

## *Citizen of the World: recent works by Aung Myint*

15th October – 14th November 2010

YAVUZ Fine Art, 51 Waterloo Street, #03-01, Singapore

The opening reception for the artist will be held from 7–9 pm on Friday, 15th October 2010.



Five Continents (Is The World Nearly Destroyed), 2009

In the decades since the military replaced Burma's post-independence civilian government in the 1960s, Myanmar has become isolated from the outside world. This isolation, aggravated by the few quickly-suppressed popular uprisings that have occurred since the 1990 elections, has resulted in the country's artists being cut-off from the international art world. Cultural life in Burma, as advocated by a state apparatus dominated by superstition, mock-piety, and ultra-conservatism, is one of extreme artistic convention. Yangon-based **Aung Myint**, with a few dozen other brave compatriots, defies the authorities and produces art outside the boundaries of Burma's officially authorized aesthetic.

Born in 1946, Aung Myint, unlike many younger Burmese artists, remembers life before the generals. He remembers the exciting time of change and optimism as colonial power ebbed after the Second World War and Burma moved into a new era of national independence. Perhaps this memory of promise, however distant, has coloured his art which, despite so many years of censorship, has retained its independence.

Self-taught, Aung Myint works mainly with paper and canvas. Influenced early in his career by New York abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, the artist has a particular predilection for abstraction. Over

the years, he has developed his own non-representational language, the line associated with Burma's script and sacred art central to his dynamic, non-figurative paintings.

But beyond an interest in pure form, Aung Myint harbours an interest in ideas. In recent years experimenting with installation and performance, genres that he is quite receptive to despite their absence from the imported, modernist canon he knows best, Aung Myint has infused some of his works with messages and narratives beyond the personal.

A series born in the 1990s and featuring images of maps and continents, gives form to Aung Myint's concerns. This *World Series* as the artist dubs it, ongoing and constantly developing in pictorial idiom, takes him beyond Burma's physical and psychological borders out into the wide, exciting world. There Aung Myint finds much that is problematic: ecological meltdown, wars, hate, death and corruption. He paints rivers of red blood flowing down his images of continents, skulls and crosses pepper his canvases, and torn patches appear, symbolizing injury and void. Yet if these works are stories of doom, they are also human stories, the artist using paint to leap out into the world with zeal, prepared to tackle global issues as he leaves petty, artificial, controlled and controlling Burma behind. A warning as much as the artist's personal catharsis, the *World Series* speaks to all.

This first Burmese exhibition at **YAVUZ Fine Art**, curated by Southeast Asian contemporary art specialist **Iola Lenzi**, aims to introduce the many expressive facets of Aung Myint. Bringing together recent paintings from the *World Series*, abstract canvases, portraits, and three site-specific installations (one of which performative, do join us for this exciting premier on opening night), ***Citizen of the World: recent works by Aung Myint*** introduces the Singapore public to one of Burma's most senior and versatile artists.

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For inquiries please contact Stella Chang at [stella@yavuzfineart.com](mailto:stella@yavuzfineart.com) or at (65) 6338 7900.