



ILLUMINATIONS

Aung Kyaw Htet

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FOREWORD

Jørn Middelborg

Thavibu Gallery

Thavibu Gallery has the pleasure of presenting the current catalogue and exhibition ILLUMINATIONS by the Myanmar artist Aung Kyaw Htet (b. 1965). The exhibition takes place in Bangkok on 18 February – 17 March, 2012 and features a series of oil paintings on canvas. In this exhibition, he explores shades of grey as well as experiments with other hues while featuring his well known subjects of monks, novices, nuns and religious life in Myanmar.

Aung Kyaw Htet has emerged to become one of Burma's most important contemporary painters. His detailed depictions of novice monks and nuns are both realistic and sensitive as he captures their expressions with humanity and dignity. His paired down compositions and use of colour emphasise the serenity of his Buddhist faith - an important foundation to his Myanmar culture despite the disparaging conditions and poverty that prevails in Myanmar.

Aung Kyaw Htet is a devout Buddhist and grew up in a small village -- two factors which have a strong influence on his art. His paintings of religious life in Burma show monks and nuns in a realistic manner, though non-essential objects are omitted from the paintings in order to focus on the religious aspects.

The essay has been written by the art historian and independent curator Shireen Naziree.

I take this opportunity to thank Aung Kyaw Htet for his collaboration, and Shireen Naziree for her contribution.

ILLUMINATIONS

Shireen Naziree

For those already familiar with Aung Kyaw Htet's intricately detailed paintings, his latest body of work ILLUMINATIONS has sought to challenge the boundaries of what the eye and mind record as he has intensified the visual perception of his subjects; he has consciously allowed for a new direction in these striking paintings, capturing an extraordinary vitality and energy. ILLUMINATIONS comprises twenty two paintings rendered in oil on canvas. The impact of these paintings lie within a sense of stillness, yet the strength of these figurative paintings prompt associations that are relevant to both his physical and spiritual world which is deeply entrenched within his Myanmar culture and Buddhist principles.

The forefront of Aung Kyaw Htet's painting practice has always been his passion for humanity whether perceived on location or memory. The language within which he has expressed his new direction in painting can be credited to his artistic skills. It is clear that the exploration of form and colour is something that excites him as he is now in the quest of pushing his own boundaries once again with the development of a series of intimate portraits.

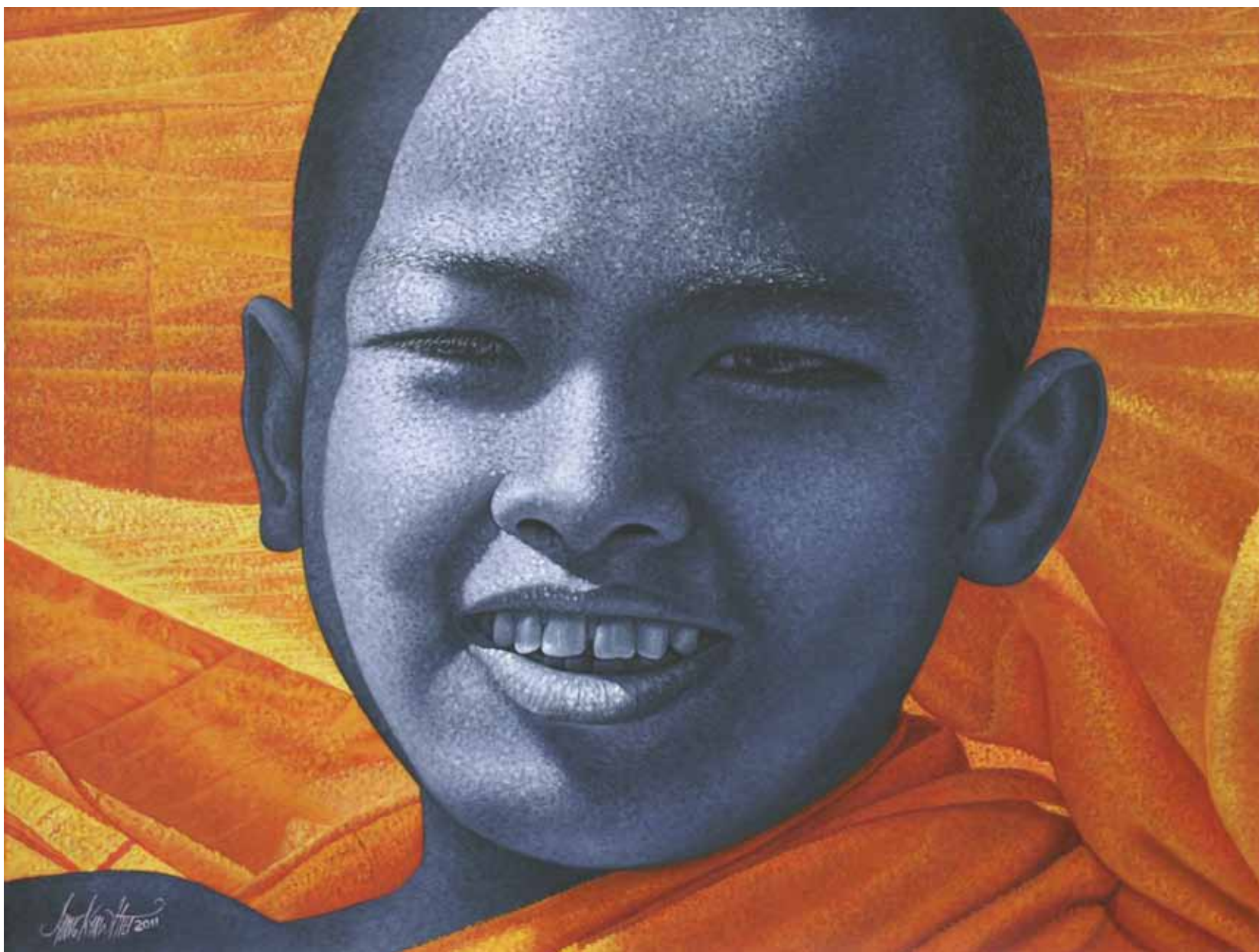
Painting for Aung Kyaw Htet represents the sole expression of his inner-self, an important means through which he conveys his sentiments in endearing works such as *Happy Face* and *Sunshine On My Face*. Undoubtedly his works display strength through the confident use of scale, composition and colour and above all, skillful draftsmanship. His use of vivid colours in *Novice in Orange*, *Novice in Blue*, *Novice in Green* and *Novice in Yellow* explain that for Aung Kyaw Htet form and colour define content. Sometimes the form dominates as in *Procession at Dawn* and other times the colour dominates.

