

BETWEEN
GENERATIONS

50 YEARS ACROSS MODERN ART IN MALAYSIA

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GENERATIONS

50 YEARS ACROSS MODERN ART IN MALAYSIA

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA, KUALA LUMPUR
25 AUGUST – 22 SEPTEMBER 2007

MUZIUM & GALERI TUANKU FAUZIAH
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA, PENANG
3 DECEMBER – 31 DECEMBER 2007

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

On behalf of the University of Malaya and the Asian Art Museum, I would like to say that it is indeed an honour and a pleasure to be working with University Sains Malaysia, Valentine Willie Fine Art and the sponsors Penjanabebas on this important exhibition and publication.

The Asian Art Museum was built in 1980 to house the University's landmark collection of Asian art. The original collection began under the auspices of the University Art Museum and its first curator Michael Sullivan, in 1955, including art from the historical past of Asia, as well as the contemporary art of Malaya (which at the time included Singapore). This far-sighted policy made for the very first institutional effort to collect local modern art in the country, one of University of Malaya's many pioneering achievements. This will be the first time part of our modest but important modern art collection is brought to the public.

From the inception of the university campus in Kuala Lumpur, further activities related to contemporary art included the hosting of artists such as Latiff Mohidin, Syed Ahmad Jamal and Ibrahim Hussein, who was an artist-in-residence at the University in the early 1970s. National Laureate Dato' Syed Ahmad Jamal was also a previous Director of the Cultural Centre.

A museum of art is a great blessing in any community. For the University, the Asian Art Museum provides an alternative path to learning, supplementing the work of the classroom, lecture courses, and theoretical research in providing students the opportunity to learn from the original object or artefact. Fostering an appreciation of historical and contemporary art is helpful to all students and tutors, expanding the boundaries of ordinary processes of learning, and exposing the imagination to a different sort of stimulus.

The Museum has been very active, generating a broad programme of cultural and other educational exhibitions, conferences and workshops. This exhibition brings together art enthusiasts, art organizers, two major academic institutions and the corporate sector to celebrate the nation's proud artistic heritage in this very important year.

Today, the Museum houses a large, diverse collection of Asian artefacts, featuring textiles, ceramics, craft objects and calligraphy. It also includes almost 300 historical paintings, from the court of the Qing Dynasty in the 17-18th centuries to the Bundi School of Art in India in the 18th Century, and even the highly sought-after work of modern Indian artist MF Hussain. We hope that this exhibition will highlight the importance of our modern Malaysian artworks within this impressive context, and encourage further research into and efforts to revitalize this aspect of the collection.

Thank you.

Datuk Rafiah Salim
Vice-Chancellor

**PERUTUSAN DARI NAIB CANSOLOR
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA**

Saya, bagi pihak Universiti Malaya dan Muzium Seni Asia berasa amat berbangga dan berbesar hati sekali kerana berpeluang bekerjasama dengan Universiti Sains Malaysia, Valentine Willie Fine Art serta penaja Penjanabebas di dalam pameran dan buku penerbitan yang penting ini.

Muzium Seni Asia telah didirikan pada tahun 1980 untuk menempatkan koleksi ulung seni Asia milik Universiti ini. Koleksi asal ini bermula di bawah naungan Universiti Muzium Seni dan kurator pertamanya Michael Sullivan pada tahun 1955. Ianya terdiri daripada karya seni sejarah lampau Asia serta juga karya seni kontemporari Malaya (termasuk Singapura ketika itu). Dasar pandang jauh ini telah melahirkan buat julung kalinya daya usaha sesebuah institusi dalam pengumpulan karya seni moden tempatan di negara ini. Ia merupakan salah satu daripada banyak pencapaian-pencapaian ulung Universiti Malaya. Ini adalah pertama kalinya koleksi seni moden yang tidaklah seberapa sangat tetapi tidak kurang pentingnya ini dipertunjukkan kepada orang ramai.

Sejak daripada penubuhan kampus universiti ini di Kuala Lumpur, aktiviti lanjutan yang berkaitan dengan seni kontemporari termasuklah jemputan artis-artis seperti Latiff Mohidin, Syed Ahmad Jamal dan Ibrahim Hussein yang juga merupakan artis-tamu di Universiti Malaya sekitar tahun 70an. Seniman Negara Dato' Syed Ahmad Jamal juga adalah bekas Pengarah Pusat Kebudayaan.

Sesebuah muzium seni merupakan suatu rahmat di dalam mana-mana masyarakat. Pada Universiti ini, Muzium Seni Asia memberi suatu jalan alternatif kepada pembelajaran, penambahan kegiatan di bilik-bilik darjah, syarahan-syarahan kuliah dan penyelidikan berteori dalam memberikan para penuntut peluang untuk belajar daripada artifak atau objek yang sebenarnya. Mengalakkan penghayatan seni kontemporari dan bersejarah boleh menolong para penuntut dan pengajar, meluaskan sempadan proses pembelajaran normal serta mendedahkan imaginasi kepada pelbagai jenis ransangan.

Muzium ini amat aktif sekali, ia telah menjanakan dengan luasnya program kebudayaan dan pameran pendidikan yang lain, bengkel dan persidangan. Pameran ini mempertemukan pencinta seni, pengelola seni dan sektor korporat dalam merayakan warisan seni kebanggaan negara dalam tahun yang sungguh bermakna ini.

Kini, Muzium ini menempatkan pelbagai koleksi artifak Asia yang luas, menampilkan tekstil, seramik, objek pertukangan dan kaligrafi. Terdapat lebih 300 lukisan-lukisan bersejarah dari istana Dinasti Qing abad ke-17 hingga ke-18, kepada 'Bundi School of Art' di India abad ke-18, dan juga karya-karya moden pelukis India MF Hussain yang amat dicari-cari. Kita berharap agar pameran ini dapat menengahkan betapa pentingnya hasil-hasil seni moden Malaysia dalam konteks yang impresif ini, dan menggalakkan lagi penyelidikan serta usaha untuk menjana semula aspek koleksi ini dengan lebih mendalam lagi.

Terima kasih.

Datuk Rafiah Salim
Naib Canselor

FOREWORD

FOREWORD BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

The plan to establish a museum in USM was initially proposed after the establishment of the School of Humanities and the introduction of the Fine Art Programme in 1971 and 1972 respectively. Since then, numerous exhibits, works of art and collections related to the arts and culture were acquired to complement the teaching and learning at USM. A special task force committee, under the patronage of the first Vice-Chancellor, the late Tan Sri Prof. Hamzah Sendut, undertook the acquisition endeavor. This initial effort was later supported by the second Vice-Chancellor, the late Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir. As a result, paintings, silverware, keris and traditional musical instruments were purchased as a part of the effort to set up the Museum and Art Gallery. T.K. Sabapathy was appointed as the first Honorary Curator. The appointment was later complimented by the official appointment of the Museum and Gallery's first Curator in 1981, Wan Zakaria Wan Ismail who was responsible in developing the collections into a full-fledge USM Museum and Gallery as it has been known until today.

For this, we have to thank and honour the late Tan Sri Prof. Hamzah Sendut, USM's first Vice-Chancellor for his far-sighted vision. It was due to his vision that USM has been credited as the first public university to formally introduce the fine arts, acting and directing within the matrix of a science-oriented university. The establishment of these disciplines became the launching pad for the preliminary idea of establishing a museum within the University's campus. The formation of the Museum's first committee in 1972 lead by its Acting Chairperson Edward Lim Huck Tee the then Chief Librarian, marked the beginning of USM's initial effort in establishing the USM Museum. The highly dedicated members of the committee consisting of Robert Van Neil, Paul Chang, A. Thomas Samy, K.J. Ratnam, T.K. Sabapathy, Benedict Sandin, Stephen Murphy and Sharom Ahmat began to embark on the process of researching, sourcing, purchasing, collecting, documenting, and displaying Malaysian cultural heritage. This initial effort was further supported by the following Vice-Chancellor, the late Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir.

The appointment of the Museum and Gallery's first curator, Wan Zakaria Wan Ismail in 1981 and the official opening of the USM Museum and Gallery in 1982 further augmented its growth. Wan Zakaria was responsible in developing the existing collections into a full-fledge USM Museum and Gallery as it is known until today. His contribution and dedication were continued by his successors Adnan Mat and Zolkurnian Hassan.

For the first fifteen years of its development, and with the assistance of several key lecturers in the then Pusat Seni (Art Centre) such as Redza Piyadasa, Chew Teng Beng, Lim Eng Hooi, Robert Crock, Ismail Hashim, Zakaria Ali, Ghouse Nassuruddin and Gulam Sarwar, the Museum began to grow into a centre for teaching, learning and research on modern Malaysian art, as well as traditional forms of the performing arts. The Museum also received donations and loans of artworks from several generous individuals, which have become a very significant mean of expanding and enriching its collections. Among our generous donors and benefactors are the family of the late Tun Dr. Ismail, Tan Sri Dato' Hanafiah Hussein, Dato' Dr. Tan Chee Khuan, Nirmala

Shanmughalingam, Chew Teng Beng, Lim Eng Hooi, Rahimie Haron, Raja Ahmad Aminullah, Taha Ismail, Tan Peng Hooi, James Sum and many more. Donations and loans until today remain an important approach to acquisition in enriching the present collection.

2007 is a very special year for the USM Museum & Art Gallery. Last March, it was inaugurated as the Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah. The inauguration is a part of the Museum and Gallery's 25 Years Anniversary and more importantly in conjunction with the celebration of our 50 years of Nationhood.

This special exhibition is a momentous marker for the Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah's maturity and its fresh realignment with the imperatives and challenges of the 21st century. It is an integral part of an extensive 'make-over' that includes upgrading its physical infrastructure, enhancing its resource and collection management, activating research and publication activities, developing a brand presence, establishing a strong national, regional and international network, as well as introducing new interactive and creative audience-development programmes. This exhibition also reflects the impinging need to professionally preserve, conserve and document USM Fine Art Collection in order to avoid it from becoming a forgotten legacy or relics of Malaysian visual art history. For the past two years, USM has embarked upon a research and re-evaluation of its existing Collection. The research and re-evaluation will hopefully identify gaps, weaknesses or incoherency in the existing acquisition practice.

It is on this basis that the Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah has for the first time decided to collaborate with the Asian Art Museum of Universiti of Malaya in a concerted effort to share the significance of their collections with the general public. Such collaboration will indirectly re-position both institutional Collections as a viable alternative that can be compared to other institutional collections such as the Collection of Bank Negara, Tenaga Nasional and Petronas Gallery.

The uniqueness of this exhibition does not only rely on the amalgamation of selected works by pioneer artists from both the USM and UM Collections, but also from the willingness of several contemporary artists of a younger generation to provide support and to allow their works to be exhibited along-side the works of the pioneers. The support is crucial due to the fact that it reflects the need for USM and UM to up-date, revive and revitalize the existing acquisition practice in order to make it more contemporary or in line with current practices and the imperatives of the 21st. century. Comparison and dialogue between the works produced by the pioneer generation and the present generation of young artists are critical, especially in unveiling common traits and prevalent themes that cut across generations for the past 50 years. It has to be noted that the present generation of young artists will eventually be read as pioneers of some sort and the prime movers for future generations.

Support from contemporary artists for this exhibition has been complemented by cooperation from several generous art collectors who were kind enough to temporarily loan precious guarded artworks from their private collections. It has to be acknowledged that the role of these collectors of modern art in Malaysia is extremely significant and has to be officially credited. In fact, it can be said that some of the best and most important works of modern art in Malaysia, especially during the 90s, can be traced to private collections of these collectors. This exhibition can be taken as a form of appreciation towards their contribution.

In addition, support from the sponsor Penjanabebas and co-organiser Valentine Willie Fine Art, reflects the fact that this exhibition represent not only the interests of USM and UM, but is also a collaboration between many parties who are key to the modern art scene in Malaysia. This includes the visual artists, academicians, curators, art writers, art collectors and art lovers, and gallery owners. As a parting note, on behalf of USM, I wish to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate all members of the working committee, as well as other supporting parties who have been working tirelessly for the past few months in assuring the success of this project. To all individual artists, the sponsors and benefactors who have supported this exhibition, I extend my warmest appreciation.

May Allah Bless all of us and grant us Strength and Guidance in pursuing our future endeavours in developing knowledge and artistic heritage.

Prof. Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
Vice-Chancellor

PERUTUSAN DARI NAIB CANSELOR, UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA (USM)

Usaha untuk menubuhkan sebuah muzium di USM disuarakan semenjak tertubuhnya Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Kemanusiaan pada tahun 1971 dan Rancangan Seni Halus pada tahun 1972. Semenjak itu, pengumpulan karya seni halus dan koleksi berkaitan dengan seni dan kebudayaan bagi kepentingan pengajaran dan pembelajaran mula dilaksanakan oleh Jawatankuasa Bertindak yang dinaungi oleh Naib Canselor USM yang pertama, Almarhum Tan Sri Prof. Hamzah Sendut. Usaha ini seterusnya digerakkan oleh Naib Canselor USM yang kedua, Almarhum Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir. Hasilnya, sebilangan lukisan, hasil pertukangan perak, keris dan alat-alat muzik tradisional mula dikumpulkan kearah merealisasikan penubuhan Muzium dan Galeri USM. Perlantikan T.K. Sabapathy sebagai Kurator Kehormat merupakan perkembangan positif kearah penubuhannya. Ini dilengkapkan pula oleh perlantikan Kurator pertama Wan Zakaria Wan Ismail pada tahun 1981 yang bertanggungjawab membangunkan himpunan koleksi yang ada kearah sebuah Muzium dan Galeri USM yang dikenali hingga kini.

Dalam hali ini, kita seharusnya berterima kasih dan memberi penghormatan kepada Almarhum Tan Sri Prof. Hamzah Sendut, Naib Canselor USM yang pertama, atas pandangannya yang jauh ke depan. Wawasan beliau telah menjadikan USM diakui sebagai universiti awam pertama yang berani memperkenalkan secara formal kursus-kursus dalam bidang seni halus, lakonan dan pengarahannya dalam sebuah universiti berorientasikan sains. Kewujudan kursus-kursus ini telah menjadi batu loncatan kepada ide awal menubuhkan sebuah muzium di dalam kampus. Pembentukan Jawatankuasa pertama untuk projek Muzium USM pada tahun 1972 yang diketuai oleh Pemangku Pengerusinya Edward Lim Huck Tee, yang ketika itu Ketua Pustakawan USM, menjadi penanda kepada usaha awal penubuhan Muzium USM. Ahli-ahli jawatankuasa berdedikasi yang terdiri dari Robert Van Neil, Paul Chang, A. Thomas Samy, K.J Ratnam, T.K. Sabapathy, Benedict Sandin, Stephen Murphy dan Sharom Ahmat mula mengorak langkah dalam menyelidiki, mencari, membeli, mengumpul, mendokumen and memaparkan warisan budaya Malaysia. Usaha ini seterusnya digerakkan lagi oleh Naib Canselor USM yang kedua, Almarhum Tun Hamdan Sheikh Tahir.

Perlantikan kurator pertama Wan Zakaria Wan Ismail pada tahun 1981 dan pembukaan rasmi Muzium dan Galeri USM pada tahun 1982, telah melengkap dan meningkatkan lagi pembangunan Muzium USM. Beliau bertanggungjawab membina himpunan koleksi sedia ada kearah sebuah Muzium dan Galeri yang kita kenali hingga kini. Sumbangan dan kegigihan beliau diteruskan oleh kurator-kurator seterusnya, Adnan Mat dan Zolkurnian Hassan.

Untuk lima belas tahun yang pertama pembangunan Muzium dan Galeri ini, dan dengan bantuan beberapa orang pensyarah di Pusat Seni ketika itu seperti Redza Piyadasa, Chew Teng Beng, Lim Eng Hooi, Robert Crock, Ismail Hashim, Zakaria Ali, Ghouse Nassuruddin dan Gulam Sarwar, Muzium USM mula berkembang menjadi sebuah pusat pengajaran, pembelajaran dan penyelidikan seni moden dan seni persembahan tradisi. Muzium dan Galeri USM juga menerima sumbangan dan pinjaman karya serta artifak dari beberapa individu yang bermurah-hati seperti keluarga Allahyarham Tun Dr. Ismail, Tan Sri Dato' Hanafiah Hussain, Dato' Dr. Tan Chee Khuan, Nirmala Shanmughalingam, Chew Teng Beng, Lim Eng Hooi, Rahimie Haron, Raja Ahmad Aminullah, Taha Ismail, Tan Peng Hooi, James Sum, dan ramai lagi. Sumbangan dan pinjaman sehingga kini menjadi satu kaedah perolehan utama yang dapat memperkayakan lagi koleksi sedia ada.

FOREWORD

Tahun 2007 ini merupakan tahun yang istimewa buat Muzium & Galeri USM. Pada bulan Mac yang lepas, ia telah dimasyhurkan sebagai Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah USM. Tahun 2007 dipilih bersempena sambutan 25 tahun penubuhan Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah dan lebih istimewa bersempena sambutan 50 tahun Kemerdekaan Negara.

Pameran istimewa ini merupakan antara penanda utama terhadap pendewasaan Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah dan penyesuaian dirinya dengan tuntutan abad ke 21. Ia merupakan sebahagian dari usaha naiktaraf dan penambah-baikannya yang meliputi peningkatan infrastruktur fizikal, pengurusan sumber dan koleksi, penyelidikan dan penerbitan, pembangunan jenama, pemantapan rangkaian kebangsaan, serantau dan antarabangsa, dan pengenalan program-program pembangunan pengunjung yang interaktif dan kreatif. Pameran ini juga mencerminkan keperluan penting untuk memelihara, memulihara dan mendokumentasi Koleksi Seni Halus USM secara lebih profesional agar ia tidak menjadi suatu warisan yang dilupai atau dianggap sebagai bahan purba dalam sejarah seni rupa moden di Malaysia. Sepanjang dua tahun yang lepas, USM telah memulakan kajian dan penilaian-semula terhadap Koleksi Seni Halus sedia ada. Kajian ini diharap dapat mengenal-pasti sebarang kelemahan, ketidakseimbangan dan kelopongan dalam amalan perolehan koleksi sedia ada.

Atas dasar inilah maka Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah USM telah buat julung kalinya berkerjasama dengan Muzium Seni Asia Universiti Malaya dalam usaha untuk berkongsi kepentingan koleksi seni halus masing-masing dengan khalayak umum. Gabungan ini secara tidak langsung dapat meletakkan-semula kedua-dua koleksi institusi ini sebagai suatu koleksi alternatif yang mampan yang boleh dibandingkan dengan koleksi institusi yang lain seperti koleksi Bank Negara, Tenaga Nasional dan Galeri Petronas.

Keunikan pameran ini bukan saja terletak pada gabungan karya-karya pilihan seniman perintis dari kedua-dua koleksi seni halus USM dan UM, tetapi juga pada kesudian beberapa orang pelukis kontemporari dari generasi muda memberikan sokongan dan mengizinkan karya-karya mereka dipamerkan beriringan dengan karya-karya seniman perintis ini. Sokongan para pelukis ini adalah sangat penting kerana ia mencerminkan keperluan mendesak USM dan UM mengemas-kini, menghidupkan dan menyergarkan semula amalan perolehan masing-masing agar lebih bersifat kontemporari dan sejajar dengan arus perubahan abad ke 21. Perbandingan dan dialog antara hasil karya para pelukis generasi perintis dan generasi baru adalah sangat penting, terutama sekali dalam mencungkil ciri-ciri sepunya dan tema-tema yang berkesinambungan dalam proses pengkaryaan yang merentasi sempadan generasi sepanjang 50 tahun yang lepas. Perlu diingat bahawa para pelukis baru kini bakal menjadi perintis dan membawa pengaruh utama untuk generasi pelukis yang mendatang.

Sokongan para pelukis ini dilengkapi pula oleh kerjasama dari beberapa orang pengumpul seni yang telah bermurah hati meminjamkan karya-karya pelukis kontemporari dari dalam simpanan mereka yang sangat dipelihara

rapi. Perlu diperakui bahawa peranan para pengumpul seni rupa moden Malaysia adalah amat bermakna dan perlu diberi pengiktirafan yang sewajarnya. Malah, tidak salah jika dikatakan bahawa beberapa karya penting seni moden Malaysia, terutama pada era 90an, terdapat dalam koleksi peribadi para pengumpul ini. Pameran ini boleh dianggap sebagai suatu penghormatan terhadap sumbangan mereka.

