

Lust for larger than life

Sculptor Lorenzo Quinn moulds metal to melt the heart, writes **CHEAH UI-HOON**

WHEN Lorenzo Quinn came to Singapore that year ago, he saw the architectural plans and the empty shell of the Marina Bay Sands — as had only his sculptural eye, of how his sculptures would look like over time.

Now that it's over a year, Quinn says, referring to his two sculptures located at Singapore's first casino in the city. "But both the sculptures are very art. For the city," he adds, referring to Peter Green's *Central Circus Fountain*, which depicts a man whose arms stretch out into a circle to catch the stars at the back with his outstretched arms, and the *Force of Nature*, depicting a woman holding back a globe with a staff, crystallised in metal.

The reason that these were not commissioned works, but already accepted in places which the client, Singapore's national water agency, would still be buying, took or rather they were small could well be the fact that Quinn — who is also the son of the late actor Anthony Quinn — has also moved in to much bigger venues like those he has done in places like Qatar and Shanghai.

"The commissioning agencies always in Qatar," he says, "and there's quite a demand for them now, not only in Asia," says the Brooklyn-based artist who is interested in a new work of public sculpture when he was represented by a London gallery.

For those who want more (and more finely placed) work, Quinn's art gallery carries a range of Quinn's work at its Marina Bay Sands space — a collection called *Transcendence of Life*. These are works which the artist describes as realist and symbolic. Although Schickel had was the first idea model for realistic art when Quinn, 44, started out as a painter, he quickly found his own vocabulary,



Heavy metal: Lorenzo Quinn (above) says he first chose to study sculpture from his studies such as *The Force of Nature* (left) at the Marina Bay Sands, showing a woman holding back a globe, crystallised in metal, and his family got the reality of each other, called *Force of Nature* (above right).

and decided that realism was more his style. Even in a young age, there was already a niche. And he found an important lesson in a budding artist — one who has helped guide his career ever since. He says, "My father helped me with my first art show as he thought I could draw well. He had a big art show in Harvard. I was 17, 18 years old,

the time — and I managed to sell all 25 of my paintings.

"So I thought, 'Wow, this is cool.' So for my second show, I thought I could do more of the same. If you're a student, you know that, I've been drawn to the quality and value of my work."

His father — well, he's not the only teacher



PHOTOGRAPH BY

John — was his second teacher for painting the painter Jacques-Louis David's *Manuel de Lavoisier* (1788). He was himself a painter and encouraged the younger Quinn. In his artistic interest, Quinn joined various studios at New York's Academy of Fine Arts, and when he was 23, already knew he wanted to be a sculptor.

Before becoming a full-time artist however, he studied for a year — playing football, for example, in an acclaimed 1990 league. "That was my first job — I used to play for my art-making," he says, adding that he was in 12 months before, adding it was in 1992, made an sculpture. "It was a question of whether I was good or bad, I did learn acting at the Actors Studio in New York, but it's whether I wanted to do it or not. I decided that I loved being outdoors and that it limited my creativity," he says.

But working sculpture is expensive, which is why acting helped pay for his art in the beginning. From the start, Quinn knew that he didn't want to create decorative pieces only, but to use his work to communicate emotions and feelings. "The fourth dimension is the one I'm looking for; it's a life through the way they move. And I wanted the message to be very understandable," he elaborates.

It's his his inspiration, which gives rise to work you can grasp at first sight. Like two human hands clasped in a grip, entitled *Love*, or two human hands gently resting upon each

other, entitled *Force of Love*. That first message is clear, and it's certainly done. I make them, and you can feel it — and Quinn has a knack of finding a deep human emotion even something so simple.

His move into Singapore also provided him with the inspiration to complete a work called *Force of Nature*, which will portray a man jumping from one platform to another, the part symbolised with stone because the part is cast in stone, the ground symbolised with wood to represent how the ground is still being carved out, while the figure is represented with glass, as you can't really see it yet.

As a sculptor, he usually starts with a piece of work that he has already formed an idea for. It's only out of clay, and then it's a sculpture model for it, take it to the factory for a positive was which then turns it into bronze. Quinn is now re-discovering marble, and getting up his career again. Growing up in Italy with the marble all around him — in 19th century Italy — was his real inspiration, more so than any other thing he had seen.

"When I was 14 in Florence, I got brought down to earth again," he says. It's a real experience.

Lorenzo Quinn's works can be seen at Ode to Art Gallery, 69-71, The Shoppers, Marina Bay Sands, 2 Bayfront Avenue, tel: 6688-7773