Aung Kyaw Htet employs the use of contrasts to great effect as in *Three Friends* and *Nun with Roses* wherein the colours of the blooms touchingly reflect the joyous purity of the novice nun. His skillful draftsmanship is most evident in *Studios Minds* wherein his sensitive and sophisticated handling of paint and carefully considered palette results in a beautifully harmonious composition, imbued with a great sense of stillness and space. Aung Kyaw Htet aims to teach himself new things through his keen observation and by adhering to his favourite subjects of young novice monks and nuns. At the same time, he aims to retain immediacy to the finished canvas, conscious not to overwork the piece, and preserving the freshness of his markings as well as that of his young subjects.

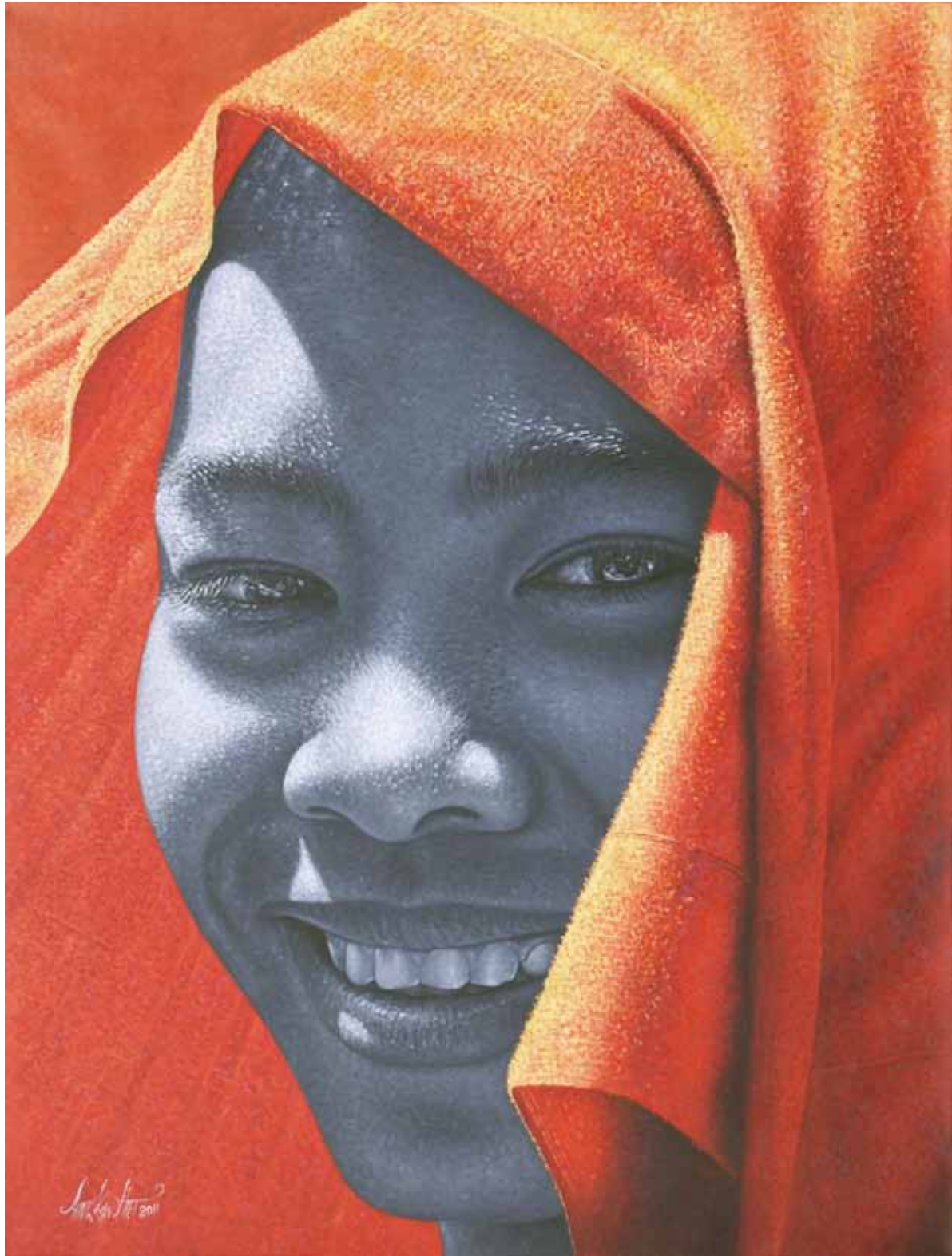
The art of Aung Kyaw Htet is as much about subject as it is about the feeling it invokes as it regales the serenity of his Myanmar culture. His paintings contain a depth that offers a rare insight into the simple, honest beauty that he sees in his everyday world.



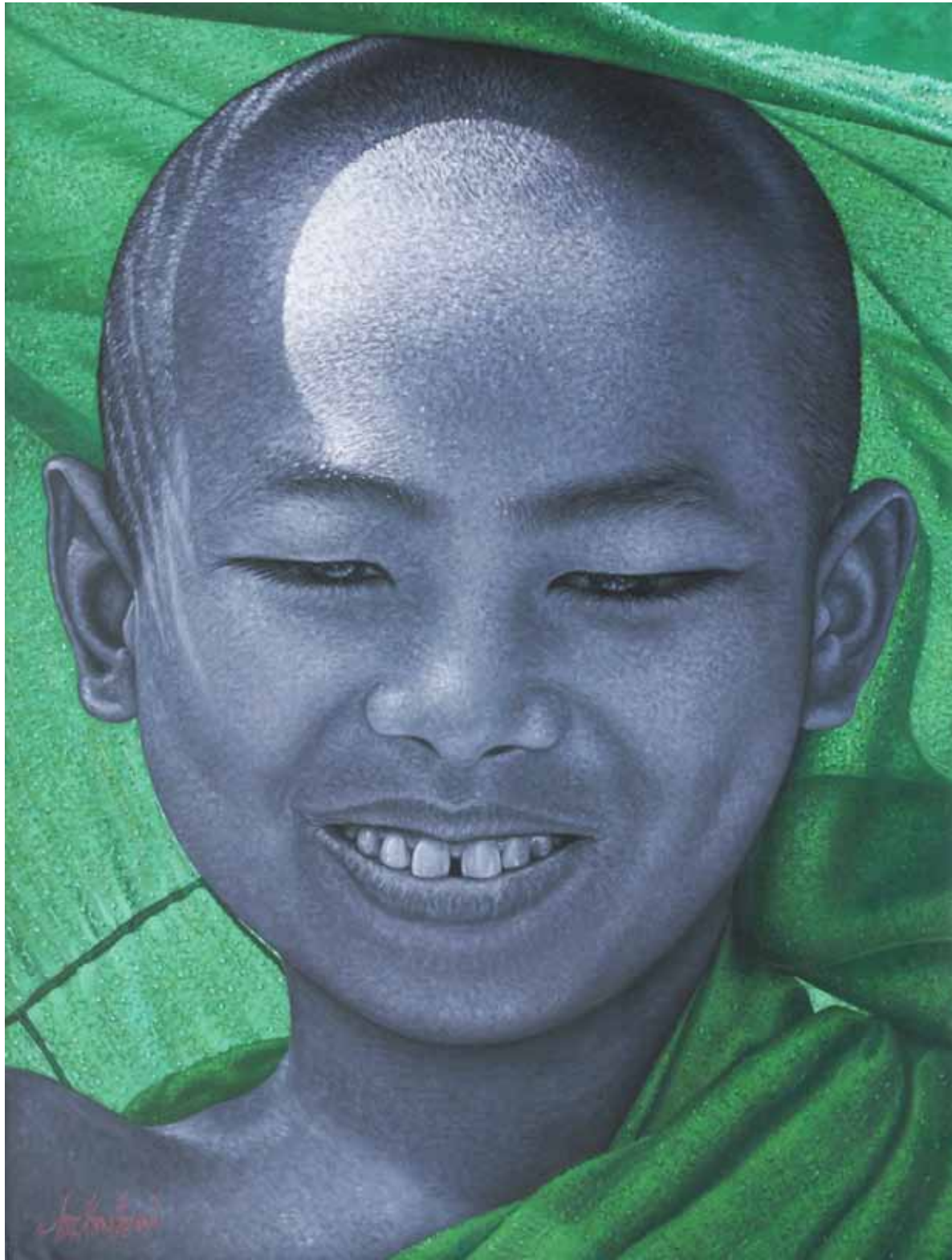
Sun-kissed Novice, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 117 x 167 cm