Selain itu, sokongan penajaan dari Penjanabebas dan penganjuran bersama oleh galeri swasta, Valentine Willie Fine Art mencerminkan bahawa pameran ini mewakili bukan saja kepentingan USM dan UM, tetapi juga suatu usahasama antara pelbagai pihak yang menjadi pemain utama dalam arena seni rupa moden Malaysia. Ini termasuklah para pelukis atau seniman, ahli akademik, kurator, penulis seni, para pengumpul dan pencinta seni, dan pengusaha galeri.

Akhir kata, saya bagi pihak USM ingin mengambil kesempatan mengucapkan berbilang terima kasih dan tahniah kepada kesemua pihak yang terlibat atas segala sumbangan dan usaha gigih yang telah diberikan bagi memastikan kelancaran pameran ini. Kepada semua individu pelukis, penganjur bersama, penaja dan penyumbang yang telah memberi sokongan padu terhadap pameran ini, saya menghulurkan salam penghargaan.

Semoga Allah Merahmati kita dan Menganugerahkan kita dengan Petunjuk terhadap segala urusan masa hadapan dalam membangunkan ilmu dan warisan seni.

Prof. Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
Naib Canselor

PENJANABEBAS

As we prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Malaysia's independence, *Between Generations*, the exhibition and the corresponding publication, represents an endeavor to create a space for the artists, the institutions and indeed all Malaysians to retrospectively examine the influence that many of the earliest Malaysians have had on us today.

The selection of modern Malaysian art to provide a platform for exploring Malaysian expressions of nationhood is particularly timely, within the context of this year's national day festivities. With many of the programmes across the nation focused on political leaders and the declaration of independence itself, what of the unsung Malaysian; such as people who through their personal expressions, have equally contributed to the development of a Malaysian identity.

As the nation grew over this fifty year period, Malaysians have time and time again shown resilience setting aside our cultural, spiritual and political differences in order to overcome whatever challenges the nation faced. And within the ranks of the rakyat, there has always been a community that has expressed Malaysia's external and internal challenges through art.

Between Generations, therefore provides an important way point in our nation's history to reflect upon these statements, not only as a source of documentary reference, for future generations to admire, but for the window in time that it creates, where statements of our artistic heritage can be reflected upon and considered by contemporary Malaysians, to explore influences and provide context that we hope will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of modern Malaysian art heritage when the nation turns 50.

Panjanabebas, as an association, was founded to create a platform for dialogue between our members, where they could engage with each other outside of their commercial operations, sharing knowledge and information as we commenced our journey into the unknown field of private power generation in Malaysia. While our members continue on this journey today, not only in Malaysia, but also in over 9 countries in which we now operate, the opportunity to pause and reflect, to document paths traversed remains a responsibility not only for Panjanabebas, but of all Malaysians, to provide context for future generations to share in our experiences.

Panjanabebas is particularly proud that this publication has created an opportunity for the association to work closely with such prestigious academic institutions as University Malaya and Universiti Sains Malaysia, institutions that have and will continue to prepare future generations of Malaysians to further develop our national identity.

Philip Tan
President Panjanabebas

Ketika kita membuat persediaan menyambut ulang tahun ke 50 kemerdekaan Malaysia, pameran 'Antara Generasi' serta buku karya terbitannya mewakili suatu usaha untuk mencipta ruang kepada para seniman, institusi-institusi termasuk juga semua rakyat Malaysia untuk mengamati kembali akan pengaruh dan kesan rakyat Malaysia terdahulu kepada kita hari ini.

Pemilihan seni moden Malaysia untuk memberikan satu ruang meninjau pernyataan kenegaraan Malaysia ini adalah amat bertepatan sekali di dalam konteks perayaan hari kemerdekaan tahun ini. Dengan kebanyakan program-program seluruh negara ketika ini tertumpu kepada pemimpin-pemimpin politik dan perisytiharan kemerdekaan, bagaimana pula dengan rakyat Malaysia yang kurang disanjung yang telah bersama-sama menyumbang kepada pembangunan identiti Malaysia secara individu.

Ketika negara berkembang dalam tempoh lima puluh tahun ini, rakyat Malaysia telah kerap menunjukkan daya ketahanan mereka dalam mengenepikan perbezaan antara budaya, rohani dan politik demi mengatasi cabaran yang dihadapi negara. Juga, di dalam setiap peringkat rakyat sentiasa terdapat satu komuniti yang meluahkan cabaran luaran dan dalaman Malaysia menerusi seni.

Oleh yang demikian, 'Between Generations' memberikan satu petunjuk perjalanan penting di dalam sejarah negara untuk kita renungi, bukan sahaja sebagai sumber rujukan dokumentari untuk generasi akan datang menghargainya, tetapi juga untuk jendela masa yang dihasilkannya yang mana kenyataan warisan seni kita boleh direnungi dan diteliti oleh rakyat Malaysia yang kontemporari, untuk menyelami kesan dan menyampaikan penghargaan dan kefahaman mendalam warisan seni Malaysia yang moden apabila negara ini berumur lima puluh tahun.

Penjanabebas, sebagai suatu persatuan, telah diasaskan untuk membina satu pelantar dialog antara ahli-ahli kami di mana mereka boleh bertemu sesama sendiri di luar kawasan pengendalian komersial mereka, berkongsi pengetahuan dan maklumat sambil memulakan perjalanan ke dalam bidang penjaan kuasa swasta yang masih mentah di Malaysia. Ketika ahli-ahli kami meneruskan perjalanan ini sekarang, bukan sahaja di Malaysia tetapi di 9 buah negara lain yang kami beroperasi, kesempatan untuk berehat seketika dan merenung, merakam laluan yang ditemphi, tetap menjadi tanggungjawab bukan sahaja untuk Penjanabebas tetapi untuk semua rakyat Malaysia, memberikan konteks kepada generasi akan datang bersama-sama berkongsi pengalaman kami.

Penjanabebas amat berbangga sekali kerana karya penerbitan ini telah menghasilkan suatu peluang kepada persatuan ini untuk bekerjasama dengan institusi-institusi ternama seperti Universiti Malaya dan Universiti Sains Malaysia yang telah dan akan meneruskan persiapan generasi Malaysia yang akan datang demi membangunkan identiti tanahair kita.

Philip Tan
Presiden Penjanabebas

CURATORS' INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

50 years is a long stretch in any modern art history, and indeed in any modern history. The intensity and pace of change and development, the tumultuous progress of the 20th century into the 21st, have caused most aspects of our experience of the world to transform seemingly overnight, or at least in one generation shift. Visual art practice has largely followed suit, reacting to and growing out of that experience.

The 50th anniversary of Malaysia's independence is as much a time to pause and think as it is a time to celebrate. It is an occasion to reflect on the trials and lessons of our country's nascent years, and on where we stand in relation to this now, no less in the visual arts than in any other field.

BETWEEN GENERATIONS: 50 YEARS ACROSS MODERN ART IN MALAYSIA is not an attempt to chart a linear, evolutionary art history. Rather this exhibition explores interconnections between the modern pioneers of art practice in our new nation, and Malaysian artists, born after Merdeka, working today. Although they are really only one generation apart, they might at the outset seem to come from different worlds, due perhaps to the transformation of our environment in the past few decades, but also to the rise of new technologies, methodologies and thinking in the visual arts in general. This exhibition brings the works of 25 key modern pioneer artists face to face with a broad spectrum of contemporary works, drawing on what binds and differentiates them in terms of their ambitions and strategies, in the context of what seem to be prevailing themes and disciplines in Malaysian art practice. At the same time, we have invited a group of contemporary artists, many of whom also work as art writers, curators and administrators, to share their personal responses to the role and influence of the artists of that earlier generation. By doing so, we hope that the centrality of our roles as curators for this exhibition can be negated while the readings on the influence of our pioneers can be further personalized, expanded and enriched by the participating artists themselves. It signifies an organic collaborative approach between curators and visual artists in providing multiple contexts for an art exhibition.

So this project is prompted, first of all, by the recognition of a need for more expansive dialogue in Malaysian art practice, and getting contemporary artists to engage with the work of their predecessors seems a step towards this. Concurrently it seems timely to assess and bring to the public light two important pioneering collections of modern art in Malaysia – belonging to University of Malaya and Universiti Sains Malaysia, respectively. Their historical contexts are telling. The collection at University of Malaya (UM) began as early as 1955, making it the first institutional collection of fine art in the country¹, which was later divided between UM and what had become the National University of Singapore in 1966, after the two countries parted. Universiti Sains Malaysia's (USM) collection was born in 1972, at a crucial, volatile, fertile juncture in Malaysian life and culture, shortly after the events of 1969. Issues of nationalism, modernity, identity were at the fore. Around the world, the 1970s marked a revolution in attitudes and ideas.

On a broader level, we hope that this exhibition and publication offers to a wide public, which includes university students from different disciplines, the opportunity to consider our modern art heritage and its relation

¹ See TK Sabapathy, "Past-present: A History of the University Art Museum" in TK Sabapathy (ed) (2002), *Past, Present, Beyond — Re-nascence of an Art Collection, Singapore: NUS Museums, National University of Singapore*

to the contemporary, to identify and relate to the prevailing concerns that have occupied artists in Malaysia and the different ways in which they have sought to deal with them.

A GENERATION OF PIONEERS

While modern art practice in the country cannot be said to begin with Merdeka, it was during the short run-up to independence and the two decades to follow that saw the coming together of an idea of a Malaysian art scene, and a Malaysian art discourse.

Prior to the 1950s, art activity in British Malaya was predominantly centred around Chinese artists, largely new immigrants, who set up studios and artists' associations in Penang and Singapore, and founded the first art college, the Nanyang Academy of Art (1938), while there were a few local artists like Abdullah Ariff, who had also set up a professional practice.

In the 1950s, various new factors began to give a firmer shape to the practice and appreciation of art around the country. Key artists' groups emerged. Local private collectors in Kuala Lumpur began to play a supportive role for artists. UM initiated their collection of local art. An Arts Council was formed (1952) and the National Art Gallery was established (1958), spearheaded by a forward-looking committee dedicated to promoting local modern art. Promising talents were sent abroad to study art and art education, who would later come back to practice, and develop art education around the country. In the 1960s as some artists returned from studies abroad, together with other professionals, activity expanded – more exhibitions were held, reviews were published, institutions like Bank Negara and the LNN² (now Tenaga Nasional) began collecting.

² LLN is a Malay acronym for Lembaga Letrik Negara

The “pioneering” generation of Malaysian artists we refer to in this project were mostly born between the late 1920's and late 1940's. Coming of age and forging their careers in the 50s and 60's, their work developed in this busy and interesting context of the building of a nation and the shaping of an art scene, which became more complex as the nation headed into the 70s.

For this project, we have tried to identify 25 artists who best represent this generation, whose works have somehow become iconic in our appreciation of Malaysian art, who forged new approaches, developed original interpretations of the Malaysian subject, who through their work, organisational activities and teaching influenced their peers and to some extent the work and thinking of younger Malaysian artists.

We do not claim that our selection is definitive, and there are significant and interesting figures who may seem to have been missed here. Our understanding of the art scene from this period is necessarily influenced by what has been previously published, by the choices made by key institutional and private collections, and the views and recollections of the art community. One key publication we have referred to is “Modern Artists of Malaysia”, a collection of articles written by the late Redza Piyadasa and TK Sabapathy (who also edited the

book), published in 1983³. Sabapathy and Piyadasa, through their research and efforts, have somewhat defined our picture of Malaysian art development up to the 80s. While we await further studies on the subject, we may use their findings and propositions as a template on which to posit new readings.

³ Piyadasa, Redza & Sabapathy, TK (1983), *Modern Artists of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka

The majority of the artists we have identified are included in that 1983 publication, with the exceptions of Joseph Tan and Lee Kian Seng. While each of the 25 artists has made an important individual contribution to Malaysian art practice, our point here is to look at their contribution in the context of the time in which they were working, representing the many different interests and developments in play. We do not mean to re-instate or reinforce a “canon” of modern Malaysian artists, but rather to enter this into discussion. The texts provided by several participating contemporary artists may serve as an appetizer for us to discuss the pioneers outside the framework of both Piyadasa and Sabapathy.

What did those pioneering years of the nation mean for the artists who were working then, and how did this translate into their artistic vision? What was the role or perception of the artist at the time? The very choice of art as a career must have seemed daunting in a new society with no real fine art tradition or infrastructure. Artists came from many different backgrounds, having trained abroad in the West (mainly the UK, but also the USA, France and Germany), in China or India or Indonesia, or locally in the Nanyang Academy which taught both traditional Chinese and early 20th Century European approaches, or independent study under other local artists. A nation was being born, its head full of ideals of democracy, independence, and a new patriotism. Society and lifestyles were changing as we modernised, looked abroad for ideas, set up models for governance, civic life, commerce, education. We were open to new trends in architecture, design, fashion and popular culture that had spread throughout the world. At the same time, the various communities that make up the nation wished to maintain and express their cultural identity.

The formation of artists’ groups must have been an important source of support, creating opportunities for the sharing of ideas, and critical exchange. Looking back, the character of these groups also tells us something about the dynamics of the early art scene. One example is The Society of Malay Artists (founded in 1949 in Singapore), with Mahat Chaadang as president. The Wednesday Art Group (founded 1952) and Penang Art Teachers’ Council (founded 1952 and later changed to Penang Teachers Art Circle in 1965) were spearheaded by British artist Peter Harris, and Tay Hooi Keat respectively. Both were educators who championed artistic freedom, encouraging their members⁴ to develop individual styles and approaches, while also providing informal training in technical skills, art history and aesthetics. The APS (Angkatan Pelukis Semananjung), later known as as Majlis Kesenian Melayu and Angkatan Pelukis SeMalaysia was established in 1956 by Indonesian-born artist Hoessein Enas and Yaacob Latiff, had a different agenda, focusing on the celebration of Malay culture in figurative depictions of kampung life, Malay beauty, family and community values. Meanwhile, the Chinese Nanyang artists remained active. Another important group that emerged was Anak Alam, a haven for young Malay poets, artists and thinkers⁵.

⁴ The Wednesday Art Group included Cheong Laitong, Patrick Ng Kah Onn, Syed Ahmad Jamal, Jolly Koh, Anthony Lau and Dzulkifli Buyong among others, and the Penang Art Teachers’ group, Abdullah Ariff, Kuo Ju Ping and Lee Joo among others.

⁵ including Latiff Mohidin.

In his essay “Merdeka Makes Art, or Does It”, in “Vision and Idea: Re-looking Modern Malaysian Art”⁶, TK Sabapathy neatly sums up the situation: “....artists in the mid- 50s developed diverse, competing aesthetic positions and continued to do so at the time of Merdeka and the years following political independence”. During those years, we see the introduction of a brand of “abstract expressionism”, self-consciously adopted by some artists as the ideal mode of expressing individual freedom, or even the spirit of independence. Syed Ahmad

⁶ TK Sabapathy (ed) (1994), *Vision & Idea : Relooking Modern Malaysian Art*, Kuala Lumpur: National Art Gallery

Jamal, Cheong Laitong, Yeoh Jin Leng, Anthony Lau, Ibrahim Hussein, Latiff Mohidin and Jolly Koh made up a loose group of abstract artists who would come to be seen as the heroes of Malaysian modernism. At the same time, we also see many powerful and distinctive interpretations of the Malaysian figure and Malaysian life (in the work of Zulkifli Dahalan as just one example), artists probing cultural traditions (such as Nik Zainal Abidin) and the sort of nostalgic romanticism epitomised by Hoessein Enas.

The late 60s, going into the 70s, saw a new wave of groundbreaking ventures. The Merdeka honeymoon ended abruptly with the race riots of May 1969. Issues of nationalism and ethnic agendas threw a shadow over many aspects of society, not least culture, and in 1971 they convened the National Cultural Congress 7. At the same time a new group of “returnees” from art schools abroad were itching to bring something new to the local scene. The likes of Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa set out to shift approaches to art, introducing new theories and strategies, and the use of alternative media. Exhibitions like the New Scene (1969) brought this to the public eye. Nirmala Dutt Shamughalingam, and Lee Kian Seng began working with installation, photography and performance. Artists like Ismail Zain, Joseph Tan, Choong Kam Kow, Long Thien Shih to name just a few, were exploring Op, Pop and other new approaches to painting.

So the early decades of art in the new nation were exciting times, a melting pot of approaches and ideas. There were competing ideologies, aesthetics, the western and the local (whether indigenous or inherited) and efforts to bring these together. Our “modern pioneers” covered a spectrum that went from realistic social narratives to conceptual installations. They were interested in our people, our lives, our landscape, what Malaysian art practice represented.

While a number of the artists mentioned continued doing important work through the 80s and in some cases the 90s through to today, by and large activity quietened down in the years that followed this formative period. The 80s and 90s saw the continued popularity of abstract and gestural modes of painting, producing most notably artists like Sharifah Fatimah Zubir, Fauzan Omar, Awang Damit Ahmad, Yusof Ghani and Tajuddin Ismail; while the late Kok Yew Puah stood apart for his powerful portrayals of the urban Malaysian. In terms of infrastructure, more money flowed into the arts, with corporations purchasing works for their buildings and even starting galleries. A few more commercial galleries began to appear. Importantly, local art education would have become quite established, with schools such as ITM (now UiTM) and the Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA) generating their own conventions or innovations, particular to their modes of teaching.

CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

It is only a short step from this point to today. How much has changed on the art scene since the Merdeka years?

The most notable change is one of demographics – the number of artists working today has multiplied manifold, as has the number of art students. The opportunities for these artists to show their works are also greater and more diverse, while the climate is also more competitive. The art market has grown tremendously with many new commercial galleries, and with the globalisation of the art scene, there are increasing numbers of residencies and international exhibitions that can open doors for emerging artists.

While, in terms of institutional infrastructure, we might lack some of the enthusiasm of the early years, there are more independent initiatives by artists. A new breed of artists' groups, such as Five Arts (a multi-disciplinary body begun in 1984 by visual and performing artists), the collaborative Matahati which has been going since 1989, and artist-run spaces such as Rumah Penan, Rumah Air Panas, Yayasan Kesenian Perak, Akal di Ulu, Spacekraft, Gudang and Lost Generation Space, have attempted to create an alternative sphere for practice, exhibition and discussion.

The makeup of the artist community has by and large kept its character. While it would be harder now to define the dynamics of the scene by specific groups and agendas, the unfortunately racialised aspect of art education has drawn some divisions and hampered discourse. A number of artists still choose to study abroad and come back to practice, and continue to straddle the lessons of their overseas training, and more local concerns. However, the fact that there are now very different sorts of audiences for art – international curators, art collectors, the younger masses, the general public, for example – helps to check easy divisions.

Moreover, the sheer proliferation of artists, coupled with the great openness of contemporary art, with its access to new technologies, methodologies, a plethora of visual and conceptual approaches, means that independence of mind is key to artistic survival. In the current climate, issues of culture, identity and tradition, while still important, have seemingly become less "imperative". Ironically, it has also at the same time become more complex and difficult, than during the nation-building years. The Malaysian reality has changed in very many ways. Many local artists have sought ways to translate this reality, at the same time pushing the possibilities of their practice in formal and conceptual terms. Artistic production has, perhaps, lost the "earnestness" of its early years, but makes up for it in being often witty, critical and sometimes brave.

Our selection of contemporary works, again, does not intend to create a definition of Malaysian contemporary art. We hope it represents some of the many approaches in current practice, and we particularly chose works we felt would relate in some way to the efforts and concerns of the preceding generation of Malaysian artists.

For the exhibition and this publication, we wanted to move away from the chronological approach which has often been employed in the reading of modern art in Malaysia. We have therefore chosen to organise this exhibition into flexible thematic "clusters" of works from both the pioneer and contemporary generations. Artists and artworks may not necessarily be placed according to their appearance in the time-line of history, but according to certain prevailing and changing themes.

