



## MELODIOUS MANDY

This Penang 'lang' discloses her experience holding her first solo exhibition, Song in Strokes, what it takes to be an artist in Malaysia, and how as well as who she began drawing portraits of.



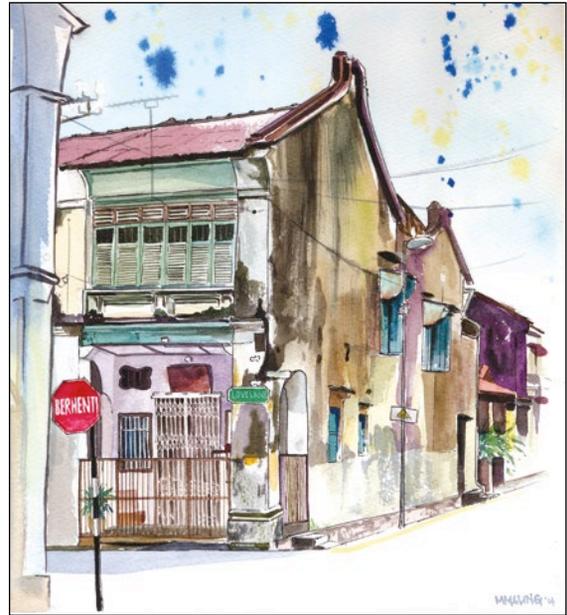
### PROFILE

The Penang-born graphic designer-turned-artist was first exposed to art when she was five. A wet brush is all it took for young Mandy to invoke colours onto a water-colouring book, a present from her aunt. The self-taught artist graduated from SK Convent Pulau Tikus, and furthered her studies at Equator Academy of Art. She was around 12 years old when she drew her first portrait.

As a woman, our capabilities, looks, choice of clothing, and decisions are constantly judged due to a number of influences, including the differing beliefs and cultural differences in our society.

RIGHT  
Lovelane

OPPOSITE  
Siamese fish



**How has your experience working as a graphic designer influenced your skills as an artist, as well as the outcome of your artworks?**

**M:** The experience I gained from graphic design is very handy, especially when it comes to 'birthing' the initial creative ideas before starting a painting, from playing with composition, layout, and colours, to photo manipulation. It also brings a certain awareness of the key elements that goes into the design process of a painting, and that has allowed me to see as much as I can what a painting would look like beforehand.

**Congratulations on your very first solo art exhibition at G Hotel Gurney. Can you tell us more about the experience?**

**M:** Thanks! It was scary and hectic; nevertheless, it was a good and exciting experience. It is scary when your works are out for the public eye to see. A lot of my friends and family came to show support. I was really nervous during the speech as I've never given one before, but I managed to pull that one off and afterwards, I had to do a short painting demonstration! I've never had so many eyes on me while painting - that was the hardest challenge! All-in-all, it was a happy occasion, and I am glad it happened.

**What inspired you to focus on women in Songs in Strokes? Are they based on people you know?**

**M:** I've always been fond of portraits, especially women, because while growing up, it was always the women that I admired and looked up to. Since I was a child, I expressed my admiration towards these women by drawing them, and I still do that! It just felt right to keep painting them. A few of the women in the paintings are friends of mine.



LEFT  
Green hour from  
songs in strokes

BOTTOM  
Peony



**What songs were you inspired by and how are they reflected in your artworks?**

**M:** As far as the music goes, I was inspired by Looking too Closely by Fink, Cigarettes by Russian Red, and I Want You by Marian Hill, just to name a few. They may be of different genres and styles, but these melodious songs help to set the tone for the painting.

**What was the message you intended to send? How important is it to you to address these issues?**

**M:** I wanted to highlight the subject of self-love and the appreciation of females in our daily lives. As a woman, our capabilities, looks, choice of clothing, and decisions are constantly judged due to a number of influences, including the differing beliefs and cultural differences in our society. We have slowly succumbed to societal expectations and our individual aspirations are being ignored. I believe that it is important to have the right balance and to know how to keep at it.

**Tell us more about Roomies Penang and Shading Studio.**

**M:** I used to work for Roomies Penang (a guesthouse) to help fund my travelling expenses for trips I was planning. I've also designed several artworks for Roomie Suites Gallery Hotel. It was a great experience as I got to meet a lot of people from around the world, and I had benefited by making new friends, learning about their culture, getting traveling tips, and hearing their personal stories. Overall, it was simply amazing.



FROM PHOTO. 26/6/14

LEFT  
Oxford park

BOTTOM  
LEFT  
In light from  
songs in strokes

BELOW  
Balloon



We used to hang out with the guests on the rooftop, playing games and sharing a good amount of jokes and laughter. It was really nice, I miss the whole vibe. Shading Studio was just a name I gave to my workplace, which is my home.

**What does it take to be an artist in Malaysia?**

**M:** It is not the easy; it comes with its own challenges. Once, an artist friend told me that it is a way of life and a choice to be an artist, and we must find ways and learn to cope with it and keep doing what we do. Even if we hit a creative block, we can never stop - as that is how we grow.

**What keeps you going?**

**M:** The encouragement and unflagging support from family and friends alongside everything else just fuelled my drive to do more and gave me the courage to step up. ●

SONG IN STROKES WILL RUN ON LEVEL 1, G HOTEL PENANG, UNTIL 2ND JANUARY 2017.

