

Identity

Art Exhibition

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In Partnership with



YEW CHUNG COLLEGE
OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION

耀中幼教學院



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About The Zubin Foundation

The Zubin Foundation is a leading social policy think tank and charity in Hong Kong, named after Zubin Mahtani Gidumal.

We aim to improve the lives of Hong Kong ethnic minorities by alleviating poverty and enhancing social inclusion. We engage with stakeholders to shape effective solutions – both through policy recommendations and direct empowerment projects. Our work is centered around a spirit of collaboration and a rigorous commitment to positive, lasting outcomes.

As a registered charity in Hong Kong (IR 91/12344), we rely on donations from individuals, corporations and foundations to fund our work.

For more information, please visit: www.zubinfoundation.org

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FOREWORD

The ethnic minority population of Hong Kong dates back to 1841. Ethnic minorities were amongst the founders of The University of Hong Kong, the Star Ferry, The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Ruttonjee Hospital. They defended Hong Kong as part of the armed forces in World War II, they have contributed significantly to trade and industry and continue to invest their skills and lives for the betterment of Hong Kong.

Most Hong Kong ethnic minority youth identify themselves as Hongkongers. Many were born and raised in Hong Kong; the vast majority go to government schools and many speak Cantonese fluently. Today, sadly, one in four live in poverty.

Ethnic minority women in some of the more conservative communities face tremendous struggles in their family life, straddling their familial culture with their own Hong Kong culture. Some try hard to balance their parents' expectations of early marriage and their own dreams of education and career. Most encounter blatant discrimination from the majority population for wearing a hijab and some are told to "go home!".

Identity is a project of The Zubin Foundation, in conjunction with 9 female students from the Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education and Kate Sparrow, a wonderful Hong Kong based artist. All the girls taking part in the project received pro bono training from Kate and were asked to represent their "identity" by way of a painting. These pieces of art are beautiful representations of their life stories.

Many thanks to the Swire Trust Arts Access Fund for funding the materials for this project and to Swire Properties Taikoo Place for providing the venue for making the roadshow of this body of art possible. With your sponsorship, you have allowed these girls to become visible. Thank you.

Warm regards,

Shalini Mahtani
Founder and CEO
The Zubin Foundation



FOREWORD

"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation."

-- Mahatma Gandhi

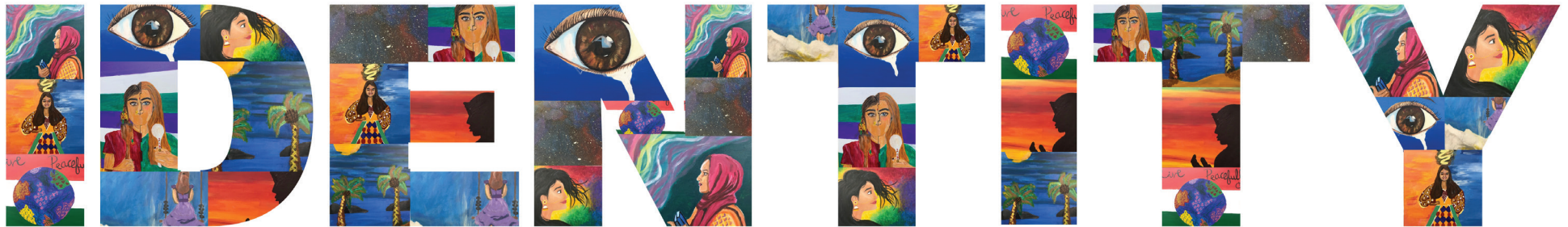
The words of Gandhi are powerful and when we do reach out and celebrate diversity, we learn much about the world and how we connect together. The experience of teaching the women of the Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education was not only enjoyable but enlightening for my own personal growth. The young women are such strong and confident people who are self-assured in their own place in the world. They talked to me about the role of women in their culture and society. The majority of their stories are positive with the women feeling valued and respected by their culture and religion. However, they wanted to create work that showed the need for equality in the world. The works created are personal and meaningful. The students have created a very important message for the time we now live in. I hope through the art project that people in the community will learn more about the ethnic minorities in Hong Kong.

