

# Peeling back layers of beauty

## A New Kind of Beauty

Showing: 2-30 September  
Opening Reception: 7 September from 5-8pm  
The Gallery at Milner, Stanley A  
Milner Library

EDMON ROTEA  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Next to diamonds and pet canines, flowers can be a girl's best friend—especially for Alexis Robb, an aspiring fourth-year Bachelor of Fine Arts student who will be hosting her first solo photography exhibit, *A New Kind of Beauty*.

To the casual observer, her work may, at first, appear to be a showcase of canvas-mounted photographs featuring images of different types of flowers. However, the more observant spectators will discover images of flowers ripe with both visual and social meaning—meanings that relate both to the artist's own personal family history and to the everyday citizen in an increasingly multicultural society.

"People have had this aesthetic response to the images themselves, and that's important to me. I think that, sometimes, we invest too much meaning in things, and sometimes, it's just the simple colours that can have more meaning than even some of the deeper stuff," explains Robb, whose works consist of a composite of floral and botanical images. The photographic effect is achieved by overlaying images of various flower types together to form a single, ambiguous and colourful



PHILLIP HOFFMAN

**A BED OF ROSELIPS** Alexis Robb combines flower photographs in her exhibit.

floral image of a new and unique type of flower—one that may never exist in nature, but perhaps only in her photographic showcase.

Robb's floral creations also include a variety of names, from a photo of a "Chrysanthisy" (a combination of chrysanthemum and daisy) to a "Tulidago" (a tulip and a yellow solidago flower).

Her work is also reflective of her own personal life, including her family history and upbringing as a citizen in an increasingly multi-ethnic Canadian society.

"When I was combining two different flowers, it felt like I was combining two different ethnic groups," says Robb, whose own family has a history of multi-racial unions. "If people do think about the deeper meanings contained within these images, they don't necessarily see two separate flowers—they see one new flower that's so

original and has a new meaning of its own that it's not necessarily definable, but it's beautiful.

"My nephew is from a Chinese and Caucasian background. You'd see this little boy and you wouldn't know what cultural background he was from. But you wouldn't be able to say things like, 'Oh, these traits or features are from this culture and that culture'—you wouldn't be able to necessarily see that. There's ambiguity."

Yet Robb's enthusiasm for her inaugural exhibit is not without trepidation. "I'm quite a sensitive person—when I put my work out to others, it's like putting a little bit of myself out there."

Despite her concern, the entire event—whether its making press packages or dealing with the media and public—has been a journey for Robb.

"It really feels like I've learned so much. It's been such a rich experience for me," Robb says.

# The Protector's all action, no plot

New Tony Jaa film may tell a thin story, but the martial arts sure are meaty

## The Protector

Directed by Prachya Pinkaew  
Starring Tony Jaa, Petchai Wongkamlae  
Opens 8 September  
Empire Theatres

JOHN KMECH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Martial arts movies have never been renowned for harboring deep, thought-provoking structures: the plot's generally derivative and poorly written, the acting wooden and the dialogue ridiculous. *The Protector*, like Tony Jaa's breakout hit *Ong Bak* and thousands of martial arts movies before it, is no different.

The inconsequential plot can be explained in a single sentence. Kham (Tony Jaa) travels from Thailand to Australia to retrieve his sacred pet elephant from a corrupt international exotic food cartel. End. Now that that's over with, we can get to the part that everyone cares about, the action, which can only be described as completely insane.

Like *Ong Bak*, Jaa's Muay Thai-based fight scenes and acrobatics take precedence over what would otherwise be a pretty shitty movie. In that respect, the action in *Ong Bak* seems mundane compared to *The Protector*. Jaa kicks so much ass in the film, using such inventive ways, that you are continually contemplating where his next victim will come from and how far they'll be placed into the world of hurt.

The fight scenes are incredibly realistic, and they're entertaining as hell. Notable scenes—although every battle and chase is an adrenaline tsunami—include an artistic combat

with capoeira master Lateef Crowder, a scene where the camera follows Kham as he works his way up several floors of a restaurant, and, of course, the final battle. What ultimately makes this movie worth seeing, though (since the premise is almost the same as *Ong Bak*), is Jaa's lack of restraint and mercy. Beat-downs are long, groan-inducing and feature great cinematography. By the end, Kham's methods are so intense that everyone in the theater is either laughing or gasping at the brutality. I won't ruin the last 20 minutes, but I will say that your limbs will ache.

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*The Protector* was released last year in Asia as *Tom Yum Goong*. Having seen an English-subtitled version earlier in the year, I can say that there were a number of changes made, some good, some bad. The plot was

originally completely incoherent, so several scenes were added, along with some exposition about Thai culture, to explain to Western audiences why anyone would travel so far for an elephant.

Unfortunately, what was also added to increase appeal with American audiences was dubbing and horrible slo-mo music. All of the fights, which previously had Thai instrumentals or nothing in the background, were replaced with generic hard rock or hip-hop. This seems to have the opposite effect of its intent, making the fighting less intense by covering the agonizing sound effects. Also, I'm not sure why they would name it *The Protector*, since Jackie Chan also has a movie with the same title.

There's also a healthy dose of unintentional humour in the film, as is standard with many foreign flicks. Some Timberlake-esque music is added to an already ludicrous hot tub scene with Thai girls dancing for rotund businessmen. For more laughs, though, watch for a hilariously cheap CGI scene that should have been cut; it looks like it was produced by a starving animation student for five dollars in 1994.

However, the problems with this movie are more frustrations than actual grievances. When it comes down to what matters (the action), *The Protector* delivers in droves, more than any movie recently released. As Dan Kaszor wisely predicted two years ago in his *Ong Bak* review, it won't be long before Tony Jaa is playing second banana to Chris Tucker, as he has ironically now been approached to be in *Rush Hour 3*. Hurry to see him now before Hollywood corrupts another promising martial artist.

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