

Lee Kian Seng

"Mankind"
1972

Installation of mixed media (160 x 220 x 140 cm) comprising the juxtaposition of two abstracted metal chair-like structures (symbolizing male and female - Yin-Yang created Mankind of Earth), which are chained and locked together atop an area of grassy earth (cow-grass).

Note: Picture taken in the 1970s at the entrance of the National Art Gallery Malaysia at Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Born: 1948

Education:

Virtually self-trained.

Conducted research at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and Tokyo Print-making Research Studio (1976-1977)

(more details at

http://www.leekianseng.com/lee_Bio.html)

LEE Kian Seng started to experiment with Yin and Yang concept in his 3-D works from 1969. In the 1970's he produced Unity, 1969-1970 (exhibited at the Malaysian Pavilion at Expo 1970 Osaka), From THE SKY, 1971-1972, Mankind, 1972, From the windows of red, 1972, Male and Female, 1973, Process of playing Poker, 1974, Resumption and Consumption, 1975, Hammer and Nail Series, 1977, and "Of 'Image, Object, Illusion-Off Series Mechanism", 1977 etc.

His work "Mankind" which was created in 1972, was technically and aesthetically enthused by the Chinese art of paper cutting. This art motivated him to create his work in a manner whereby manipulation takes place rather than addition or subtraction. Instead of adding or taking away elements on the plane, he manipulated and dissected the plane, turning it or bending it to reveal the intended form. No welding was employed in this process of the interplay between form and space that is developed from the two-dimensioned sheet of steel. Each abstracted form depicts the synergy of positive and negative elements. The remaining sheet on the ground brings together the interaction of the composition as a whole. The work was conceived from the elements of Yin and Yang. It was completed in July 1972 and was first exhibited at the "Man and His world", National Art Gallery Malaysia in November 1973.

The work is inspired by the ingenuity and originality of the Pictograph (Primitive stage) representing the "female" and "male" in the Chinese script. These two representations, suggested by the two 3-D chairs, are thus chained and locked to symbolise "Mankind" on Earth. The original pictograph for woman (女) depicts her in bowing position. A field (田), where strength (力) is exerted, is the symbol for "masculine" man (男), the male of the human species.

(Note: Each part of a Chinese script character has its own original meaning; the combination or the juxtaposition of interchangeable elements and combination gives birth to new meaning, such as the combination of the pictograph Sun (日) and Moon (月) creates the word "Ming" (明) which literally means "bright".)

