

## AROUNDTOWN

## A play for women, by women

Three women, completely different in character, but bound by their experiences with one, violent man.

*Can't Stand Up for Falling Down* (right) by Skinned Knee Productions takes on the very serious issue of domestic violence with a series of monologues and scenes that weave together the stories of three women: Lynette, a quiet and spiritual woman; Ruby, a rebellious youth; and Jodie, a cheerful and loving teenager.

With an all-female cast of Kluane Saunders, Karina Sindicich, Sophie Wee, the piece aims to spread awareness about violence against women and its impact on society as a whole. The play is directed by Rayann Condy.

The play is on at the cafe, *Speakeasy*, from Nov 30 to Dec 3. Tickets cost \$25. *Speakeasy* is located at 54 Blair Rd. Tickets available at [www.skinnedkneeproductions.com](http://www.skinnedkneeproductions.com)



## Filipino fusion palette

Artist collaborations have always been a tradition in Filipino art, and Galerie Sogan & Art celebrates that with their current group exhibition, titled *Interplay*.

Featuring the five-man collective, Quinta, the exhibition highlights five large works (below) created through the combined efforts of the group members. Each work is made instinctively, and makes references to works by other artists as a comment on the interaction between artists, curators and all that is in the art market, and how that influences artworks.

Each big work is supported by five smaller works that relates to the narrative presented in the bigger work. The exhibition is held in collaboration with the Philippine Embassy.

*Interplay* is on at Galerie Sogan & Art until Dec 22. The gallery is open from 12pm to 7.30pm from Mondays to Saturdays, and 2pm to 5pm on Sundays. It is located at 33B Mosque St (Level 3). For more info log on to [www.soganart.com](http://www.soganart.com)



## Taking Chinese opera to the streets

Gone are the days when people would gather around a wooden stage in the middle of the street to watch a piece of Chinese opera together. But here's a chance to relive those memories, except in a cosier environment.

Catch the traditional Cantonese opera, *Dream of The West Chamber* at the Kreta Ayer People's Theatre. Based on the original opera scripted by Tang Di Sheng, the opera explores themes of love, trickery, tragedy and, of course, dreams in the heart-wrenching tale of star-crossed lovers, Mu Suhui and Yu Shuye, as they battle the odds to be with each other.

Expect a sensory spectacle as colourful costumes and props come together with an enchanting score performed by ECHO Music Accompaniment Group.

*Dream of The West Chamber* is on at Kreta Ayer People's Theatre on Nov 26 from 3pm to 7pm. Tickets cost \$10, \$15, \$20, \$30 and \$50. The theatre is at 30A Kreta Ayer Road. Contact Eunus Community Club at 6448 6971 for more information

## Marquis bargains are back

The annual designer furniture warehouse sale by Marquis is back. Expect discounts of up to 70 percent off on in-stock and display Italian furniture and home accessories, and up to 50 percent off on new orders of imported furniture. Furniture by renowned designers such as Patricia Urquiola, Karim Rashid and Jean-Marie Massaud will also be available at rock bottom prices.

The Annual Marquis Designer Furniture Warehouse Sale is on at Marquis @ Qsquare from Nov 26 to 27 from 10am to 8pm. Admission is free. Its address is 16 Tai Seng Street. Log on to [www.marquis.com.sg](http://www.marquis.com.sg) for more information

Compiled by NATALIE KOH

## The writing's on the wall

Graffiti, all totally legal mind you, took pride of place at an exhibition recently, writes NATALIE KOH

**G**RAFFITI shed its cane-worthy status for an evening last Saturday when a large crowd gathered around 18 graffiti artists to watch them take turns spraying a huge 10 by 2.2m canvas on a wall at Tanjong Pagar Distripark along Keppel Road. French rap was the soundtrack for the three-hour transformation of the blank canvas into a snazzy tableau of 18 different street art styles.

To say the sight was rare would be a gross understatement. Granted, the artists – or writers, as graffiti artists are called – were spraying a piece of canvas propped up against a wall rather than the wall itself, but that's as far as you can go in Singapore without being handed a jail sentence.

Of course, the 18 writers – nine from Singapore and nine from France – knew that they were working within perfectly legal boundaries. Part of the combined exhibition, *Off the Wall – Down by Law in Singapore, Lah!*, between French gallery Wallworks Galerie and local art consultancy, Fortune Cookie Projects, the writers showed off their skills live for select groups of people in various part of Singapore through the week.

On top of the mural at the distripark, three other large, pimped-up works of graffiti art were created by the writers: one with the students from the French School of Singapore; another with students with mild intellectual disabilities from Delta Senior School at Shangri-La Rasa Sentosa Resort; and the last at Changi Prison as part of a workshop for prison inmates.

With the rise of graffiti as a recognised art form throughout the world, Claude Kunez, owner of Wallworks Galerie, decided to see if the trend had extended to Asia as well. After a successful combined exhibition in Jakarta, Indonesia with a local gallery there, he thought, "why not come to Singapore too?"

