

# JOE FAN

## SCOTTISH CONTEMPORARY ARTIST



**J**OE FAN is a Scottish contemporary artist living and working in Aberdeen. He was born in Hong Kong in 1962 and moved to Britain in 1979 to study Graphic Design at Aberdeen College. His choice of Aberdeen as a place to study was quite by accident, with no real definite plan behind it and he had no idea what the City would be like to live in.

"Aberdeen was recommended to me by friends as at the time it was quite a popular foreign venue for Asian students to study in."

As a child Joe was always interested in drawing but he was never sure what he wanted to do in life. However, when he was advised by an Aberdeen College lecturer to apply for a place at Gray's School of Art to study Fine Art he had no hesitation in deciding that his future lay in this direction..

After successfully gaining a place at Gray's he found the instruction there highly beneficial to his development as an artist helping him gain a good traditional technical grounding in all areas of art.

His success as a student allowed him to progress to a lecturers position and he taught at Gray's for several years. He found teaching there highly refreshing and stimulating as he felt he was not only helping others to realise their potential but also finding out more about himself and about what he wanted to say in his own work.

Joe has since given up his role as a lecturer to pursue his own full-time career as an artist.



OCTOBER

Joe Fan's approach to painting is quite unique in many ways. He claims to have no great purpose to his paintings, no common themes or concepts, but instead presents them as being pictorial and narrative, depicting various stories and concepts for the viewer to interpret. He is fond of playing visual tricks in his work, and often paints with "tongue-in-cheek" taking liberties with perspective and magnifying the scale of his images.

If there is one thing which sums up the difference between Joe Fan and most of his contemporaries it is the serene quality he brings to his paintings. His landscapes, bathed in diffused sunlight, have a rare beauty and accord with his idea of painting "the last painting you would see just before you fall asleep".

His works go through many different stages, beginning with an image in his head that he explores and develops. However, this image can change considerably during the course of development, so that the final scene may end up quite different to what he originally intended. He finds that this organic way of painting allows him to fully express himself.

Fan rarely uses first hand sources for inspiration, preferring to draw directly from his own imagination. His original training as a graphic artist helped him to become very disciplined in his paintings and he keeps the process of applying paint to canvas very simple. He starts off with an amber wash to conceal the vastness

of the white canvas and then develops the painting using low-key colour themes to expand the process of drawing.

Joe Fan does not see his North-East surroundings as a significant influence on his work and in actuality, his allegorical landscapes are much more reminiscent of Italian scenes - a deliberate move on his part. Although he has never been to Italy he finds the work of the early Renaissance artists have



THE BARBER

played an important part in the development of his ability to build up unique and personal images of different places without these images being tainted by the reality of what the place actually looks like.



CHAIRS



THE FAMILY

Despite his often light hearted approach, Joe Fan is serious about the influences in his work. His figurative paintings owe much to the likes of the Flemish painters Bosch and Breughel in whose paintings, like Fan's, encourages the content to be reflected on. This enables the viewer to come to his/her own conclusions as to what the painting is about. Fan admits that he himself is just as curious as the rest of us to know what his paintings mean!

His highly structured and organized compositions owe much to his training as a graphic designer. Fan considers and plans each stage carefully executing highly detailed drawings in which he places images, not as much through concept and emotion, but through balance and counter balance. He will include a tiny figure engulfed by a huge mountain, not for some hidden meaning or

significance but merely to enhance the quality of the composition. These are a series of pictorial devices employed to stimulate the eye and to evoke mystery and curiosity about the meaning of his paintings which is left to the imagination of the viewer.

Fan is reluctant to be associated with any style or movement. He feels that he couldn't restrict himself in such a way and enjoys looking at the works of everyone, believing that an artist needs as much help as he/she can get by looking at examples of how other people approached similar problems. However, he does concede that he is influenced by his Asian background, which can clearly be seen in his works, and finds that he is attracted to the clarity and simplicity of Asian art, which he returns to again and again. Interestingly enough, when in his homeland of China he does not work and feels no drive to paint.



THREE GARDENERS

Joe Fan's work is highly original and combines elements of his Asian background with Scottish culture and heavily-laden Italian-style landscapes. He has learned to absorb as much as he can about painting, trying anything once, but he always comes back to his natural figurative approach.

He is currently working at the WASP studios in Aberdeen developing his work and working towards future exhibitions.



MORVEN'S WEDDING



THE DILEMMA OF ALEXANDROS

*" Fan presents Life's absurdities and hidden narratives; playful and full of delights, his paintings are somehow reminders of things past and recollections that will come. His vision is quietly powerful and self-assured, and just perfectly off centre."*



WONDERLAND

