



■ Liu Cheng-mui's exhibition showcases different series of her paintings, including, clockwise from far left: *Devil and Angel*; *Summer of 2020 (1)*; *Surge*; *Poise*; *Twilight*; *Estrangement*; *River of Life 1*; *Reclining*; and *Steadiness*.

Cara Chen

A renowned Hong Kong artist whose paintings are popular with collectors, Liu Cheng-mui's dream has always been to hold a gallery exhibition – though not for the recognition.

"Hanging my paintings in a gallery gives me a sense of distance, allowing me to reflect on what I have gained in the past and think about how to go on in the future," Liu said.

She is enchanted by the evocative words of English painter and critic Roger Fry: "We feel that [the artist] has expressed something which was latent in us all the time, but which we never realized, that he has revealed us to ourselves in revealing himself."

Her new exhibition, *Scenic Romance* at [Sun Museum](#) in Kwun Tong, reflects and explores her own self. She hopes that the audience can stop and reflect on life through these paintings.

Among the more than 30 works she is exhibiting, most of the pieces are bold oil paintings featuring nude female bodies.

The naked truth

Liu's colorful paintings are watched over by Dickson Yewn's black-and-white photos across the hall in the same gallery space, which Liu finds mysterious and exciting.

Initially attracted by the light and shadow in Yewn's photographs, Liu said the large patches of darkness seemed to surround her, allowing her to reflect on the stories behind the photos.

She found that this feeling was very similar to appreciating paintings.

Despite the richness of color in her paintings, Liu said the bright elements often depict a clear subject, and only the dark parts give her more room to express herself and leave the audience with more imagination.

"When I paint, I add more layers of colors on the dark part with my imagination on the subject," she said. "This kind of imagination makes my creation more relaxed and free."

In her works, Liu accentuates body curves

and skin textures rather than depicting face profiles or facial expressions. The proportions of the bodies are realistic, but the colors are not necessarily so. They confront, clash or mix with one another to create a mesmerizing visual effect.

Her brush flows so smoothly that it swirls colors into a dance, imbuing the paintings with sharp contrasts of light and shadow and animating her protagonists with a dance in various poses. Even if there is no movement, they still come to life by simply just standing, sitting or reclining.

In Liu's words, these soft bodies – mostly her own – represent a woman's motherliness, symbolizing warmth and love. They reveal her thoughts on her mother and herself, and the dark patches resemble the pressure on a woman's body and spirit.

Some pieces started off as sketches, to which Liu added her expressive touches after

the model left. Liu described the process as talking to herself, thinking and imagining alone. That is the reason why she named the series *Wo Yu*, or talking to myself.

A few figure drawings are also on display. Liu said that she hopes that the audience can intuitively feel her objectivity when sketching and her "carefree state" when painting.

Ironically, this contrast was broken by the last series of realistic paintings – including still subjects and scenery from the series *Diary* and *Hong Kong during the Pandemic*.

"I removed all emotions at the start and observed the subject dispassionately, but when I finished the painting, I found that what I thought was objective was still full of inner choices," said Liu. "The color I chose and the way I handled every stroke were all related to my inner feelings."

Given the latest government measures on the Covid-19 pandemic, Sun Museum is closed to the public until further notice so the exhibition will be extended to March.

More updates will come on the museum's website: www.en.sunmuseum.org.hk