There is so much we can learn from each other and art has the ability to be a universal language, one that can inspire and bring about change.

The art created in this project comes from a place of love and each painting will bring with it positivity and hope for a better future.

Kate Sparrow





Artwork and Artist Profiles



Support Women by Anika Akbar

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

The purpose of this artwork was to show the emotions of ethnic minority girls who are not able to freely express themselves and not able to take a stand for themselves. There are many ethnic minority girls who deal with family pressure and emotional problems but are not able to tell anyone, especially their family members, because they have been taught that men are superior to women. Although some girls are lucky to have the support of their families, there are also many girls who do not get any such help. I made this artwork to represent the emotions of the ethnic minority girls who are not able to act as they wish, due to the restrictions and rules laid down by their families, girls who are not able to stand up for themselves and girls who have no choice but to depend on their family.

About the Artist:

Anika Akbar (18 years old) is the artist of this painting. The artwork reflects the life of ethnic minority girls. She has seen many girls who do not have the freedom to do what they like. After high school, one of her friends was not allowed to continue her education at tertiary level. Instead, she was asked to start working and save money for her marriage. This incident made her want to advocate for women who do not have a voice.



***Empowered Woman* by Iqbal Saana Batool**

59.4cm (W) x 42cm (H)

About the Artwork:

In this painting, we see a brown girl with dark hair wearing traditional jewelry. This painting defines me and my culture - the struggle which brown girls face in society and how they overcome everything for their dreams. I have tried to convey my personal story through the painting, as I have always felt empowered by my family and friends. They made me face my fear, which was a lack of confidence, as I used to feel very nervous when I had to interact with other people. Now I'm so much better at socialising with anyone, including people from other cultures.

About the Artist:

As a Pakistani girl, Iqbal Saana Batool knows how hard it is for some women to get their own rights in restricted families, but she feels so grateful that her family has been so supportive. They always respected her decisions and listened to her ideas about what she wants to become in the future. Her ethnicity is Pakistani, but she was born and raised in Hong Kong. Her dream is to study hard, get a degree in Early Childhood Education, and make her parents feel proud. Living among people from different cultures, she feels everyone is equal and she feels empowered by all the people who have supported her.



***Women Belong to the Kitchen* by Limbu Bhumika (Mika)**

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

As the term “women belong to the kitchen” has been used for decades, I decided to draw two women divided by their traditions, cultures, eras, countries and so forth. The women are united by their invisible mouths to show that their words are not being heard. Additionally, the women are holding spatulas – cooking implements which further symbolise the role of the kitchen in a woman’s life.

About the Artist:

Limbu Bhumika (Mika) is a student who really adores painting, dancing, drawing and doing make-up. This platform of showcasing her love of painting was such a great experience. She is currently studying for the Diploma in Early Childhood Studies. However, she feels uncertain about her future job as she has many things on her plate.



Hope by Bibi Farhat

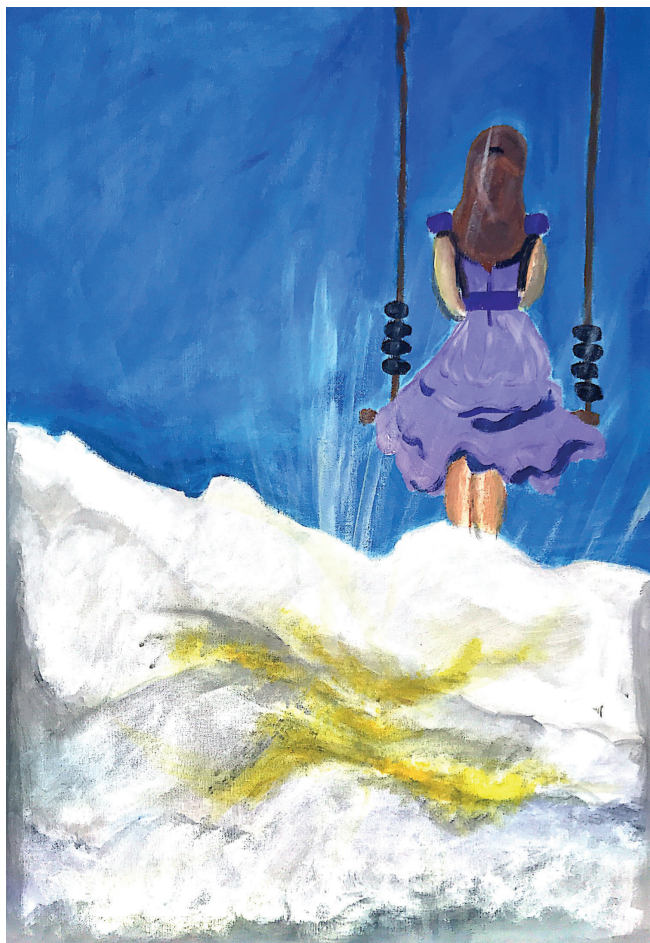
42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

