

Artist Interview: Dyn aka Safaruddin (Singapore)
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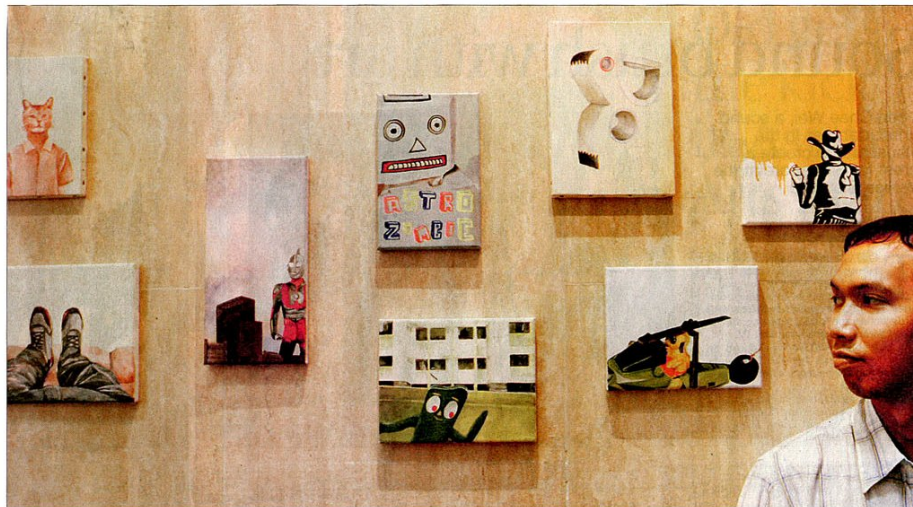
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Brush with the past

That's what two artists are doing by using objects of nostalgia in their exhibition

June Cheong
 ARTS REPORTER

PAINTING helped artist Dyn re-connect with his past. And the 29-year-old, whose given name is Safaruddin Abdul Hamid, hopes that his artworks will reverse the "culture of forgetting" in Singapore. His work comprises stylised paintings of past landmarks such as the old National Theatre and National Library, which no



IN MEMORIA: Dyn (above) relishes painting childhood relics while Justin Lee (below) prefers to dabble in coloured portraits of Asian icons like Astroboy.

PHOTOS: DOMINIC WONG



longer exist, and sentimental portraits of childhood relics like ViewMaster toys and jewel biscuits.

His paintings, along with pop artist Justin Lee's nostalgia-suffused portraits, are featured in an exhibition called Memories & Mementoes at the Marina Mandarin hotel, *It runs till June 30.*

He says: "I started using objects from my past as I wanted my work to be about an experience, not just art."

"It's hard to find primary school pupils playing zero-point or marbles now. Most of them prefer the PlayStation Portable. My job is to bring back memories of childhood for adult viewers."

Besides paying homage to the long-lost Singapore of his childhood, he also wanted to remember his late elder brother Rahman, who died in his sleep at the age of 32 three years ago.

Missing his brother terribly one day, Dyn created a series of portraits dedicated to him, titled *Ultimately Missed*.

One of them is a painting of a brown T-shirt his brother



loved when he was younger.

Dyn says: "He left without saying goodbye, so this is like my goodbye to him."

The past also asserts a similar emotional pull on Lee. But while Dyn's paintings are mostly direct, sombre studies of objects, Lee creates luridly coloured portraits of Asian icons like Bruce Lee and Astroboy.

The artist, 43, says: "The past is very important as everyone stems from a past and culture."

His signature motif is the Chinese character for double happiness, done like a traditional Chinese paper cutting. Asked why he fuses Eastern traditions with the Western method of pop art, he says: "I read somewhere that whenever you want to create something new, you join the halves of something old together."

"So I mixed East and West to create tension in my works and for the audience to think more about who we are."

In using the glossy veneer of pop art and the figurative language of graphic design that is the natural domain of advertising, he also seeks to question consumerism and media saturation in today's society.

On his cheeky portraits, which depict Asian action legend Bruce Lee with various appendages like alien antennae (above), he says: "I paint a lie so that we realise what is real."

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> *Memories & Mementoes* is on at Level 5, Marina Mandarin hotel, 6 Raffles Boulevard, Marina Square, till June 30. Admission is free.

> Justin Lee is also holding a solo exhibition, *Happy Nation*, at Utterly Art Exhibition Space, 229A South Bridge Road, Level 2, from tomorrow till June 10. Opening hours: noon to 8pm (Mon to Sat), and noon to 5.30pm (Sun). Admission is free.