



*muhd sarip*  
**automatons**

I'M YOUR SUPERSTAR  
YOU MAY CALL ME  
VAVA VIVI MALAYA

vwfa



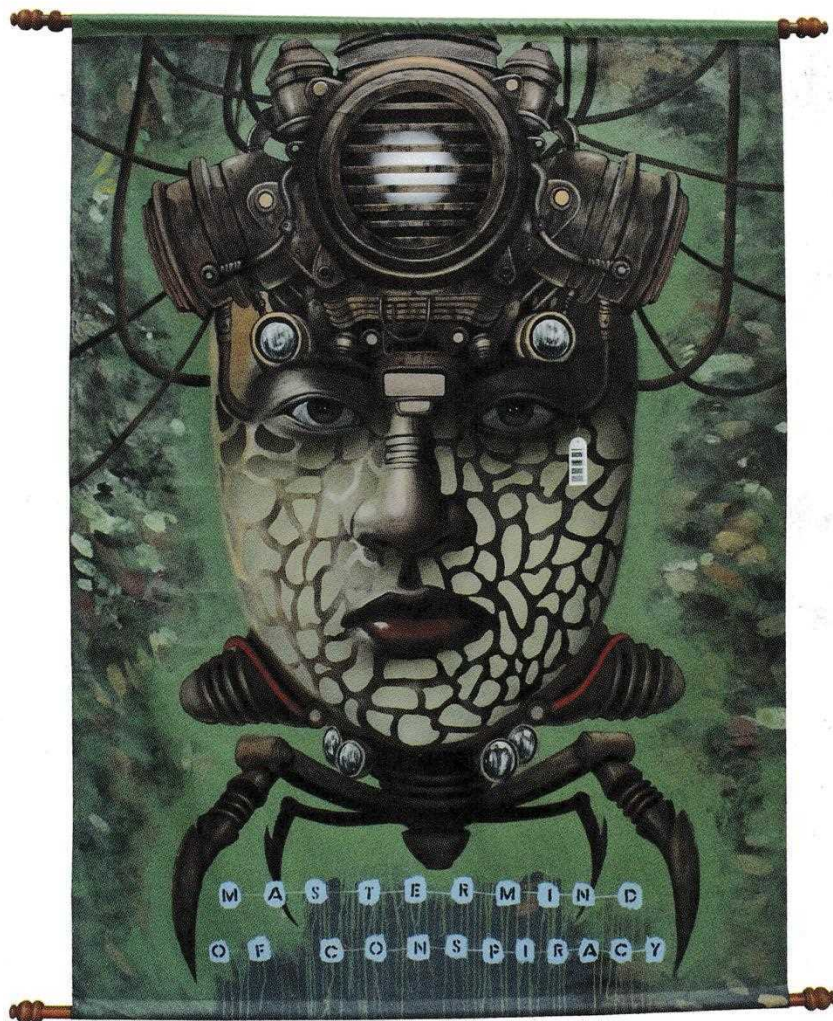
THE CROSS FIRE amidst canvases depicting combative toy robots from popular TV cartoons in Muhd Sarip's *Automatons* depict a battle arena that is treacherously playful. As they don war armature and strike a ready battle pose, these toy figures, in spite of their association with playtime, take on larger than life roles in playing out a veiled critique on the real world challenges faced by the artist.

When asked about how this body of work came together, Muhd Sarip points to his interest in painting as a form of self expression. While this would mean resorting to abstraction in works of many other contemporary artists, registering their inner turmoil through the gestural mark, Muhd Sarip has instead chosen to align his interest in self expression within the genre of figuration. The cavalcade of robots featured in *Automatons* reads like a litany of popular TV cartoon characters that populated weekday evening public television programmes back in Eighties Malaysia. By appropriating them, they return from the artist's childhood as a body of mismatched ciphers that provides a stinging commentary on the challenges of facing an adult reality and its host of deceitful players.

Many of the stories that make up for the heroes in his paintings relate to his personal experience of working in the civil service. The dour countenance of *Head Machine* stares vacantly at the viewer as his head is outfitted with an artificial support that transform his identity. Faced with bureaucracy, red tape, double-crossing colleagues and a stultifying work environment, the clock work setting felt antithetical to the creative pulse that defines the free spirited spontaneity of art making. This would appear as an impasse for an artist turned lecturer, where there is a need to balance one's own practice with that of the teaching institution.