This impressive creation shows the importance of education. It is a powerful picture of a Muslim girl who is wearing a headscarf and is holding books with her head held high. On the left is colourful smoke which represents freedom. The painting shows that every girl is powerful, regardless of any cultural barriers, if she is given the right to educate herself. It shows how education can bring you the power that can fill your world with colours. This is a unique and influential painting filled with bright colours that makes the painting more eye-catching.

About the Artist:

Bibi Farhat (24 years old), the artist, loved making this painting. It gave her an opportunity to express her belief in the importance of education for girls, despite the cultural barriers they sometimes face. The artwork reflects her love of education and how education can make a person stronger. Farhat dreams of becoming a teacher so she can show others that education is a powerful tool and is the right of every girl regardless of religion, culture, or gender.



***Equality is the Soul of Liberty* by Shanza Rukhsar Ijaz**

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

The first thing that came to mind before I started painting was equality. As an ethnic minority myself, living in another city with a different culture and traditions, I wanted to deliver a message through my artwork that everyone is equal. Everyone has their own dreams and ambitions, and I wanted to express that it is okay to be confident and to dream. This piece of artwork also represents how determined people can be to fulfil their goals, especially ethnic minority women.

About the Artist:

Shanza Rukhsar Ijaz's ethnicity is Pakistani. When she meets new people, you might say she is an introvert, but once she gets to know you better, you will find she is a very open person. She really likes to dance and back in high school she used to enter many dance competitions. Also, she loves photography and whenever she visits places, she always takes plenty of pictures. Originally, she wanted to be a flight attendant but later realised that she would prefer to be an inspiring educator. Throughout every journey, her family, friends, and of course her teachers, have always supported her to do better every time. Most importantly, she believes that she is her own biggest supporter as she has never allowed herself to give up easily. Every day she is fighting to be the person who she wants to be in the future.



United World by Khushpreet Kaur

59.4cm (W) x 42cm (H)

About the Artwork:

This artwork is based on world peace and different cultures. The background colours orange, white and green are inspired by India's flag. In the middle of the painting, a world globe indicates the whole world. The patterns of the different countries express the beauty of each country, with their myriad of unique populations and cultures.

About the Artist:

Khushpreet Kaur (19 years old) is the artist of this painting. She really enjoyed doing this painting as she did painting after a long time. Through this painting, she tried to express her love for her country. She believes in bringing people from all cultures together to live peacefully.



