

## **Kevin Chin, Artist Statement**

My oil paintings combine fragmented foreign lands with more familiar household artifacts, to explore how you find your place in the world. Their ambitious scale immerses the viewer in colourful, ethereal realms. Figures wander amidst curious objects in search of connection and refuge, but cultural cues are elusive. Each landscape dissolves into the next, representing place as it may be conceived in the mind, as though in yearning or escape. Fluid paintwork is punctuated with piercing colour, just as a daydream is broken by moments vividly remembered.

As a Malaysian-born Australian migrant of Chinese ancestry, and having lived in both London and Tokyo, travel is in my genealogy. I have grown up in the rhetoric of globalisation, at a time when consumer tourism fuels some of the world's largest international trade industries. With a characteristic mix of humour and pathos, my paintings express a sense of alienation common to our time, and a search for solace in this current world context.

### **Between Bridges and Less Than White**

These paintings were made upon returning to Melbourne, after residencies at Youkobo Art Space, Studio Kura, and a year living in Tokyo. I had gone from my home country of Australia where I am often asked where I am from, to a place where I felt foreign but was mistaken as local. Speaking no Japanese and distant from loved ones, the social isolation had the unforeseen effect of opening a surprising stillness within myself. The effect resembled a silent Vipassana meditation retreat, where days on end without speaking help to bring inner awareness. The paintings explore this paradox of feeling at once foreign and yet connected with all around you.

My use of multiple panels is influenced by Edo-period paintings seen in the temples of Kyoto, which in turn had reminded me of the Chinese watercolours that hung in my childhood home in Melbourne. I am interested in how place can extend across geography through contemplation and memory. Individual locations are reassembled into fictitious panoramas, becoming more idea than representation.

The paintings depict a sense of longing, and a desire for connection. Faces are often concealed, reflecting a sense of social isolation. The figures are solitary in their own individual panels, yet are connected through their gaze across the separated canvases. There is a search for somewhere to belong in the context of global mobility.

### **Touch Up**

On the subway in Tokyo, I watched a woman adjust her makeup, using her iPad as a mirror, breaking down what was public and private space. In the painting, I have put her back into a more residential scene, with a house that could also use some touching up. Paint flakes off the house to reveal the linen canvas ground, meditating upon this painting process of re-assembly.

I use dissolving paintwork and heightened colour to create non-places, where there is no separation between the local and foreign. In these scenes outside place and time, objects and actions are displaced and rearranged, to test cultural signifiers. I reposition domestic icons amidst travel imagery to question conceptions of home and abroad.