



Publication: The Business Times

Date: Oct 24 2007

Headline: When the wine doesn't quite live up to the Big Picture



Impressive: One of the works on show – *Unfinished Painting Of The Present* by Edgar 'Egai' Talusan Fernandez; oil on canvas; 367 x 612cm

When the wine doesn't quite live up to the Big Picture

By SYLVIA TAN

THE art was huge, dramatic and even spectacular at the Big Picture Show wine appreciation event at the Singapore Art Museum on Monday night. But the wine did not quite match the "big" mood set by the artworks.

The theme at the Australian wine tasting, which followed a short tour of the exhibits, was "generation next". And since the next crop of Aussie winemakers are looking back and using old European grape varieties – pinot noir chardonnay (champagne), pinot gris (Alsace), shiraz viognier (Rhône and Côte Rotie), tempranillo (Rioja) and sangiovese (Chianti) – this meant fairly subtle tastes.

Jeremy Oliver, one of Australia's iconic wine writers, was exemplary in his discourse. But this was an occasion that cried out for the massive blockbuster "Robert Parker" Oz wines – those burly Barossa cracker-jacks with the impossibly high alcohol (14.5 per cent upwards) and typical succulent fruity Down Under character. In other words, big wines, more fitting for the occasion. Notwithstanding the choices, the wines offered for tasting were still aromatic and balanced, though subdued.

Guests at the event first had a preview of the Singapore Art Museum's Big Picture Show, which is on until March 23, 2008. Eventually some 24 works will be exhibited – itself a feat in terms of transport and mounting, as some of the pieces are nine metres tall.

The show features mostly artworks in the museum's own collec-

tion which, in the main, have never been exhibited before. And it was a spectacular display of mural art, some of which spans an entire wall.

Mounted by curators Low Sze Wee and Ong Zhen Ming, the pieces, which come mostly from the region, such as Laos, the Philippines, Indonesia and China, were staggering in scale and aesthetics.

One piece in particular – *Without Narration*, by Indonesian artist Entang Wiharso – is a nine metre tall mosaic-like hanging, full of textures and colours. It challenges the viewer with its multi-perspective approach to its theme of love and violence. No space is wasted here, with its decorative background reminiscent of Indonesian batik.

One of the masterpieces must be Nobel Prize winner in Literature Gao Xingjian's *Day and Night* – a massive black and white contemporary work in Chinese ink and paper. It was donated by Gao to the Singapore Art Museum this year.

While a few of these works, such as Charlie Co's *Carosa Sang MGA Espiritu*, are firm favourites with museum goers, others like Pacita Abad's *Marcos and His Cronies* are being displayed for the first time since acquisition.

With such massive works of art on show, the viewer was primed – perhaps unconsciously – to expect some of the big, full-bodied wines we associate with Australia. But the tastes that followed were far too subtle to hold up to the massive pictures. A bit more thought could have been put into integrating the wines with the theme of the Big Picture Show.