***Wonders of the Galaxy* by Urooj Khan**

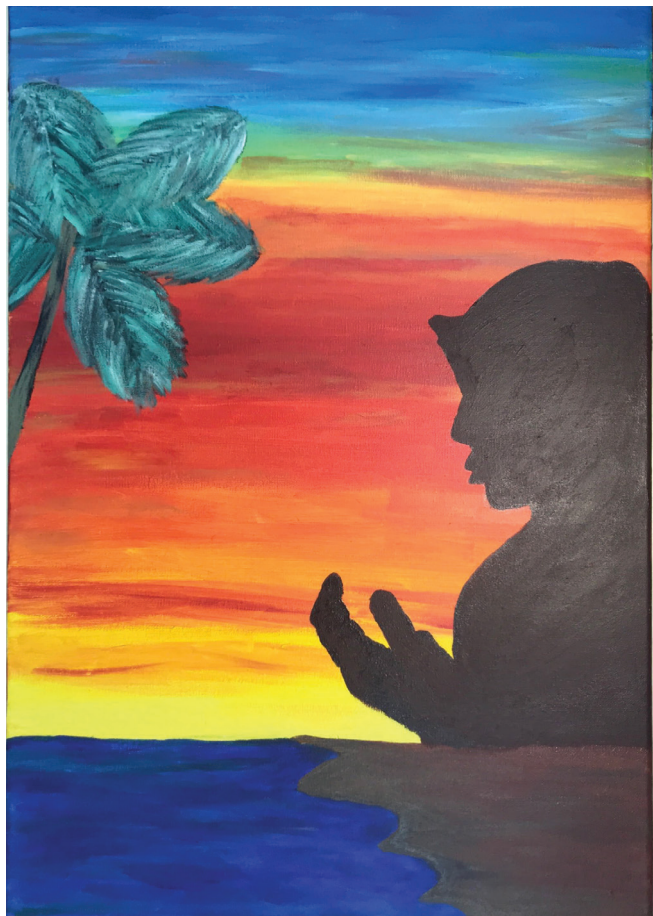
42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

This artwork celebrates the wonders of the galaxy. Staring into the galaxy always makes me reflect on different things in life. At times, it also makes me wonder how many secrets lie in there. Imagine lying under the stars while they shine their light on you. This acrylic painting of a galaxy allowed me to experiment with many cool colours, including different types of blue, purple and pink. The hint of black adds an effect of darkness and the splatters of white paint resemble the uncountable number of stars.

About the Artist:

Urooj Khan is an 18-year-old student who always had an artistic side. She loves drawing and painting anything related to nature. The galaxy is one of the things that really captures her attention, as the shining stars look unexceptionally beautiful to her, especially during the darkest nights. Since there are hardly any stars visible in Hong Kong, Urooj takes time to admire the sky at night, whenever she visits her home country.



***The Effects of Sunsets* by Urooj Khan**

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

This artwork acknowledges the effects of sunset. It is amazing how, when the sun comes up, it becomes morning, and when it sets, it turns to night. The first and last prayer of the day depends on the movement of the sun and so does, the start and end of the fast in Ramadan. The place in the painting resembles the place I would like to visit and clear my mind from the unnecessary tensions of this world and pray to the almighty. Like the female in the painting, raising from the earth and praying, I believe that we are all made of soil. This painting has allowed me to experiment with many cool and warm colours from blue to red and from brown to orange.

About the Artist:

Urooj Khan is an 18-year-old student who always had an artistic side. She loves drawing and painting anything related to nature. Sunset and sunrise are two of the things which amaze her, not just because they look extremely gorgeous with many colours blending together, but also because many things in the world depend on them. That's why she believes that there are many effects of the sunrise and the sunset.



***Girls Can Be Set Free* by Limbu Laxmi**

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

The girl in the portrait is from a beautiful country named Nepal. She believes that every girl in every nation should have the right to stand up for their country and to speak for themselves. They should also be given the chance to be proud and happy like everyone else. The right-hand side of the painting features the beautiful Mount Everest, which shows this girl is proud to be a Nepali child. The left-hand side of the painting shows beautiful waves; these represent the belief that a girl can have more than one dream and can achieve so much in life despite the challenges. Girls can pursue whatever they want in their life and they can achieve their goals. Moreover, she supports being a feminist and hopes that everyone around the world everyone can be treated equally.

About the Artist:

Limbu Laxmi comes from a very beautiful country where there are many different traditions and the tallest mountain – Mount Everest. She is very proud to call herself the daughter of her nation. Right now, she is trying to fulfill her dreams and her bucket list.



