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**THE STRAITSTIMES**

## **Artist Sunny Chyun impressed judges with embroidery and glow-in-the-dark paint**

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**Embroidery and paint come together in Sunny Chyun's work, winner of the UOB Painting of the Year (Singapore) Award**



Artist Sunny Chyun's artwork, *Dyspraxia* (above). PHOTOS: UOB

Visual artist Sunny Chyun's award-winning work comes from dealing with the chaos in her head.

Last week, the 38-year-old won the UOB Painting of the Year (Singapore) Award in the established artist category for her linen artwork, *Dyspraxia*.

The piece, which won US\$25,000 (S\$34,000) and a three-month showing at the UOB Art Gallery, has embroidered spiderweb patterns created with threads and acrylic, oil and glow-in-the-dark paint.

Dyspraxia is a common condition that affects motor coordination in children and adults. Chyun has this disorder and her nine-year-old niece was recently diagnosed with it as well.

She says dyspraxia is not about being clumsy, bumping into things or dropping things.

In her case, it affects spatial awareness. She finds it difficult to locate her own bathroom at times, let alone her home.

Using Google Maps is hard. "I make myself dizzy, going round and round in circles," she says.



Artist Sunny Chyun (above) suffers from dyspraxia and finds it difficult to locate places  
.PHOTOS: UOB

But without dyspraxia, she might not be the artist she is.

"I hate to think of it as a disability or an obstacle. It's coming to a conclusion in a different way," she says.

Because of her condition, the Seoul-born Singapore permanent resident was drawn to two-dimensional art over sculpture and other three-dimensional art forms.

Real space may be confusing but, she says, "with 2D, you're creating an illusion of space and images that's left to the imagination".

She works on several pieces concurrently and repetitive patterns are a common feature of her work.

"When I sew a line, the thread breaks just as my concentration does. That's where that line ends and a new one begins," she says.

Chyun moved to Singapore at age five when her father, who worked in the oil industry, took up a post here.

When she was 12, she met Cultural Medallion recipient Teo Eng Seng and the visual artist has been her mentor since.

His wife taught her to crochet, sparking an interest in arts and crafts involving threads.

Chyun studied at the United World College of South-east Asia here and has a bachelor's degree in studio arts and economics from Wesleyan University in the United States.

She did her master of fine arts degree in painting at Korea National University of Arts.

She had various jobs for a time, including with a film company in Los Angeles and MTV Singapore, before deciding to make art full-time. She is single.

Time spent at STPI, a contemporary gallery and creative workshop here, introduced her to embroidery, a key component of her current art.

She likes the connection to her heritage - her grandparents used to own an embroidery factory.

Embroidery also allows her to layer and interweave colour, along with other embellishments such as nail art or crystals.

"That's how I see my life," she says. "Things come together that do not make sense."

This is the third year she had entered her work in the annual UOB Painting of the Year competition.

The contest, now in its 36th year, is held in Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Thai winner, Sukit Choosri, won the overall prize as well - the UOB Southeast Asian Painting of the Year.

The prize money and exposure are welcome and heartening, as is the response from some viewers.

A woman whose daughter has dyspraxia told Chyun that the artist's openness about her condition helped her better understand her child.

"Increasing awareness of dyspraxia - that, for me, is more important," Chyun says.