The robot is a mechanical artificial agent guided by electronic programming to perform a perfunctory task. One of the first references in Western literature to the robotic form is attributed to Homer's *Iliad*. It is mentioned that the God of Fire, Hephaestus made a new armour for Achilles in his battle against the Trojans, assisted by 'golden maidservants' who 'looked like real women and could not only speak and use

*Head Machine*  
2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 226 x 162 cm





their limbs and were endowed with intelligence and trained in handwork by the immortal gods.' They were seen as mechanical beings with human appearance.

Robotic technology that took on a much more human form was not developed until the early twentieth century, although it has been spurred and fueled by Gothic and sci-fi literary imagination. The term 'robot' was first used in Karel Capek's play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots) written in 1920, 'robot' itself is derived from the Czech word 'robota', translated as menial labour. As a critique on the enslavement of labour in capitalist society, the play from its very onset established robot as an automaton with human form.

It is also because of their semblance of the human form that the 'robot' has over the years become a trope that symbolises various emotions and attitudes associated with man. In Sarip's *Automatons*, these robots take on various roles as representation of dictators, as cogs in the wheel of mechanised rote production, as the invincible man.

*R.I.P.* shows the familiar figure of Optimus Prime from the cartoon series *Transformers* being suspended in mid air by a cluster of balloons. His otherwise musculature armour is painted with batik motifs. The employment of the motif is a veiled critique of the culture that surrounds the artist's working environment, as batik is known as the official wear during government functions. The comic tragedy comes through in the other elements that doubly infantilise what is already a children's toy - the heroic Optimus Prime is spotted with balloons and croc shoes.

Commentaries on the artworld also made its way into Sarip's new body of work. In *One Man Show*, we can make out from the protruding ears above a gas mask, a pig head humanoid which stands conceitedly showing off his muscular steel coated body to the viewer. The bar of green cartridges beneath this figure recalls the health bar indicator found in many video games. This painting suggests confrontation just as much as it signifies a kind of



TOP  
*Sharp Shooter*  
2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 153 x 153 cm

BOTTOM  
*Red Devil*  
2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 213 x 152 cm



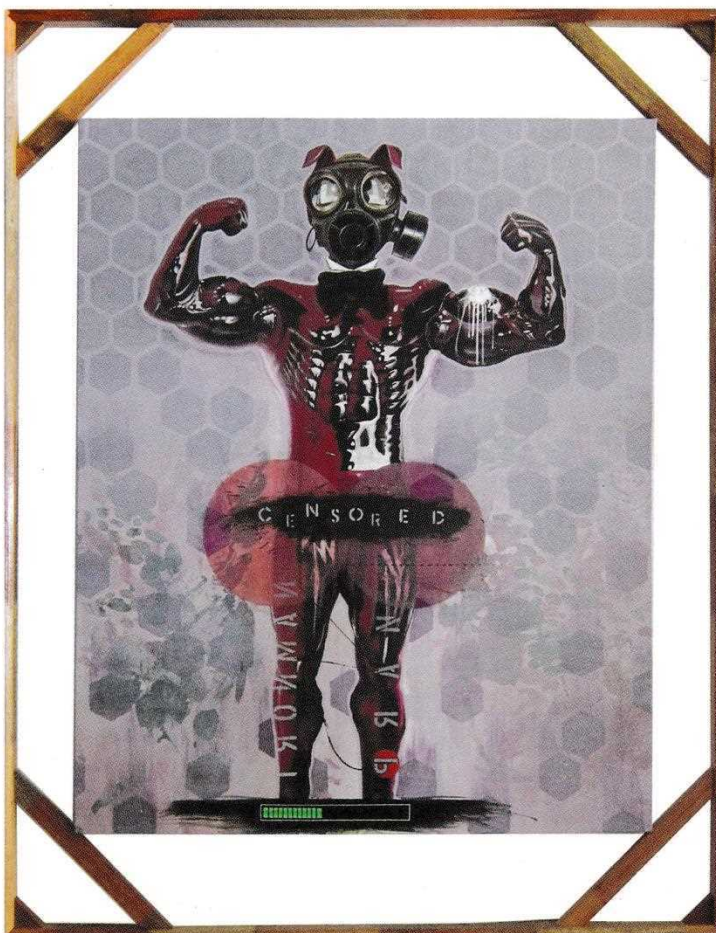
retreat on the part of the artist into a fantasy world where he is able to wield his brush as an allegorical weapon.