"I knew it would be difficult to do it in Singapore," he shares, in a lilting French accent. "I heard about the Swiss man who got into trouble for vandalising a train here. But I talked to the French Ambassador, and we got a permit."

Since Fortune Cookie Projects had conducted a collaboration between local and American graffiti artists before, co-director Howard Rutkowski thought it would be a good idea to join hands with French writers. And that's how French writers, Alex, Ceet,



**Writers' canvas:** French rap was the soundtrack for the three-hour transformation of the blank canvas into a snazzy tableau of 18 different street art styles. Featured here is a tableau of works by Kongo (left), whose real name Cyphil Phan

Colorz, Fenx, Gilbert, Kongo, Lazoo, Sonic and Tilt were introduced to the Singapore writers, Antz, Asno, Mimer, Myow, Scope, Slacsat, TR853-1 (pronounced as Trace-one), Clog Two and Jaba.

These aren't their real names, of course. They just came out of tagging – the practice of signing a piece of graffiti art with a nickname – or tag – to claim bragging rights. Because graffiti in public areas is, well, illegal in most parts of the world, writers would come up with pseudonyms for themselves to avoid getting caught.

Apart from the murals, 72 individual works by the artists are also being showcased at ArtSpace@Helutrans. The aim of conducting such a large scale exhibition, is, according to Mr Rutkowski, "to demonstrate that graffiti is truly a global art form, practised by artists everywhere and, hopefully, to create greater awareness among the public."

So far, the response has been pretty positive, with the opening reception seeing 600 guests attending, and about 25 per cent of the artworks already sold.

However, Mr Rutkowski says that Singapore's street art scene still has a long way to go compared to that of Europe and the United States. "There are a lot of writers here, but they have a limited audience. Interest is growing, but it will take time," he shares.

Mr Kunez is a bit more optimistic

though. He points out that graffiti art only took off in galleries in the 1970s, and that was only in the US. Europeans only opened up to it in the 1980s, and as for Asia, graffiti art arrived here in the 1990s. "There are already two generations of writers in Europe," says Mr Kunez. "Many of the French writers in this project are about 40 years old, for instance. But those from Singapore are maybe 20 or 25," he adds.

"In France, there are exhibitions and auctions for street art every month, and in a few years, I think – I hope – Singapore will have the same."

Having such collaborations between local and foreign artists is a good start. "It's great to have Singapore and French artists share the same art. And it was great to see the artists come together about two minutes before the live painting started and make art," he says. "It was just like how street art is supposed to be: free."

Mr Rutkowski adds: "Live communal painting is the traditional heart and soul of graffiti and we wanted people to see it in action."

One of the French writers, Kongo, agrees: "That's what I love about graffiti. It's about sharing."

An established artist in the international street art scene, Kongo (whose real name Cyphil Phan), was recently commissioned by Hermes to do a line of scarfs.

In conjunction, he had created a graffiti live on the hoarding of Hermes Scotts Square last Friday night. The work will be up until the store's opening on Dec 9.

His works, just like those of the other writers, are extremely distinctive, and his creations for the exhibition and those for Hermes are vastly different.

"The scarf designs are very letter-focused. I use a lot of alphabetic letters to create a graphic vocabulary," he shares. But for the solo works at the *Off The Wall* exhibition, he felt a need to let go of his energy "and just explode onto the canvas. It's more instinctive, and a kind of meditation for me".

Another artist to look out for is Colorz, who recently had one of his works auctioned off for a little higher than 20,000 euros – an extremely high amount for street art. Fellow writer and friend, Fenx, says of Colorz's works: "He puts what a street gave to him onto the canvas. That's what makes him so famous. Having a piece of his work is like having a part of Paris's walls."

This exhibition will run at ArtSpace@Helutrans until Nov 26 and is offered as part of the *Voilà! French Festival Singapore's* programme. The exhibition is open daily between 11am to 7pm. The gallery is at the Tanjong Pagar Distripark (39 Keppel Road, #01-05)

## By NATALIE KOH

IT'S not uncommon for young Singaporeans to want to go out and explore the world before settling back home to start a career. But every once in a while, you get someone who chooses not to return, much to the dismay of his parents.

It's something that playwright Yang Ming noticed has become so prevalent in Singapore that she has written a play about it. Funnily enough, the genesis of the story wasn't personal experience, or from someone close to her. It came from her fish pond.

"A few years ago, something happened to my family's fish pond, and my dad decided to transfer the fish out," Ms Yang says. "Unfortunately, they couldn't adapt and all of them died. So I thought, what happens when you put someone into a completely different environment – how would they feel and what would they do?"

After much thought and countless re-writes, the story finally evolved into *Jen's Homecoming*, a play that runs this weekend.

The protagonist, Jen (Adeline Pang), returns home from London with the sole intention of telling her father that she wants to stay in London to pursue a fashion career. At the same time, however, her father wants to tell her of the grand plans he had made for her permanent return to Singapore.

