

# Malaysian artist makes small floral sculptures that are both beautiful, strange

In this week's Creative Capital instalment, we meet Noreen Loh, aka miun. A spontaneous visit to LASALLE College of the Arts on her way to work inspired her to quit her day job and start her art journey

The floral sculptural art pieces that dominate Noreen Loh's Instagram page are hauntingly beautiful. Ethereal, surreal, elegant and fantastical. They capture and hold your attention.

When I first stumbled across this 40-year-old Malaysian artist's works, I thought that the floral works were her specialty. But as I learned more about her, I realised that she does not have one. Rather, she works across multiple mediums, adopting different styles and producing very different kinds of work.

When Loh told me she began her art journey on a whim while working in the shipping industry, I had to know more.

According to Google, a youth is someone between 15 and 24 years old. I came to Singapore when I was 19 but I only got into LASALLE College of the Arts when I was 25 years old. So, I am not sure I fitted the "youth" profile then. Creatively, I wasn't exposed to a lot of art when I was growing up in Malaysia. But I think my creativity emerged as I got older.

Funnily, when I was working for a shipping company (she stayed in the industry for

four to five years), I did get comments from a colleague that I was more suited for the art and design industry, and that maybe, I should reconsider my choice of vocation. To be honest, I became an artist by accident.

Yes, and I've only completed my foundation year at LASALLE. One day, on the way to work, I passed by the school and I suddenly had this impulse to go in. Thankfully, I acted on it.

I alighted at the nearest bus stop and serendipitously, it was their open day. After my visit, I took a leap of faith. I quit my full-time work, applied and got into LASALLE.

My dad passed away when I was two years old, so sadly, he wasn't around when I made the switch. Besides, I was already an adult so really, it is not something you need your parents' approval for.

Nevertheless, my mum loves me and she has been so supportive of my entire journey. That said, I think she still doesn't understand how I make a living as an artist till today.

I'm a multi-disciplinary artist, which means I love to explore different subjects and experiment with different mediums to create a wide body of work.

For example, if I were given a specific tool, I can produce many different results even though I'm drawing the same thing.

After my foundation year, I deferred my studies to pursue a jewellery design course. However, it was cancelled two weeks before class even commenced.

While waiting for the course to resume, I went job hunting and stumbled upon a creative assistant job at a floral shop. I ended up spending three years there.

Right before I quit that job, and inspired by what I was doing, I created my first series of artwork (Beauty & the Beast) using fresh flowers as the medium. This artwork was created in 2009.

A piece from Noreen Loh's first series, Beauty & the Beast. (Photo: Andrew Kua)



When I went back to flowers as a subject again at a later date, I decided to create a floral sculpture instead. (It is part of the series, The Marriage, which features Lamitek laminates.)

I was grateful that the years of being a florist, and the research and time I spent experimenting with flowers and foliage gave me lots of resources and an in-depth knowledge that allowed me to make something entirely new with this medium. That artwork

was created in 2015.

It is actually difficult for me to explain how my work has evolved but I hope that this is a good example on how my work has transitioned through the years, even with the same subject matter.

HAS THERE BEEN A DEFINING MOMENT FOR YOU SO FAR IN THE LAST 10 YEARS OF PRACTICE?

This year will be that defining moment. I'm revisiting my approach in making art.

Moving to Singapore is just something that many Malaysians think about. For many of us, growing up, we long to see the rest of the world. Greener pastures, you know? Thankfully, given the profession I have chosen, it's good to be here. The art scene and support in Singapore are definitely much better than back home. I would say just enough to make a living. But you need to be a very hardworking artist to survive. It can be really tough. —CNA



## 'Lee Jinglei, see you in court': Singaporean duo By2 announced on Weibo



Just when you think the mess involving Lee Jinglei, Wang Leehom and Yumi Bai has blown over, it's back.

This time, Bai who is part of the China-based duo By2, is suing Lee for her insinuations that Bai could have come in between Lee's and Wang's marriage, resulting in the messy divorce that hogged entertainment headlines for weeks last December.

Prior to the lawsuit, Bai had filed a police report on Dec 18 against Lee's implications, to which Lee responded: "Please give me the police officer's contact details and I will provide them with evidence".

To date, Lee has not submitted any proof to the police, according to By2's Weibo post on Jan 29.

On Weibo, the post stated that Bai and Wang knew each other "formally as close friends from 2012 to 2013" (Wang and Lee married in Nov 2013) and "was

never in the way of their marriage".

The post continued: "Perhaps because the police and the courts in real life are not like the virtual world, malicious lies and fabricated evidence are illegal".

The lawsuit was filed as the result of the band's "hard decision to take legal action" after the police informed Bai that Lee cannot be immediately summoned as she is not in China, according to the post. "The law recognises evidence, not mini essays," By2 wrote, referring to the long posts that Lee had previously made on social media. Furthermore, the duo accused Lee of cyberbullying by "satisfying her personal agenda", adding that the Internet is not lawless. The post is also accompanied by a three-page letter from the pair's lawyer detailing their demands for Lee to cease the cyberbullying and rumour spreading. "We may have to spend a

long time to take those responsible for the rumours to task, but we'll do our best. Because if public figures lack the courage to speak up, how would future victims of cyberbullying stand up for themselves?"

