

Spot light: With Ron Wong

(China Daily) Sean Dinsmore

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In her first solo show, at Shanghai's M Art Center on Moganshan Road, Ron Wong uses watercolors, sketches and oil paintings to capture a side of Shanghai that is as familiar as it is inscrutable. Living in Shanghai since 2005, Wong is used to the mad jumble of energy, different dialects and nerves that make up this cosmopolitan city, and she uses this insider's perspective to portray street scenes and simple caricatures with great effect. In a series of subway scenes called Monday, Tuesday and Weekend Train, she

shows crowded carriages filled with people who are detached from one another. What is striking about her paintings is the amount of humor, depth and soul she injects into her subjects, as well as the sense of intimacy and distance that she plays with so masterfully. This, no doubt, owes in part to her background: Ron was born in Macao, grew up in Singapore and arrived here in 2005 to study for her master's degree at Shanghai University College of Fine Arts. Sean Dinsmore finds out more.

Q: Which artists have influenced you the most?

A: I love Egon Schiele, David Hockney and Lucian Freud. They are very different, but they inspire me inside and out.

Q: How is studying in Shanghai different from Singapore?

A: Shanghai Art Institute focuses more on the traditional ingredients of studying, while art schools in Singapore place more of an accent on creative studying. Both are essential for one to be a good artist. Shanghai is like a market, everyone can find almost everything at almost every price ... it is very distinctive and infectious too. Anyone from any place, be it China or overseas, gets "infected," and most of us fall in love with the culture and magic of it.

Q: You depict your subjects in a humorous but loving way. Do you always try to see the best in people?

A: I don't try to see the best in people, but I try my best to see the real people in them. Many of us tend to overlook the people closest to us ... having too many layers protecting ourselves makes us over-complicated [but] because of that, we are so interesting. I hope to bring some simplicity back to our society, and I hope everyone can care for mankind a bit more.

Q: What do you think of the current state of Shanghai's art scene?

A: It's a big art fair. You get to see all kinds of art and it's becoming a trademark.

* See www.ronwongart.com for more information about the artist.