

Fine Art Book Launch

Emily of Emerald Hill by Stella Kon
Featuring the Artworks of Kelly Reedy

Cover
Story

Before the upcoming launch of the new limited edition printing of the Singaporean play, *Emily of Emerald Hill* by Stella Kon, SAGG spoke with artist Kelly Reedy who was asked to create iconic images for this gem of a theatre piece.

SAGG: When did you first encounter the one-woman play, *Emily of Emerald Hill*?

Kelly: I first saw the play in 2000 at Jubilee Hall in a production by the Wild Rice theatre company starring Ivan Heng as Emily.

SAGG: What impressed you the most?

Kelly: My memory of the play over the years revolved around the strong matriarchal character of Emily. I remember it as an entertaining play, full of heart and soul.

SAGG: How did you feel when you were asked to create the symbolic images for the fine art edition?

Kelly: I felt very honored as this play represents an important part in Singapore's cultural heritage.

SAGG: Where did you begin?

Kelly: I began by rereading the play and then I saw Wild Rice's 2011 anniversary production at the Esplanade. At this point I was surprised by how poignant the play really was. It had its comic moments but by and large it was a drama and a tragedy packed full of calamities and obstacles, which Emily kept trying to rise above. I was very moved by it.

SAGG: How did you try to capture the "Peranakanness" of the play?

Kelly: What I love about the Peranakan culture is their use of funky colour combinations, turquoise and salmon pinks combined with pastel yellows, blues and oranges. I also love the multicoloured batik sarongs that they would have worn in Emily's time. I decided to use these colourful fabrics as a base or language to create my images.

SAGG: What made you decide to use paper cut and collage for the entire suite of images?

Kelly: The artworks were supposed to be symbolic rather than realistic representations of the chosen characters and scenes in the play. Paper cuts lent themselves well to this abstract concept. I also wanted to combine elements from the different cultural heritages that make up the Peranakan world, such as Malay inspired batik fabrics, Chinese traditional paper cuts as well as



"Matahari I"
by Kelly Reedy
35 cm x 35 cm
mixed media collage on paper
2012



"Matahari II"
by Kelly Reedy
34 cm x 30 cm
mixed media collage on paper
2012

references to the British Colonial era in which the Peranakan culture thrived.

SAGG: How did you decide which people or moments in the play to depict?

Kelly: I read through the play several times and it was very clear to me the people or moments that were the most striking in the text.

SAGG: Do you have a favorite image?

Kelly: I am most happy with my interpretations of Emily's favorite son Richard, depicted in *Matahari I* and *Matahari II*. Their relationship was the deepest and most complex in the whole play. I like the Malay word "matahari" which denotes the "sun", literally meaning "eye of the sun". I felt it alluded to the important place Richard held in Emily's heart, just as we say someone is the "apple of our eye" or someone is "our sunshine", so was Richard for Emily. The two images represent Richard and his relationship with his mother over time, the positive and negative energies, that which gives life and that which destroys life.

SAGG: Is this play "typically" Singaporean or does it go beyond the local context?

Kelly: The power and beauty of this play is that it is both so very local and so very universal at the same time. Stella Kon has created a masterpiece in the Singaporean context, but it is also one that everyone anywhere can relate to when thinking about the intricate relationships of families.



For more information on the artist, please visit www.kellyreedy.com

Emily of Emerald Hill by Stella Kon, published by Landmark Books and Constellation Books, 2012 can be found in bookstores in Singapore

"Emily's Children"
by Kelly Reedy
50 cm x 44 cm
mixed media collage on paper
2012