It's a complicated situation, but one that will touch the hearts of all Singaporeans. The message, Ms Yang says, is "about balancing fulfilling one's responsibilities and fulfilling one's own dreams".

And she hopes that the message will reach out to both the young and old generations of Singapore. For the older genera-



**Rules of the roost:** Protagonist, Jen (Adeline Pang, left), returns home from London with the sole intention of telling her father (Jamie Shawn Tan, right) that she wants to stay in London to pursue a fashion career. But her father has grand plans for her permanent return to Singapore

PHOTOS: ERN & JOIS FOR CREATIVE CUBE

tion, they get to understand their children's points of view, and vice versa for the younger generation.

While creating the part, which is supported by Skinned Knee Productions and directed by Hilmi Shukur, part of the research process involved finding out if the story truly was relevant in Singapore. She offers: "I spoke to a few people, and some of them told me that they had experienced something similar to Jen's. There were people whose parents gave them permission to go out and fulfil their dreams – but only for two years. The condition was that they had to come back to fulfil their responsibilities, such as taking over the family business."

Family issues have always been a favourite topic of hers, Ms Yang says, "because of the plays that I tend to read. I've always been interested in family dramas".

But coming from a healthy family environment herself, the challenge for her was understanding the issues the play broached, such as comprehending the emphasis that parents placed on upholding the family legacy and the inner conflicts both parent and child faced.

One other challenge was the "researching process on the fashion designers – their thoughts, their creativity process towards fashion design and their vibrant industry".

But it all came together in the end and it will definitely make audiences think about "how to let go of a person to let her pursue her dreams, and whether or not the grass really is greener on the other side", she says.

*Jen's Homecoming* is on at The Creative Cube Theatre, from Nov 25 to 27. Tickets \$25. The theatre is at LASALLE College of the Arts, 1 McNally Street. For ticket purchases, visit [www.skinnedkneeproductions.com/tickets](http://www.skinnedkneeproductions.com/tickets). hml

## GAMING REVIEW

## Lock and load, it's war

By CHRISTOPHER LIM

IF you have ever wanted to star in a Tom Clancy novel or Steven Spielberg war movie, *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* is your chance. The first-person shooter (FPS) is so deft at military thrills that this latest instalment in the *Call Of Duty* series raked in US\$775 million (S\$1,012 million) to break its predecessor's record for the world's biggest movie, book or game launch. And while hype definitely accounts for part of that frenzy, *Modern Warfare 3* deserves its success.

Multiplayer dynamics are polished and well implemented, with classic scenarios like *Capture The Flag* that will have you and your teammates glued to your screens for hours.

It's the expertly crafted single-player campaign, however, that vaults *Modern Warfare 3* far ahead of its closest competitor, *Battlefield 3*. The latter's forte is detail-oriented multi-player missions, but its single-player narrative is so bland as to obviously be an afterthought.

*Modern Warfare 3*, however, will have your heart thumping and fingers twitching

for hours as it combines the suspense of TV series *24*, dramatic savvy of movie *Black Hawk Down* and testosterone-driven bluster of arcade shooting games as it drags you across the world to stop what's rapidly becoming a new World War.

Real war involves a lot of monotony and waiting around, but the game conveniently cuts all these bits out to present you a story with comic book-style pacing.

The physics of violence is spot-on, with explosions hurling vehicles in your direction, and missiles tracing believable trajectories as they arc towards you. But all other realism is thrown right out of the window. Every soldier is a violent force of nature with the skill and flair of James Bond – lucky beyond belief, and able to summon wisecracks even in the midst of hellishly frightening fire-fights.

There are surreal game-within-a-game moments such as when your character whips out an Apple iPad-like tablet to control a helicopter gun turret remotely, with a bird's-eye view and enemies marked by red boxes. It's hard to tell if the game is poking fun at itself or taking all this gadgetry seriously.



The story continues 2009's *Modern Warfare 2* left off, rather than last year's *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*, and brings back familiar super-soldier characters like Price and Soap.

They are out to save the world from blood-thirsty Russian warlord Malakov, who unleashes chemical weapons in London, and tanks and nuclear submarines in New York. It's an over-the-top apocalyptic plot to match the crazy action.

This plot continuity from *Modern Warfare 2*, while sure to please fans of the series, also highlights the only real criticism one can level against *Modern Warfare 3*: it's a bit predicta-

ble. The narrative isn't the only thing that sticks closely to the franchise.

The game evolves the *Call Of Duty* series' strengths rather than contributing significantly to them. It gets away with this conservative polishing this time round, but unless the next *Call Of Duty* title substantially rewrites the rule book, the series will face a crisis of stale-

ness. Rating: **A-**

*Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* is available now for Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's PlayStation 3 and Windows PCs



**Movie-style meltdown:** Soldiers in *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* are a violent force of nature with the skill and panache of James Bond – lucky beyond belief, and able to summon wisecracks even in the midst of hellishly frightening fire-fights but the game evolves the series' strengths rather than contributing significantly to them. It gets away with this now but unless the next title substantially rewrites the rule book, the series could be dead in the water