

700
9.1'595
MOH

NOOR MAHNUN MOHAMED

blue shirt

2002

oil on canvas

73.7 x 61 cm

white shirt

2002

oil on canvas

73.7 x 61 cm



getting dressed I

2002

oil on linen

30.5 x 23 cm

getting dressed II

2002

oil on linen

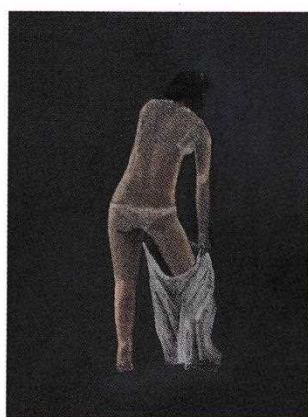
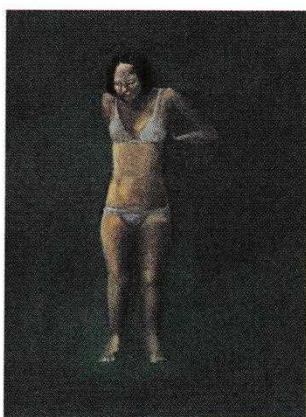
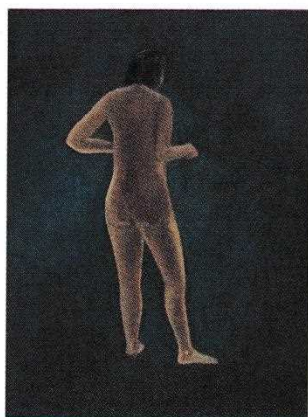
30.5 x 23 cm

