

ABIogenesis

MARTIN  
CONSTABLE

I first met Huiting when she was attending Singapore's school of Art Design and Media (ADM) as a student of the Digital Animation program. I did not know that she painted until long after she left school. When she first showed me her work, I was very impressed by how completely she had embraced the 'substance' of paint. Like the remains of a mad child's dinner, crimsons, lemon yellows and Prussian blues had been smeared across the canvas with abandon. I tried, like the conscientious teacher I am, to link what I was looking at with what I remembered of her student work, but they seem as opposites of each other.

As a digital animator, she was neither very gifted in matters digital, nor was she very good at animation. It was plain that this was because she was not really interested in either. However, she received good grades for the entirely left-of-field vision that she brought to the classroom. I remember her once asking in tutorial how a painting of an optical illusion was different to a photograph of one. Such a question! Its implications still bedevil me.

It is clear to me now that her need for haptic engagement was not being served by ADM's curriculum. After all, neither animation nor the digital have much of a physicality.

So... how in the hooting heck may we account for these paintings, in all their sticky glory? Where did they come from? After all, it is difficult for a painter to be a painter without first experiencing a painting: the physical can only be evidenced by itself. Now we have the new National Gallery Singapore, stuffed to the gunnels with daubery of the highest order. But this is too late to the scene to impact upon what Huiting presents us. I could suggest the obvious: that they are a re-palettting of her food-centric subject matter, that she isn't really painting but instead cooking. After all, at their best they look good enough to eat.

But I prefer to imagine that they are without genealogy, that her work spontaneously developed from base ingredients. Like some abiogenesis, it arose from the union of food, pigment and Huiting's own lyrical perversity.