

Director Baz Luhrmann (right) and artist Vincent Fantauzzo say creating the centrepiece painting for their installation, *The Creek, 1977*, was a process much like making a film. Photo: K.Y. Cheng

Director Baz Luhrmann brings his filmmaking touch to a multimedia work at arts fair, writes Vivienne Chow

ARTS

What's your story?

Inside a pitch black, chapel-like room, a string of small childhood photographs are lined up on two of the walls. Flickering tea light candles placed in front of each frame shed just enough light to reveal the image. At one end of the room hangs a large Caravaggio-style painting of a young man apparently being rescued from a car that has gone off a bridge. Is this the end or just the beginning of a story? What will happen next?

These are questions that Moulin Rouge director Baz Luhrmann and award-winning painter Vincent Fantauzzo want to ask these who visit their multimedia installation, *The Creek, 1977*.

The two Australians created the work especially for the ART1K fair, which, in its third year, has established itself as a catalyst for Asia's arts scene. It's not their first collaboration. The pair have been friends since they met five years ago through Australian actor Heath Ledger (Fantauzzo's portrait of the *Brokeback Mountain* star shortly before his death won the Archibald People's Choice Award in Australia two years ago). Prior to *The Creek, 1977*, the pair teamed up in February for a project in India—an art motorcycle diary as Luhrmann dubbed it—creating artworks on the walls of hotels, in the streets and on 17th-century forts as they travelled through the northwestern state of Rajasthan.

Luhrmann recalls it as a "wild and fantastic time", and says he enjoys such creative breaks from film productions, which take years to complete. "The immediacy of it is fantastic."

Sitting casually in his hotel suite in Admiralty a few days before the installation is due to be unveiled by 10 Chancery Lane Gallery at ART1K, the director explains the concept of the art piece.

is how viewers respond when they enter the chapel; they think, "This is what I see, this is what I feel, and more importantly, what happens next?" he says.

The centrepiece painting was created in a process much like making a film, with sketches, storyboards and casting well-known actors to appear in

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Vincent Fantauzzo



Workers assemble the multimedia installation (above) on *The Creek, 1977* (show right). Photo: 10 Chancery Lane Gallery

the image, which also featured Fantauzzo and Luhrmann.

Viewers are challenged to think about the story that the image is trying to tell, blurring the line between image and narrative. A website will be set up to gather viewers' responses. "But what we don't want to see is that people treat it like a guessing game," Luhrmann says.

"A lot of classical art was narrative... you have to get a lot of stories in a single frame," he says. "In the classical period, no one went to galleries; they were in churches... so if people go to a church, they would contemplate a painting. They knew it would tend to be a biblical piece, but they would have their own story, their own emotional and spiritual experiences from that painting."

Fantauzzo, who flew to Hong Kong for the installation despite having been hit by a taxi when out on a motorcycle just hours before his flight, elaborates further.

"We all have a different way of interpreting singular images," he says. "Limiting what you show people at the beginning leaves the mind open to different possibilities."

By placing the painting against photographs and images from his childhood in a chapel-like setting, Luhrmann hopes to remind viewers of the power of incidents from their own youth which, he reckons, can be like religious experiences.

Images of the car accident and of growing up next to a petrol station come from his childhood, and are so powerful that they inform his own journey.

"Those memories from your childhood... they form your life... You can't go and borrow one from someone else. It's yours, and you are stuck with it. They are your religion," he says.

"Some of us suppress them. Some of us forget them. Most of us don't realise the profound effect it has on us. The great tragedy I see is



that people who don't reconnect [with their childhood]."

Before embarking on another creative journey, Luhrmann and Fantauzzo will be painting at the Sovereign Art Foundation stand during the fair period as a continuation of their motorcycle journey in India. And despite the dominance of

commercial elements with the art fair and major auctions taking place in the same week, Fantauzzo takes a positive view of the local art scene. "Some people think that art in Hong Kong is just about investment. But without it, we can't make a living," he says. "This gives us artists a chance to network and communicate."