

Get schooled on S'pore's new generation of film-making

SHE'S A DRAWING INSPIRATION

From the time she learnt how to hold a pencil, Miss Shari Chong was doodling on any piece of paper she could find.

This vivacious 24-year-old started creating her own comics from the age of five, with the support of her artist dad and her music lecturer mum.

Her comics have since evolved from children's fairy tales "of princes and princesses" to comics with deeper meanings, "such as identity issues".

Miss Chong, who is from Malaysia and has been in Singapore for the past four years to pursue a degree at Nanyang Technological University (NTU)'s School of Arts, Design and Media, said that she did extensive research when drawing her comics to create her character's identity.

Likening it to the creation of a film's character, Miss Chong, who has a bachelor of fine arts in visual communication and was valedictorian of her cohort, told FIRST: "When you create a character, it has to have a background story (explaining) why it appears to be the way it is.

"That's where the research bit comes in. It is just like creating a movie character."

Miss Chong, who once wanted to see her comics on the big screen, now feels they should remain the way they are – on paper.

"I used to dream of making my comics into movies or animated films. I even made a comic on superpower girls.

"But I now feel that comics lose their elements when they are made into films. Some movies, like Iron Man, were done nicely and the comic character comes to life on screen but others, like Garfield, were disappointments," she said.

Aspirations

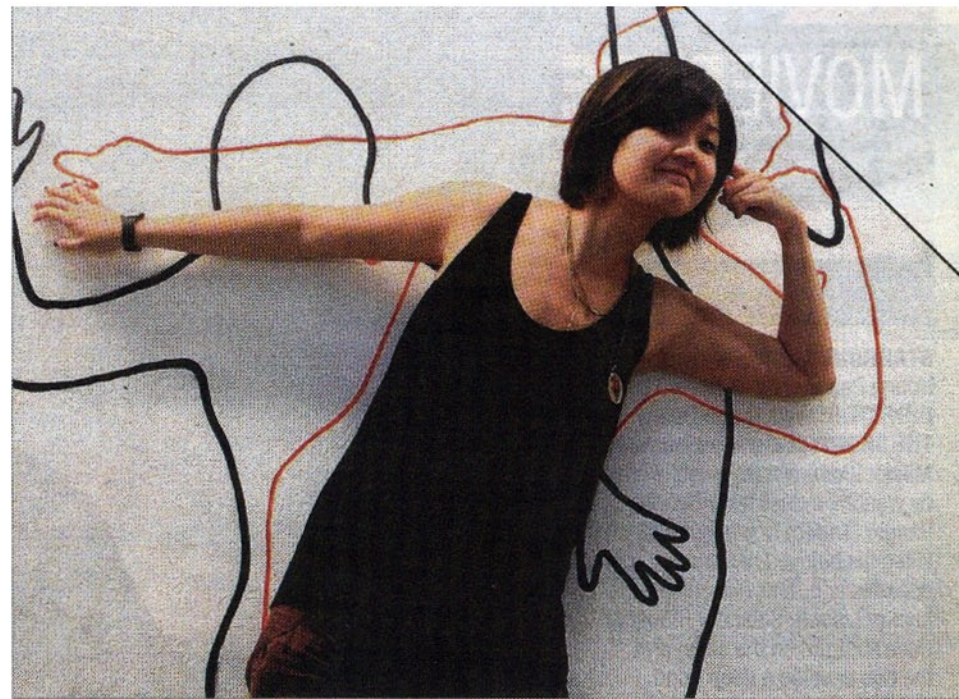
On who her influences are, Miss Chong said that she aspires to be like Bill Watterson, the creator of comic strip Calvin and Hobbes, and Neil Gaiman, author of The Sandman.

"What I like about someone like Bill Watterson is that he stays true to the comic medium. The experience you get from reading a comic is different from watching a movie.

"Bill Watterson celebrates the idea of two-dimensional drawing, which is what I aim to do with my drawings," said Miss Chong.

Her graduating class had its final-year projects showcased at Old School at Mount Sophia last month.

It was a milestone in NTU's School of Arts,



TNP PICTURE: BENJAMIN SEETOR

PASSION FOR HER ART: Miss Shari Chong, posing with artworks at the Esplanade.

Design and Media's five-year history because it marked the first time that all six majors – digital animation, digital film-making, interactive media, photography and digital imaging, product design and visual communication – were presented together in a single venue.

Miss Chong's passion for telling stories through comics will take a back seat for now as she starts work as a teacher.

She is a Ministry of Education teaching award recipient.

She hopes to be able to inspire young people to express themselves through the visual arts.

She said: "Words are no longer enough to capture students' interest. I feel that visuals and experiences will help them find a new meaning on their learning journey."

– Syahirah Anwar