

THE HEART IN ART

This month, more than 1,500 graduating students from local arts institutions LaSalle College of the Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts will be holding showcases of their final-year projects and graduating pieces.

They will be graduating with degrees and diplomas in a variety of disciplines, ranging from fashion design to art therapy.

The various graduation shows will run from this month to June at the schools' respective campuses.

Ng Wei Kai reports on four graduating projects that reflect the passion and creativity of students from these two arts schools.

One project is about helping people with mental issues through art, another is about expression through the avenue of art. Two other projects are linked to fashion, with one seeking to make clothes a better fit for people with disabilities and the other trying to empower women by giving them control over their clothes.



Ms Pamela Lie's graduate piece, *Down The Rabbit Hole*, made up of 220 Enid Blyton books, depicts the sense of travelling into the unknown which she experiences at the start of her relationship with each new patient. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

A healing journey through art

Two years ago, Ms Pamela Lie, 34, took a step into the unknown and applied for a Master's in Art Therapy course at LaSalle College of the Arts.

She left a comfortable job as a sales executive to pursue a vocation which she felt would give her a stronger sense of purpose.

"Even though I had plenty to be thankful for (then), I was empty and starving inside," she said.

This month, as a capstone to the two-year course, Ms Lie's graduate piece, *Down The Rabbit Hole*, will be on display at LaSalle's campus, alongside the works of her 10 coursemates.

Made up of over 220 Enid Blyton

books stacked in a circle to form an upward-facing tunnel, her work seeks to depict the sense of travelling into the unknown which she experiences at the start of her relationship with each new patient.

It stems from her experience with young adults suffering from depression, whom she had encountered during the course's practical learning phase.

"It's about each relationship as a new journey and getting to know the person behind the disease."

She chose art therapy, a form of psychotherapy that seeks to help people with mental health issues through art materials, as she feels "words are often insufficient in expressing the language of emotions".

Ms Lie, who is single, hid her decision from her parents initially as she felt they might not support her. But she later told them and they turned out to be supportive.

She felt her decision to give up her job for the course was the right one. "I felt that I finally found a way to express myself, and I hope to bring this liberty of self-expression to others," said Ms Lie, who intends to pursue a career in art therapy after her convocation in September.

The works will be on show from Thursday to May 31.

BEYOND WORDS

Words are often insufficient in expressing the language of emotions.



MS PAMELA LIE, who left a comfortable sales job to pursue art therapy, a vocation that would give her a stronger sense of meaning and purpose in life.



From left: Ms Elisa Lim, Ms Caroline Justine and Ms Ethrisha Liaw hope to establish their brand, Will & Well, which will focus on clothes that look good and are also tailored to fit the needs of those with disabilities. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

Clothes designed for people with disabilities

Nobody likes wearing ill-fitting clothes, but the effects are worse for those who rely on wheelchairs.

Thick materials can cause pressure sores and the lack of airflow caused by sitting for long hours regularly results in a heat rash, among other things.

For their graduation project, Ms Elisa Lim, 23, Ms Caroline Justine, 22, and Ms Ethrisha Liaw, 23, who are graduating fashion studies students from LaSalle College of the Arts, are trying to come up with a solution.

Titled 1000 mph, the project is a fashion collection that aims to dress people with disabilities in clothes that not only look good, but are also tailored to fit their needs.

Geometric prints break up the

The collection aims to dress people with disabilities in clothes that not only look good, but are also tailored to fit their needs. Geometric prints break up the form of the wearer, allowing him or her to appear more proportionate, despite differences in posture or body shape

form of the wearer, allowing him or her to appear more proportionate, despite differences in posture or body shape. Soft, natural textiles such as cotton do not trap heat.

Such designs fulfil a need that is not met by commercial brands, said the students.

"Fashion as a whole needs to better reflect the people it serves, to represent the world as it actually is," said Ms Liaw.

The trio involved in the project have different specialisations. Ms Liaw and Ms Lim are from different majors in the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Fashion Design and Textiles course, while Ms Justine is from another degree course - Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Fashion Media and Industries.

What bound the women together was their experiences working with clients who have disabilities and the difference they feel they are able to make.

"Not only do you have to be a designer, you have to really know and understand the user's needs," said Ms Lim.

The students are pursuing this project full time upon graduation and have plans to establish their brand, Will & Well, which will focus on inclusive fashion for people with disabilities.

The reception so far has been positive.

"Our users told us we're only allowed to have a one-week break before coming back to make more clothes for them," said Ms Lim.