



A Commotion of Colour

Written by Allysa De Silva

Colour has a capacious capability to evoke a certain mood or memory and has long been an important vessel that helps carry the emotions of artists. In Ong's new selection of abstract paintings, she reveals to us how colours can endure. Essentially based on her everyday surroundings, Ong captures the immediacy of emotions and approaches her large-scaled canvases with a velocity of vivid colours.

The artist parallels human emotions to nature and in looking at her sweeping gestural brushstrokes, there is a sense of relentlessness and refusal to stay stuck. I am reminded that we too are ever-changing landscapes. Thriving, moving, shifting, disintegrating as nature would with the change of weather and seasons.

Stripping objects to their bare minimum of shape, texture and colour, Ong directs our gaze on overlooked details. Her heightened sense of awareness nudges us to reflect on how much we actually notice in the act of looking. Sensitive to the visual cacophony and energy of places, much of Ong's work navigates around her admiration for nature combined with personal experiences. She attunes this sensitivity to her creative process and projects these saturated memories onto her canvases.

Building up towards a collision of internal and external elements, Ong's works begin as a way of working through her inner rumblings. Outward factors - such as the restless churning of nature in the wind, to the colours of flora and fauna - all act as secondary agents of inspiration for her works. At the heart of Ong's works is her inquisitive nature of exploring the possibilities of material and colour. This interest taps into her research process to how she can manipulate material to conjure different textures and moods.

Her research interest in material and colour is explored in her initial work, *The Cloud and Pigment Series* (2020). Inspired by volcanic eruptions, these intimately scaled paintings were completed during a tumultuous period that the artist was going through. Employing oil on arches paper, this series soon became a catalyst for her other works, *Memories of the Wind* (2021) and *Under Pressure* (2021).

Prompted by emotions to form a narrative in her paintings, each canvas acts as a time capsule from a certain period of her life. As a result of the conjoining of different experiences onto a single canvas, Ong's works reflect a constant state of migration of feelings. This flux is reminiscent in *Seasons Don't Matter Anymore* (2020), where clusters of red hues dominate her canvas. Reflecting on her state of mind, her turbulent motions are felt as we witness heavy brushstrokes converging horizontally against one another.

Ong plays with colour, depth, and texture by using a mixture of materials such as beeswax, oil bar, and turpentine in her paintings. A recurring theme in her works is the use of strokes that extend beyond her canvases, suggesting the commotion of life going on outside of the canvas. Slowly seeing the beauty of spontaneity, the artist is trying to embrace the impulsivity that comes with it. She incorporates this in her works by painting in emphasised gestural movements and flipping her canvases in different directions as she paints.

Tuning into calmer hues and playful undercurrents, *Cloudburst* (2022) and *Into the Blue* (2022) brings us into an interplay of abstract and figurative forms where we are introduced to monumental human figures. With rushing rebellious strokes, hazy textured hues, and endless stretches of gradient lines, her paintings oscillate between the yin yang effect of light and dark or the tension and serenity that we go through daily.

In this new series of works, the paintings of Ong's shift and glint with life as we witness how she utilises the nuances of colour as a medium to envelope us into her world of hope and longing.

NOVEMBER GINKGO (DETAIL)

2021
Oil on Canvas
150 x 120 cm

