

Chris Pole turns toward a residency in Malaysia to inspire new works.

Kuala Lumpur



Chris Pole

Chris Pole

Date : 13 MAY 2013

text art4d.asia

Chris Pole, a New Zealand artist, discusses his upcoming residency at Shalini Ganendra Fine Art, the impact of traveling on his work and how his painting's intriguing textual elements work themselves into the imagery.

Firstly, could you please explain how you got involved with the Vision Culture Residency in Kuala Lumpur?

I applied for the residency through the Asia New Zealand Foundation, who very generously offer residencies in various Asian countries, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and India. This is the first time they have offered the Malaysian residency, so I'm very pleased to be the first recipient. Kuala Lumpur is particularly appealing to me due to the sheer variety of architectural examples on offer, which will be a rich inspiration for the work I make during my time in Malaysia, and obviously the chance to spend a couple of months in the studio is going to be great. I have a young family here in New Zealand so it will be bittersweet being away for such a period of time - I will miss my daughter and partner greatly. At the same time the city I live in, Christchurch, is still in recovery from a series of devastating earthquakes in 2011, and my studio isn't in the best shape - it's still waiting to be demolished and rebuilt, so it will be great to escape the South Island winter and very rewarding to immerse myself in a new environment and get a heap of work done. The gallery at SGFA looks brilliant, so I'm really excited to have the opportunity to produce a new body of work and show it there and find out what the reaction is.

What are you most looking forward to during your time at SGFA?

It's hard to say exactly one thing, I'm really looking forward to the entire experience - meeting new people, eating amazing Malaysian food, and being a 'fish out of water'. All of the dialogue with Shalini Ganendra thus far has been really positive, communication has been very professional and so everything bodes well for the residency, but at the same time I don't entirely know what to expect. That's part of the excitement of going somewhere new, and I'm sure that sense of 'wide-eyed wonder' will feed directly into the work. Seemingly simple things like buying materials will be that little bit more difficult, but it's while negotiating all those new experiences that unexpected encounters will happen, and it's often the unforeseen aspects that become the most memorable.

You are not new to traveling, having spent time living and working in the UK as well as having traveled through Europe, North Africa, the US and Middle East. How has traveling influenced your practice in the past?

Traveling has had a massive influence on my practice, in many ways the



© Chen Man

CHEN MAN 陳漫

Metropolitan by CCOMO, Bangkok
April 25 - May 31 2013



very notion of travel is the basis for my work. It is during travel that I have sourced the images I go on to paint, and naturally the process of getting there in the first place becomes a tangible part of the work, whether it's a hike into the high country a few hours from where I live, or seeing friends in Hungary, or visiting ancient ruins in Syria. Even before I had left New Zealand for the first time I had a huge interest in cartography, and I often utilised map-making imagery in my works. Now my work is heavily based on imagery collected while traveling, I'm always delving back into my own archives to make new work - I've built up a lot of potential images, more than I can feasibly paint, especially as I keep on gathering more imagery as I continue to travel. Nothing is dismissed though, one of my most recent paintings is based on a photo I took in the Czech Republic over five years ago. It's an unusual angle and I've had it in my mind to paint for sometime but have only just now attempted it.

What is it that you enjoy the most about traveling outside of New Zealand?

Places like Europe have such a huge history compared to New Zealand that it's one of the reasons Kiwi's are so compelled to go there. New Zealand's colonial history is little more than 150 years old - very similar to Kuala Lumpur in that regard - and so being from such a young country makes me want to travel to places where I can visit buildings that are 1,000 years old, or see art by Renaissance masters, or abstract expressionist pieces that feel really familiar but actually I've only seen in reproduction in ArtForum or something. Those experiences are not possible here at home. For all of that, of course, I love New Zealand, and through leaving for awhile it makes me realise how lucky I am to live where I do. Even with language barriers, I've still been able to find familiarity in places as diverse as Morocco and Portugal and Jordan and Indonesia, strange little moments that have reminded in one way or another of home. The great challenge of course, when time is limited in a country, is to get beyond the tourist trappings and get a more 'real' experience. I expect that two months in Malaysia is going to allow me time to venture beyond the more obvious spots. Don't get me wrong, I will certainly go up the Petronas Towers, check out Merdeka Square, and visit places like the Batu Caves and Frim; it seems silly not to, these places are world-famous for a reason! However, it may prove that the local neighbourhood around SGFA will be just as interesting to me, or my yet-to-be-discovered favourite little stall at the night markets in Chinatown. I'm looking forward to exploring a little bit of the countryside as well, maybe getting onto a train without really knowing the destination, we'll see. For all of that, I have a lot of work to get through, so a large portion of my days I will be locked away in the studio with brush in hand, and I'm looking forward to that just as much.