The "clusters" or "themes" are based on several prevalent characteristics that have surfaced across 50 years of modern art in Malaysia, such as the figure, abstraction, the landscape, sculpture, cultural traditions, the search for new strategies and social consciousness. Our selection of works began with what was held within the UM and USM collections, and was extended to works from other institutional, private and artists' collections. We chose works which we felt best represented prominent tendencies of the artists, and also for their suitability to a chosen theme, considering also their physical condition. We particularly chose contemporary works that we felt might instigate dialogue if placed in a particular cluster.

We wanted to keep the exhibition modular, open-ended and fluid, to instigate multiple narratives that could be further explored in different trajectories by other curators, visitors and readers. The exercise is experimental and hypothetical, we hope it will provoke questions and different ways of reading the history of modern art in Malaysia – how certain artists or artworks can be related or associated or inter-connected in many different ways with other artists/artworks across generations, allowing for multidimensional, overlapping discourses.

We hope that the framework we have attempted reflects the hybrid, organic character that we feel has characterised the Malaysian art scene in both its founding years and today, with the proviso that we are functioning within certain limitations. We hope that the exhibition as a whole supports an argument that modern art in Malaysia has always been plural, multi-cultural, diversified, trans-disciplinary, cutting across borders (including geographical borders), and thus dynamic. That there is no frozen, monolithic, or 'absolute' way of representing 'modern Malaysian art history', or for that matter 'modern Malaysian art' or 'Malaysian identity' in either the local or the international art scene is implied by the diversity of the exhibited artworks.

We would like, finally, to suggest that there are many intertwining, inter-connected and inter-locking 'faces' of modern art in Malaysia, and that these different faces (or interfaces) may put forward contradictory pictures, which eventually have to be acknowledged, and even celebrated and respected (or debated and contested in a civilized way).

Beverly Yong and Hasnul J. Saidon

Kuala Lumpur and Penang

August 2007

PENGENALAN

50 tahun adalah satu tempoh yang panjang bagi apa jua sejarah seni moden, malah bagiapa jua sejarah moden sekalipun. Kepesatan serta kepantasan perubahan dan pembangunan, kemajuan dari abad ke 20 ke 21 yang gamat, telah menyebabkan banyak aspek dalam pengalaman hidup kita berubah sekelip mata, atau sekurang-kurangnya berganjak satu generasi. Amalan seni rupa juga turut berubah, memberi reaksi dan menjadi matang dari pengalaman ini.

Ulangtahun Kemerdekaan Malaysia yang ke 50 adalah satu masa untuk kita berhenti sejenak dan berfikir, serentak dengan masa untuk kita merayakan kemerdekaan. Ia adalah satu masa untuk kita merenung-semula segala dugaan dan pengajaran yang telah ditempuh semasa tahun-tahun awal kemerdekaan, dan tentang letak-duduk kita sekarang, dalam bidang seni rupa dan apa jua bidang-bidang yang lain.

ANTARA GENERASI: MERENTAS 50 TAHUN SENI MODEN DI MALAYSIA bukanlah satu percubaan untuk memetakan sebuah sejarah yang berurutan dan bersifat evolusi. Sebaliknya, pameran ini meneroka saling-kaitan antara para perintis amalan seni moden dalam Negara baru kita, dengan para pengkarya Malaysia masa kini yang lahir selepas Merdeka. Walaupun mereka hanya dibezakan oleh satu generasi, kemunculan mereka kelihatan seperti berasal dari dunia yang berbeza, mungkin kerana perubahan persekitaran dalam beberapa dekad yang lepas, juga kerana peningkatan teknologi, metodologi dan pemikiran baru dalam seni rupa secara amnya. Pameran ini mengumpulkan karya-karya oleh 25 orang karyawan perintis seni moden secara berdepan dengan sebuah himpunan karya-karya seni rupa kontemporari yang pelbagai. Pertemuan ini mencungkil apa yang menghubungkan dan membezakan mereka dari segi cita-cita dan strategi, dalam konteks tema yang berkesinambungan dan beberapa disiplin amalan seni di Malaysia. Pada masa yang sama, kami telah menjemput sekumpulan pengkarya seni rupa kontemporari, ramai dikalangan mereka merupakan penulis seni, kurator dan pentadbir seni, untuk berkongsi reaksi mereka terhadap pengaruh para pengkarya dari generasi terdahulu. Dengan cara ini, kami berharap dapat menipiskan pemusatan peranan kami sebagai kurator manakala pembacaan terhadap pengaruh para pengkarya perintis dapat dijadikan lebih peribadi, berkembang dan lebih kaya oleh para pengkarya yang terlibat. Ia mencerminkan satu pendekatan usahasama yang lebih organik antara para kurator dan pengkarya dalam menyediakan konteks untuk sesebuah pameran seni.

Oleh itu, projek ini telah dicetus pada mulanya, oleh kesedaran bahawa terdapat satu keperluan untuk ruang dialog yang lebih luas bagi amalan seni di Malaysia, dan usaha mendapatkan para pengkarya kontemporari untuk melibatkan diri dengan karya-karya perintis terdahulu merupakan satu langkah ke arah memenuhi keperluan ini. Serentak dengan ini, adalah tepat pada masanya untuk menilai dan membawa kepada pengetahuan khalayak umum dua koleksi perintis seni moden di Malaysia — milik Universiti Malaya dan Universiti Sains Malaysia. Konteks-konteks sejarahnya adalah penting. Koleksi Universiti Malaya (UM) bermula seawal 1955, menjadikannya sebagai koleksi seni halus bersifat institusi yang pertama di Malaysia ¹, yang kemudiannya dipisahkan antara UM dan National University of Singapore pada tahun 1966 selepas kedua-dua Negara terpisah. Koleksi Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) dilahirkan pada tahun 1972, pada persimpangan waktu yang penting, genting dan subur dalam kehidupan dan budaya Malaysia, tidak lama selepas kejadian pada tahun 1969. Isu-isu berkaitan nasionalisma, kemodenan, dan jati diri pada ketika itu hangat diperkatakan. Di seluruh dunia, tahun-tahun 1970an ditandai oleh revolusi dari segi sikap dan ide-ide.

¹ Rujuk TK Sabapathy, "Past-present: A History of the University Art Museum" dalam TK Sabapathy (ed) (2002), *Past, Present, Beyond — Re-nascence of an Art Collection*, Singapore: NUS Museums, National University of Singapore

Di tahap yang lebih lebar, kami berharap pameran dan penerbitan ini dapat membekalkan kepada khalayak yang lebih luas, yang meliputi para pelajar universiti dari pelbagai disiplin, peluang untuk mempertimbangkan semula warisan seni moden kita dan hubungannya dengan seni kontemporari, untuk mengenal-pasti dan menghubungkan kesinambungan persoalan-persoalan yang telah menyelubungi para pengkarya di Malaysia dan cara-cara yang berbeza dalam mana mereka telah mendepaninya.

SATU GENERASI PERINTIS

Manakala amalan seni moden dalam Negara ini tidaklah bermula dengan Merdeka, dalam masa singkat sebelum kemerdekaan dan dua dekad selepasnya, telah menyaksikan kehadiran ide tentang arena seni Malaysia, dan wacana seni Malaysia.

Sebelum 1950an, aktiviti seni di British Malaya adalah secara dominannya berkisar sekitar para pengkarya Cina, kebanyakannya para penghijrah, yang membuka studio-studio dan beberapa persatuan pelukis di Pulau Pinang dan Singapura, dan menubuhkan kolej seni yang pertama, Akademi Seni Nanyang (1938). Pada masa yang sama terdapatnya pengkarya tempatan seperti Abdullah Ariff, telah memulakan amalan profesionalnya.

Pada tahun 1950, beberapa factor baru mula memberikan bentuk yang lebih tegas terhadap amalan dan penghayatan seni di serata Negara. Beberapa pengkarya utama mula muncul. Pengumpul seni tempatan di Kuala Lumpur mula memainkan peranan sokongan untuk para pengkarya. Universiti Malaya memulakan koleksi seni tempatan mereka. Sebuah Majlis Seni dibentuk (1952) dan Balai Seni Lukis Negara telah ditubuhkan (1958), digerakkan oleh jawatankuasa yang berpandangan jauh dan berdedikasi dalam mempromosikan seni moden tempatan. Bakat-bakat yang berpotensi dihantar ke luar Negara untuk mempelajari seni dan pendidikan seni, yang kemudiannya pulang untuk menjadi pengamal seni, dan membentuk pendidikan seni di seluruh Negara. Pada tahun 1960 beberapa orang pengkarya pulang dari pengajian di luar Negara bersama dengan beberapa ahli profesional yang lain, telah menambahkan lagi aktiviti — lebih banyak pameran telah dilangsungkan, ulasan diterbitkan, beberapa institusi seperti Bank Negara dan LLN 2 (kini Tenaga Nasional) mula membeli karya-karya.

2 LLN adalah singkatan
Lembaga Letrik Negara

Generasi perintis pengkarya Malaysia yang kami rujuk untuk projek ini kebanyakannya dilahirkan antara lewat 1920an dan lewat 1940an. Menjadi matang dan menempa karier mereka sekitar 50an dan 60an, kerja-kerja mereka berkembang dalam konteks pembinaan sebuah Negara yang sibuk dan menarik dan dalam konteks pembentukan satu arena seni, yang menjadi bertambah kompleks manakala Negara ini menuju ke era 70an.

Untuk projek ini, kami cuba mengenal-pasti 25 orang pengkarya yang paling sesuai mewakili generasi perintis, dengan karya-karya yang telah menjadi ikonik dalam penghayatan kita terhadap seni Malaysia, yang telah membentuk beberapa pendekatan baru, membangunkan beberapa interpretasi asli tentang subjek-subjek Malaysia, yang menerusi kerja-kerja mereka, beberapa aktiviti organisasi dan pengajaran telah mempengaruhi rakan-rakan yang lain dan dari satu segi, mempengaruhi juga kerja-kerja dan pemikiran para pengkarya Malaysia yang lebih muda.

Kami tidak melaungkan yang pemilihan kami ini bersifat mutlak, malah terdapat beberapa insan penting dan menarik yang mungkin tidak disenaraikan di sini. Kefahaman kami terhadap arena seni dari zaman ini adalah

merujuk kepada apa yang telah diterbitkan sebelum ini, juga oleh pilihan-pilihan yang telah dibuat oleh beberapa koleksi peribadi dan institusi, dan pandangan serta renungan-semula komuniti seni. Satu penerbitan utama yang kami telah gunakan adalah "Modern Artists of Malaysia", satu kokeksi artikel yang ditulis oleh Allahyarham Redza Piyadasa dan TK Sabapathy (yang juga menyunting buku tersebut), diterbitkan pada tahun 1983. Sabapathy dan Piyadasa, menerusi penyelidikan dan usaha mereka, telah mentakrif gambaran pembangunan seni di Malaysia hingga ke tahun 80an. Sementara kita menunggu penyelidikan-penyelidikan mendatang tentang subjek ini, kita boleh juga menggunakan jumpaan-jumpaan dan usul-usul mereka sebagai satu bingkai untuk mencetuskan pembacaan yang baru.

3 Piyadasa, Redza & Sabapathy, TK (1983), *Modern Artists of Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka

Kebanyakan para pengkarya yang telah dikenalpasti adalah termasuk dalam penerbitan pada tahun 1983 itu, kecuali Joseph Tan dan Lee Kian Seng. Manakala setiap dari 25 orang pengkarya ini telah memberikan sumbangan peribadi terhadap amalan seni di Malaysia, matlamat kami di sini adalah untuk melihat karya-karya mereka dalam konteks masa yang melingkari kerja-kerja mereka, mewakili pelbagai kecenderungan yang berbeza dan pembangunan yang telah dilaksanakan. Kami tidak berniat untuk memperkukuhkan lagi satu 'kanun' para pengkarya seni Malaysia, tetapi untuk melibatkannya dalam satu perbincangan. Teks berkenaan para perintis yang disediakan oleh beberapa pengkarya kontemporari yang terlibat dalam pameran ini mungkin boleh membuka selera kita untuk membincangkan tentang para perintis ini di luar kerangka kedua-dua Piyadasa dan Sabapathy.

Apakah maknanya merintis sebuah Negara yang baru bagi para pengkarya yang berkarya ketika itu dan bagaimanakah persoalan ini dizahirkan menerusi visi artistik mereka? Apakah peranan dan persepsi para pengkarya ketika itu? Malah, pemilihan bidang seni sebagai satu karier merupakan sesuatu yang tidak digalakkan dalam sebuah masyarakat yang ketika itu tidak memiliki tradisi dan infrastruktur seni halus. Para pengkarya datang dari pelbagai latarbelakang, terlatih di Barat (kebanyakannya di UK, dan juga di USA, Perancis dan Jerman), di China, India atau Indonesia, atau menerima pendidikan tempatan seperti di Akademi Seni Nanyang yang mengajar kedua-dua tradisi seni China dan juga beberapa pendekatan Eropah abad ke 20, atau menerima pengajian bebas dari beberapa pengkarya tempatan yang lain. Sebuah Negara sedang dilahirkan, dipenuhi dengan idealisma demokrasi, kemerdekaan dan semangat cintakan Negara yang baru. Masyarakat dan cara hidup berubah sementara kita dimodenkan, melihat keluar untuk mencari ide-ide, membentuk model untuk kerajaan, kehidupan bermasyarakat, perniagaan dan pendidikan. Kita mendedahkan diri kepada aliran-aliran baru dalam seni bina, reka bentuk, fesyen dan budaya popular yang telah merebak ke seluruh dunia ketika itu. Pada waktu yang sama, pelbagai komuniti yang membentuk Negara ini berhasrat untuk mengekal dan menzahirkan jati diri budaya mereka.

Pembentukan beberapa perkumpulan pengkarya telah menjadi satu sumber sokongan yang penting, membuka peluang-peluang untuk perkongsian dan pertukaran ide kritikal. Apabila direnung kembali, sifat perkumpulan-perkumpulan ini juga memaklumkan kita tentang dinamika arena seni yang awal ini. Satu contoh adalah Persatuan Pelukis-pelukis Melayu (ditubuhkan pada tahun 1949 di Singapura) dengan Mahat Chaudhary sebagai presiden. Kumpulan Pelukis Rabu (ditubuhkan pada tahun 1952) dan 'Penang Art Teachers Council (ditubuhkan pada 1952 dan kemudiannya diubah kepada Penang Teachers Art Circle pada tahun 1965) telah digerakkan oleh pengkarya British Peter Harris, dan Tay Hooi Keat. Kedua-duanya merupakan pendidik yang memperjuangkan kebebasan artistik, menggalakkan ahli-ahli mereka untuk membangunkan stail dan pendekatan individu, pada masa yang sama membekalkan latihan tidak rasmi dalam kemahiran teknikal, sejarah seni dan estetika. Manakala APS (Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung), yang kemudiannya dikenali sebagai Majlis Kesenian Melayu dan seterusnya Angkatan Pelukis

4 Wednesday Art Group dianggotai Cheong Laitong, Patrick Ng Kah Onn, Syed Ahmad Jamal, Jolly Koh, Anthony Lau dan Dzulkifli Buyong antaranya, dan Penang Art Teachers' group, Abdullah Ariff, Kuo Ju Ping dan Lee Joo antara ahlinya.

SeMalaysia telah ditubuhkan pada tahun 1956 oleh pengkarya kelahiran Indonesia Hoessein Enas dan Yaacob Latiff, memiliki agenda yang berbeza, menumpukan kepada kebudayaan Melayu menerusi gambaran figuratif kehidupan kampung, keindahan Melayu, keluarga dan nilai-nilai komuniti. Sementara itu, para pengkarya Cina Nanyang terus aktif berkarya. Satu lagi kumpulan penting yang muncul adalah Anak Alam, tempat berkumpulnya para penyajak, pelukis dan pemikir Melayu 5.

5 termasuk Latiff Mohidin.

Dalam esei beliau "Merdeka Makes Art, or Does It", dalam "Vision dan Idea : Relooking Modern Malaysian Art" 6, TK Sabapathy dengan kemasnya meringkaskan situasi ini: "...pengkarya pada pertengahan tahun 50an membangunkan kedudukan estetik yang pelbagai dan saling bersaing, dan terus berkeadaan demikian pada masa sekitar Merdeka serta tahun-tahun yang menyusul kemerdekaan". Pada tahun-tahun tersebut, kita melihat pengenalan satu jenama "ekspresionisma abstrak", yang digunakan secara sedar oleh beberapa pengkarya sebagai satu kaedah penzahiran kebebasan individu yang ideal, malah sebagai satu semangat kemerdekaan. Syed Ahmad Jamal, Cheong Laitong, Yeoh Jin Leng, Anthony Lau, Ibrahim Hussein, Latiff Mohidin dan Jolly Koh membentuk satu kumpulan longgar pengkarya abstrak yang kemudiannya dilihat sebagai wira-wira modenisma Malaysia. Pada masa yang sama, kita juga melihat beberapa interpretasi yang tersendiri dan gagah terhadap figura dan gaya hidup Malaysia (dalam karya-karya Zulkifli Dahalan sebagai satu contoh), dengan pengkarya yang meneroka tradisi budaya (seperti Nik Zainal Abidin) dan juga romantisma nostalgik yang dijiwai oleh Hoessein Enas.

6 TK Sabapathy (ed) (1994),
Vision & Idea : Relooking
Modern Malaysian Art, Kuala
Lumpur: National Art Gallery

Lewat tahun 60an, dan menuju ke tahun 70an menyaksikan gelombang beberapa penerokaan yang memecah kelaziman. Bulan madu kemerdekaan terhenti secara mengejut dengan rusuhan kaum pada bulan Mei 1969. Isu-isu tentang nasionalisma dan agenda etnik menebarkan bayangnya pada beberapa aspek dalam masyarakat, tidak kurang dalam kebudayaan, dan pada tahun 1971, isu-isu ini dibincangkan dalam Kongres Kebudayaan Kebangsaan 7. Pada masa yang sama, satu kumpulan 'pengkarya yang pulang' dari sekolah-sekolah seni di luar Negara sangat teruja untuk membawa pembaharuan dalam arena seni tempatan. Pengkarya seperti Redza Piyadasa dan Sulaiman Esa memulakan usaha untuk menganjak beberapa pendekatan terhadap seni, memperkenalkan beberapa teori dan strategi baru, dan penggunaan media alternatif. Beberapa pameran seperti 'New Scene' (1969) membuka ini kepada pemerhatian khalayak. Nirmala Dutt Shamughalingam dan Lee Kian Seng mula menggunakan instalasi, fotografi dan seni persembahan. Para pengkarya seperti Ismail Zain, Chong Kam Kow, Long Thien Shih, sekadar menyebut beberapa nama, mula meneroka seni Op, Pop dan beberapa pendekatan lain dalam catan.

7 Kongres Kebudayaan
Kebangsaan dilangsungkan di
Universiti Malaya pada 1971

Oleh itu, dekad-dekad awal sebuah Negara baru merupakan waktu yang sangat mengujakan, satu percampuran pelbagai pendekatan dan ide. Terdapat beberapa ideologi yang bersaing, estetik, Barat dan Timur (samada pribumi atau diwarisi) dan beberapa usaha untuk menggabungkan kepelbagaian bersama. "Perintis moden" kita telah meliputi satu spektrum yang bermula dari naratif sosial yang realistik kepada instalasi konseptual. Mereka berminat terhadap rakyat kita, kehidupan kita, lanskap kita, bagaimana kita berfikir, dan apakah yang digambarkan oleh amalan seni Malaysia.

Sementara ramai dikalangan pengkarya yang telah disebut di atas masih menghasilkan karya-karya penting pada tahun-tahun 80an dan 90an, secara amnya, aktiviti pada tahun-tahun yang menyusul era awal adalah agak lembab. Tahun-tahun 80an dan 90an menyaksikan populariti berterusan kaedah catan abstrak dan gestural, menghasilkan beberapa pengkarya penting seperti Sharifah Fatimah Zubir, Fauzan Omar, Awang Damit Ahmad, Yusof Ghani dan Tajuddin Ismail; disamping mendiang Kok Yew Puah pula lebih menonjol menerusi gambaran

figuratif beliau tentang masyarakat bandar di Malaysia. Dari segi infrastruktur, pengaliran wang dalam kesenian semakin bertambah, dengan syarikat-syarikat membeli karya-karya untuk bangunan dan juga untuk membuka galeri. Beberapa galeri komersil mula muncul. Lebih penting lagi, pendidikan seni tempatan menjadi lebih teguh, dengan beberapa institusi seperti ITM (kini UiTM) dan Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA) memperkenalkan beberapa inovasi, yang berkait dengan kaedah pengajaran masing-masing.

