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I can talk to him. He is enjoying it. I just bought him the Sports Illustrated magazine Sunday. Me and him are on the same page.



TV PRESENTER NICK CANNON, 35, on bonding with his four-year-old son with singer Mariah Carey



It's not so much needing to be fit and young - it really comes down to experience and timing. You have to be very confident when they drop you.



ACTRESS MICHELLE YEOH, 53, on taking on wire work for 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Sword Of Destiny'

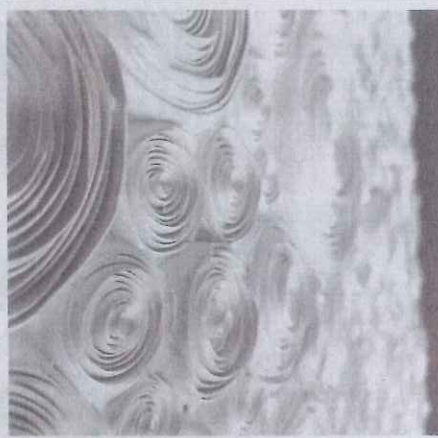


I was meeting potential investors, and right away, everybody's like, 'It's an Asian-American cast. It'll never sell.' And a lot of them were Asian-American investors.



JUSTIN LIN on being an Asian-American director in Hollywood

monica delgado Reis Studios



Too similar?

Manila-born Monica Delgado's artworks look like that of renowned Singapore artist Jane Lee



Spot the difference: Singapore artist Jane Lee's Colling V (left) and a similar-looking work by Manila-born artist Monica Delgado (far left). PHOTOS: STP/JANE LEE, MONICA DELGADOS INSTAGRAM

Deepika Shetty Arts Correspondent



Delgado (above) says that while there are "stylistic and textural similarities

perceived" in Lee's (top) and her artworks, the "processes and materials are quite different".

A plates teacher and New York-based artist has been creating artworks very similar to leading Singapore painter Jane Lee's.

Manila-born Monica Delgado's art was brought to the attention of The Straits Times by a Singapore-based art lover, who pointed to their uncanny similarities.

The work of Delgado, 36, is featured extensively on her Instagram account (@monica_delgado) and on her website (www.monicaidelgado.com).

In November last year, her work was part of a group exhibition presented by Faksu Gallery here and was recently part of Art Fair Philippines 2016, held earlier this month in Manila.

Several elements in Lee's art – including her signature squiggles of paint effect, the layering and peeling of paint and tactile, fabric-like effects in paintings suspended from walls – can be found in Delgado's work. Delgado has described her works as "straddling the worlds of painting and sculpture" – something Lee has long been known for.

Those in the art world here, including artists and curators who were shown the works of both artists, pointed to "startling parallels". However, in an e-mail response, Delgado said she started exploring the materiality of paint in 2002. That was when she was working for her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting) thesis in the University of the Philippines.

"At that time, I was dripping multiple layers of paint on objects, to explore the medium itself and its transformative effects on objects, and was interested in creating ambiguity between painting, object and sculpture."

She visited Singapore several years ago and stumbled upon Lee's work and says encountering it was part of my inspiration to revisit my explorations from college."

She adds that while "there are stylistic and textural similarities perceived in some of Lee's and my work, our exploration, varied processes and materials are quite different".

"Lee uses canvas in some of her work, whereas I have eliminated canvas or traditional support in mine," she says.

Lee 52, said she was "alerted" to Delgado's work late last year by a friend. "When I saw them on Instagram, I felt I was looking at my own paintings," she says.

Asked why she did not say anything about it then, the mild-mannered and media-shy artist adds: "I was just trying to find a positive way of dealing with it. As an artist, I want to stay focused on my own work."

"I am actually really angry inside. I have shown it to my close friends. They are as shocked as I am. Not only is she imitating my style, she is openly putting it out there."

Lawyers who deal with such cases say several factors have to be considered. Mr Samuel Seow, managing director of Samuel Seow Law Corporation, which handles copyright cases, says some parts of

Delgado's artworks "echo Jane Lee's". He looked at the websites of both artists and their Instagram accounts and said that several of Delgado's pieces are more recent creations than those of Lee's, some of which date back to 2009.

Mr Seow says while copyright laws do not protect ideas, they protect the way an idea is expressed and executed by an artist. When such expression is proven to have been copied, there is copyright infringement. When comparing works to determine if there is infringement, a court will compare the works as a whole and look for similarities in any leading feature of an earlier work, and will also judge if the later work copies the "general effect" created by the original.

Gallerist Sundaram Tagore, who has represented Lee exclusively since 2011, says: "Her works are the result of years of study, experimenting, practice and struggle. It is not a simple thing to create groundbreaking work such as hers."

"So, we take a very dim view of people copying or co-opting her work, or the work of any artist. It is especially unfortunate when such a person seeks to profit by selling such work."

Lee presents no more than one solo show a year and has established a reputation for her meticulous artwork. Her works are generally priced in excess of \$550,000.

Take's founder, collector and gallerist Subervan Abu, who has exhibited works by both Lee and Delgado, says: "When you squeeze paint from a tube or a dispenser, the form of the paint is similar to

anyone who does it. Indonesian master Affandi did it by accident when he broke his brush and this technique made him famous."

The gallery had shown Lee's works for a few years starting in 2005.

Highlighting some differences between the two artists' works, he says: "Delgado's paintings are mainly flat and hung loosely. They look like layers of cut fabrics and she does not use canvas as a base. I can see the difference between their styles, since we were the first gallery in Singapore to show both of their artworks."

Singapore artist and academic Ian Woo says: "It reflects laziness on the part of the maker when formats or visual ideas are lifted solely for aesthetic purposes. But to be appropriated or imitated means that your works as an artist have arrived."

So in this instance, Jane has arrived." A collector of Lee's art, Mr Jackson See, who bought his first painting by the artist in 2005, says he is not entirely surprised.

"A lot of people copy Jane Lee's style even in graduation shows." He agrees that in this instance, there are too many "striking similarities" but "if you are no good, no one copies you", adding that serious collectors will always be able to tell an original from a copy.

"What helps also is that I have kept re-inventing myself," he says. "Each time, she creates something new. She is a pioneer in her practice. People will continue to imitate her style but she is conceptually very strong and no one can copy that."

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