***Palm Trees in the Summer Sun* by Asma Sultan**

42cm (W) x 59.4cm (H)

About the Artwork:

I drew the painting because I felt it was very descriptive about how the trees blend with the background and how it shows different hues of the sky illuminating the beach and the palm trees. Another reason why I decided to draw palm trees on a beach is because I had been to Saudi Arabia a few years ago and was feeling quite nostalgic about the trip. Saudi Arabia is famous for its hot summers and palm trees filled with dates. This made me eager to draw the palm trees, as I felt like it was very symbolic of my visit to Saudi Arabia.

About the Artist:

Asma Sultan comes from a big family and in this kind of family she needed some way to grab everyone's attention! She found that through art, she could be inspired by anything and everything, whether it's a movie, a book or even a billboard sign. Art gives her this sense of creativity that makes her believe in who she is and gives her the sense of self. Although she is usually a shy and introverted person and sometimes cannot express herself verbally, she can use art and canvases to express her meaning.

OBSERVATIONS FROM YEW CHUNG COLLEGE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

How We Started the Project?

We invited Ms. Shalini Mahtani to be an interviewer for the Drs. Richard Charles and Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation Scholarship for Non-Chinese Speaking Students. During the interviews, she observed that many of the applicants expressed their interest and passion for the arts. She was also aware that the applicants have very demanding study schedules and that it would not be easy for them to fulfil the requirements for 20 hours of community work. Thus, she initiated this art project with the main aim to help the scholarship recipients fulfil these requirements. The College appreciated the idea and agreed to work together with The Zubin Foundation on this very meaningful project.

Changes in the Students

By participating in the project, our students were given two tasks, first, drawing a canvas and second, posting posters about "Call Mira", a helpline for ethnic minority women operated by The Zubin Foundation, in the community.

It was observed that our students underwent the following changes:

A. They became more outspoken and could overcome their fear when interacting with new people. As

students, the scholarship recipients need only to fulfill the study plan, which means attending class, doing assignments and preparing for exams. They interact primarily with teachers and their peers. However, as volunteers posting posters in the community, they had to venture into local places frequented by ethnic minority people such as Indian grocery stores, restaurants and shops, and had to ask permission from the owners to let them display the posters. To achieve this, they would need to explain to the owners the mission of "Call Mira", and how it could help the target audience. On one hand, our students were practising skills in advocating a mission and communicating with strangers. On the other hand, they learned when to accept a "no" response and when to move on.

B. They realized that they could come out of their comfort zones and feel positive about themselves when they were able to offer good deeds to the community. Many of the students mentioned that they were in a serious struggle when they first received the message to volunteer. They were worried about time management, their ability to handle both schoolwork and community work. Some of them even worried about not being able to find suitable volunteer opportunities.

Luckily, they were introduced to The Zubin Foundation and this meaningful project, and in the end were allowed to complete their work at their own pace. The students realized in the end that they could actually manage very well in all aspects.

C. They became more expressive. Some students mentioned that by drawing the canvas, they were given a tool to express themselves in terms of their cultures and their situation. They were required to submit some writings together with the drawings, which, in fact, let them further elaborate the thoughts that came through their minds while they did their paintings.

Benefits to the Students and College

This project succeeded in achieving many wins. First of all, the students won. Apart from the academic training, which was provided by the College, they were also nurtured in their artistic development. Many of them had never used easels before when they drew. They were taught skills in painting such as the use of color and brushes. They were supposed to draw pictures from their own photos. So, they needed to know how to "read" a photo and turn it to a picture. Some of them could even think out of box and exercise their creativity in doing the canvas. They

were given opportunities to write a self-introduction as well as inspiration of the artwork. It was a platform for them to talk about themselves and their thoughts. They would have a better understanding of themselves after going through the process.

The College also won. Through the project, our staff were able to have more interaction with the participating students. Students were supposed to finish their artworks in the campus when they were free. With the students staying longer in the College, our staff had more opportunity to interact with them and understand them further. Staff-to-student relationships became better this way. Besides, peer relationships amongst students were also strengthened because students would normally do their work in a group. By spending time together and sharing ideas, thoughts and feelings, they developed a closer bond with each other.



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