You plan to use your time in Malaysia during the residency to



[subscribe](#)

**subscribe
to newsletter**

<input type="text"/>	name
<input type="text"/>	email
send	

suggest a story

post a job

gather photographic images to be translated into paintings. Do you always work from photographic resources or are many of your images drawing from imaginary places?

No, they are always based on photographs I have personally taken. The specific images are selected because they have certain characteristics, strong compositions etc. In some ways the hard work has been done when taking the photograph, and it's up to me not to screw it up when I turn them into paintings! At the same time, certain things happen in the translation from photograph to oil paintings, and this is the area I am most interested in - the small changes, the shifts in colour, and most notably the omissions. The things that are left out are largely what the paintings are about. All of the works are notable for the complete absence of people - despite the architecture being an obvious testament to humankind. Omitting people entirely from the city and landscapes gives the works a more sombre tone, a little lonely and strangely empty.

You often utilise an intriguingly flattened depth of field that makes your images slightly imagined or dreamlike and causes me to wonder how, and in what ways, you draw upon photographic resources in your process. What is it that the photos most importantly provide you with for the creation of your paintings?

As mentioned, it's that strong composition. It's a very good starting point to then make changes from there. My own decision making process kind of intrigues me - and remains a mystery of sorts. Why did I choose that image to paint? Why did I use that colour for the roof? Why did I not paint in the boat on the river but I did keep the car on the road? There are so many random variables that influence the paintings - the album I was listening to, the time I stopped for coffee and restarted, you know, all the things you don't really think about still end up affecting the work. Even with the source photos, sometimes they could be very considered at the time of photography, carefully set up and composed, but on other occasions they could arise from a simple point-and-shoot situation. There are no particular rules that I adhere to.

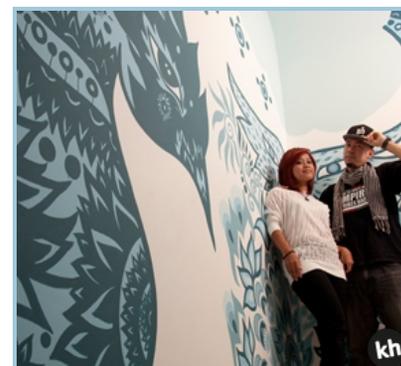
I am also curious about when in the painting process you decide what the text will be that you superimpose over the images. Do the words come to you at the onset, like a straightforward statement, or evolve over time as you create and have a conversation with the painting?

That's a really interesting question, and again there are no set rules, but generally I would say it's the latter example you gave, evolving over time as the artwork develops and emerges. I mean, it's funny, because sometimes the text seems quite incongruous to the image, and other times there seems to be complete synergy. When I first began to make

art4d.asia jobs



art4d.asia selects



Interview with Peap Tarr and Lisa

Mam interviews



Chris Pole turns toward a residency in Malaysia to inspire new works.

news

these paintings I hadn't done anything like them before. I'd just returned to New Zealand after a sustained period of travel, and inspired by a lot of what I'd seen I wanted to make a direct shift from the more abstract work I'd previously been making to something more representational. This presented many challenges, especially as I don't really possess exceptional painting skills - hence the flattened depth of field you alluded to earlier. This ceases to allow the works to be too realistic, and makes them more 'imagined' as you said. The text adds another layer to this, and often references song lyrics or literary snippets, but can just as easily be a random reference or phrase that seems appropriate at the time. Like I say, I'm intrigued by these decisions I make, and don't completely understand them myself. However, there are only a couple of works where in retrospect I feel I didn't get it quite right, generally I'm really comfortable with the words I've chosen. They can be off-putting to some people - why ruin a perfectly good landscape by writing all over it, that kind of thing, but I feel the works are stronger for having the textual element. I had made about eight works in the series before I committed the words to them when I felt the paintings were a little too generic, and needed an extra kick. It was quite daunting at the time, but the first work I painted the text into was hey, and I loved the result and I've never looked back.