Perhaps no other painting highlighted this combative stance more than 'F' For Your Right. This cheeky portrayal of popular Muppet character Kermit the Frog charging towards the viewer in a robotic outfit is representative of Muhd Sarip's wry humour found in his use of robots to stage a series of comeback actions that capture the struggle of the individual against some larger and more powerful opponent. For Muhd Sarip, the role that art plays is no different. Its expressiveness and allegorical possibilities wields the potential to unseat these loci of power by way of alluding to the human struggles of our everyday.

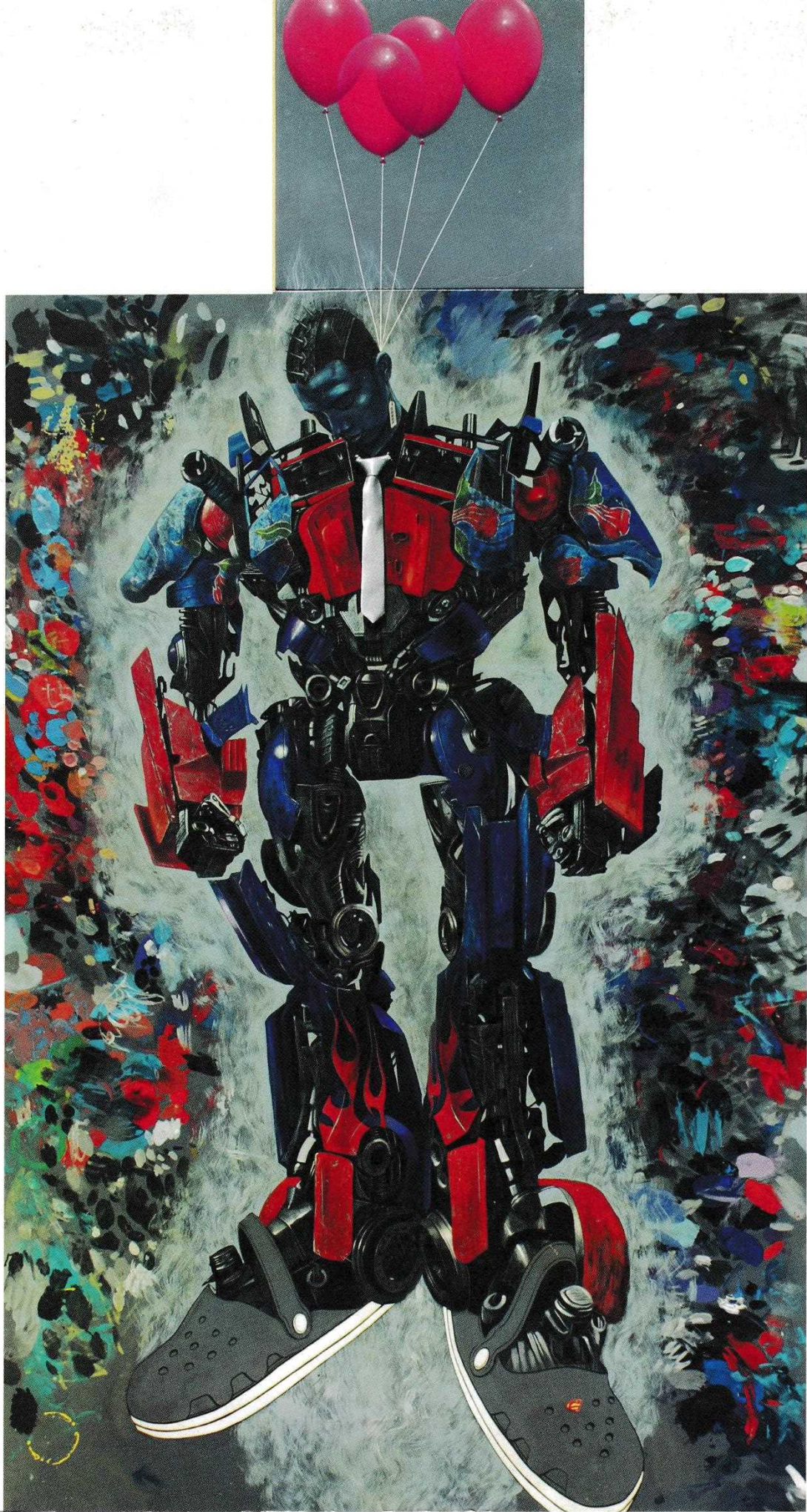
Simon Soon

RIGHT  
One Man Show  
2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 198 x 152 cm

