

Fashion Designer splashes her creativity across canvas

Ngô Thái Uyên has followed her dreams by painting them on canvas. The fashion designer has temporarily put down her tools of the trade and picked up a paint brush to launch her *Dreams of Love* exhibition at Mai's Gallery in HCM City.

"*Dreams of Love* is like my return to art after five years of working in the fashion industry and I hope it will bring viewers a new view of creation," said Uyên.

The exhibit features her interpretations of dreams depicted in six paintings framed by roses and displayed as an installation. Rose petals have also been arranged on the floor.

"My works are borne by love and memory. I want to tell people there exists such a love," Uyên said.

Uyên, 28, graduated from the HCM City Fine Arts College in 1998 and has been designing clothes professionally since then. She found that her studies gave her the skills to combine both art and fashion design. She won the Special Colour award at Fashion Connections Singapore in 1997, and later was named best young designer at the Asia Collection Makuhari in Japan.

"Although I have won several top prizes at fashion competitions at home and abroad painting is still my dream," she said, adding she's eagerly awaiting the response from art lovers in HCM City.

Five years ago, Uyên and her close friend, poet and artist Ly Hoàng Ly, displayed their installation, *Dreams*, in HCM City and received a warm response from art critics and viewers.

The desire to paint led Uyên to study at the Massachusetts College of Art. After graduation last year she returned to her passion for her art.

"Although my work may be complex and difficult to interpret, I hope viewers will be able to understand and appreciate my exhibition." The exhibition is being held at 16 Nguyễn Huệ Street, District 1.

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A convert's confession

"Such love does exist" is the message that established fashion designer and newcomer to painting Ngô Thái Uyên wants to convey in her "Dreams of love" exhibition at Mai's Gallery. Uyên's first solo exhibition contains merely six unframed paintings but around them are seemingly a million roses filling the room with the fragrance of love.

"Naturally, the blossoms and their fragrance will fade away but the love is still there, deep in our hearts," explains the artist, who says she used to shun any hint of gaudiness, especially of love, but now such color is an inspiration that may yield greater success.

Even before Thai Uyen, who was born in 1975, graduated from the HCMC University of Fine Arts in 1998 she was taking part in fashion show inside and outside Vietnam, and doing well.

In 1997, a year before her graduation, she received the "Special Color" prize in the Fashion Connections Singapore competition. The following year saw even greater success when her collection was nominated for the Makuhari final in Japan.

Subsequent achievements include the Dat Thang Long fashion show for Thang Long-Hanoi's 990th anniversary in 2000, advising on costume design for that most unquiet of films *The Quiet American*, and her contributions to the "British People in Saigon" week and the Vietnam fashion week in 2001.

Her tireless efforts won her a scholarship to Massachusetts Fine Arts University in America in 2002, and now she is the chief designer for Viko Glowin.

Thai Uyen says she took up painting at the age of 28 as a way of challenging her artistic self. "Painting when my mind is at peace prepares me for whatever difficulties lie ahead and is not a way of avoiding problems."

On a more pedestrian level, Mai's Gallery can be found at 16 Nguyen Hue Boulevard, District 1, HCMC. The exhibition last until January 8.

Huu Thang, Saigom Times Daily