getting dressed III

2002

oil on linen

30.5 x 23 cm



slide I

2002

oil on canvas

46 x 51 cm

slide II

2002

oil on canvas

46 x 51 cm

slide III

2002

oil on canvas

46 x 51 cm

topyary I

2002

oil on linen

16 x 20 cm

topyary II

2002

oil on linen

16 x 20 cm

topyary III

2002

oil on linen

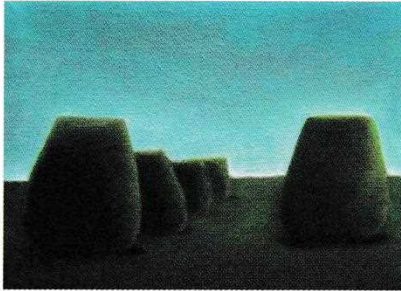
16 x 20 cm

topyary IV

2002

oil on linen

16 x 20 cm



circus

2002

oil on linen

60 x 89 cm

elephant

2002

oil on linen

60 x 89 cm

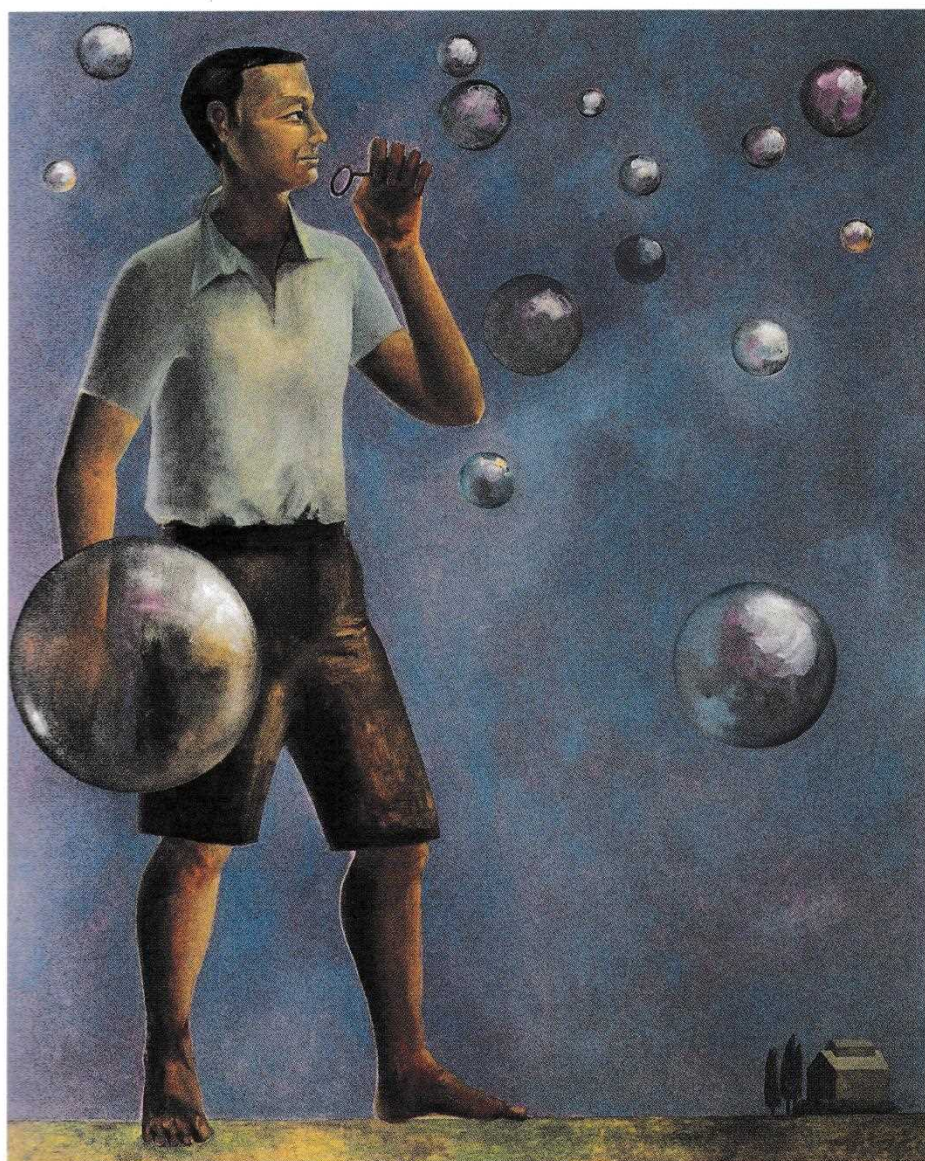


boy blowing bubbles

2002

oil on canvas

147 x 117 cm



girl with a hoop

2002

oil on canvas

147 x 117 cm



bathrobe

2002

oil on canvas

200 x 125 cm



Vexing Lyrical

Adeline Ooi

In order to savour Noor Mahnun Mohamed's work, one has to be armed with a substantial measure of patience. The artist, rarely allows her audience to pin her down at first sight. Instead, the challenge and appeal of her work lies in unravelling her intricately layered, exquisitely presented narratives. Autobiographical yet far from confessional or illustrative, they are intimations about her personal life and surroundings that extend beyond the physical into a space known only in painting. Not one satisfied with immediate emotional responses, her work's trajectory slices past obvious statements to strike a chord with pointed metaphors and allusions. Her penchant for irony and intellectual repartee brews shrewd and mischievous plots designed to draw out responses beneath naïve and delicate guises.

Deceptively tucked behind a camouflage of impeccably painted and bijou-like canvases are labyrinths loaded with symbols charged with emotional complexities and sensuality. These evocative mise-en-scènes, so carefully created, are silently vexing, intended to sustain and stretch every strand of emotion, each detail on the canvas playing its part.

Noor Mahnun Mohamed's world is inhabited by a convergence of paradoxes. Feminine yet emotionally distant, delicate yet piercing, her suggestive narratives brim with allegorical inflections playfully accented with dark humour. She weaves together the most unexpected elements and textures; riveting, strange and uncanny. Her palette, handling of light and precision are influenced by North European Masters Pertrus Christus and Jan Van Eyck, while her meticulous detailing in fabrics and textures pay homage to Diego Velazquez's masterful brushwork. Her Braunschweig training is evident through the use of flat perspective, spatial play and distortion. Miniatures suggest a refuge for greatness. Should the recurring appearance of miniatures in her oeuvre be subject to psychological readings related to control and possession?