The texts often refer to those 'missing' elements I previously mentioned, hence the 'ghosts' and 'disappearances' and 'absences'. Even when the words name an actual place, it's not generally the place actually depicted but often part of the journey to get there. crooked river for example is a view of Lake Brunner on the west coast of New Zealand, on a typically moody day, but to get to the position where I shot the photo on which the painting is based, a friend and I had kayaked down Crooked River. In that sense, the place named is actually behind the viewer, unseen. blind creek is similar, the place depicted is Lake Christabel, a very isolated area that took me six hours to tramp into. I took a route called Palmers Track, but there is another way in via Blind Creek over another valley. I like the idea that these works draw upon their surrounds. In the same way that the words may not be devised when I start a painting, I don't always know when I take a photo that it will become a painting. dumbstruck is a great example of this. It's probably one of my best works, certainly one of the largest at almost four metres in length, but it's based on a photograph I took out the window of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. It's not a particularly special view, and I'm sure millions of people have sat on the same seat and stared out the same window. At the time I snapped the photo I had no idea it would become this rather monumental painting. Conversely, I was up the Nina Valley in the Lewis Pass, a few hours from my home, having hiked for a few hours to a hut. The next morning I awoke to a crazy foggy morning, and I very carefully composed an image in the mist before heading to the top of a very steep saddle that went over to the next valley. As soon as I took that photograph on that morning



Metro-sapiens: Dialogue in the

Cave news



Kyu Hwang on Relocation and

Creation interviews

Find us on Facebook



854 people like art4d.asia.



Facebook social plugin

though, I knew I would be painting it at some point. It became the work devilskin pass, and although it's the complete antithesis of dumbstruck in terms of it's genesis - premeditated, considered - it's not necessarily a better painting for it. I'm very conscious that when I go to Kuala Lumpur that every photograph I take has the potential to become a painting, but I'm excited by that prospect. There will still be an element of surprise I'm sure, and changes will occur between what I capture with the camera and what I paint in oil. In fact, I'm a little worried that the city will be too intriguing, that I'll have too many great photographs and I'll have trouble choosing which ones to paint - but I guess that'll be a pretty good problem to have!

Chris Pole will participate in the Vision Culture Art Residency at Shalini Ganendra Fine Art from June 6 – August 6, 2013. The residency is sponsored by the Asia New Zealand Foundation.



Shalini Ganendra Fine Art Gallery
www.shaliniganendra.com

Like 1 Follow

+ 0 comments



tags

Chris Pole | Shalini Ganendra Fine Art Gallery | Asia New Zealand Foundation | art | exhibition

next >

leave a comment

name

ART4D.ASIA

- SGFA art4d.asia - See super write up on SGFA Vision Culture Resident, CHRIS POLE... fb.me/2R0LVNR9r
5 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite
- SGFA art4d.asia - See super write up on SGFA Vision Culture Resident, CHRIS POLE... fb.me/1F5sOw4Dv
7 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite
- SGFA art4d.asia - See super write up on SGFA Vision Culture Resident, CHRIS POLE - art4d.asia/beta/
7 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite
- SGFA art4d.asia - See super write up on SGFA Vision Culture Resident, CHRIS POLE... fb.me/2R0LVNR9r
5 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite
- SGFA art4d.asia - See super write up on SGFA Vision Culture Resident, CHRIS POLE... fb.me/1F5sOw4Dv

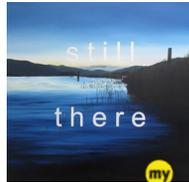


Join the conversation

email

 city

related



Chris Pole turns toward a residency in Malaysia to inspire new works.



Metro-sapiens: Dialogue in the Cave



Yu-Cheng Chou's Working History of Lu Chieh-Te

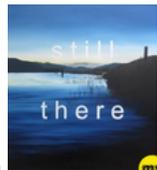


Here is There, There is Here by Toyomi Hoshina

trending



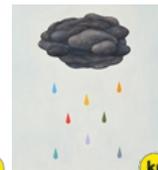
Interview with Peap Tarr and Lisa Mam



Chris Pole turns toward a residency in Malaysia to inspire new works.



Metro-sapiens: Dialogue in the Cave



Kyu Hwang on Relocation and Creation



Interview with Makoto Tanijiri



Sound Bites:
Nesigner



Interview with Em
Riem



Yu-Cheng Chou's
Working History
of Lu Chieh-Te



Shalini Ganendra



Sound Bites:
&Larry



comments

No comment



archives + tags

- advertising 1
- animation 2
- announcement 1
- architecture 27
- art 53
- art direction 2
- book 3
- branding 3
- catalogues
- communication 4
- design 98
- editorial 2
- exhibition 57
- identity 5
- illustration
- interior design 19
- magazine 1
- product design 20
- typography 4

- austria 1
- bangladesh
- brunei
- cambodia 1
- china 8
- france 2
- germany 1
- hong kong 13
- india 1
- indonesia 4
- italy 4
- japan 12
- laos
- malaysia 13
- myanmar
- netherlands 1
- philippines 5
- singapore 32
- south korea 6
- spain 1
- sri lanka
- taiwan 4
- thailand 45
- united kingdom 6
- united state 4
- vietnam 2