AMALAN KONTEMPORARI

Dari detik awal ke hari ini merupakan langkah yang agak singkat. Sejauh manakah perubahan telah berlaku dalam arena seni sejak tahun-tahun kemerdekaan?

Perubahan yang paling ketara adalah demografi — jumlah pengkarya yang berkerja hari ini telah bertambah berlipat-kali ganda, sepertimana juga jumlah penuntut seni. Peluang-peluang untuk para pengkarya mempamerkan karya-karya mereka juga lebih terbuka dan pelbagai, manakala suasana persaingan makin meningkat. Pasaran seni telah tumbuh subur seiring dengan pertumbuhan galeri-galeri komersil, dan menerusi globalisasi arena seni, semakin banyak program residensi dan pameran antarabangsa yang membuka pintu kepada para pengkarya yang baru muncul.

Sementara dari segi infrastruktur institusi, kita mungkin tidak seghairah tahun-tahun awal, terdapat pula lebih banyak inisiatif bebas oleh para pengkarya. Kumpulan-kumpulan pengkarya yang baru seperti Five Arts (satu badan pelbagai-disiplin yang dimulakan pada tahun 1984 oleh beberapa pengkarya seni rupa dan seni persembahan), kumpulan Matahati yang telah wujud sejak 1989, dan ruang-ruang yang diusahakan oleh pengkarya seperti Rumah Penan, Rumah Air Panas, Yayasan Kesenian Perak, Akal di Ulu, Spacekraft, Gudang dan Lost Generation Space, telah cuba untuk mencipta sfera alternatif untuk amalan, pameran dan perbincangan.

Wajah komuniti pengkarya secara amnya masih mengekalkan karektornya. Manakala terdapat kesukaran untuk mentakrif dinamika arena seni berdasarkan kumpulan dan agenda yang khusus, aspek pendidikan yang malangnya diperkaumankan telah membawa sedikit perpecahan dan membatasi wacana. Beberapa pengkarya masih memilih untuk belajar di luar Negara dan pulang untuk berkarya, dan meneruskan pengajaran yang diperolehi dari luar dan juga dari permasalahan-permasalahan tempatan.

Lebih dari itu, pertambahan pengkarya, ditambah pula dengan keterbukaan seni rupa kontemporari, dengan akses kepada teknologi-teknologi baru, metodologi-metodologi, pendekatan-pendekatan konseptual dan visual yang melimpah-ruah, membawa makna bahawa kemerdekaan minda adalah kunci kepada daya hidup artistik. Dalam suasana terkini, isu-isu budaya, jati diri dan tradisi, sementara masih lagi penting, telah kelihatan menjadi kurang 'menekan'. Ironiknya, isu-isu ini pada masa yang sama telah menjadi lebih rumit dan sukar dari ketika zaman pembinaan Negara yang baru dahulu. Realiti Malaysia telah berubah dalam pelbagai cara. Ramai pengkarya tempatan telah mencari cara-cara untuk menterjemahkan realiti ini, pada masa yang sama melebarkan kemungkinan-kemungkinan dalam amalan mereka dari segi formal dan konseptual. Ketulusan yang ada pada era Merdeka dahulu mungkin semakin pudar dalam produksi artistik terkini, namun diganti pula dengan sikap cerdik-lucu, kritikal dan kadangkala berani.

Pemilihan karya-karya kontemporari pula, sekali lagi, tidak bertujuan untuk membentuk satu definisi seni kontemporari Malaysia. Kami berharap agar karya-karya ini mewakili pelbagai pendekatan dalam amalan terkini, dan kami telah memilih karya-karya yang boleh dikaitkan dalam beberapa cara dengan beberapa usaha dan persoalan yang dibawa oleh generasi pengkarya Malaysia terdahulu.

Untuk pameran dan penerbitan ini, kami berhasrat untuk menjauhkan diri dari pendekatan kronologikal yang sering digunakan dalam pembacaan seni moden di Malaysia. Oleh itu, kami telah memilih untuk menyusun pameran ini berdasarkan beberapa 'kelompok' tema pengkaryaan yang anjal dari kedua-dua generasi perintis dan kontemporari. Para pengkarya dan karya-karya tidak semestinya diletakkan berdasar kepada kemunculan dalam garis-masa sejarah, tetapi berdasarkan tema-tema yang berkesinambungan dan juga yang berubah.

'Kelompok' atau 'tema' ini adalah berdasarkan kesinambungan ciri-ciri yang telah timbul sepanjang 50 tahun seni moden di Malaysia, seperti figura, abstraksi, lanskap, arca, tradisi budaya, pencarian ke arah strategi baru, dan kesedaran sosial. Pemilihan kami bermula dengan apa yang terkandung dalam koleksi UM dan USM, dan dikembangkan kepada karya-karya dari koleksi lain-lain institusi, badan swasta dan para pengkarya sendiri.

Kami berhasrat untuk menjadikan pameran ini modular, terbuka dan mengalir, untuk mencetus pelbagai naratif yang boleh diterokai lebih lanjut dalam arah-arrah yang berbeza oleh para kurator yang lain, pengunjung dan pembaca. Usaha ini bersifat eksperimental dan andaian, dan kami berharap ia dapat menimbulkan beberapa persoalan dan cara yang berbeza dalam membaca sejarah seni moden di Malaysia — bagaimana segelintir pengkarya dan karya-karya boleh dihubungkan atau saling-berkait dalam pelbagai cara dengan para pengkarya/karya yang lain merentas generasi, justeru mengizinkan wacana yang bertindan dan pelbagai dimensi.

Kami berharap bahawa pemingkaian yang kami cuba ini mencerminkan sifat organik dan hibrid yang dirasakan telah memberi satu karektor kepada arena seni rupa tempatan ketika zaman awalnya dan juga hari ini, asalkan kita berfungsi dalam had-had yang tertentu. Kami berharap pameran ini secara keseluruhannya menyokong hujah bahawa seni moden di Malaysia sememangnya sentiasa plural, pelbagai-budaya, rencam, rentas-disiplin, dan menerobos sempadan (termasuk sempadan geografi), oleh itu dinamik. Bahawa tidak terdapat satu cara mutlak yang beku dan monolitik untuk menggambarkan 'sejarah seni moden Malaysia', atau 'seni moden Malaysia' atau 'Identiti Malaysia' di peringkat tempatan mahupun arena seni antarabangsa memang disarankan menerusi kepelbagaian karya-karya yang dipamerkan.

Akhir sekali, kami ingin mencadangkan bahawa terdapat banyak 'wajah' atau 'muka' yang saling-mengikat, saling-berkait dan bergumpalan dalam seni moden di Malaysia, dan wajah-wajah yang berbeza-beza ini (atau 'antaramuka') mungkin mengusulkan gambaran-gambaran yang bertentangan, yang akhirnya perlu diberi perhatian, malah dirai dan dihormati (atau dibahas dan diuji secara beradab).

Beverly Yong and Hasnul J. Saidon

Kuala Lumpur and Penang

August 2007

FIGURING THE MALAYSIAN

It is apt that we begin by asking who we are and what it means to be a Malaysian. A pioneer generation of artists, who witnessed the birth of a nation, formed the first impressions of a multi-ethnic Malaysian community. Concerns about creating an aesthetic identity (or identities) particular to this new community came together with diverse individual artistic approaches, giving birth to unique artworks that have become hugely significant from an artistic, historical and cultural perspective.

During the early decades, many local artists were trained in academic naturalism. Hoessein Enas, for instance, perfected this approach, producing works with a clarity accessible and appreciated by a wide audience. His large oeuvre consisted of portraiture and genre paintings and drawings that emphasized the idyllic and romantic characteristics of the Malay world.

At the same time, increasingly stylized approaches seemed to emerge from a deeper examination of Southeast Asian indigenous communities, their busy tropical surroundings and their lifestyle. Artists such as Chuah Thean Teng, who has been hailed as the father of batik painting, introduced new formal configurations in his depictions of men and women in everyday life that have now become iconic.

Young artists at the time, like Dzulkifli Buyong, Zulkifli Dahalan and Patrick Ng Kah Onn brought fresh, candid and deeply original approaches to the Malaysian subject, again creating some of the most memorable images to capture the local imagination.

Fifty years later, younger generation artists are now reassessing who we are as Malaysians. Who have we become?

Faced with different societal concerns in a rapidly changing world, artworks produced in more recent years reveal the flux, ambiguity and rapidly changing norms and rituals of Malaysian daily life. Issues faced by society today, such as commercialism, urbanization, consumerism and the dislocation of migrant communities have to be interpreted with new visual languages. Such artworks employ a wide range of strategies for visually narrating these changes. This includes appropriating Western-centred art approaches within local and regional contexts, or fusing them with Eastern or Southeast Asian artistic traditions, so that their artworks can be meaningfully read by those have experienced life as Malaysians.

MEMAHAMI PENDUDUK MALAYSIA

Adalah sesuai untuk kita bermula dengan bertanya siapakah kita dan apakah maknanya menjadi seorang rakyat Malaysia. Generasi awal pengkarya yang menyaksikan kelahiran negara, telah menjadi perintis yang membentuk tanggapan pertama masyarakat Malaysia yang berbilang etnik. Kebimbangan tentang mencipta satu (atau beberapa) identiti estetik khusus untuk masyarakat yang baru ini bertembung dengan pendekatan artistik individu yang pelbagai, seterusnya menghasilkan kerja seni yang telah menjadi amat penting dari segi pandangan seni, sejarah dan budaya.

Semasa dekad-dekad awal, kebanyakan pengkarya tempatan dilatih dalam naturalisme akademik. Hoessein Enas, sebagai contoh, menyempurnakan pendekatan ini dengan menghasilkan kerja yang amat jelas yang boleh difahami dan dihayati oleh audien yang besar. Keseluruhan hasil seninya terdiri daripada lukisan dan catan potret dan genre yang menampilkan keindahan dan karektor romantis komuniti tempatan Malaysia.

Pada masa yang sama, pendekatan dengan olahan gaya kelihatan muncul daripada penelitian mendalam terhadap masyarakat pribumi Asia Tenggara, persekitaran tropika mereka yang sibuk serta gaya hidup mereka. Para pengkarya seperti Chuah Thean Teng, yang dianggap bapa lukisan batik, telah memperkenalkan konfigurasi formal yang baru dalam penggambarannya tentang lelaki dan wanita yang menjalani kehidupan seharian. Kini, konfigurasi ini telah menjadi sesuatu yang ikonik.

Para pengkarya muda ketika itu, seperti Dzulkifli Buyong, Zulkifli Dahalan dan Patrick Ng Kah Onn telah membawa pendekatan yang segar, berterus terang dan sangat asli kepada subjek Malaysia, dan mencipta antara imej-imej yang paling diingati dalam menggambarkan imaginasi tempatan.

Lima puluh tahun kemudian, para pengkarya generasi muda kini perlu menilai semula siapakah kita sebagai warganegara Malaysia. Siapakah diri kita sekarang?

Berhadapan dengan persoalan-persoalan masyarakat yang berbeza dalam dunia yang begitu cepat berubah, kerja seni yang dihasilkan dalam beberapa tahun kebelakangan memperlihatkan ketidaktentuan, kesamaran dan norma serta cara hidup seharian rakyat Malaysia yang cepat berubah. Isu-isu yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat hari ini seperti komersialisme, urbanisasi, konsumerisme dan pemindahan masyarakat penghijrah perlu ditafsirkan menerusi bahasa visual yang baru. Kerja seni sebegini menggunakan pelbagai jenis strategi baru untuk menceritakan perubahan ini secara visual. Ini termasuk menggunakan pendekatan seni berpusatkan Barat dalam konteks tempatan dan serantau, atau menggabungkannya dengan tradisi seni Timur atau Asia Tenggara, agar kerja seni mereka boleh dibaca dengan lebih bermakna oleh mereka yang mengalami kehidupan sebagai rakyat Malaysia.



Amron Omar
Pertarungan, 1996
Oil Pastel on Paper
74cm x 54cm
Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman



Ahmad Fuad Osman
Apa Tengok-tengok,....
Ada Hutang Ka....?, 1999
Mixed Media on Paper
87cm x 64cm
Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman



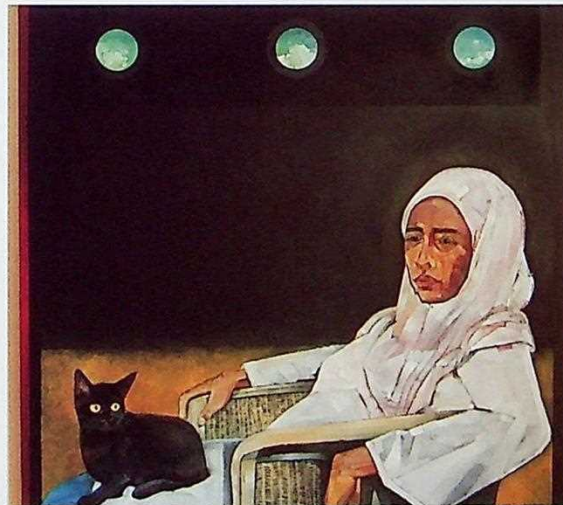
Mohd Hoessein Enas
Cucu, 1966
Pastel on paper
68.6x 55.9cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Chuah Thean Teng
Scarlet Lips, c. 1970
Batik
90 x 77cm
University of Malaya Collection



Mohd Hoessein Enas
Kakak dan Adik, 1959
Pastel on paper
78.7 x 63.5cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Anurendra Jegadeva
Malay Madonna with Cat - 'Hitam', 2004
Oil on canvas
91.5 x 91.5cm
Collection of Dr Steve and Rosemary Wong



Khoo Sui-Ho
Gadis Memegang Sejambak Bunga,
1967
Oil on canvas
96.5 x 96.5cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Kow Leong Kiang
 You Never Cared Really, 2005
 Oil on canvas
 89 x 89cm
 Collection of HRH Raja Nazrin Shah

Nadiah Bamadhaj
 Menelan Kejut, Termuntah Diam, 2006
 Charcoal on Paper Collage
 46 x 158cm
 Collection of Pakhruddin and
 Fatimah Sulaiman



Yau Bee Ling
 Family Life, 1995
 Oil on canvas
 90 x 95.5cm
Private Collection



Chuah Thean Teng
 Untitled, 1972
 Batik
 74 x 56cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

Dzulkifli Buyong
Mosquito Net (Kebahagiaan Hidup), 1964
Pastel on paper
56 x 76cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection





Khalil Ibrahim
 Aku Sudah Cukup, 1983
 Batik
 85 x 105cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Chang Fee Ming
 Food From the Earth, 2000
 Watercolor on paper
 56 x 76cm
 Collection of HRH Raja Nazrin Shah



Lai Foong Moi
Indian Curry, 1959
Oil on canvas
73 x 86cm
University of Malaya Collection



Chong Siew Ying
The Waiting, 2000
Oil on canvas
70 x 180cm
Private Collection



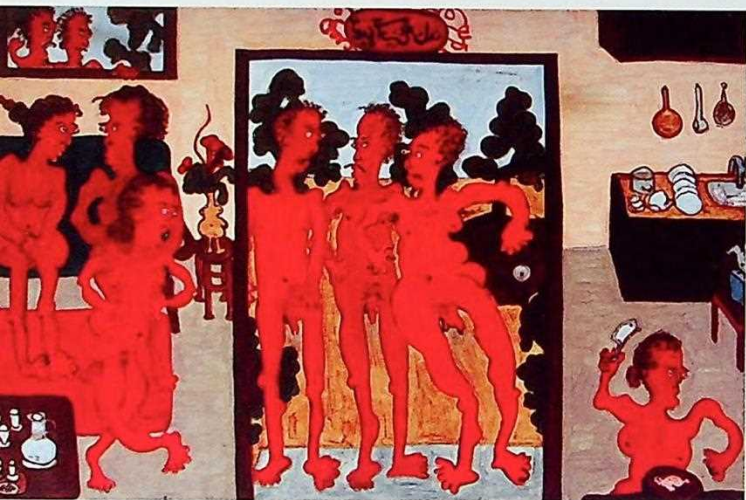
Wong Hoy Cheong
In Search of Faraway Places, 1986
Pencil on paper
50 x 52 cm
Collection of Valentine Willie



Patrick Ng
Di Tepi Sungai, 1973
Oil on canvas
119 x 119cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Noor Mahnun Mohamed
The Couple, 2005
Oil on linen
180 x 200cm
Artist's Collection



Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan
Ruang Dapur, 1978
Acrylic on canvas
65 x 102cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

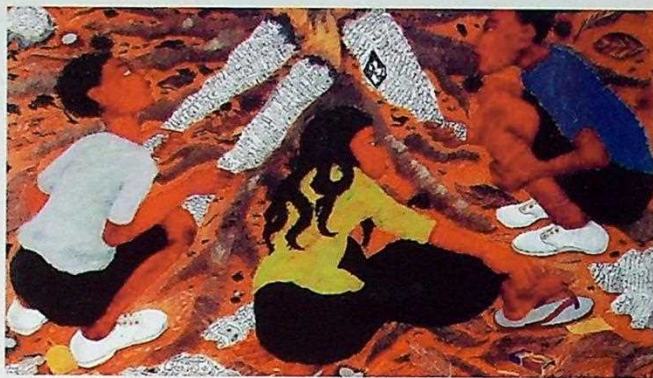


Zulkifli Yusoff
Yang Arif, 2001
Steel Sculpture
101.5cm x 35.6cm x 20.3cm
*Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman*

Chang Yoong Chia
A Pick-up at the Train Station, 2006
Oil on canvas
64 x 170cm
Collection of Ng Sek San and Carolyn Lau



Noor Azizan Paiman
The Challenger I Page II, 2007
Mixed media on paper
84 x 59 cm
Artist's Collection



Dzulkifli Buyong
 Burning Ants, 1967
 Pastel on paper
 57.7 x 99.5cm
 National Art Gallery Collection

My first visit to the National Art Gallery coincided with my first glimpse of a Dzulkifli Buyong. 'Balai' at the time was situated at the pre-independence building that was formerly the Majestic Hotel. I was still an art student trying to figure out the artworks in there, unsure of my assessment of their merit, when suddenly my eyes were caught by the strange pastel drawing of Buyong's "Burning Ants".

Dzulkifli Buyong was born in 1948. Before he reached 19 he was hailed as a child prodigy and a darling of the Kuala Lumpur art scene. Working under the tutelage of his secondary school art teacher Patrick Ng Kah Onn, and subsequently his membership of the Wednesday Art Group during the 1960s shaped his unique and deeply personal depiction of children at play, which firmly placed him as part of the canon of early post-Independent art in Malaysia. The rest of his life, however, remained a closed door to a lot of people and his death in 2004 was a quiet affair unknown to many.

Peter Harris, then superintendent of art for the Federation of Malaya founded The Wednesday Art Group. Established in 1952, it attracted artists and enthusiasts who gathered together on Wednesdays and Saturdays for art lessons, performed plays and other exchanges.

The group's core emphasis was that art was a means for self-expression and thus permitted a wide range of imagery and pictorial statements. Notable members of the group included Syed Ahmad Jamal, Cheong Laitong and Jolly Koh, who went on to establish Abstract Expressionism as a major presence in Malaysian art, an influence that was strongly felt well into the early 90's. The figurative approaches of members like Patrick Ng and his protégé Dzulkifli Buyong were overshadowed by the prevailing modes of Abstract Expressionism in practice at the time.

Because of his vivid depiction of children's games to the point that they can be accurately identified, Buyong's works are often mistaken for expressions of a naïve and straightforward point of view of the children's world, thus overlooking their real value and significance. Children play because it is fun. But this is also part of a very complicated socialization process for a child to prepare himself for the adult world. A game, to be enjoyed and to be played successfully, is an externalization of one's inner world into the outer world, and requires all its players to follow a set of rules.

