

**tcc presents..**

**con-fusion:** if you're not confused, you're not paying attention  
ASIA POP! art + furniture by **Ketna Patel**

tcc "The Gallery" 51 Circular Road

art + furniture will be on display  
from 3 February till 31 March 2009

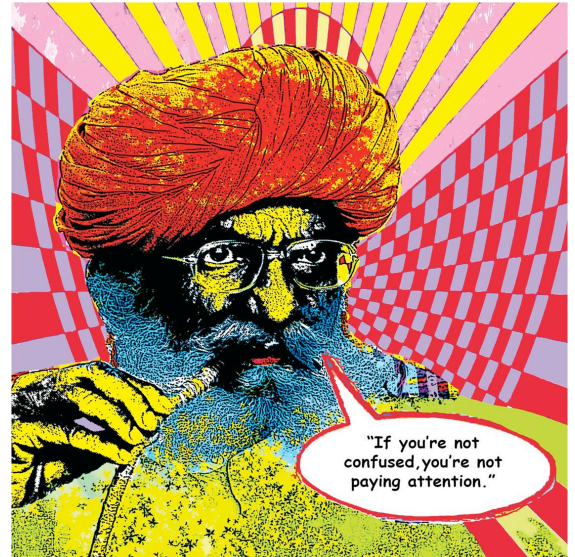
Opening Hours :

Sunday to Thursday & Public Holidays 11:00am to Midnight

Friday, Saturday & Eve of Public Holidays 11:00am to 02:00am

Free to Public

General Enquiries: (+65) 6479 2445



**"Pipe Dream"**

102 x 102cm 2008 Screenprint on Acrylic

*What if it were frozen words and thoughts and emotions that made up the buildings and roofs and pavements in our streets? If one were to 'defrost' these frozen entities, what would the 'liquid' of street conversations look like??*

*"I try to compress an illustrious past, a changing present and a rapidly unfolding future, so the observer gets multiple messages.... this is the new Asia; this is what I see."*

presented by:



in collaboration with:



*Enabling great talents to  
shine the way they deserve...*

tcc's latest exhibition at "The Gallery" will be showcasing more than 30 unique ASIA POP! art + furniture by artist **Ketna Patel**

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## See, Touch, Feel, and Sit on ASIA POP! by tcc

“ASIA POP!” by Ketna Patel is a collection of Asian street narratives. It has an unmistakable look - a boisterous yet harmonious visual cacophony that is plural and laden with many meanings. It holds within it the contradictory, bittersweet quality of memories that are fading fast. By looking and relooking, as if by drinking them in, one brings these memories back to life, perhaps bringing certain buried parts of oneself back to life. Not unlike a robust cup of coffee, sips of ASIA POP! take you on journeys that are textured and potent, yet calming in their familiarity. These are walks through the streets of Asia, from their lurid depths to their cultured heights. The mixed media artworks are mirrors to the new and old ‘ASIA’ that surrounds us; it is impossible to be indifferent to them!

The sensory overload of a dank, busy night in Jakarta marries the languor of an Ah-Pek scratching his exposed belly in a Singapore hawker centre. A toothless woman swats flies in Hanoi while a mythic Indian prince pontificates on the meaning of life and choice of wife. Kitschy icons, religious deities, rusty street-signs and peeling architecture are weaved together into a maddening yet precise tapestry. The coffee connoisseur “The Gallery” on 51 Circular road is housed in a building that has lived through decades, in a neighbourhood that is a ‘trading’ gateway, and it is quite befitting for ASIA POP! to rest here for a while. This Exhibition is a metaphor for a larger phenomenon - Singapore is a cosmopolitan Ambassador to the rest of Asia; by being here, we are pausing at a cultural crossroad. A few minutes at the tcc, basking in ASIA POP!, is a few minutes dipped into our collective consciousness, where we hope your ‘gaze’ will make these stories come alive.

This exhibition by the coffee connoisseur presents, for the first time, an opportunity for the viewers to interact with the artist’s work. Ketna’s furniture, designed by her and crafted according to exact specifications, is a shrewd union of utility and art; it’s the commonplace and the gaudy re-contextualised and plastered onto a neat little sofa or a barber’s chair - quite ordinary and extremely comfortable, except when you realise the cushion you are resting against has the face of a Rajasthani woman mouthing western city lingo. So when you sprawl on it, enjoy the fine fabric and the generous armrests, but also appreciate the chance to be physically present among the various stories of a continent in transition - that madcap, beautiful and confounding place we call Asia.

Ketna’s own cultural background is unsurprisingly diverse, with equal parts of Asia and Europe and a childhood in Africa thrown in. She has made a career out of not-belonging: as a resident, a frequent tourist, and as a perpetual observer, she distils her travels through a soul itself displaced. And there’s nothing clinical or distant about it - this is unmistakably joyous work, by someone who loves being in the thick of things; she revels in and often manufactures the chaos.

Her background in architecture informs the meticulousness of her compositions, and her use of colour - once you get past its neon loudness - is almost classically balanced. Its look isn’t sober by any measure, but it isn’t unduly wild or drunk, though the subject being photographed may well be. Faithful to the content is the choice of media: there’s a mélange of photographs, comic-book cut-outs, painted textures and illustrations.

