

## MY THOUGHTS

# Finding peace of mind through peace in art

■ BY ALICIA NG

IF THERE is anything else worth taking away from four years in university besides a piece of paper and life-long friends, it is the experience of pursuing an activity so far removed from the demands of my accounting degree.

My involvement with Art Peace(s) was just the thing – a month-long art exhibition at Singapore Management University to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Peace on Sept 22. This year's programme included a public forum on human trafficking and child labour in Asia, as well as a documentary to promote universal peace and freedom.

The scale of the project hit me after I signed up, with the hours-long commitment it called for.

I gathered with 20 other students, in a basement art studio at school, several hours a day for four whole weeks to conceptualise and produce nine pieces, ranging from installations to paintings and various mixed media, all conveying the underlying themes of peace and freedom.

My piece, titled When I'm 64, measured 1.5m by 1.5m, and was inspired The Beatles' dedication to spreading the message of love and peace.

What started out as a bare cotton can-

vas eventually morphed into a "notepad" consisting of 25 alternating layers of black and white emulsion paint, with the lyrics from 19 of their songs scrawled on top – no simple task.

Master artist I was not. My only previous experience was repainting the walls of my house.

I learnt to get in touch with other basic virtues too.

Patience, for one. Paint does not dry instantly, and any refusal to obey this principle begets a clumpy mess.

Next: Responsibility. Clean up your own mess of emulsion paint and vinyl stickers daily – no one owes you the favour of doing it for you.

Finally, no one likes a whiner. When the going gets tough, remind yourself that others are coping too.

Fortunately, I had the privilege of being mentored by a professional artist, who helped us transform our weaknesses into something of aesthetic value.

I can take away more than just the satisfaction of having my own publicly displayed art piece, but a timely reminder of how to address everyday annoyances.

I was celebrating both International Peace Day and my newfound inner peace.

**The writer, 24, is a final-year accountancy student at SMU.**