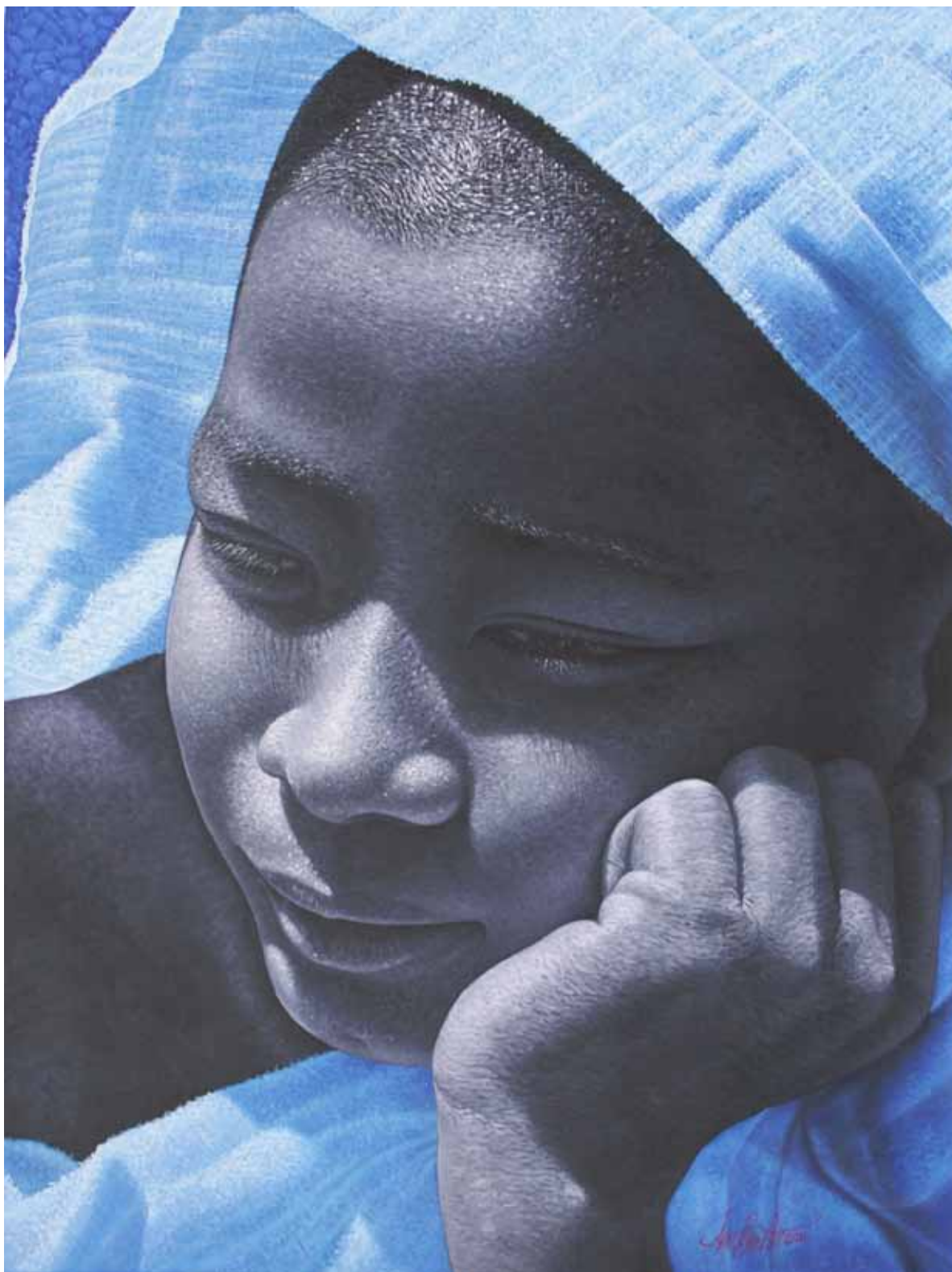
Novice in Yellow, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 115 x 85 cm



