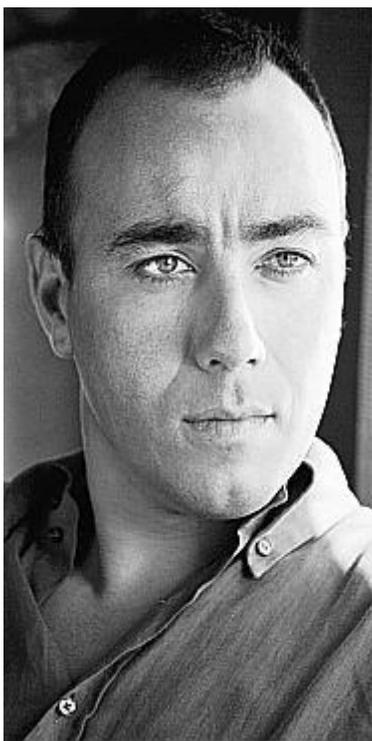


Lust for larger than life

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

WHEN Lorenzo Quinn came to Singapore four years ago, he saw the architectural plans and the empty site of the Marina Barrage - so had only his artistic instincts of how his sculptures would look like over there.



Heavy mettle: Lorenzo Quinn (above) works best when he distils an emotion from his sculptures such as *The Force of Nature* (next), at the Marina Barrage, showing a woman holding back a globe, crystallised in motion and two hands gently resting on each other, called *Eternal Love* (last picture)

Now that he's seen it in person, 'they could have been slightly bigger sculptures, I think,' he says, referring to his two sculptures located at Singapore's first reservoir in the city, 'But both the sculptures are very apt for the site,' he adds, referring to *What Goes Around Comes Around*, which shows a man whose arm stretches out into a circle to nudge the man at the back with his own finger; and *The Force of Nature*, depicting a woman holding back a globe with a sash, crystallised in motion.

The reason is that these were not commissioned works but already-completed sculptures which the client, Singapore's national water agency, installed in the Barrage. Another reason they seem small could well be the fact that Quinn - who is also the son of the late actor Anthony Quinn - has since moved on to much bigger works like those he has done in places like Qatar and Shanghai.

'The monumental sculptures can go up to 100m,' he describes, 'And there's quite a demand for them now, but only in Asia,' says the Barcelona-based artist whose international career took off about a decade ago, when he was represented by a London gallery.

For those who want a more house-friendly piece of work, Ode to Art gallery carries a range of Quinn's works at its Marina Bay Sands space - a collection entitled *Transmission of Life*. These are works which the artist describe as realistic and symbolic. Although Salvador Dali was the first role model for surrealist art when Quinn, 44, started out as a painter, he quickly found his own vocabulary, and decided that realism was more his style.

Even at a young age, Quinn was artistically inclined. And he learnt an important lesson as a budding artist - one which has helped guide his career ever since. He recounts: 'My father helped me with my first art

show as he thought I could draw well. He had a big art show in Hawaii then. I was 17, 18 years old at that time - and I managed to sell all 25 of my paintings.

'So I thought, 'Wow, this is easy.' So for my second show, I thought I could do more of the same. But not a single one sold. Since then, I've been careful about the quality and value of my works.'

His father - well known for tough, macho roles - won his second Oscar for portraying the painter Gauguin in Vincente Minnelli's *Lust for Life* (1956). He was himself a painter and encouraged the younger Quinn in his artistic interest. Quinn junior went on to study at New York's Academy of Fine Arts, and when he was 21, already knew he wanted to be a sculptor.

Before becoming a full-time artist however, he also dabbled in acting - playing Dali, for example, in an acclaimed 1990 biopic. 'But acting didn't fulfil me - I used it to pay for my art-making,' he says, adding that he was in 12 movies before calling it quits to concentrate on sculpture. 'It's not 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 hated taking orders and that it limited my creativity,' he says.

But creating 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 works to communicate emotions and feelings. 'The fourth dimension is the reason for making art; it's the message they carry. And I wanted the message to be easy to understand,' he elaborates.

Life is his inspiration, which gives rise to works you can grasp at first sight, like two human hands clutched in a grip, entitled *Love*; or two human hands gently resting upon each other, entitled *Eternal Love*. That their message is discernible immediately doesn't make them any less profound - and Quinn has a knack of distilling a deep human emotion into something visually simple.

His recent visit to Singapore also provided him with the inspiration to complete a work called *Leap of Faith*, which will portray a man jumping from one platform to another; the past symbolised with stone (since the past is cast in stone), the present symbolised with wood to represent how the present is still being carved out; while the future is represented with glass, as you can't really see it yet.

As a sculptor, he usually starts a piece of work only if he has already formed an idea for it. He sculpts out of clay, and then makes a rubber mould for it, takes it to the foundry for a positive wax which then turns it into bronze, aluminium or stainless steel.

Quinn is now re-discovering marble, and picking up his carver again. Growing up in Rome with the masters all around him - the 15th-century artists are his real inspiration, more so than any other living or dead artist. 'Whenever I go to Florence, I get brought down to earth again,' he notes, in a self-reflective moment.

Lorenzo Quinn's works can be seen at Ode to Art Gallery, 01-19, The Shoppes, Marina Bay Sands, 2 Bayfront Avenue, tel: 6688-7779