Buyong's best works were done when he was in his teens, during his secondary school years and his Wednesday Art Group days, when he was growing from a boy into a man, at a time when Malaysia was in transition – a newly independent country trying to shake off her colonial past. However the children's games in his works are predominantly played by primary-school-aged children. Set within his own timeline, that would mean the twilight years of British rule in Malaya. This body of Buyong's work, therefore, is unique because it contained within it the transitional spirit of a boy turning into a man in a country in the first stages of its development.

Buyong's imageries are derived from two periods of his life: The children's games from his pre-pubescent days, and the everyday objects with which these games are played which belong to his teenage years in the sixties. When scrutinized carefully, one can even precisely identify the details in these images. The cigarettes boxes in "Meniup Jatuh" and the jawi newspapers in his "Burning Ants" and "Paper Boats" are some examples. The children perhaps served as his alter egos, a way for him to reflect on his surroundings in a pictorial form. One can also catch a shadow of Buyong's self-portrait in the form of a Victoria Institution logo on an exercise book at the lower right corner of "Paper Boats". The newspapers in his drawings seem to

be copied from actual newspapers during his time. They serve not as social statements but as generation markers of sorts.

My first impression of Buyong's "Burning Ants" is closely linked with my first impression of the National Art Gallery. Nestled opposite the capital's train station, 'Balai' conjured up an impression of the colonial past we inherited, an inheritance we are now unsure we want to remember. Now no longer functional and the train station facing it equally vacant, a nagging thought has crept up in my mind: the Buyong seemed to belong in that old building which housed the nation's modern artistic treasures. Perhaps it fitted well there because his works were an expression of the idealism of his time, of a newly independent country. This idealism has since morphed into a different reality.

Buyong's 'absence' from the art scene since the seventies is in part due to his private nature and an unprolific output. But it was also due to the direction which Malaysian art developed in subsequent years. His colleagues from the Wednesday Art Group who favored Abstract Expressionism came to dominate the scene. In Malaysia's search for an Islamic identity, many of her artists began to question the use of figuration in their works and Abstract Expressionism may have seemed a logical way out for many.

Like his scenes of children at bedtime depicted in "Hantu" and "Kebahagiaan Hidup", Buyong seems to have gone quietly into the night.

Chang Yoong Chia
19 July 2007

Lawatan saya yang pertama ke Balai Seni Lukis Negara bertembung dengan pandangan saya yang pertama dengan **Dzulkifli Buyong**. 'Balai' pada ketika itu terletak di bangunan pra-merdeka yang dulunya merupakan Hotel Majestik. Saya ketika itu masih seorang pelajar seni yang cuba memahami karya-karya seni di situ, dan tidak pasti tentang penilaian saya terhadap kehebatan karya-karya yang ada apabila dengan tiba-tiba mata saya ditangkap oleh sebuah karya pastel yang pelik berjudul "Membakar Semut" oleh Dzulkifli Buyong.

Dzulkifli Buyong dilahirkan pada tahun 1948. Sebelum mencecah usia 19, beliau telah pun digelar sebagai seorang kanak-kanak pintar dan seorang yang disayangi dalam arena seni di Kuala Lumpur. Pengalaman bekerja dibawah bimbingan guru sekolah menengah beliau Patrick Ng Kah Onn, dan kemudiannya menjadi ahli Kumpulan Pelukis Rabu pada sekitar 1960an telah membentuk ciri-ciri unik dan sangat peribadi dalam gambaran beliau terhadap kanak-kanak yang sedang bermain, yang secara kukuhnya telah meletakkan beliau sebagai antara tokoh dalam era pasca-merdeka untuk seni moden di Malaysia. Baki hayatnya, bagaimanapun, terus tertutup dan kematian beliau pada tahun 2004 tidak begitu diketahui oleh ramai orang.

Peter Harris, yang ketika itu merupakan Superintendent of Art untuk Persekutuan Tanah Melayu telah menubuhkan Kumpulan Pelukis Rabu. Ditubuhkan pada tahun 1952, ia telah menarik ramai pelukis dan peminat yang berkumpul pada setiap hari Rabu dan Sabtu untuk mengikuti kelas-kelas lukisan, membuat persembahan dan lain-lain bentuk pertukaran ilmu.

Penekanan utama Kumpulan ini adalah seni sebagai satu cara untuk mengekspresi diri yang seterusnya mengizinkan terbentuknya pelbagai jenis imejan serta pernyataan bergambar. Antara ahli-ahli yang dikenali pada ketika itu termasuklah Syed Ahmad Jamal, Cheong Lai Tong dan Jolly Koh, yang telah membentuk

aliran Ekspresionisma Abstrak sebagai suatu kuasa utama dalam seni moden di Malaysia, suatu pengaruh yang dirasai hingga awal tahun 90an. Pendekatan figuratif oleh ahli-ahli seperti Patrick Ng dan anak didik beliau Dzulkifli Buyong telah dibayangi oleh pendekatan Ekspresionisma Abstrak yang lebih menonjol ketika itu.

Oleh kerana gambaran beliau yang begitu jelas tentang alam permainan kanak-kanak hingga ianya dapat dikenal dengan tepat, karya-karya Buyong sering disalahtafsir sebagai suatu ekspresi yang naif dan pandangan yang lurus-bendul tentang alam kanak-kanak, justeru menidakkan nilai dan kepentingan sebenar karya-karyanya. Kanak-kanak bermain kerana ia menyeronokkan. Tetapi, ini juga merupakan sebahagian dari proses sosialisasi yang kompleks untuk kanak-kanak menyediakan diri mereka bagi menghadapi alam dewasa. Sesuatu permainan, yang dinikmati dan dimainkan dengan jayanya, adalah penzahiran dunia dalaman seseorang kepada dunia luaran, dan menuntut para pemainnya mematuhi satu set peraturan yang tertentu.

Karya-karya terbaik Buyong dihasilkan ketika usia remaja, ketika tahun-tahun beliau berada di sekolah menengah dan ketika beliau bersama dengan Kumpulan Pelukis Rabu, apabila beliau membesar dari seorang kanak-kanak kepada seorang lelaki, ketika Malaysia sedang rancak berubah — sebagai sebuah Negara merdeka yang cuba menanggalkan saka kolonialnya yang lepas. Bagaimanapun, permainan dalam karya-karya beliau kebanyakannya dimainkan oleh kanak-kanak sekolah menengah. Diletakkan mengikut unjuran masa beliau sendiri, ini bermakna karya-karya beliau merujuk kepada zaman penjajahan British di Malaya. Oleh itu, himpunan karya-karya ini adalah unik di Malaysia kerana ia mengandungi semangat perubahan dari seorang kanak-kanak yang bertukar menjadi lelaki dewasa di sebuah Negara yang juga sedang mengalami perubahan pertama dalam proses pembangunannya.

Imejan Buyong merujuk kepada dua period dalam kehidupannya. Permainan kanak-kanak adalah dari zaman kanak-kanak dan objek seharian yang digunakan dalam permainan yang digambarkan merujuk kepada zaman remajanya sekitar 60an. Apabila dikaji secara halus, seseorang akan dapat mengenalpasti beberapa perincian dalam imejan-imejan beliau. Kotak-kotak rokok dalam “Meniup Jatuh” dan suratkhobar jawi dalam

“Membakar Semut” dan “Bot Kertas” adalah antara contoh perincian tersebut. Kanak-kanak yang digambarkan mungkin berfungsi sebagai ‘alterego’ beliau, satu cara untuk beliau membayangkan persekitaran beliau dalam bentuk lukisan. Seseorang itu juga boleh menangkap bayangan potret diri Buyong dalam bentuk logo Victoria Institution yang tertera di atas buku latihan di sebelah kanan bawah karya “Bot Kertas”. Suratkhobar dalam lukisan-lukisan beliau seperti disalin dari suratkhobar sebenar pada zaman itu. Namun, ia berfungsi sebagai suatu pernyataan sosial bagi sesuatu generasi.

Pandangan saya yang pertama terhadap karya “Membakar Semut” adalah berkait rapat dengan pandangan pertama saya tentang Balai Seni Lukis Negara. Terletak bertentangan dengan stesen keretapi ibu Negara, ‘Balai’ membentuk suatu pandangan tentang sejarah kolonial yang kita warisi, suatu warisan yang kita tidak begitu pasti mahu mengingatnya. Kini tidak lagi digunakan, manakala stesen keretapi didepannya pula semakin sepi, suatu fikiran yang sering menghantui saya mula menyusup minda: Bahawa karya-karya Buyong nampaknya lebih serasi dengan bangunan lama sebelum ini yang merumahkan khazanah artistik Negara.

Ketiadaan Buyong dari arena seni pada tahun 70an adalah antaranya kerana sikap beliau yang sangat menyendiri dan juga pengeluaran karya beliau yang tidak begitu prolifik. Akan tetapi, ia juga disebabkan oleh arah perkembangan seni moden di Malaysia pada tahun-tahun berikutnya. Rakan-rakan beliau dari Kumpulan Pelukis Rabu yang memilih Ekspresionisma Abstrak mula mendominasi arena tersebut. Dalam pencarian Malaysia kearah jati diri Islam, ramai pelukisnya mula menyoal penggunaan figura dalam karya-karya mereka dan Ekspresionisma Abstrak mungkin merupakan satu jalan penyelesaian yang logikal.

Seperti juga adegan kanak-kanak sebelum tidur yang digambarkan dalam “Hantu” dan “Kebahagiaan Hidup”, Buyong seakan hilang dalam diam malam.

Chang Yoong Chia (*trans. HJS*)
19 July 2007

RABU

Dzul mencangkung di atas batu. Dia membebel.

Tanah. Air.

Agak terlewat untuk menanam bendera.

Seketul batu di bucu pagar.

Air. Air.

Bucu tadi semakin karat.

Tanah yang berbau masih dicari pembelinya.

Kanak-kanak itu menunggu yang esoknya.

Bendera dikibar melintang.

Tajak tanah semasa renyai seluas bendera yang itu juga.

Tanah. Air.

Tanam.

Sampul surat berisi rumput. Dikirim Professor yang Diraja.

Pemerintahan miang sipucuk rebung selari adat.

Akanku Tanya pada kuku apa khasiat tangan simenantu.

Tidak dijawab seribu tahun juga.

Ibrahim mengukir senyum. Melerek gelihatinya melihat pengkarya yang tersipu malu. Dzul. Malu-malu kucing.

Ibrahim di suruh ziarah Dzul dari Kak Azah.

Tegap Ibrahim, sasa Ibrahim, melenyap terus badannya. Ibrahim tidak berkawan dengan Dzul. Dia amat gemar kerja Dzul. Dzul akhirnya bertemankan Mukhlis dengan botol-botolnya. Latifah sudah mengundang. Kak Azah yang menasihati senarainya.

Senarainya: Cinta hati Samat. Akhirnya Samat mati petang Rabu.

Penjajah Kangaroo, tuan punya Samat.

Penjajah Pendidikan, tuan punya Rabu.

Cikgu Ng, cikgu sayang.

Dzul yang belum bertemu 'Puri'.

Ibrahim yang menggelapkan bendera kerana terlalu terang.

Disenarai pendekkan lagi: Samat.

Dzul pembawa kotak dan makanan 'Puri'.

Ibrahim bertemankan Kathleen ke panggung wayang.

Lagi pendek: Dzul bersama Kak Azah,

Kak Azah membawa Ibrahim.

Hari Rabu Dzul keluar pagi, pagi hari Jumaat Latifah yang sebenarnya menjamu lagi, Ibrahim yang meraikan setiap hari. Kak Azah ini siapa?

Jamuan Latifah sudah kecundang akan ditangan Telawi yang sering mengundang...

Sooshie Sulaiman



Mohd Hoessein Enas
Portrait of Tun Dr Ismail, 1967
Oil on canvas
99 x 73.7cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Mohd Hoessein Enas
Portrait of Toh Puan Norashikin, 1968
Oil on canvas
99 x 73.7cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

Mohd. Hoessein Enas (1924–1995) was called “The Father of Malaysian Portrait Painting” and “The Man With the Golden Arm”. Born in Indonesia, he was, true to his nicknames, one of the most prolific portrait painters to have arrived on this shore. A selftaught artist, he started with charcoal drawings when he was quite young and with his father’s encouragement, the young artist pursued this interest that later became his profession. Not having a formal art education background, Hoessein Enas’s talent was further honed by oil painting lessons given to him by a Japanese artist during the war where he learned to draw and paint from life. He moved to Malaya at the end of December 1947 when he was 23 years old, first to Singapore and then Penang, before settling in Kuala Lumpur in his pursuit to become a full-time painter. With a successful first (two-man) show in 1949 at the British Council, Hoessein Enas’s career as an artist began.

A figurative painter, Hoessein Enas is well-known for his portraits – his numerous head studies in pastel and oil, his full-length portrait painting commissions for the who’s-who of Malaysia: prime ministers, politicians and kings. But he also drew and painted ordinary people, from all walks of life, the different races and ethnic groups, from east to west coast, from semenanjung to east Malaysia. His portfolio of portraits, if assembled together, would give us a picture of how richly diverse we were. (He also loved drawing women). He was influential and seen as

a mentor to many young artists who started to work in figurative painting. He started “Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung” as a group to bring the artists together.

University Sains Malaysia has in its collection two paintings by Hoessein Enas, “Potret Tun Dr. Ismail” (1967) and “Potret Toh Puan Norashikin” (1968). Both were painted in oil in a very formal type of portraiture. Tun Dr. Ismail is holding a pipe in his left hand while the right hand supports itself at the edge of a round table with a thick glass ashtray; he is bespectacled, in a severe black suit; at the back, on the right side of the picture, a nearly monochromatic composition except for the red books or files, a microscope on a table to allude to the sitter’s profession. His demeanor is more reserved in comparison to Toh Puan Norashikin’s in her portrait – she looks haughty, but approachable. Mostly painted in warm colours, she is wearing a beautiful golden long kebaya, her handbag draped on her left arm as it holds in its pose, showing her diamond ringed finger.

The first Hoessein Enas I ever came across was a drawing in the possession of the artist Sivarajah Natarajan. Siva’s studio was near the house I was renting at Sg. Penchala. It was a head study in pastel, a lovingly executed “Orang Asli Girl” (1963) in three-quarter profile. Looking at the drawing it reminded me of the style of my father’s drawings of my mother. He was a school teacher in Kelantan. He sketched and painted as a hobby and the subjects were usually our village landscape or portraits, mostly of my mother. He did mostly ink drawings, watercolours and oil on masonite board paintings. I remember my father’s painting of my mother in a short lace kebaya and sarong, sitting on the beach, looking directly at the viewer. It was painted in the 60’s by my dad. The painting’s whereabouts are unknown now.

There is a picture of Hoessein Enas in his temporary studio in Kota Bharu in 1952. He had only been in Malaya for five years, but he had already established himself as the foremost portrait painter of the country. His reputation must have influenced, not just younger artists, who looked up to him and tried to follow his style, but anybody with a creative disposition, to pick up the brush and paint. When I think of the painting of my mother, I see a continuation of Hoessein Enas’s legacy – the influence that inspired my father to paint and then later to teach my older siblings and I to draw, and how that began my interest in the visual arts.

Noor Mahnun Mohamed
Kuala Lumpur, August 2007

Mohd. Hoessein Enas (1924 –1995) digelar sebagai “Bapa Catan Potret Malaysia” dan “Manusia Bertangan Emas”. Dilahirkan di Indonesia dan sesuai dengan gelaran di atas, beliau merupakan antara pelukis catan potret yang paling prolifik pernah berhijrah ke Malaysia. Sebagai seorang pelukis yang belajar-sendiri, beliau bermula dengan lukisan-lukisan pensil arang ketika masih muda dan dengan galakan bapanya, pelukis muda ini meneruskan minat beliau hingga menjadi seorang pelukis sepenuh masa. Walaupun tidak mendapat pendidikan formal, bakat Hoessein Enas telah dipertajamkan menerusi pengajaran catan minyak oleh seorang pelukis Jepun ketika zaman perang. Dari sinilah beliau belajar melukis secara langsung. Beliau berhijrah ke Malaya pada penghujung bulan Disember 1947 ketika berusia 23 tahun, mulanya ke Singapura dan kemudian ke Pulau Pinang sebelum menetap di Kuala Lumpur dalam mencapai cita-citanya sebagai seorang pelukis sepenuh masa. Karier beliau sebagai seorang pelukis bermula menerusi pameran pertama beliau (Pameran Dua Pelukis) pada tahun 1949 di Kedutaan British.

Sebagai seorang pelukis figuratif, Hoessein Enas dikenali menerusi catan-catan potret beliau — menerusi kajian-kajian potret dalam medium pastel dan cat minyak, juga potret penuh yang ditempah oleh kalangan orang penting dan ternama di Malaysia: perdana menteri, ahli politik dan raja-raja. Namun demikian, beliau juga melukis orang biasa dari pelbagai latarbelakang kaum atau kumpulan etnik, dari pantai timur ke pantai barat, dari semenanjung ke Malaysia Timur. Sekiranya portfolio potret beliau dikumpulkan, ia akan memberi kita gambaran tentang betapa kaya dan pelbagai kita (beliau juga sangat gemar melukis wanita). Beliau amat berpengaruh dan dilihat sebagai mentor kepada ramai pelukis muda yang baru bertapak dalam catan figuratif. Beliau menubuhkan “Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung” sebagai satu kumpulan yang dapat mengumpulkan para pelukis.

Koleksi Seni Halus Universiti Sains Malaysia menyimpan dua catan oleh Hoessein Enas, “Potret Tun Dr. Ismail” (1967) dan “Potret Toh Puan Norashikin” (1968). Keduanya dilukis menggunakan cat minyak dalam pendekatan melukis potret yang formal atau rasmi. Tun Dr. Ismail kelihatan memegang paip di tangan kirinya manakala tangan kanan menyokong badannya dengan menekan meja bulat yang di atasnya diletakkan bekas abu rokok yang dibuat dari kaca tebal; beliau berkaca mata, dalam sut hitam yang keras; di belakang sebelah kanan kelihatan komposisi buku-buku yang agak mono warnanya, kecuali buku-buku atau fail-fail yang berwarna merah; sebuah mikroskop di atas meja diletakkan untuk menggambarkan jenis pekerjaan beliau. Riak beliau lebih terkawal jika dibandingkan dengan potret Toh Puan Norashikin — Toh Puan kelihatan lebih yakin, namun mesra. Digambarkan menerusi warna-warna yang lebih panas, beliau memakai kebaya panjang emas yang cantik, beg tangannya tersangkut di tangan

kiri sementara beliau mengekalkan gaya peragaan, sambil memaparkan cincin berlian di jari.

Karya Hoessein Enas pertama yang saya lihat adalah sebuah lukisan dalam simpanan pelukis Sivarajah Natarajan. Studio Siva berdekatan dengan sebuah rumah yang saya sewa di Sg. Penchala. Karya tersebut menampilkan lukisan kajian potret dalam medium pastel, menggambarkan dengan penuh perasaan “Gadis Orang Asli” (1963) dalam profail tiga perempat. Melihat lukisan ini mengingatkan saya kepada stail lukisan lukisan gambaran ibu saya yang dihasilkan oleh ayah saya. Ayah merupakan seorang guru sekolah di Kelantan. Beliau melakar dan melukis sebagai satu hobi dan subjek-subjek kesukaannya adalah lanskap kampung atau potret, kebanyakannya wajah ibu saya. Saya masih ingat catan ayah saya yang menggambarkan ibu dalam kebaya pendek dan sarong, duduk di pantai sambil merenung tepat ke arah pemerhati. Ia dilukis oleh ayah saya sekitar 60an. Catan itu kini tidak diketahui di mana letaknya.