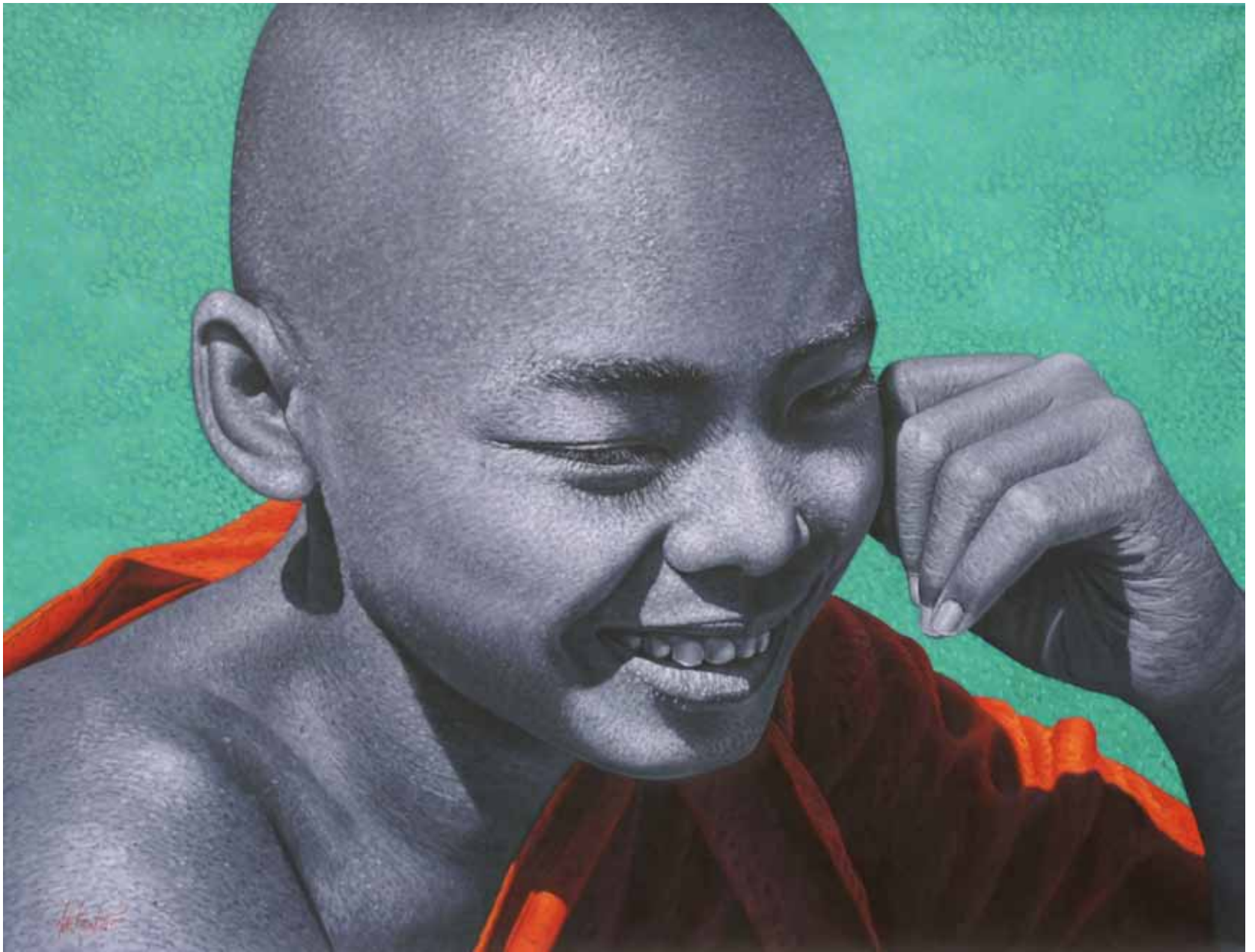
Novice in Orange, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 85 x 115 cm



