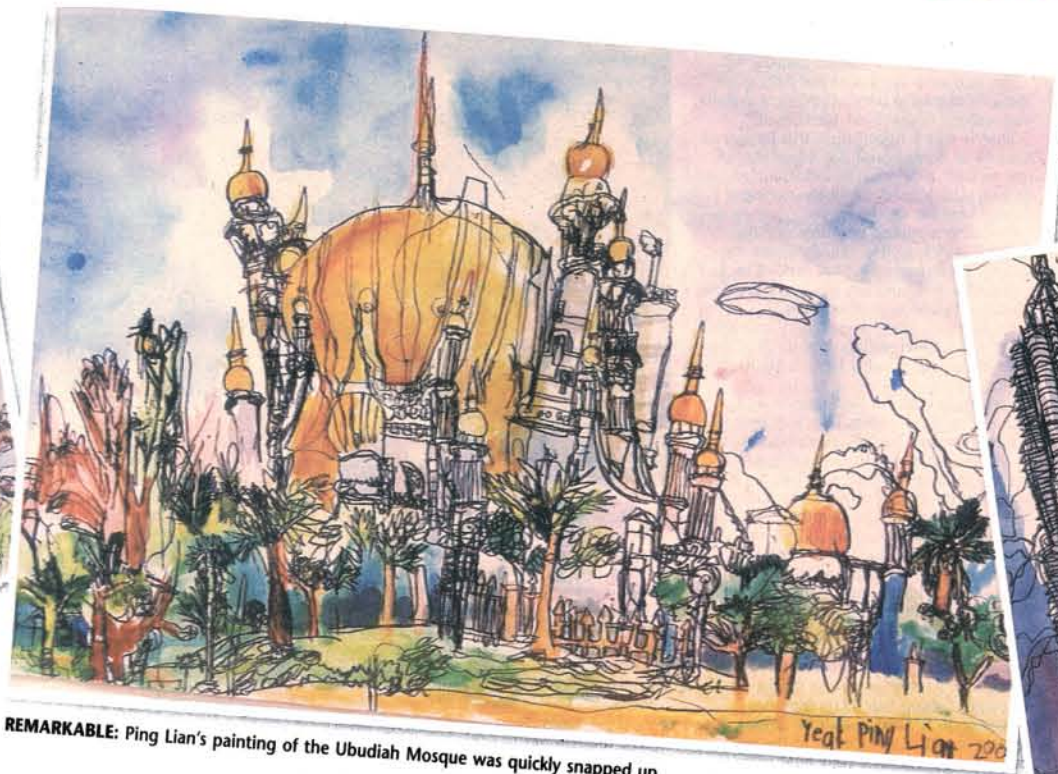
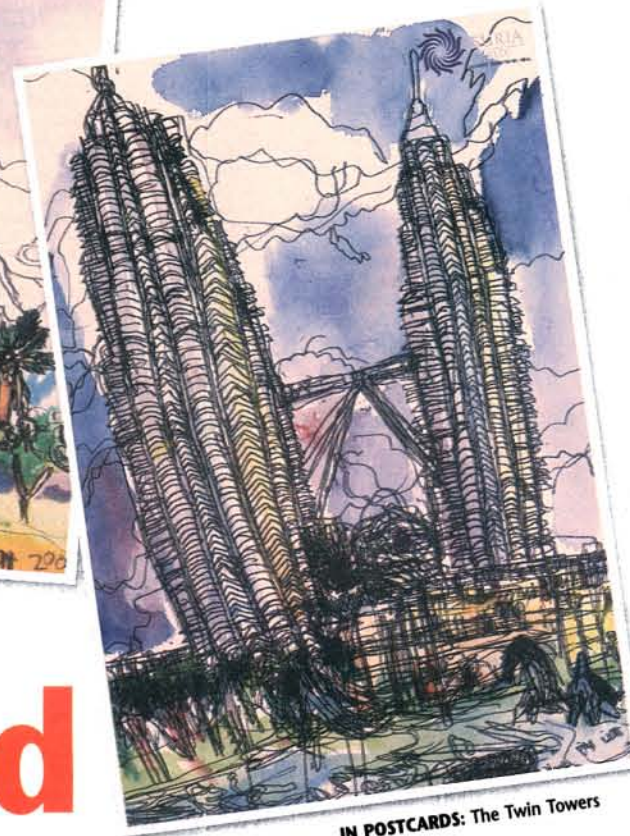