Terdapat satu gambar Hoessein Enas dalam studio sementara ayah di Kota Bharu pada tahun 1952. Waktu itu, Hoessein Enas baru berada di Malaya selama lima tahun, namun telahpun menempa nama sebagai seorang pelukis potret untuk Negara ini. Reputasi beliau mungkin telah mempengaruhi bukan saja para pelukis muda yang melihat beliau sebagai contoh yang perlu dituruti, tetapi sesiapa jua yang memiliki bakat kreatif untuk mula berjinak-jinak dengan berus dan cat. Apabila saya teringat pada catan yang menggambarkan ibu saya, saya melihat kesinambungan warisan Hoessein Enas — satu pengaruh yang memberi inspirasi kepada ayah saya untuk melukis dan kemudiannya mengajar saya dan adik-beradik saya yang lebih tua untuk melukis, dan bagaimana ini semua membuka minat saya dalam seni rupa.

Noor Mahnun Mohamed (*trans. HJS*)

Kuala Lumpur, August 2007



Khalil Ibrahim
 Aku Sudah Cukup, 1983
 Batik
 85 x 105cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

‘WRAPPING THE FIGURE’

The phrase ‘Malaysian Identity’ scares me. It is an oxymoron, a politically charged oxymoron. It seems so singular a pursuit to satisfy our pluralistic landscape. To borrow from Benedict Anderson’s brilliant book on nationalism ‘Imagined Communities’, he writes “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined”. So how do we collectively figure the Malaysian?

It is hard to look at a batik painting without simultaneously remembering the sarong. As we remember the sarong it is hard to remember a time without it. It is the fabric of our society. The sarong has become like a skin, its very form, its name, envelopes us, *sarong*. It is almost a secondary after thought that a sarong is (traditionally) batik – stained cloth. Batik envelopes us, batik wraps the Malaysian figure, stains our skin. So it is hard for us to look at a batik painting without feeling the stir of a national consciousness. It is this stirring that intrigues me.

The cultural continuity that **Chuah Thean Teng** exercised when he became the first to use and create batik as a fine art medium in those heady pre-Merdeka 50’s, feels like a contemporary provenance of a new ‘Malaysian’ imagining. A post-war, post-colonial, early-day-of-nationhood visualization. His batik works are full of idealism and romance. The sociological landscape is aestheticised to the point of being mythicized yet paradoxically, they are seemingly humble in their content. His paintings show the machinations and chores of daily life. “Malaysian Reality” (1982) carefully choreographs (very) large-breasted women into an epic of domestic bliss, stitching, feeding their children durian, and generally looking dreamy in a tropical garden of Eden. Every surface is detailed and busy with the intrinsic batik veins pulsating with a static energy. We see scenes of industry in “Fishing Village” (1956) and “Penang Waterfront” (1958), buzzing with activity, yet each character is singularly

absorbed by the task at hand only culminating as a whole into a collective driven movement and agenda. The iconographic language, the amnesia of negatives, the memory of cultural artefact feeds the propaganda and we get stirred. Chuah Thean Teng is a powerful ‘Malaysia’ artist.

Khalil Ibrahim continues Chuah Thean Teng’s masterful stain on our consciousness. In his batik painting “Aku Sudah Cukup” (1983) we see the backs of men collectively heaving into a monumental form. Their actual activity is unclear but they appear to have something to do with fishing, that other narrative that reminds us of our common diet and archipelagic heritage. Their bodies are lean and strong and nimble. They are the bodies of dancers that fluidly remember the shapes of *silat* and manliness, devoid of the fatness of greed, yet wrapped in the curvaceous folds of the background environment. There are no longer the singular characters of Chuah Thean Teng’s compositions but here a collective movement creates the monument.

I place Chuah Thean Teng’s “Malaysian Reality” and Khalil Ibrahim’s “Aku Sudah Cukup” side by side to see what this joint imagining will espouse. What strikes me is how secular the collective vision is, how gentle and confident and powerful. I feel the encompassing love! There are clear gender stereotypes, which I read as a reflection of a kind of Oedipus complex that, like the skin of the batik surface, crackles through within the rich earthy natural tones of colour. The son rivals his father for his mother’s love. The Mother is of course that of nature, of The Land, of The Nation. What then comes to my mind is a favourite reference in Milan Kundera’s ‘The Unbearable Lightness of Being’ where he writes about kitsch. “When the heart speaks, the mind finds it indecent to object... The feeling induced by kitsch must be a kind the multitudes can share. Kitsch may not, therefore, depend on an unusual situation; it must derive from

Chuah Thean Teng
Malaysian Reality, 1982
 Batik on cloth
 90 x 180cm
 Private Collection



the basic images people have engraved in their memories... Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. The brotherhood of man on earth will be possible only on a base of kitsch."

Milan Kundera in the same book also writes "political movements rest not so much on rational attitudes as on the fantasies, images, words and archetypes that come together to make up this or that political kitsch." Benedict Anderson in 'Imaging Communities' writes "nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness". I believe it is quite possible to argue that Chuah Thean Teng and Khalil Ibrahim's batik paintings are this 'political kitsch' and do paint an earnest 'nation-ness'. I think what makes them so appealing and significant to me is that they are inclusive as a national imagining. Batik is humble in its very nature and this permeates the paintings. Like the phrase 'Malaysian Identity', these paintings are also oxymora – humble epic declarations of national identities. Batik wraps the figuring. This is our Malaysian identity and it is comfortable.

Yee I-Lann
August, 2007

'MEMBALUTI FIGURA'

Frasa 'Jati Diri Malaysia' menakutkan saya. Ia merupakan suatu 'oxymora' yang dijana oleh politik. Ia seakan suatu sasaran yang terlalu tirus dan tunggal untuk memenuhi tuntutan lanskap kita yang plural. Meminjam dari sebuah buku pintar oleh Benedict Anderson tentang nasionalisma yang berjudul 'Imagined Communities' (Komuniti yang Dibayangkan), beliau ada menulis "Komuniti dibezakan, bukan atas kepincangan/kepintaran mereka, akan tetapi atas cara dalam mana mereka dibayangkan." Oleh itu, bagaimanakah kita membayangkan atau membentuk Malaysia secara kolektif?

Adalah sukar untuk melihat catan batik tanpa secara serentak mengingatkan kita kepada sarung. Tatkala kita mengingati sarung, adalah sukar pula untuk mengingati masa tanpanya. Ia adalah fabrik milik masyarakat kita. Sarung telah menjadi seakan kulit yang menyampul kita, dari segi bentuk dan namanya. Jarang kita fikirkan bahawa sarung itu adalah kain batik tradisional. Batik menyampul kita, membalut figura Malaysia, membasahi kulit kita. Sukar untuk kita melihat catan batik tanpa mengocak kesedaran nasional. Kocakan inilah yang menarik perhatian saya.

Kesinambungan budaya yang telah diusahakan oleh Chuah Thean Teng semasa beliau menjadi insan pertama menggunakan batik sebagai medium seni halus pada era pra-Merdeka 50an, terasa seperti suatu latar terkini untuk pembayangan tentang keMalaysiaan. Ia merupakan gambaran awal tentang kenegaraan ketika era pasca-perang, pasca kolonial. Kerja-kerja batik beliau penuh dengan idealisma dan romantisma. Lanskap sosiologikal beliau telah diindahkannya hingga menjadi suatu bentuk mitos yang sebaliknya, agak merendah diri pula dari segi makna. Catan-catan beliau menonjolkan sifat mesin dan kerja-kerja harian. Karya "Malaysian Reality" (Realiti Malaysia, 1982) misalnya memaparkan wanita-wanita berdada besar yang disusun dengan rapi untuk menjadi suatu epik kenikmatan domestik tentang kerja menjahit, memberi anak-anak makan durian dalam sebuah mimpi taman

tropikal untuk kaum wanita. Setiap permukaan diperincikan dan penuh dengan urat-urat intrinsik batik yang berdenyut dengan tenaga statik. Kita melihat adegan industri dalam "Fishing Village" ("Kampung Nelayan", 1956) dan "Penang Waterfront" ("Dermaga Pulau Pinang", 1958), sibuk dengan aktiviti namun setiap watak sangat khusyuk dengan tugas masing-masing dan hanya bergabung untuk membentuk satu pergerakan dan agenda kolektif. Bahasa ikonografik, unsur negatif yang dilupakan, dan memori tentang artifak budaya telah membekalkan propaganda di atas hingga kita turut dikocak. Chuah Thean Teng ialah seorang pelukis 'Malaysia' yang gagah.

Khalil Ibrahim meneruskan jejak kepakaran Chuah Thean Teng dalam kesedaran kita. Dalam catan batik beliau "Aku Sudah Cukup" (1983), kita melihat beberapa bahagian belakang anggota badan sekumpulan lelaki membentuk suatu bentuk tugu yang unggul. Aktiviti sebenar mereka tidak begitu jelas namun kelihatan seperti sesuatu yang berkaitan dengan menangkap ikan, suatu lagi naratif lain yang mengingatkan kita tentang makanan lazim dan warisan semenanjung yang dikongsi bersama. Tubuh-tubuh mereka mantap, kuat dan anjal. Tubuh-tubuh mereka seperti para penari yang mengalirkan ingatan tentang bentuk-bentuk bersifat kejantanan dan silat, yang tidak menunjukkan sifat tamak yang berat namun dibalut dalam lipatan-lipatan yang beralun-alun pada persekitaran latar catan. Tiada lagi watak-watak keseorangan seperti yang terdapat pada komposisi karya Chuah Thean Teng. Dalam karya Khalil, pergerakan kolektif membentuk dan menghasilkan keunggulan tugu tersebut.

Saya meletakkan karya Chuah Thean Teng "Malaysian Reality" dan karya Khalil Ibrahim "Aku Sudah Cukup" secara bersebelahan antara satu sama lain untuk melihat apakah yang bakal terhasil dari bayangan yang bergabung ini. Apa yang menarik perhatian saya adalah bagaimana sekularnya visi kolektif ini, yang juga begitu halus, yakin dan gagah sekali. Saya merasa dibaluti cinta! Terdapat stereotaip gender yang nyata, yang saya baca sebagai refleksi kompleksiti Odepus. Kompleks ini ditamsilkan dengan permukaan batik yang retak dan menyelinap masuk dalam tona warna yang semulajadi. Di sini, kita lihat anak lelaki melawan bapa untuk mendapatkan kasih sayang ibu. Ibu di sini tentunya merujuk kepada

alam semulajadi, atau tanah, atau negara. Apa yang datang ke dalam fikiran seterusnya adalah rujukan pilihan saya dari penulisan Milan Kundera dalam "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (Keringanan Kewujudan yang Tidak Tertanggung) dalam mana beliau turut menulis tentang selera rendah. "Apabila hati bercakap, fikiran mengatakan adalah tidak manis untuk menyoalnya... Perasaan yang diterbitkan oleh selera rendah mestilah sesuatu yang boleh dikongsri ramai. Oleh itu, selera rendah tidak semestinya bergantung pada situasi yang pelik; ia mestilah merujuk kepada imejan-imejan asas yang telah ditanam dalam memori kita. Selera rendah membuka dua perkara dalam urutan yang pantas. Perkara yang pertama akan berkata: Alangkah cantiknya melihat kanak-kanak berlari di atas rumput. Kesedaran kedua akan berkata "Alangkah cantiknya untuk digugah, bersama dengan seluruh umat manusia, oleh kanak-kanak yang berlari di atas rumput! Kesedaran kedua inilah yang menjadikan sesuatu selera rendah itu benar-benar selera indah. Persaudaraan manusia di atas muka bumi boleh diusahakan hanya di atas asas selera rendah itu."

Mian Kundela dalam buku yang sama ada menulis "pergerakan-pergerakan politik tidak begitu bergantung atas sikap rasional seperti mana ia bergantung pada fantasi, imejan, kata-kata, dan arkitaip yang dikumpulkan untuk menghasilkan beberapa selera rendah politik." Benedict Anderson dalam "Imaging Communities" menulis "kenegaraan tidak boleh dipisahkan dari kesedaran politik". Saya percaya adalah tidak mustahil untuk menghujahkan bahawa catan-catan batik Chuah Thean Teng dan Khalil Ibrahim adalah salah satu contoh bentuk 'selera rendah politik' yang cuba menggambarkan kenegaraan. Saya fikir apa yang membuatkan mereka ini menarik dan penting adalah bahawa mereka sudah menjadi sebahagian dari bayangan nasional. Sifat asal batik adalah merendah diri dan sifat ini menyelinap ke seluruh catan-catan mereka. Seperti juga dengan frasa 'Jati Diri Malaysia', catan-catan adalah juga 'oxymora' — yakni pernyataan epik yang merendah diri tentang pelbagai jati diri nasional. Batik membaluti fugura. Ini adalah jati diri kita dan ia juga selesa.

Yee I-Lann (trans. HJS)
Ogos 2007



Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan
Realiti Berasing: Satu Hari di Bumi
Larangan (Separate Reality), 1975
Enamel paint on board
244 x 366cm
National Art Gallery Collection

Q: What made you choose Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan as “your” artist of the pioneer generation?

A: *I chose Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan because I think he’s cool.*

Q: What’s so “cool” about him?

A: *It’s because he creates with feeling, with heart. For example, he did what he loved, not conforming to the art market’s sentiment at that given time. I would not say his works are not serious but his presentation is relaxed, fun and not “Abstract”, haha. His works are also contemporary at that given time because he would record what was happening to Kuala Lumpur’s society at that particular time.*

Q: What was happening in KL at that time?

A: *Take a look at his work “Kedai-Kedai” (Shops) when KL’s economy was greatly developing. KL was exciting, as it was getting populous. The work “Separate Reality” portrays extensive squatter dwellings at a time when droves of people from rural areas come to live in Kuala Lumpur. It is quite a contemporary work.*

Q: Which is your favourite work?

A: *I don’t know his work that well; honestly I only know those two works “Separate Reality” and “Kedai-Kedai”.*

Q: Where have you seen those works?

A: *In the beginning, I only got to know his works in art history class during my studies at ITM (now UiTM). Then, I got to see his original works at the National Art Gallery.*

Q: Do you remember when Zulkifli Dahalan passed away?

A: *I’m not entirely sure, all I remember is that he died at a very young age.*

Time break

Q: Say you are in possession of a Zulkifli Dahalan artwork right now, what would you do?

A: *I would probably sell it to a public gallery since a collector I’m not. And I do feel that his works should be appreciated by the mass.*

Time break – Phone call

Q: What do you think would have happened to Malaysian art if Zulkifli Dahalan were still alive?

A: *Were he still alive today, I would say that the art scene would be much more vibrant because looking back at his works then, they were already brilliant. With his unusual ideas, imagine what he would have produced today. Then again, maybe his journey in the art world would have moved forward and spawned the unexpected, who knows?*

Q: In what way do you think his works are important to today’s Malaysian art scene?

A: *Recording history in visual art form on the yesteryears of Kuala Lumpur with his own unique style.*

Q: From the point of view of aesthetics?

A: *Me, I look at the aesthetics of each specific work. If a work makes me happy and I get pleasure from it, then to me an aesthetic property exists, just as how Zulkifli’s works express themselves.*

Q: Any further observations on Zulkifli Dahalan?

A: *I just would like to say that if there are any inaccuracies regarding Zulkifli Dahalan on my part, I assure you that this is just my observation as a Visual Artist, not as an art historian, critic nor a scholar of the Malaysian art scene.*

Thank you.

You’re welcome.

Ise (trans. AR)
2007

Soalan : Apa yang menyebabkan saudara memilih pelukis Zulkifli Mohd Dahlan sebagai pelukis generasi pilihan?

Jawapan : *aku memilih Zulkifli Mohd Dahlan sebab aku rasa dia cool.*

Soalan : Apa yang cool?

Jawapan : *Sebab beliau berkarya megikut feeling (hati) contohnya buat apa yang dia suka, tidak megikut market lukisan ketika itu, bukan hendak kata lukisannya tidak serius tetapi caranya menyampaikan maksud karyanya begitu santai, fun dan tidak ABSTRAK.hehehehehe. Karya beliau juga merupakan karya yang bersifat kontemporari ketika itu kerana dia merekodkan apa yang berlaku pada masyarakat yang berlaku di Kuala Lumpur pada waktu itu.*

Soalan : Apa yang berlaku di KL waktu itu?

Jawapan : *Cuba lihat karya beliau "Kedai-Kedai" dimana ekonomi di KL waktu itu sedang berkembang pesat, KL menjadi 'Havoc' ketika itu. Orang pun dah mula ramai. Didalam karya "Realiti Berasing — Satu hari dibumi larangan" pula sudah banyak kelihatan seperti rumah setinggan dimana waktu ni jugak kebanjiran penduduk dari kampung datang untuk tinggal di Kuala Lumpur.kan kontemporari habis tu karya nya,*

Soalan : yang mana satu karya pilihan anda?

Jawapan : *aku tak punya banyak pilihan sebenarnya, seriusnya aku hanya tahu dua buah karyanya saja iaitu "Realiti Berasing — Satu hari dibumi larangan" dan "Kedai-Kedai".*

Soalan : dimana anda melihat karya itu?

Jawapan : *pertamanya aku berkenalan dengan karyanya sewaktu didalam kelas art history masa aku belajar kat ITM. selepas tu tengok lah work originalnya kat National Art Gallery.*

Soalan : Tahun bila Zulkifli Dahlan meninggal dunia?

Jawapan : *aku tak tahu.la pulak detailnya.tapi yg aku tahu dia maninggal pada usia yang sangat muda.*

Time break...

Soalan : katakanlah anda memiliki sekeping karya Zulkifli Dahlan waktu ni, apa yang hendak anda lakukan dengan karya itu?

Jawapan : *aku akan jual ke public gallery sebab saya bukan art kolektor dan karyanya tu bagi aku patut di share oleh orang ramai.*

Time break — Phone call...

Soalan : Apa yang terjadi pada senilukis diMalaysia sekiranya Zulkifli Dahlan masih hidup?

Jawapan : *kalau dia panjang umur pasti art scene tak le boring sangat, kot kerana melihat karya beliau pada waktu itu pun dah cool cuba fikir dia pasti akan keluar dgn macam2 lagi idea yg pelik2 lagi,pasti art scene jugak mungkin berbeza, dan mungkin jugak journey beliau dalam bidang art ni makin maju dan unexpected. siapa tahu kan?*

Soalan : anda rasa apa pentingnya karya beliau ni pada art scene Malaysia pada masa kini?

Jawapan : *merekod sejarah didalam bentuk visual, tentang apa yang berlaku diKuala Lumpur waktu dulu.dgn gaya dan cara dia yang tersendiri dan unik*

Soalan : dari segi estetikanya?

Jawapan : *bagi aku, aku melihat estetik dari segi keseluruhan satu-satu karya.kalau karya tu boleh membuat aku senang hati dan enjoy tu dah kira wujudnya sifat estetik dalam karya itu, jadi karya beliau memang lucu dan amat menyenangkan aku.*

Soalan : ada apa-apa lagi yang hendak anda katakan mengenai Zulkifli Dahlan?

Jawapan : *tidak ada.rasanya pasal kalau cakap lebih2 takut salah banyak la pulak, ni pun aku rasa dah banyak benar salahnya. so aku mintak maaf banyak2 kalau ada banyak silap dlm fakta atau sebagainya pasal bagi aku ini hanya pendapat aku sebagai seorang VISUAL ARTIST dan bukannya dari art historian, art critic atau orang yg bijak pandai dalam Malaysian art scene.*

Soalan : Terima Kasih, selamat maju jaya.

Jawapan : *sama-sama.*

Ise
2007

SEPARATE REALITY, 1975

By Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan

This is a timeless piece, a major artwork. The work consists of diverse elements:

CULTURE

The time (the 70's) was the era of Woodstock and the Hippies.

POLITICS

Dato' Harun Idris brought in the Muhammad Ali – Joe Bugner fight. (He then served a jail sentence on corruption charges). Tun Abdul Razak was Prime Minister at that time.

RELIGION

The artist's thinking pattern in "Hari Perhitungan di Padang Mashar" was witty, mocking the existing system. (The artist portrayed the hedonistic lifestyle practised by the Hippies in a languorous manner)

Then came a seminal series of prints by Sulaiman Hj Esa titled "Waiting for Godot" based on Samuel Beckett's famous existential play.

ECONOMY

In the late 1990's, a new image began to emerge. To me, it is a text that is a subtext that went on to become a hypertext in the middle panel where the word "Muhibbah" is formed. (Concealed for more than 30 years behind the rear layer as a suggestion of hidden connotations right about the same time the N.E.P was formed to balance the economy of all races especially the Malays after the May 13, 1969 incident.)

