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SOUTHEAST
ASIAN ART



DAZED IN MAZES

HASLIN ISMAIL MUHD SARIP RUZZEKI HARRIS TEY BENG TZE

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Living in this era of modern mass consumption, we are constantly overwhelmed by one-sided news and media information. Somewhat trapped, we are forced to listen and accept the perspectives directed to us by the "storytellers" of our time and this has given birth to a race that accepts without questioning. As a child, I grew up in an environment where it is alright to be provincial and where questionable curiosities are often frowned upon. Looking back, I recall myself constantly searching for an answer, seeking a certain amount of reasoning, even if inconclusive- perhaps an understanding, or an ultimatum. Conditioned by such circumstances, many of my contemporaries, rarely express any concerns about how the country is in turmoil or how disturbing the world has become. Have we fallen into the black hole of ignorance or have we become so immune we'd rather passively watch the world unfold before our eyes waiting for the worst to come to pass? *Dazed in Mazes* addresses these questions of uncertainties and frustrations in the works of Haslin Ismail, Muhd Sarip, Ruzzeki Harris and Tey Beng Tze.

Muhd Sarip has chosen to illustrate issues affecting the country and social commentaries of hidden agendas, corruption, and the blind influences of mass media in the society. Through deft use of his chosen medium, Sarip alternatively juxtaposes various issues that express the conflicting realities of being an artist in a Southeast Asian context. While Sarip scopes right into the many cross cultural issues and disagreements of plagiarism and globalisation, Ruzzeki Harris visually documents conspiracies that take place far from the artist's everyday environment. He uses found metal as a medium to emphasise the stories he feels the need to share as well as perceptions on political issues. Ruzzeki chooses to experiment with different techniques and styles by using various media like spray paints, industrial paints and bitumen. Although the issues voiced in his works do not directly affect him, he feels the need to put himself in the shoes of those who are facing chaos to observe a sense of common dismay about the political scene and the misuse of power.

In Malaysia, the disenfranchised few continue their struggle to find a voice in a country that does not believe in the freedom of speech. However, these voices always end with the questions: is anyone listening or can we make a difference? Are we becoming a more assertive society which responds and reacts to questionable agendas or are we instead being conditioned to become a submissive generation? These questions and wonderment, although seldom mentioned or asked, have subconsciously convinced people to form utopias in their minds in which they feel safe to live in.

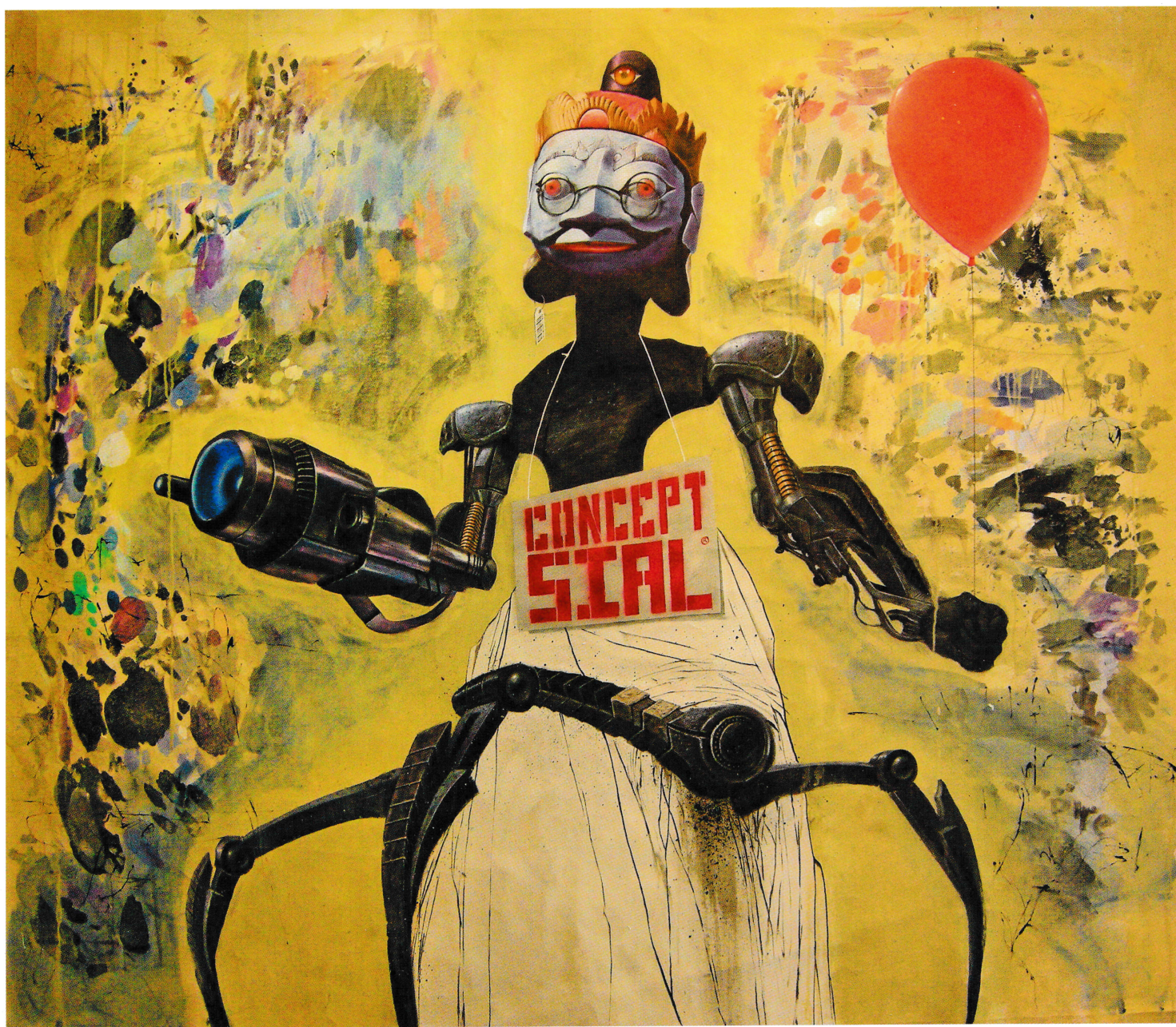
As shown in Tey Beng Tze's works, the idea of forming a utopia is somewhat comforting because he sees the city life as threatening and dangerous. Tey fears existence within this sort of environment, and creates figures of authority within each of his works to watch over the world- but a world where good and evil is hard to distinguish. By using iconic figures related to his real life and influences from the virtual world, movies and computer games, he creates a visual journal about survival in the country/city which is utterly confusing and chaotic.

