

Seeing the beauty in old machines

Cara Wong

Others may think of machinery as cold and practical, but artist Carey Ngai sees it as a thing of beauty.

The 2016 UOB Painting of the Year award winner in the established artist category (Singapore), is launching his first solo art exhibition here after 10 years and many of the works revolve around an industrial theme.

“The works hint at the revolution of the industrial era, about how production methods are being revised,” Ngai tells The Straits Times in a telephone interview ahead of the launch of the exhibition.

His Industry series – comprising 15 oil paintings and six ink sketches – depicts machinery in various states of disuse, showing how “in the absence of man, all machinery becomes abandoned”, he says. “There’s a sense of desperation and unease to the scene.”

The exhibition is an extension of his award-winning 2016 work – Industry 2.0 III, an oil on canvas piece depicting an industrial machine.

He was inspired to create these artworks after chancing upon some industrial workshops in Kallang and Lim Chu Kang, where he found machinery to model his works after.

“They can’t be operated anymore

to produce anything of value, but in my mind, I kept thinking about how these machinery have produced so many valuable goods in the past,” says Ngai.

He likens this to how fast societal progress has rendered many things obsolete, adding that he hopes to capture this in his artwork, to provoke thought about why progress happens so quickly.

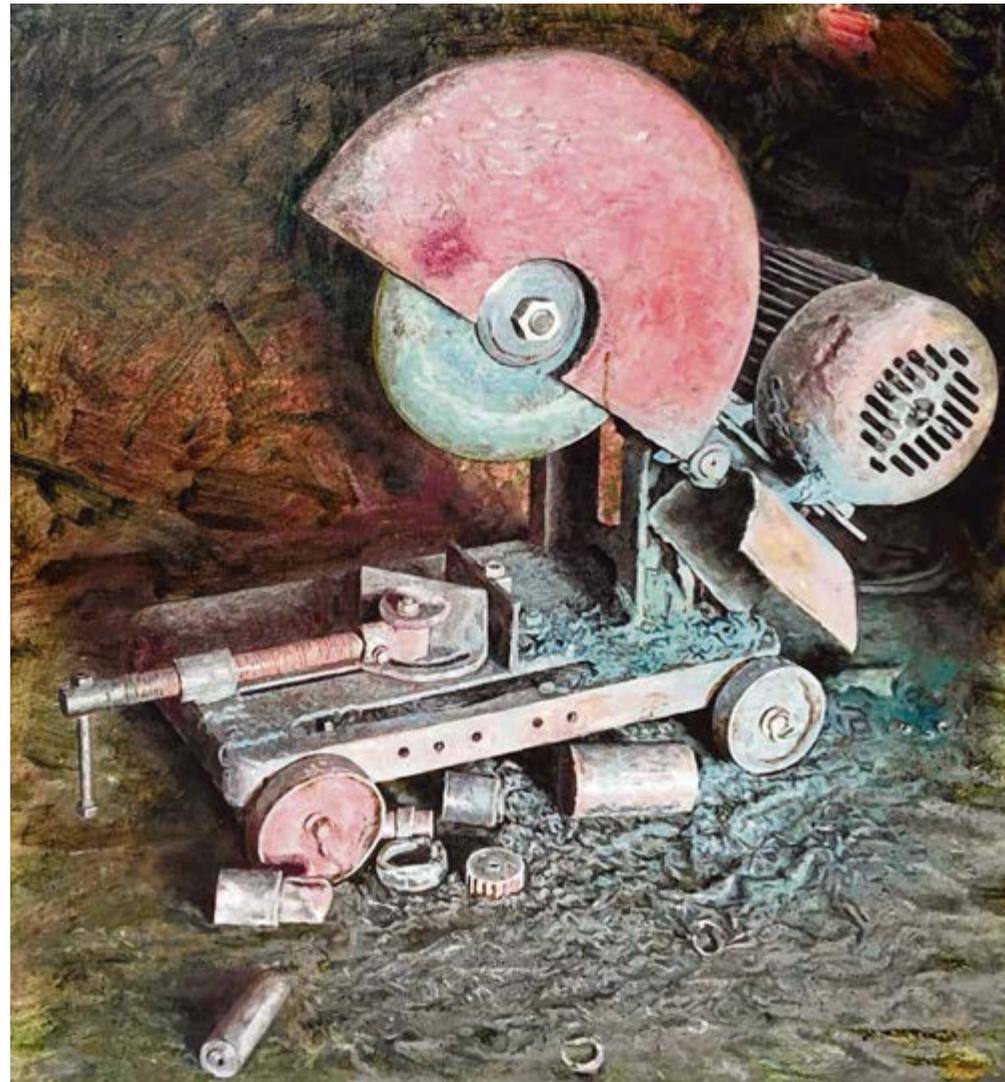
Other artworks on display at the exhibition include pieces from his Forest series and Life In Still series.

The 49-year-old China-born artist, who also won awards in the 1998 and 2001 editions of the UOB Painting of the Year competition, is an associate professor at the Xiamen University College of the Arts in China.

He first studied Chinese brush painting at the Guangzhou College of Fine Arts, but switched to oil painting after moving to Singapore to study at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Since winning the award last November, Ngai, a Singapore permanent resident, has gone on to showcase his work at contemporary art fair Art Stage Singapore this year, and will be participating in an arts exchange programme by UOB in Bangkok this month.

“The competition is not just a cornerstone for us artists, but it is also a platform for emerging and es-



tablished artists alike to come together and allow us to push our own boundaries,” says Ngai.

He will be one of seven UOB Painting of the Year winners, from various categories, to conduct sharing sessions with secondary and junior college students from July, as part

of a new arts education initiative by UOB.

This year’s UOB Painting of the Year competition is launched today and Singapore-based artists may submit their entries from Aug 18 to 20 at art venue Artspace@ Helutrans.

Cutting Edge by Carey Ngai (above right) is one of the works showcased at A Moment In Time.

PHOTOS: UOB



VIEW IT / A MOMENT IN TIME

WHERE: The UOB Art Gallery, ground floor, UOB Plaza 1, 80 Raffles Place

WHEN: Today to July 24, 9am to 6.30pm daily

ADMISSION: Free