This piece has dramatic criminal elements, yet the wit hidden within the objects and camaraderie is formed only through the panel division.

Azizan Paiman (trans. AR)

REALITI BERASING, 1975

Zulkifli Mohd Dahalan

Karya ini adalah karya agung sepanjang zaman. Karya ini mempunyai kepelbagaian element. Ianya terbentuk daripada element:

BUDAYA

Pada zaman ini (70an) era Woodstock festival terbentuk (Hippies)

POLITIK

Dato Harun Idris membawa perlawanan tinju antara Muhammad Ali vs Joe Bugner (selepas itu Dato Harun memasuki penjara atas tuduhan rasuah). *Tun Razak ketika itu Perdana Menteri.

AGAMA

Corak pemikiran pelukis ini terhadap hari perhintungan di padang mashar begitu humour yang mengejek sistem yang ada. (Amalan pergaulan bebas yang diketengahkan oleh hippies diaplikasikan oleh pelukis dalam kaedah bersahaja.)

Selepas itu barulah karya pencarian/pertembungan dibina oleh Sulaimen Esa "Waiting for Godot" dari karya pentas Samuel Beckett.

EKONOMI

Pada sekitar lewat 90an, satu imajan lain terbentuk. Ia merupakan suatu text pada pandangan peribadi saya adalah subtext dan menjadi hypertext di tengah-tengah panel di mana ayat muhibbah terbentuk. (Lebih 30tahun tersorok dilapisan belakang sebagai yang mempunyai makna tersirat pada ketika itu juga D.E.B terbentuk 7 ianya terbentuk kerana mengimbangi ekonomi pada setiap kaum lebih-lebih lagi melayu / selepas 13 Mei 1969.)

Karya ini mempunyai unsur-unsur jenayah yang penuh dramatik akan tetapi humour yang berselindung melalui objek dan muhibbah terbentuk melalui pembahagian panel sahaja.

Azizan Paiman

ABSTRACTION

Abstraction emerged as a dominant mode of painting during the 1960s as a new generation of graduates from European and American art colleges returned to Malaysia. The departure from naturalist and figurative modes employed by the earlier generation of artists ran parallel to a significant turn towards self-expression and individualism. This non-objective approach to art allowed the artist to focus on the formal aspects of art and was at that time regarded as a move in the right direction in terms of fulfilling modernistic impulses. Although the artworks produced in this idiom were mainly forked in two directions – one analytical, the other emotive – it was the latter that became the prevailing mode of representation within local artistic circles.

“Abstract expressionism” (used as a loose term here) was adopted enthusiastically for its emotive quality and gestural energy. Among its several proponents, Syed Ahmad Jamal led the way with groundbreaking artworks that were celebrated for their spontaneous and spiritual character. This

period also saw the rise of artists like Latiff Mohidin, whose Pago-Pago series of the 1960s created a visual language from principle elements of the flora and fauna and traditional architecture of the Southeast Asian region. Cheong Laitong developed an approach which drew from the spirit and spontaneity of Chinese calligraphy.

Younger generation artists have continued to push abstraction in new directions. Jalaini Abu Hassan has added fresh layers to this approach by incorporating local objects and forms in his works and highlighting the elemental process of art-making.

Although the initial attraction to abstraction as a mode of representation has somewhat diminished amongst young artists, abstraction continues to be employed in painting and interwoven with objective, symbolic and analytical modes of seeing.

ABSTRAKSI

Abstraksi muncul sebagai mod persembahan yang dominan semasa tahun 1960an apabila generasi baru lulusan kolej seni dari Eropah dan Amerika kembali ke Malaysia. Perubahan daripada mod naturalis dan figuratif yang dipakai oleh generasi pengkarya terdahulu bergerak selari dengan peralihan ke arah ekspresi diri dan individualisma. Pendekatan bukan objektif terhadap seni membolehkan pengkarya memberi tumpuan kepada aspek formal seni. Pada ketika itu, tumpuan ini dianggap sebagai satu halatuju yang tepat dalam memenuhi dorongan moden. Walaupun kerja seni yang dihasilkan melalui idiom ini secara asasnya terbahagi kepada dua arah — analitis dan emosi — arah yang kedua telah menjadi mod persembahan yang lazim dalam linkaran artistik tempatan.

“Ekspresionisma abstrak” (satu istilah yang digunakan secara longgar) telah diterima dan digunakan secara penuh minat atas dasar kualiti emosi dan tenaga gesturnya. Antara penyokong utama pergerakan ini ialah Syed Ahmad Jamal yang membuka jalan dengan kerja seni penting yang dipuji atas karaktornya yang spontan dan berciri kerohanian.

Tempoh ini juga menyaksikan kebangkitan pengkarya seperti Latiff Mohidin dengan siri Pago-Pago pada tahun 1960an yang mencipta bahasa visual daripada elemen utama flora dan fauna dan seni bina tradisional rantau Asia Tenggara. Cheong Laitong menerokai pendekatan yang diilhamkan daripada semangat dan kespontanan kaligrafi Cina.

Para pengkarya generasi yang lebih muda terus membawa kecenderungan ekspresionistik ke arah yang baru. Jalaini Abu Hassan telah menambah lapisan-lapisan segar terhadap pendekatan ini dengan menggabungkan objek-objek dan bentuk rupa tempatan dalam karya beliau dan menonjolkan proses asas dalam pembikinan seni.

Walaupun tarikan awal kepada abstraksi sebagai mod persembahan agak berkurangan di kalangan pengkarya muda, ia masih terus digunakan dalam catan dan digabungkan dengan mod melihat yang objektif, simbolik dan analitis.

Ibrahim Hussein
Kabuki Actor, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
183 x 183cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Jalaini Abu Hassan
Gurindam Jiwa (Indian Summer), 2000
Mixed media on canvas
122 x 122cm
Private Collection

Zulkifli Yusoff
 Winning at Genting, 1996
 Acrylic on canvas
 91 x 91cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Latiff Mohidin
 Pago-Pago Series, 1960
 Oil on canvas
 75 x 100cm
University of Malaya Collection



Cheong Laitong
 Penghidupan Tersembunyi dan Umum, 1965
 Oil on board
 94 x 135cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Syed Ahmad Jamal
 Solar Energy, 1967
 Acrylic on canvas
 183 x 183cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Ahmad Shukri Mohamed
Target Series (Vanish), 1994
Mixed Media on Canvas
158cm x 158cm
*Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman*

Choy Chun Wei
Constructed Landscape Series:
Murmur of the Idyllic, 2004
Mixed media on canvas
183 x 183cm
Collection of Ng Sek San and Carolyn Lau



PESAN

During some of my visits to Dato' Ibrahim Hussein at his abode, which clearly reflects his success as an eminent Malaysian artist, the myths about his attitude and arrogance towards young artists especially, were completely removed from my mind. In fact, I became more in awe of his artistic position, which is self-centered. There is a time and place where ego can play an important part in an artist's life. His message was all about "don't ever demean your works" and "create with integrity and responsibility, then the reward shall come forth". The one significant message that I shall always remember was to "take good care of your works, for one day your works shall take good 'care' of you".

Ahmad Fuad Osman (*trans. AR*)

Rimbun Dahan

17 July, 2007

PESAN

Dalam beberapa kesempatan mengunjungi Dato' Ibrahim Hussein di kediamannya yang jelas membayangkan kejayaannya sebagai seorang seniman terulung tanahair, segala mitos tentang keangkuhan dan kesombongan, terutamanya terhadap pelukispelukis muda selama ini, terpadam dari hatiku. Aku malah semakin kagum dengan sikap kesenimanannya yang amat mementingkan harga diri. Ada tempat dan ketikanya, ego memainkan peranan yang penting dalam hidup seorang seniman. Pesanannya penuh dengan "jangan sekali-kali melacurkan karyamu" dan "berkaryalah dengan penuh rasa jujur dan tanggungjawab, hasilnya pasti akan menyusul". Dan satu pesanan yang amat penting yang sentiasa kuingat ialah "jagalah baik-baik karyamu, kerana suatu hari nanti karyamu pula yang akan 'menjaga' mu".

Ahmad Fuad Osman

Rimbun Dahan

17 Julai, 2007

**UNTUK
LATIFF MOHIDIN**

1
dulu
di kota usang
abang bersebang
warna abang
lebih terang
kuning pinang
kadang-kadang
dulu
di kota usang
abang bersebang
garis-garis rambang
di atas kertas
baris-baris gelombang
di atas kanvas

2
teringat daerah samat
bersemat pingat
tenat dengan gelagat
pekat dengan keringat
mencari semangat
mencari berkat
mencari makrifat

3
aku tersudut di bucu ruang
telanjang
tersandar di riba betis
menangis
mencari daerah
menebus maruah

Jalaini Abu Hassan
Berlin, Julai 2007

1
Damals
in dieser geschichtstraechtigen Stadt
erzaehltest Du
Von Deinen Farben
so sinnlich
ockergelb
gelegentlich
Damals
in dieser geschichtstraechtigen Stadt
erzaehltest Du
Von zufaelligen Linien
auf Pergament
von wellenfoermigen Rhythmen
auf Leinwand

2
Gedanken an Samats Welt
verehrt
anstrengende Versuche
Charaktere zu formen
dicke Schweisstropfen
auf seinem Weg
auf der Suche nach Mut
auf der Suche nach Kraft
auf der Suche nach Richtung

3
Ich in die Ecke getrieben
nackt
auf meinen Knien
weinend
suchend nach Zugehoerigkeit
und Wuerde

Jalaini Abu Hassan
(trans. Jana Stefanie Klein)
Berlin, July 2007

**FOR
LATIFF MOHIDIN**

1
before
in a weary town
You spoke of
Your colours
so luminous
warm golden yellow
from time to time
before
in a weary town
You spoke of
loose lines
on paper
columns of waves
on canvas

2
recalling Samat's district
honoured with medals
burdened with characters / idiosyncrasies
drenched with sweat (= a struggle)
searching for courage
searching for blessing
searching for knowledge

3
i'm tucked away in the corner
naked
leaning on my calf
weeping
searching for space
(to) redeem my pride

Jalaini Abu Hassan (trans. Adeline Ooi)
Berlin, July 2007

THE MALAYSIAN LANDSCAPE

Since the colonial period, the lush, tropical Malaysian landscape has been attractive subject matter for traveller artists as well as local artists. After the nation's independence, however, the depiction of the Malaysian landscape by local artists took on a different level of meaning as subject matter. The tropical environment was subsequently rendered with a sort of optimism, fondness and familiarity that could only be expressed by a people who now lived in Malaysia and who belonged to her.

During the fifties, Tay Hooi Keat emerged as a pioneer modernist whose post-impressionist- and cubist-influenced approach carved out unique interpretations of the local landscape. His flattening of forms and adoption of multiple perspectives were rich and expressive in their depiction of local scenery. Other leading artists included Yeoh Jin Leng, and Jolly Koh who rendered landscapes in the abstract idiom, creating colouristic harmonies to express the essence of place. Joseph Tan, who produced more controlled, "hard-edge" abstract interpretations of landscape, later developed a meticulous and highly rendered approach to the subject.

More contemporary works on the Malaysian landscape reveal a significant geographical transformation due to the rapid development that has taken place since the fifties. Diverse approaches to perceiving landscapes have emerged. Yee I-Lann, for instance, experiments with new media such as photography and digital manipulation, creating relationships between landscapes and cultural identities. Rural environs are sometimes juxtaposed with urban ones. The earlier optimism and idealism in interpreting landscape are substituted with a more realistic and meticulous scrutiny. Reactions of the artist to the landscape are recorded rather than the actual physical environment. There also seems to be a further examination of the inner landscape of the self and how that is transformed as a result of the changing physical landscape.

LANSKAP MALAYSIA

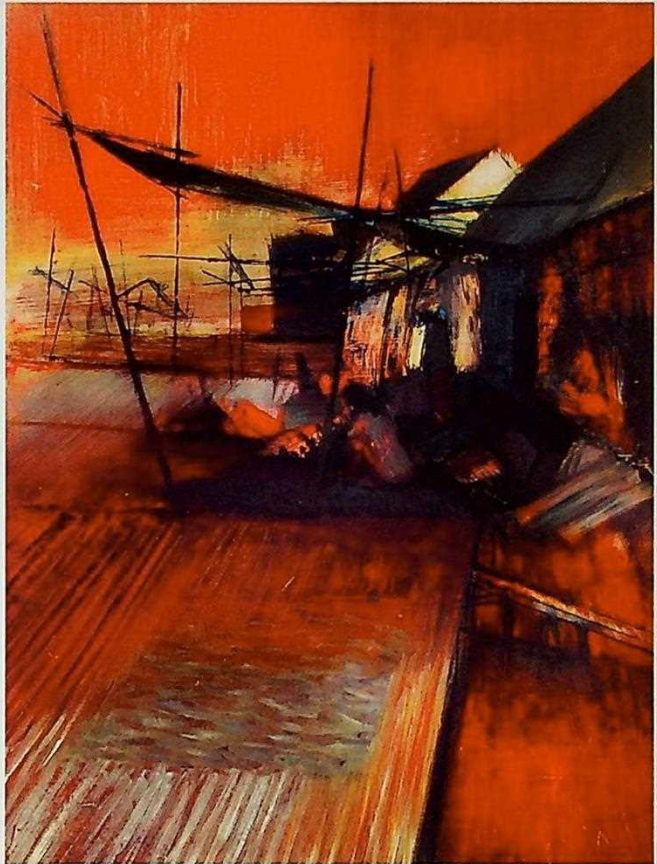
Sejak daripada zaman penjajah lagi, lanskap tropika Malaysia yang menghijau telah menjadi bahan menarik untuk para pengkarya yang berkembara serta pengkarya tempatan. Walau bagaimanapun, selepas negara mencapai kemerdekaan, penggambaran lanskap Malaysia sebagai bahan subjek oleh pengkarya tempatan telah membawa tahap makna yang berbeza. Persekitaran tropika telah digambarkan secara optimis, penuh kasih sayang dan keakraban yang hanya boleh digambarkan oleh mereka yang sekarang tinggal di Malaysia dan menjadi sebahagian daripada Negara ini.

Semasa tahun lima puluhan, Tay Hooi Keat muncul sebagai pelopor moden di mana pengaruh impresionis dan kubis beliau telah membentuk interpretasi unik tentang lanskap tempatan. Bentuk-bentuk yang mendatar dan penggunaan berbilang perspektif begitu kaya dan ekspresif dalam menggambarkan pemandangan tempatan. Pengkarya terkemuka yang lain termasuk Yeoh Jin Leng dan Jolly Koh yang menggambarkan lanskap dalam idiom abstrak, menghasilkan keharmonian warna untuk menyatakan sesuatu tempat. Pengkarya yang lain ialah Joseph Tan, yang menghasilkan interpretasi abstrak lanskap yang lebih terkawal dan jelas, kemudiannya

menghasilkan pendekatan yang begitu teliti terhadap formasi batu.

Kerja-kerja seni yang lebih kontemporari tentang lanskap Malaysia memperlihatkan transformasi geografi yang signifikan disebabkan pembangunan pesat yang berlaku sejak tahun lima puluhan. Pendekatan yang pelbagai dalam penggambaran lanskap telah muncul. Yee I-Lann, sebagai contohnya membuat eksperimen dengan media baru seperti gambar foto dan manipulasi digital dalam menghasilkan pertalian di antara lanskap dan identiti budaya. Suasana kampung kadang kala seiring dengan pemandangan bandar. Sifat optimis dan idealis dalam menterjemah lanskap diganti dengan pemerhatian yang lebih realistik dan berhati-hati. Reaksi pengkarya terhadap lanskap direkodkan, bukannya suasana fizikal yang sebenar. Terdapat juga pemerhatian lanjut di antara lanskap dalaman diri dan bagaimana ia berubah disebabkan perubahan dalam lanskap fizikal.

Yeoh Jin Leng
Seberang Takir, 1964
Oil on canvas
80 x 59.5cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Tay Hooi Keat
Chingay Procession, 1979
57 x 36.5cm
Oil on board
Petronas Art Collection



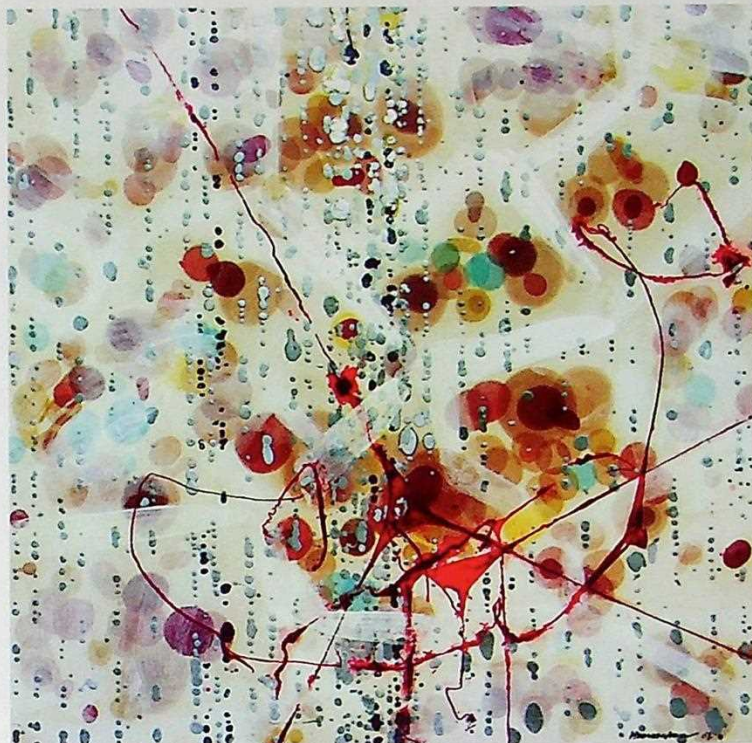
Wong Perng Fey
Arising I, 2002
Oil on canvas
172 x 240cm
Artist's Collection



Yee I-Lann
In the Palm of Putrajaya, 2003
Digital print on Kodak Endura paper
46 x 183cm
Artist's Collection

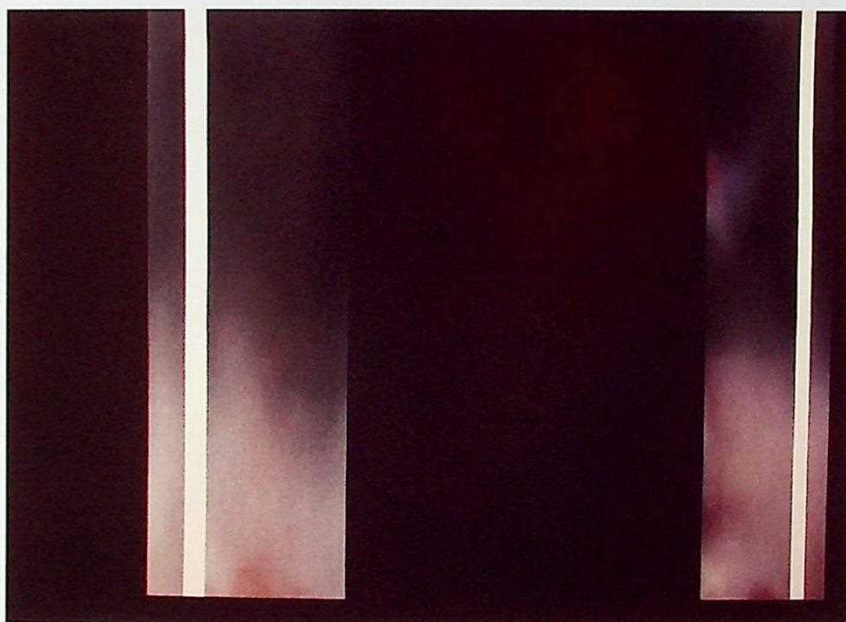


Jolly Koh
Reflection, 1977
Oil on canvas
120 x 89.5cm
Petronas Art Collection



Hamidi Abdul Hadi
Untitled, 2007
Industrial paint on unprimed canvas
145 x 145cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

Joseph Tan
 Lukisan Bersiri II No. 3, 1972
 Oil on canvas
 152.4 x 213.4cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Yusof Majid
 Putra Jaya HQ 5/1, 1996
 Mixed Media on Board
 60cm x 60cm
 Collection of Pakhruddin and
 Fatimah Sulaiman



RECALLING CONVERSATIONS

MARCH 1996, 41 JALAN JELUTONG

'Chong Yong, get married! To your Art!'
'You will remember this one day.'