While Tey undeniably feels that the world is in a predicament, Haslin Ismail dreams to achieve and rises to the occasion. His works depict collective memories of characters found in sci-fi and fiction movies, where the lines between good and evil are clearly defined. Experimenting with composition of forms and lines, Haslin fuses painting and collage to convey the idea of the world being in a state of human versus machine that he has unwillingly accepted. When asked how he feels about living in this type of world, he admits that this has put him in a "confused state of mind" and that all he wanted to be is "everything that is great".

Dazed in Mazes presents viewers with a spectrum of perspectives. Whether through proclamation, documentation or visual discourse, these four young artists are not afraid to represent the voice of their generation by addressing concerns for the environment, their surroundings and contemporary issues that are plaguing the society and the country. Rather than blindly accepting propaganda, they have chosen to deal with a confusing world without being confused.



Ruzzeki Harris *The Nutmeg Demolisher* 2009 mixed media on metal sheet 130 x 205 cm



Muhd Sarip *Mr. ConceptSIAL* 2009 acrylic on canvas 152.5 x 183 cm

Haslin Ismail *Astounding Stories* 2009 acrylic and collage on canvas 183 x 152.5 cm





Tey Beng Tze
Just
2007
mixed media on paper
20 x 29 cm



Tey Beng Tze
Tunnel
2007
mixed media on paper
20 x 28 cm

FRONT COVER
Tey Beng Tze
Dark Water & Stars
2009
acrylic on canvas
95 x 113 cm

Haslin Ismail (b. 1984, Johor Bahru) graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) in 2007. He has been actively participating in numerous group shows and competitions locally since 2000 and was awarded the Grand Prize for *In Print: Contemporary British Art from the Paragon Press* held at the National Art Gallery in 2006. He recently held his first solo exhibition, *Exorsismus Pesona: Tingkaptingkap Dunia Fantasi Haslin Ismail* in 2009 at RA Fine Arts Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.

Muhd Sarip (b. 1981, Sabah) graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) in 2005. He has won multiple awards in both Islamic Painting and Calligraphy since 1996. He has been actively participating in various group exhibitions locally since 2002 and some of his most recent group exhibitions are *Rasa Terasa* which was held at The Annexe Gallery, Kuala Lumpur and *Locals Only* at Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.

Ruzzeki Harris (b. 1984, Penang) graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) in 2007. He has been actively participating in various group exhibitions locally since 2004. He was the artist in residence at the House of Matahati in 2008, which led to his first solo exhibition entitled *Gravitate*. He was the 3rd Prize winner for the *Salon Meets Art* competition organised by Schwarzkopf in 2007.

Tey Beng Tze (b. 1983, Kuala Lumpur) graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA). He is also one of the co-founders of FINDARS Space, which was situated at the Central Market Annexe. Besides being involved in the arts, he is also contributing his skills and passion in the independent music scene. He has been actively participating in various group exhibitions locally since 2003 and has recently held his first solo exhibition, *Dirty Mary Crazy Mickey* at FINDARS Space.

EXHIBITION DATES: 4 - 21 NOVEMBER 2009

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