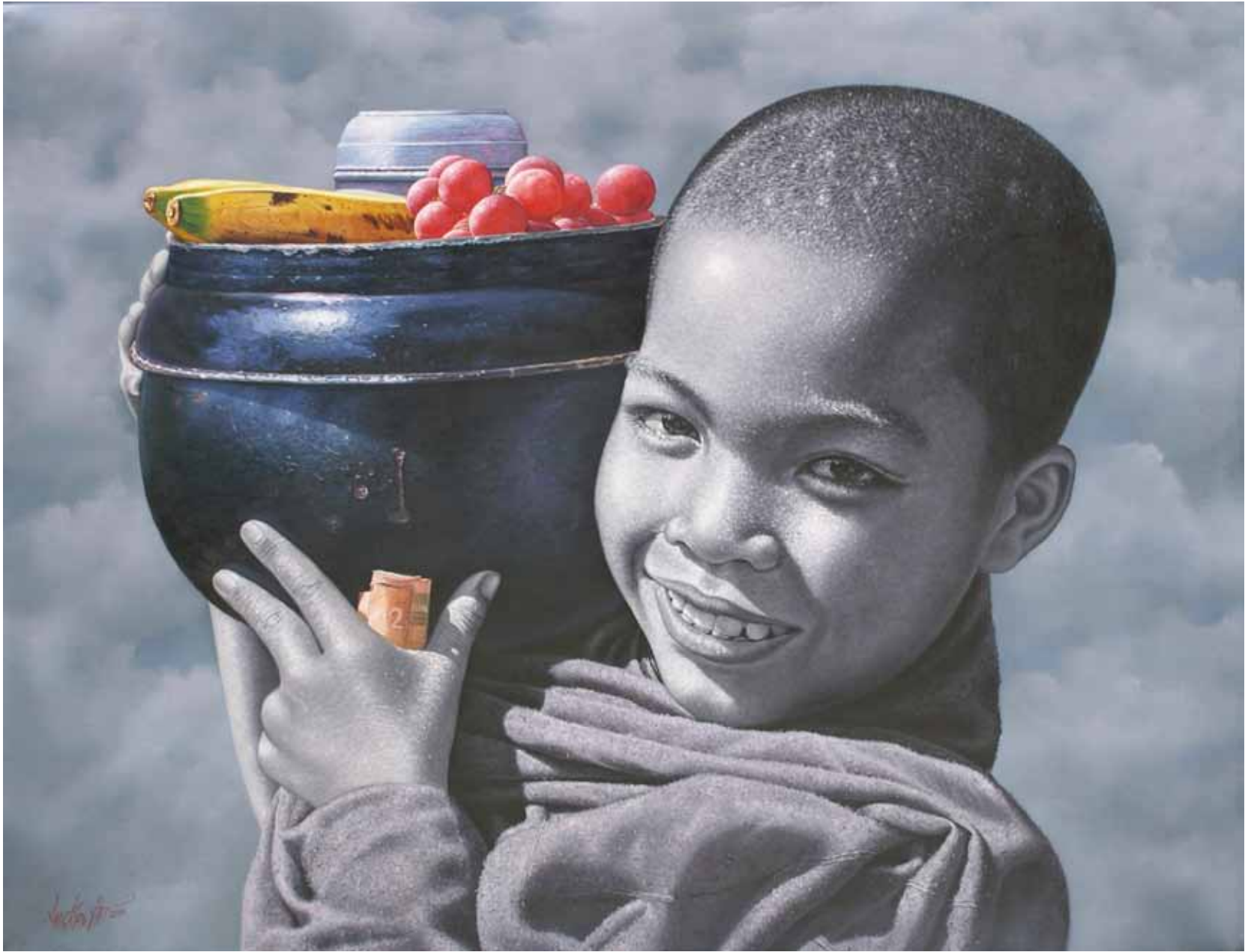
Novice in Green, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 85 x 115 cm



