put your head down and work hard. Discard all bad habits, including negative people. Work hard, have mentors, be humble, don't get bitter, be kind to yourself, have love in your heart. All is not lost if you have love. Most importantly, keep faith in kindness and practise it.



LIANG'S PAINTING TITLED 'CÔTE D'AZUR'