LIVELY: Horses by Ping Lian



REMARKABLE: Ping Lian's painting of the Ubudiah Mosque was quickly snapped up



IN POSTCARDS: The Twin Towers

## Brilliant art of an autistic child



THE YOUNG ARTIST: Ping Lian with one of his works

Lian visiting the professor.) "I asked my son what he wanted to be and sure enough, he said he wanted to be an artist," adds Lee. His artworks are mainly done in charcoal, pencil ink and marker pens as well as watercolour and acrylic. These include the Kek Lok Si Temple, the Kuala Lumpur railway station, Dataran Merdeka, Christ Church in Malacca and the Dewan Tunku Chancellors of University Malaya. In June 2003, he won a consolation prize in the Creative Young Artist Award competition. He also participated in an art exhibition "Different

Strokes: Diversity Through Art" organised by the Arab Women Association and Friends held at the National Art Gallery in Kuala Lumpur last year. His remarkable ability despite his disability also caught the attention of the management of the Suria KLCC. Recently 20 of his paintings were featured in an art exhibition at the Ramlee Skylight of the shopping complex. In conjunction with the exhibition, Suria KLCC is also organising a charity programme through the sale of postcards featuring Ping Lian's sketch of the Petronas Twin Towers. The

postcards will be sold at RM5 each. The funds raised through the sale will be channelled to the Autistic Society of Malaysia.

Ping Lian has been profiled as an autistic savant by Dr Darold A. Treffert, a psychiatrist with the St Agnes Hospital in Wisconsin, on the website [www.savantsyndrom.com](http://www.savantsyndrom.com).

Dr Treffert, who has studied the savant syndrome for many years, describes autistic savants as "the juxtaposition of severe mental handicap and prodigious mental ability".

They are known for their extensive mental ability (called splinter skills) and can, for instance, memorise facts, numbers, licence plate numbers and maps, do lightning-fast arithmetic calculations, including precisely estimating distances by sight.

Examples of autistic savants include Blind Tom, who had exceptional musical ability (although he had no musical education), and Richard Wawro, an illustrious artist.

Why autistic savants are capable of such an astonishing ability is not clear. Some savants have obvious neurological abnormalities but the brains of most are anatomically and physiologically normal.

Ping Lian's mother resigned

from a senior position with a telecommunication company in Kuala Lumpur to spend more time with him. The youngest of three children, Ping Lian has very limited speech vocabulary communication and social skills and lives in a world of his own.

He underwent speech and language intervention, occupational therapy and behavioural intervention at home. He received home tutoring and attended supplementary lessons for special needs children.

Lee sees Ping Lian as a wonderful child, full of love and gratitude. She advises parents with special children not to give up. "Do your best and have faith in your child. Celebrate each small progress made as a major achievement. Who knows one day a miracle may happen," she says.

She lauds KLCC's charity programme for creating a caring and sharing society. It is also a good way to create awareness about autism and the talents of the autistic. "Hopefully, it will change the misconception that autistic people are disabled people." She says society should focus on their special skills rather than their disabilities.

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## With charity and special children in mind



RAFIDAH: A theme of caring

CHARITY and a caring society have always been the focus of Suria KLCC's community programmes. "We have always wanted a theme linking charity with children, art/education and the community," says Datin Rafidah Jalil, senior manager, marketing, Suria KLCC. The shopping complex chose Yeak Ping Lian as an outstanding example of what special children can achieve given proper guidance and assistance.

Twenty artworks were exhibited at the complex, on the concourse level, recently.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the shopping centre also organised a charity programme through the sale of postcards featuring Ping Lian's sketch of the Petronas Twin Towers.

The postcards will be sold at RM5 each to raise funds for the National Autistic Society of Malaysia. Suria KLCC hopes to raise RM100,000 from the sale of the postcards which will end this month.

"All the funds raised will go to charity," says Rafidah. She knows what life for these children is like. She recalls that she once had a neighbour with an autistic child and found that the child was very focused in whatever he set his mind to do. She was impressed with his ability to play the piano when he was invited to perform at a charity function.

According to her, Ping Lian is a role model for special children as it shows that with parental perseverance and financial assistance, they too can lead a quality life.

Suria KLCC had successfully raised RM270,000 from its recent carnival. The Suria Teddy Bear Picnic, which was given to the Paediatric Ward of the Kangar Hospital, Perlis for the purchase of equipment, to the KL Paediatric Hospital for the upgrading of the family resource centre, and to the Paediatric Ward of HUKM for the setting up of a speech therapy centre for intellectually challenged children. The shopping centre also organised a volunteer programme called the Gift of Time where an individual had to do volunteer work with a volunteer body such as the Befrienders and Tasputra before she is selected to win a Perdana.

The big-hearted volunteer who won the car donated the entire proceeds from the sale of it to the purchase of dialysis machines for a hospital. — By Ruslina Yusoff



ART FOR SALE: In postcards, painted by Ping Lian



SO DETAILED: The Sultan Abdul Samad Building