To celebrate mawkishness without irony takes a very special skill; to embrace excess when minimalism is in vogue suggests both skill and courage. ASIAPOP! constantly reminds us that it doesn’t belong to the world of cerebral detachment - it is the art of simple, direct experience, of literally sitting on “art” as you sip coffee and enjoy the company of friends. And its unique unpretentiousness enables it to mingle noisily with the crowd - like an inebriated bohemian, it belongs as much in a café as in a museum. As music it would be an Erhu solo set to a Bollywood beat, with audience laughter and applause recorded - it is virtuosic, self-reflexive, unexpected, and absolutely hilarious.

© 2009 Rahul Joshi



## “Rainbow settee 1”

2 piece 2008 Vinyl ASIA POP furniture



## “Rainbow settee 2”

2 piece 2008 Vinyl ASIA POP furniture



## “China cool-ie”

2008 Print on Photo Paper



## Artist Profile – **Ketna Patel**

*Are our tastes ours, or are we blindly following printed media, cable TV and similar arbitrators of information? How is it possible to authentically 'connect' with ourselves in an environment of packaged words and consumerist sound bytes? The recent world events remind us that our existence here is temporary, fragile, and that knowledge and self learning cannot be substituted with external, material obsession. Wisdom, and the ability to deconstruct 'information' are the key drivers behind identity, and for each person, this is different. Everything we read or see or hear can have more than one interpretation. My anxiety is the increasing onslaught of homogeneity and the 'cloning' of taste.*

**Ketna Patel**, African born, UK educated and a Singaporean PR for the last fifteen years, describes herself as happily culturally schizophrenic, yet deeply grounded in an evolving Asian culture.

Explains Patel, "I have deliberately chosen collage as a technique because it allows me to juxtapose narratives and extrapolate and exaggerate."

Why? "We human beings are extremely conditioned. We do not acknowledge or celebrate what is right under our nose! These works are inspired by the world around me which is multi layered and plural. The most rapid changes in society can be witnessed on the streets, and it is at this level that my story telling starts".

She tells her stories – of Singapore, and other Asian countries by juxtaposing images; sometimes clashing, sometimes complementary. The lotus flower and media man in suit, celebrity faces and ordinary folk, rickshaws and hawkers, local food and mis-spelt menus. "I try to compress an illustrious past, a changing present and a rapidly unfolding future, so the observer gets multiple messages....in a few seconds they have to get the message - this is Singapore, this is what I see."

For Patel, it's all about building bridges between cultures by showcasing everyday, ordinary life as opposed to stereotypes perpetuated by the media. She seeks to validate and celebrate the individual versus 'the hive', and to treat contemporary lifestyle as an organic art-form in itself.

As part of a new generation of Asian Artists who are drawing on their own culture for inspiration, Ketna's current series juxtaposes High Art with contemporary Popular Culture. Her candid portrayal of the lives of everyday Asians compresses this region's illustrious past with its rapidly unfolding culture, making the compositions both personal and impersonal. The viewer is encouraged to make an appraisal of 'received' ideas filtered down to us through our media saturated conditioning. Ketna's global observations take us on many layers of readability as photographic images, patterns and vibrant colours are orchestrated across bold canvases. The colours are kept deliberately gaudy to reflect the exuberance of Asian life...Strong chromatic hues such as bandung pink, day-glow orange, vermilion, aqua and lime usually found in Bollywood film posters give the work a novel vibrancy which also cleverly acknowledges our rampant consumer culture and the omnipotent presence of advertising.



- **An Art Space for Everyday Use:**

At the coffee connoisseur Circular Road art boutique caffè we have created an Art Gallery where a whole range of works by both local and foreign artists will be featured through exhibitions that are organized on a quarterly basis.

The old heritage building that is situated at Singapore's historic river district lends itself perfectly to an art gallery. The ground floor offers the more conventional seating for those in a rush, while those who want to escape from the outside pressure and stress can slip upstairs out of sight and away from the sounds of the busy street.

Here the ambience is totally laid back as you find beanbags that let you sink into oblivion are scattered across the space. Where you can take your time to peruse art magazines provided and enjoy the paintings on the wall. Art, like a great cup of coffee, shouldn't be rushed.

*tcc* created this very special art space in a city that seeks to nurture the arts because we want art to communicate in a relaxed atmosphere. And let's face it, it's so easy to relax over a great cup of coffee.

The artists whose works appear at *tcc* "The Gallery" have a wonderful opportunity to reach a wider audience through a space that is frequented by people from many areas of work, and especially those who may not have the time nor inclination to visit more conventional art spaces like museums and galleries.

- **Special Partnerships:**

*tcc* recognises the benefits not only of supporting the arts by forging creative partnerships with people who specialise in the arts, we also let art experts do what they're good at while we get on and do what we're best at – providing excellent service and great coffee.

We work exclusively with [art-management.com](http://art-management.com), a company dedicated to promoting and managing visual artists both in Singapore and overseas. [art-management.com](http://art-management.com) has, from its beginning focused on linking the artists it represents with leading brand names in a way that will be of benefit to both artist and brand. *tcc* is the latest in a long list of leading brands that [art-management.com](http://art-management.com) has been proud to work with.

Claude Verly, Managing Director and Founder of [art-management.com](http://art-management.com) has commented in relation to his partnership with *tcc*, "One of the biggest challenges in managing art and artists in Singapore today is finding new and unusual venues in which to present the art, and then matching up the artist with the venue. This venture with *tcc* takes [art-management.com](http://art-management.com) into a new phase; together we take art into the public arena rather than relying on people coming to the art. At the *tcc* "The Gallery", the art will be there always for people to realize them.

Through [art-management.com](http://art-management.com), *tcc* is able to support the artist in terms of providing an art space that is totally rent-free and driving awareness for them through media publicity and events.