BELOW  
'F' For Your Right  
2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 213 x 312 cm (diptych)











LEFT

*Me and The Killer Scissors*

2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 153 x 275 cm (diptych)

OPPOSITE LEFT PAGE

*R.I.P.*

2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 305 x 160 cm (diptych)

FRONT COVER

*Who Is The Real VAAVIL Malaya?*

2010 :: mixed media on canvas :: 213 x 152 cm

## muhd sarip

b. Sabah, 1981

### Education

- 2010 Master of Arts (Visual Art & Design), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang
- 2005 B.A. (Hons) in Fine Art, MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Shah Alam, Selangor
- 2003 Diploma in Fine Art, UiTM, Shah Alam, Selangor

### Group Exhibitions

- 2010 *Contemporary Rhetoric*, Valentine Willie Fine Art (VWFA), Kuala Lumpur
- Contemporaries 5*, Pace Gallery, Selangor
- 've(ə)rēd. Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Penang
- Timbul*, Pelita Hati House of Art, Kuala Lumpur
- Young Malaysian Contemporary*, New Objection, Galeri Petronas, Kuala Lumpur
- 2009 *Rasa Terasa*, The Annexe Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Locals Only!* Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Pameran ILHAM "continuity"* MIDF-UiTM Gallery
- Iskandar Malaysian Contemporary Art Show (IMCAS)*, Johor Bahru
- Virus Lima Belas*, NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Pameran Amal Untukmu Palestin*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Overlooked*, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Dazed in Mazes*, Valentine Willie Fine Art (VWFA), Kuala Lumpur
- 2008 *Bukak Mata*, Studio Dikala Jingga, Selangor
- Serangkai Rupa*, Galeri Tuanku Nur Zahirah, UiTM, Selangor
- FormaSiX*, Pelita Hati House Of Art, Kuala Lumpur
- Pallette*, The Gallery @ Star Hill, Kuala Lumpur
- X Show*, Taksu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

- 2008 *Vibrant Edge*, The Gallery @ Star Hill, Kuala Lumpur
- 2007 *KAMI 3 Bota - Pulau Pinang*, Dewan Sri Pinang, Pulau Pinang
- Biasan*, Galeri Seni UiTM, Seri Iskandar, Perak
- Open House*, Kebun Mimpi Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Across The Border*, The Gallery @ Star Hill, Kuala Lumpur
- 2006 *"Triangle"* 3 man show, Maya Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Malaysians For Peace, On War & Peace*, Maybank Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Reformatting Second Time Around*, Gemarimba Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- ISME 2006* Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre
- Open Studio*, Chapter 2, Gudang, Petaling Jaya, Selangor
- 2005 *3 Hari 2 Malam*, Universiti Bangsar Utama, Kuala Lumpur
- Art for Tsunami Relief*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Malaysians for Peace*, Berjaya Time Square, Kuala Lumpur
- 7 Magnificent*, Izzu Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Through Our Minds*, Galeri Shah Alam, Selangor
- Open Show*, Galeri Shah Alam, Selangor
- Pop Culture*, Maya Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Lacraft*, Langkawi Art & Craft Festival, Langkawi
- Open House*, Gemarimba Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 2004 *Recent Works*, Maya Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- Bucket of Ideas*, UiTM, Shah Alam, Selangor
- 2002 *Time & Space*, Diploma show, UiTM, Shah Alam, Selangor

EXHIBITION DATES: 10 - 23 DEC 2010

**vwfa**

valentine willie fine art

1st Floor, 17 Jalan Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.  
Tel: +603 2284 2348 :: Fax: +603 2282 5190 :: [www.vwfa.net](http://www.vwfa.net)  
Mon - Fri, 12 - 8pm, Sat 12 - 6pm. Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays.

**vwfa.net**

KUALA LUMPUR • SINGAPORE • YOGYAKARTA (TEMPI CONTEMPORARY) • MANILA CONTEMPORARY