Novice in Blue, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 85 x 115 cm



Glow in Green, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



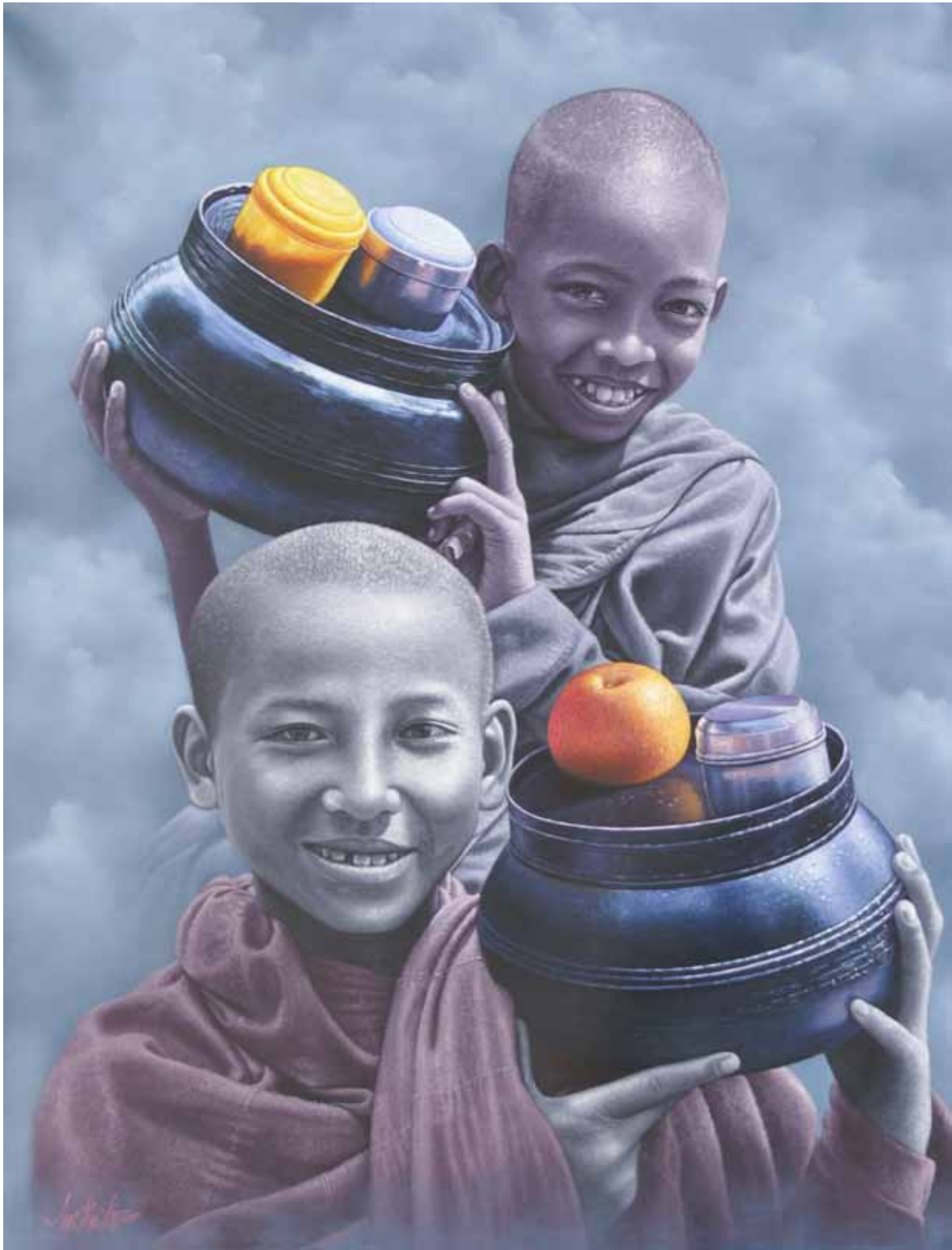
Sunshine On My Face, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