The post ended by saying the duo has faith in the judicial system. And along with Lee's Weibo handle, it included the words: "See you in court".

**Joni Mitchell boycotts Spotify over COVID-19 'lies' on Joe Rogan's podcast**

Singer Joni Mitchell said Friday (Jan 28) she was pulling her music from Spotify over "lies" on the streaming service about COVID-19, just days after fellow musical titan Neil Young did the same.

In a post on her website, the Big Yellow Taxi singer said she was supporting Young, who clashed with Spotify over its wildly popular Joe Rogan Experience podcast.

"I've decided to remove all my music from Spotify," Mitchell wrote. "Irresponsible people are spreading lies that are costing people their lives. I stand in solidarity with Neil Young and the global scientific and medical communities on this issue."

Neil Young (left) in Calabasas, Calif, May 18, 2016 and podcaster Joe Rogan in Seattle on Dec 7, 2012. (Photos: AP Photo)

Mitchell's website also carried a copy of an open letter to Spotify by medics and other scientists calling on the company to establish a misinformation policy to

Yumi Bai, who is one half of the China-based singing duo, was embroiled in the messy divorce of Wang Leehom and Lee Jinglei last December.

combat Rogan's repeated falsehoods and conspiracy theories around the coronavirus pandemic.

There was no immediate comment from Spotify.

Young, the voice behind Heart Of Gold and Harvest Moon, yanked his music from Spotify this week after telling the service it had to choose between him and Rogan.

He accused Spotify of "spreading fake information about vaccines - potentially causing death" by putting out Rogan's podcast, which racks up millions of listens.

"Spotify has become the home of life threatening COVID misinformation," he wrote. "Lies being sold for money."

"I realised I could not continue to support SPOTIFY's life threatening misinformation to the music loving public." Young had over six million monthly listeners on the popular streaming platform. His fellow Canadian Mitchell currently has 3.7 million. Rogan has a multi-year exclusive deal with Spotify, reportedly worth US\$100 million (\$\$135.5 million), and a massive following. Critics say his podcast is a platform for conspiracy theories and disinformation, particularly over COVID-19. Rogan has discouraged vaccination in young people and promoted the off-label use of the anti-parasitic drug Ivermectin to treat the virus.

In a statement this week, Spotify said: "We want all the world's music and audio content to be available to Spotify users. "With that comes great responsibility in balancing both safety for listeners and freedom for creators. We have detailed content policies in place and we've removed over 20,000 podcast episodes related to Covid since the start of the pandemic." —Agencies

## Sopranos actor Tony Sirico dies at age 79

LONDON: American actor Tony Sirico, who played the lovable but murderous gangster Paulie Walnuts on the HBO series The Sopranos and was frequently cast in Woody Allen films, died on Friday at age 79, his family said.

Sirico played a major role in the HBO drama that started in 1999 and became an influential hit early in the era of prestige television.

Though he played smaller parts in six Woody Allen movies from 1994 to 2016, Sirico was not especially well known before his breakout role, in which he was a captain in the crime family of lead character Tony Soprano, played by the late James Gandolfini.

The Paulie Walnuts character was a steely criminal who displayed periodic kindness, sometimes providing goofy comic relief with malapropisms, but always loyal to the boss.

"A larger than life character on and off screen. Gonna miss you a lot my friend," Sopranos co-star Steven Van Zandt said on Twitter.

Sirico often played Italian-American mobsters, including a small part in Goodfellas, Martin Scorsese's popular and critical hit from 1990. Sirico also took a comic turn voicing the talking dog Vinny on the animated show Family Guy.

His credits in Woody Allen movies include Bullets Over Broadway of 1994, Mighty Aphrodite of 1995, Everyone Says I Love You from 1996, Deconstructing Harry from 1997, Celebrity from 1998, and in his post-Sopranos fame, Café Society of 2016.

"It is with great sadness, but with incredible pride, love and a whole lot of fond memories, that the family of Gennaro Anthony 'Tony' Sirico wishes to inform you of his death on the morning of July 8, 2022," his brother, Robert Sirico, a Roman Catholic priest, posted on Facebook.

He is survived by two children plus an unspecified number of grandchildren, siblings, nieces, nephews and others, his brother said.

No cause of death was reported. Born in Brooklyn on July 29, 1942, Sirico served 20 months in prison on a gun charge in the early 1970s, according to the movie database IMDB. His first movie role came in 1974's Crazy Joe, about the Mafia figure Joey Gallo, but his defining role was in the HBO series created by David Chase.

"When I first read David Chase's script, I knew this was special," Sirico is quoted as saying on IMDB. "This is what I'd been looking for all my life. ... I knew right away this was a role to kill for."

—Reuters

He was known for playing Paulie Walnuts, a mobster in the hit show that started in 1999.