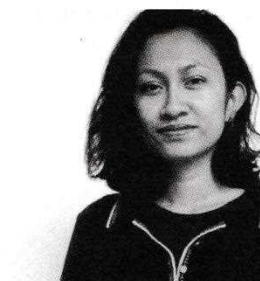
This exhibition sets us on a journey outdoors and later indoors as Noor Mahnun Mohamed explores varying notions of "play". A perfectly manicured residential estate becomes unsettling in its marked absence of human activity, with only a lone figure of a little girl skipping dreamily past its isolated street. Monsters of grace, the gargantuan *Boy Blowing Bubbles* and *Girl with a Hoop* looming over their respective miniature houses are dramatic in their spatial arrangement yet poignant, with allusions to estrangement and solitude. *Elephant* brims with unspoken desire as we witness a yearning tension silently played out between the elephant topiary and girl. The celebration, festivity and excitement usually associated with visits to the circus become remote - *Circus* is enigmatic, frozen against an expanse of green field. Our attention, rather, is stirred by a girl straddling an opaque white ball, swinging sensuously like a trapeze artiste.

Slide I, II, & III see the artist looking back to childhood. These structures represent a common image in our shared memories of growing up. In as much as they are nostalgic revisits, the austerity of cold steel and hard concrete also caution danger as they stand barren, precarious without any safety measure in sight.

From the playground, the artist draws us behind closed doors into the world of dressing up. She teases as we find ourselves caught in a private space watching a woman taking or putting on a shirt, tying or untying a sarong. A sense of unease is heightened as we are involuntarily bestowed with the role of the voyeur.

Featured also are several items from the artist's wardrobe in a series of still life paintings. Here, we witness Noor Mahnun Mohamed's refined control and delicate touch as she describes texture, shape and light in paint. The stark simplicity and remarkable precision of *Green Shirt* hangs vulnerably from its wire hanger as we are tempted to reach out and feel the loose weave of its fabric so masterfully captured. Underneath each lovingly painted surface, the artist's garments, still and removed of emotion, seem to breathe, haunting with a familiar presence and absence.

Inspired by Lucien Freud's *Girl with a White Dog* [1950-1], *Bathrobe* drapes expressively over its wooden hanger against the bathroom wall. Rich with emotional texture, it is one of the most impressive works in this collection. Through meticulous detailing she conveys the plush comfort of terrycloth, its gentle white glow and subtle shadow against the mosaic tiles sensuously described. Evocatively tactile, one fleetingly recalls the robe's soothing touch brushing against our skin.



Noor Mahnun Mohamed

Born 1964
Kelantan, Malaysia

education

- 1989-96 Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Braunschweig
1996 Masters in Fine Arts

solo exhibitions

- 1985 Video Diva, Florence, Italy
1989 Sparkasse der Stadt Berlin, Germany
1995 Galerie im zweiten Rang des Staatstheater, Braunschweig, Germany
1997 *Kunst in Treppenhause*, Feldschloßchen, Braunschweig, Germany
1998 *Mysteries*, Angelucci, Kuala Lumpur

group exhibitions

- 1993 Alpertsbach Galerie, Alpertsbach, Germany
1994 *Werkchau Klasse Gorella*, Galerie der HBK Braunschweig, Germany
1995 *Alpertsbach Galerie*, Alpertsbach, Germany
1996 *Meisterschüler 96*, BMG Halle, Braunschweig, Germany
1997 *5 x 5*, Galerie Peters-Barenbrock, Braunschweig, Germany
1998 *Of Allegory and Symbols*, Galeri Tangsi, Kuala Lumpur
1999 *Aku – Potret Diri*, Petronas Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Through Our Eyes, Petronas Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
2000 *Love on Paper*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Arang, Gallerie Taksu, Kuala Lumpur
Water for Life in aid of World Wildlife Fund, Islamic Art Center, Kuala Lumpur
2001 *Headlights*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Ilham, Galeri Shah Alam, Selangor
Rimbun Dahan Artist-in-Residence, Rimbun Dahan, Selangor
Exhibit X, Gallerie Taksu, Kuala Lumpur
Flashpoint in aid of the World Wildlife Fund, Rimbun Dahan, Selangor
2002 *Painted*, Southeast Asian Contemporary Artists,
Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Touch, in aid of World Wildlife Fund, Rimbun Dahan, Selangor
Identities, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Bara Hati Bahang Jiwa, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Laughter, iPreciation Gallery, Singapore

awards & scholarships

- 1995 2nd Prize, Alpertsbach Galerie Competition
2000–01 Rimbun Dahan, Artist-in-Residence
2002 Italian Government Scholarship to study etching at Il Bisonte, Florence

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