A Young Novice, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 86 x 114 cm



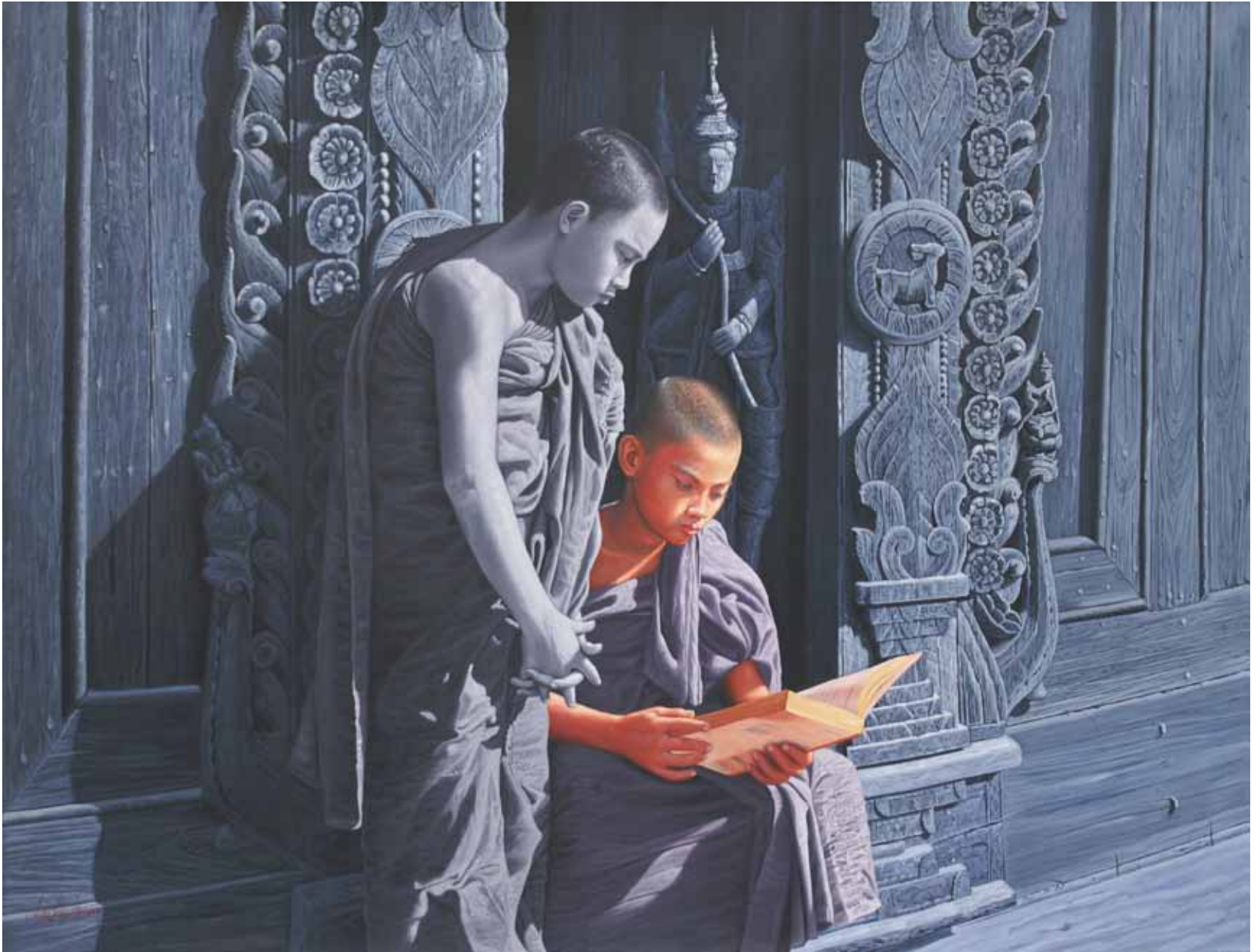
Happy Face, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



Alms Round in Sunlight, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 116 x 153 cm



Novices On The Go, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 167 x 117 cm



Studious Minds, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



Three Novices, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



Two Praying Novices, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 167 x 117 cm



A Distant Memory, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 116 x 167 cm



Nun With Roses, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 152 x 117 cm



Serenity at Dawn, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 116 x 167 cm



Get in Line, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 162 x 116 cm



Three Friends, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 114 x 86 cm



Little Boy in Charge, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 167 x 116 cm



Tagging Along, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 116 x 167cm



Procession at Dawn, 2011 | Oil on canvas | 223 x 110 cm



Aung Kyaw Htet

Born 1965 in Myaungmya
Studies at the State School of Fine
arts, Yangon and with art masters
U Thukha and U Aung Moe

Selected Art Exhibitions

- 2002 – *Burmese Days* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
- 2003 – Group exhibition - **Singapore**
 - *Shades of Asia* at HKFinearts - **Hong Kong**
- 2004 – *Burmese Master Paintings*, with U Lun Gywe at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
- 2006 – Art Taipei – **Taiwan**
 - *Spirit of Burma* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
- 2008 – Art Singapore 2008 – **Singapore**
 - Solo show: *Burmese Inspirations* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
 - *Spiritual Spaces* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
- 2009 – The India Art Summit – New Delhi, **India**
 - Solo show: *The Silent Journey* at the Red Gallery – **Dubai, UAE**
- 2010 – Solo show: *Shades of Grey* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok
 - Art Monaco'10 – **Monaco**
- 2012 – Solo show: *Illuminations* at Chan Hampe Galleries – **Singapore**
 - Solo show: *Illuminations* at Thavibu Gallery, Bangkok

Museum Collections

The National Museum of Myanmar
The National Art Gallery of Malaysia



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