MAY 1996, 0677 MELAWATI

'Chong Yong, I want to come and see your paintings.'

'*ai ki chak* curry fish head at the restaurant across the Mall.
Very famous.'

'*wa lang ki* Dynasty hotel *chak dim sim ka mou*, the other day
I was attending their wine tasting with friends.'

JULY 1999, RUMAH AIR PANAS

'Joseph, I am preparing my work for Germany, would like to
invite you to see.'

'Chong Yong, Zanita and I are on our way to Rumah Air Panas.'
'Joseph, what happened to your voice?'

'*Wa lang kie chak tieow chiew pek chiou mi hoon.*'

2000, CAFÉ BALAI

'Excuse me...'

1999, 39 LORONG ALOR AKAR

'Joseph, I was backpacking to Europe and my friend in Holland
told me about leasing art works from the museum, you can
buy a membership and lease art from the collection to decorate
your house from time to time. What do you think about art
leasing in Malaysia?'

'What were you all discussing during your younger times?'

'We were talking about approaching manufacturers to propose
to them to print artworks on their labels...'

1994, NANYANG SIANG PAU MAAROF

'Chong Yong, there is a senior conservator coming from Singapore
coming to conserve some paintings, I want you to learn from her.'

JANUARY 1998, KOTA KINABALU

'Let's check into the Jesseton Hotel. It's a nice hotel.'

2001, BALAI

'Chong Yong, I'll show you my new studies... I was jogging
with Gaik Hoon at Bukit Pelinding... sometimes I go alone.
Now I exercise twice a day.'

'I think the collage doesn't blend well with the drawings...'

MARCH 1996, 41 JALAN JELUTONG

(I was a free lancer then)

MAY 1996, 0677 MELAWATI

(I was painting my "Pre-war building for sale: the gold wash")

JANUARY 1998, KOTA KINABALU

(We were doing a project at Karambunai Resort then)

2000, CAFÉ BALAI

(We were having food then and Joseph excused himself to go to
the washroom. He was trying very hard to talk and eat, yet he
gentlemanly excused himself from the table. I was so insensitive.)

APRIL 2003, FUKUOKA

I burned an incense house to Joseph, an art work that I failed
to give him in time.

Sometime in 1999, he said to me, 'Chong Yong, let's exchange
one art work.'

7 AUGUST 2007, 35 ZUM FERIEPARK 41, PAPENBURG

I remember I first met with Joseph at galeri MIA, sometime in
Nov 1993 when I was about to finish my course. He was with
Zanita, they came to select artworks for Hyatt JB. He chose
13 out of 14 of my works, which gave me RM1,300 in total,
RM100 per pc.

NOVEMBER 2001

I remember I received a call from Adeline, she said in her
weeping, 'Joseph just passed away in Kuantan. Are you going?'

I remember, soon after Joseph's funeral, Lena told me Joseph, in
his Will, had given me two of his studies of his Tambun painting,
his last commissioned painting which I helped him with in the
earlier studies and site visits. And at the back of his "East Coast
Revisited No#2" which he gave me as wedding gift, wrote,
'Congratulations on your wedding day 17-10-99. Long life,
prosperity, good health and many² children. Yr friend, Joseph'.

Now,

Sometimes, I call Lena.

Sometimes, I remember Joseph's canvases, Liquitex acrylic,
charcoal, red stapler gun and tool box, sitting in my studio, still.

• The idea of "recalling conversations" started flashing in my
mind during our project meeting at San Francisco Coffee at
KLCC, and started to materialize in writings from 16 July 2007
onwards. The writing was done on a PDA and transferred to
a Word file later. • The recalling is done in a random sequence,
recording whatever voices flashed into mind, in the middle of
carrying out an assignment in Papenburg, Germany. • Hokkien
dialogue is in italics.

Chuah Chong Yong

2007

MENINGAT-SEMULA PERBUALAN

MAC 1996, 41 JALAN JELUTONG

'Chong Yong, kahwin! Dengan seni kamu'
'Kamu akan ingat ini suatu hari nanti.'

MEI 1996, 0677 MELAWATI

'Chong Yong, saya mahu datang dan lihat catan-catan awak.'

'*ai ki chak* kari kepala ikan dekat restoran di depan the Mall. Sangat terkenal.'

'*wa lang ki* hotel dinasti chak dim sim ka mou, hari lain saya menghadiri sesi merasa wain dengan kawan-kawan'

JULAI 1999, RUMAH AIR PANAS

'Joseph, saya sedang menyediakan karya untuk ke Jerman, nak jemput awak datang lihat.'
'Chong Yong! Zanita dan saya sedang dalam perjalanan ke Rumah Air Panas.'
'Joseph, apa dah jadi dengan suara awak?'

'*Wa lang kie chak tieow chiew pek chiou mi hoon.*'

2000, KAFE BALAI

'Maafkan saya...'

1999, 39 LORONG ALOR AKAR

'Joseph, saya sedang berkembara di Eropah dan kawan saya di Holland beritahu saya tentang pinjaman karya-karya seni dari muzium, awak boleh membeli keahlian dan meminjam seni dari koleksi untuk menghias rumah awak dari masa ke semasa. Apa pandangan awak tentang pinjaman karya seni di Malaysia?
'Apa yang awak semua bincangkan semasa muda dulu?'
'Kami bercakap tentang menemui beberapa pengilang untuk mencadangkan kepada mereka agar mencetak karya-karya seni di atas label mereka...'

1994, NANYANG SIANG PAU MAAROF

'Chong Yong, ada seorang konservator kanan yang datang dari Singapura untuk memulihara beberapa catan. Saya mahu awak belajar dari dia.'

JANUARI 1998, KOTA KINABALU

'Mari kita menginap di Hotel Jesseton. Ia hotel yang bagus.'

2001, BALAI

'Chong Yong, saya akan tunjukkan pada awak kajian terbaru saya... saya sedang berlari dengan Gaik Hoon di Bukit Pelinding... kadang-kadang saya pergi seorang. Sekarang saya bersenam dua kali sehari.'
'Saya fikir kolaj itu tak serasi dengan lukisan-lukisan itu...'

MAC 1996, 41 JALAN JELUTONG

(Saya sedang membuat kerja-kerja sebagai pelukis bebas ketika itu)

MEI 1996, 0677 MELAWATI

(Saya sedang menyiapkan karya saya "Pre-war building for sale: the gold wash"v)

JANUARI 1998, KOTA KINABALU

(Kami sedang membuat satu projek di Karambunai Resort ketika itu)

2000, KAFE BALAI

(Kami sedang makan ketika itu dan Joseph meminta diri untuk pergi ke tandas. Dia cuba sedaya upaya untuk bercakap dan makan, namun dia secara berhemah memohon diri dari meja makan. Saya sungguh tidak sensitif.)

APRIL 2003, FUKUOKA

Saya membakar sebuah rumah kemenyan kepada Joseph, sebuah karya yang saya terlewat memberinya.
Sekitar 1999, beliau berkata kepadaku, 'Chong Yong, mari kita bertukar sebuah karya seni'.

7 OGOS 2007, 35 ZUM FERIEPARK 41, PAPENBURG

Saya ingat pertama kali saya bertemu dengan Joseph di Galeri MIA, sekitar Nov 1993 semasa saya tengah menghabiskan kursus saya. Pada masa itu, beliau dengan Puan Zanita, mereka datang untuk memilih karya-karya seni untuk Hyatt JB. Joseph memilih 13 daripada 14 karya-karya saya, yang telah memberikan saya sebanyak RM1,300, RM100 sekeping.

NOVEMBER 2001

Saya ingat saya menerima panggilan dari Adeline, sambil menangis dia berkata, 'Joseph telah meninggal dunia di Kuantan. Adakah kamu akan pergi ke pengembumiannya?'

Saya ingat, tidak lama selepas pengembumian Joseph, Lena memberitahu saya bahawa Joseph telah memberi kepada saya dua keping lakaran awal "Tambun Painting", kepunyaan karya komisen Joseph yang terakhir, yang saya turut memberi bantuan semasa pengajian persediaan awal dan lawatan sambil mengkaji. Di belakang karya Joseph "East Coast Revisited No. #2" yang diberi kepadaku sebagai sebuah hadiah perkahwinan, dicatat, "Congratulations on your wedding day 17-10-99. Long life, prosperity, good health and many² children. Yr friend, Joseph".

Sekarang,

Kadang-kala, saya memberi panggilan kepada Lena. Kadang-kala, saya mengingatkan kanvas Joseph, akrilik Liquitex, arang, "stapler gun" merah dan kotak peralatan, yang masih ada dalam studio saya.

• Ide untuk "mengingati semula perbualan" mula timbul dalam mindaku semasa sebuah perbincangan projek di San Francisco Coffee di KLCC, dan ia mula menjadi kenyataan dalam catatan semenjak 16 Julai 2007. Ia dicatat dalam PDA and kemudiannya dipindah ke Microsoft Word. • Peringatan ini dilaksanakan secara rambang, merakamkan apa jua suara yang muncul di dalam mindaku, di samping melaksanakan tugas di Papenburg, Germany. • Dialog Hokkien dalam italics

Chuah Chong Yong
(trans. HJS)

Joseph Tan
Hill of Thyme, 1983
Acrylic on paper
71 x 153cm
National Art Gallery Collection



Image courtesy of National Art Gallery

WANDERING FREELY IN THE ILLUSIONARY WILDERNESS

When I was admiring the breathtaking landscape painting by the late artist Joseph Tan, I couldn't help but remember John Berger's words, "all artists inspired by nature will eventually change their perception of nature. Either Art has further established our founded perception towards nature or it has provided, and will provide us yet another new perspective of nature".

However, even if an artist fails to conjure up a balanced depiction of nature through observation, it is still an illustration of the relationship between nature and humankind. Ancient Chinese ink paintings often express an utopian sanctuary from great heights: such height often reveals nature to be serene and hidden in an unfathomable depth. Therefore, it is crucial for an artist to find absolute objectivity to create anew, and to craft a wider horizon. Furthermore, an artist must be one with nature in order to foster a true marriage between the two.

In February 2006, the National Art Gallery launched a special retrospective exhibition of Joseph Tan while renowned art historian T.K. Sabapathy was invited as a guest curator. Under his professional supervision, the exhibition was organized according to various themes and periods, in which the Landscape Paintings (1971-2001) were the largest component, including the *Painting Series*, *The Dungun Series*, *The Formation Series* and various studies.

Through these acrylic paintings, natural landscape was depicted with great accuracy, and with an impressive extension of modernism's creative logic and aesthetic rules. From the form to the content, the artist abandoned the western tradition of

landscape painting, without following a prescribed pattern. He refused to cage himself in the same perspective as most other landscape painters, but at the same time carefully indicated that both nature and mankind share a similar horizon.

Even though the focus in the painting is lax, the space and time tend to overlap while the deposition of the artist remains free. As he mentioned, 'Artists have changed their thinking and no longer produce works with narrative content. Artists are now more concerned with thinking about concepts and forms'.

For years, the artist had experienced a transition towards eastern thinking, and searched for a way or method to create new masterpieces in the language of nature and landscape. His works reflect a wide and distant sense of space and a deep sense of cosmic meaning. Contemplating these visual texts, we believe that the artist had gained a great enlightened understanding. He had attained the highest level of painting that is worth seeing, worth visiting and worth pausing at, a lifetime's spiritual sanctuary.

Born in Penang, Joseph Tan (1941-2001) studied abroad in Australia; and in 1970, he received the Fulbright Hayes Scholarship to study Modern Arts in the renowned Chicago Art Academy and obtained a Masters Degree from the academy. He was appointed Senior Lecturer in UiTM (formerly known as ITM), and was elected Director General of the National Art Gallery, and Director of the National Art Gallery's Trust Fund Committee; he was also the General Manager of the Nanyang Art Gallery, and spent most of his life contributing tremendously in the field of art education, art management and so forth.

There were many outstanding works in the exhibition but I was personally captivated by the work "Hill of Thyme" and viewed it in a new light. Compared to the other beautiful big pieces in three or four panels, such as "Memories of Dungun", "Gifts of Endau Rompin", "No Beginning to the Fourth Dimension" and so on, the canvas space for the "Hill of Thyme" is relatively smaller and its aesthetic gestures are geared more towards light and quietness; every color, hue, shade and form is painted with an extreme ease.

"Hill of Thyme" is well worth pondering because the artist had successfully amalgamated both the subject and the medium into a conscious field of vision, allowing the recipient to sway freely in the 'illusionary' wilderness and to enjoy oneself to one's heart's content.

Composed of three parts: the scenery seeps effortlessly through the windowpane and into the windows of our souls; a continuous sense of space and time that is perceptible and inseparable, unconventional, and gently revealed with an original charm. Azure sky and colors turn from thick to thin... the concentration of the visual sense develops towards the peaks and ridges that set off the stone surfaces and vegetation. The artist used light ink strokes to capture the mountains, as though brushed with a thin film of colors to create a unified manifestation of nature. Verdant hills and green mountains are bright and limpid. It is transparent, sparkingly bright and crystal clear.

Someone once said that Joseph Tan had accumulated an understanding of local ecology during his time in the education

industry, and that he was strongly attached to the subject and immersed himself into nature. How true is this? Perhaps the best way to know more is through the artist's own words...

"Day in and day out, I saw the colors of water change on the beach, with the changing of climate. When the storm came, the sand was churned out (as a) yellow thing in the air. The water changes, the coastline changes, the rocks erode. Watching these, it's very frightening but very satisfying. There is thunder storm and rain and the next moment, there is calmness".

Chai Chang Hwang (*trans. CH*)

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- 2 Xu Fuguan (2001), *The Spirit of Chinese Art*, Shanghai: East China Normal University Publications

BERKELANA BEBAS DALAM BELANTARA ILUSI

Apabila saya menghayati lanskap yang mengagumkan oleh mendiang **Joseph Tan**, saya tidak dapat tidak mengingati kata-kata John Berger, "semua pelukis yang mengambil inspirasi dari alam semulajadi akan akhirnya mengubah persepsi mereka terhadap alam semulajadi. Samada seni terus mengukuhkan lagi persepsi kita terhadap alam semulajadi atau ia telah menyediakan kita dengan perspektif yang baru terhadap alam semulajadi."

Namun demikian, jikapun seorang pelukis itu gagal menghasilkan gambaran yang seimbang terhadap alam semulajadi menerusi pemerhatiannya, hasilnya tetap merupakan suatu ilustrasi terhadap hubungan antara alam semulajadi dengan kemanusiaan. Catan-catan dakwat Cina yang lampau sering menzahirkan suatu tempat persinggahan yang indah dari sudut yang tinggi: suatu ketinggian yang sering mendedahkan bahawa alam semulajadi adalah sesuatu yang mendamaikan dan tersembunyi dalam sesuatu yang tidak terjangkau dalamnya. Oleh itu, adalah penting bagi seorang pelukis untuk mencari objektif mutlaknya dalam mencipta sesuatu yang baru serta membentuk pandangan yang lebih meluas. Lebih lanjut lagi, seorang pelukis itu perlu bersatu dengan alam semulajadi untuk menggalakkan pencantuman antara pelukis dengan alam.

Pada Februari 2006 Balai Seni Lukis Negara telah melancarkan sebuah pameran retrospektif untuk **Joseph Tan**, manakala T.K. Sabapathy, seorang ahli sejarah seni terkenal telah dilantik menjadi kurator tamu untuk pameran tersebut. Dibawah penyeliaan beliau, pameran ini telah disusun berdasarkan beberapa tema dan waktu, dalam mana catan-catan lanskap (1971–2001) merupakan komponen yang paling besar, termasuk 'Painting Series', 'Dungun Series', 'The Formation Series' dan pelbagai kajian.

Menerusi catan-catan aklirik ini, lanskap semulajadi digambarkan dengan ketepatan yang tinggi, juga dengan suatu lanjutan terhadap aturan estetik dan logik kreatif modenisma

yang membanggakan. Dari segi bentuk dan makna, pelukis telah meninggalkan tradisi catan lanskap barat, dan tidak menuruti sesuatu corak yang telah ditetapkan. Beliau mengelak dari memenjarakan diri dalam perspektif yang sama seperti para pelukis lanskap yang lain. Pada masa yang sama, beliau dengan berhati-hati mencadangkan bahawa kedua-dua alam semulajadi dan manusia berkongsi lapangan yang sama.

Walaupun titik tumpuan pada karya-karya beliau tidak begitu menonjol, aspek ruang dan masa kelihatan bertindan manakala kedudukan beliau sebagai pelukis kekal bebas. Sebagaimana yang pernah beliau nyatakan, "Para pelukis telah menukar pemikiran mereka dan tidak lagi menghasilkan karya-karya dengan kandungan yang naratif. Para pelukis kini lebih berminat dengan pemikiran tentang konsep dan bentuk."

Untuk beberapa tahun, pelukis telah mengalami transisi pemikiran timur, dan mencari satu cara untuk menghasilkan karya-karya agung yang baru menerusi bahasa alam semulajadi dan lanskap. Karya-karya beliau mencerminkan satu sensitiviti yang luas dan jauh terhadap ruang dan makna kosmik.

Dalam merenung teks-teks visual pelukis, kita percaya bahawa beliau telah memperolehi suatu sinar kefahaman yang tinggi. Beliau telah mencapai tahap pencapaian catan yang tinggi, yang berbaloi untuk kita saksikan, lawati dan merenung sejenak, sepanjang hayat memberikan kita suatu persinggahan rohani yang bersifat menerima.

Dilahirkan di Pulau Pinang, **Joseph Tan** (1941–2001) menuntut di Australia, dan pada tahun 1970, beliau telah menerima Biasiswa Fulbright Hayes untuk mengikuti pengajian seni moden di Akademi Seni Chicago yang terkenal bagi mendapatkan Ijazah Sarjana dari akademi tersebut. Beliau pernah dilantik sebagai Pensyarah Kanan di UiTM (sebelumnya dikenali sebagai ITM), dan

pernah dilantik sebagai Ketua Pengarah Balai Seni Lukis Negara, Pengerusi Jawatankuasa Tabung Amanah Balai Seni Lukis Negara; beliau juga pernah berkhidmat sebagai Pengurus Besar Nanyang Art Gallery dan memenuhi hayatnya dengan memberi sumbangan besar dalam bidang pendidikan seni, pengurusan seni dan yang berkaitan.

Terdapat beberapa karya yang cemerlang dalam pameran ini, tetapi saya secara peribadinya sangat tertarik pada "Hill of Thyme" dan melihatnya dari sudut yang berbeza. Berbanding dengan lain-lain karya besar dalam bentuk tiga atau empat panel seperti "Memories of Dungun", "Gifts of Endau Rompin", "No Beginning to the Fourth Dimension" dan lain-lain, ruang kanvas untuk "Hill of Thyme" secara relatifnya adalah kecil dan gestura estetikanya lebih kearah cahaya dan kesunyian; setiap jenis warna, nilai terang-gelap dan bentuk dilukis dengan begitu mudah.

"Hill of Thyme" sangat berbaloi untuk direnungi kerana pelukis telah berjaya menggabungkan kedua-dua subjek dan medium dalam suatu lapangan kesedaran yang mengizinkan pengunjung untuk berhayun bebas dalam belantara ilusi untuk membuai hati sendiri.

Digubah dalam tiga bahagian, pemandangan yang digambarkan kelihatan menyusup masuk membolosi satah karya untuk menjengah jendela jiwa kita. Ia mewujudkan suatu sensasi ruang dan masa yang boleh dikesan, tidak boleh dipisahkan, tidak bersifat seperti kelaziman, asli, menarik dan dizahirkan dengan begitu lembut. Langit warna 'azure' dan warna-warna lain bertukar dari tebal ke nipis... penumpuan kedamaian tampak berkembang ke puncak dan jurang-jurang yang menjelaskan kualiti permukaan batu dan juga tumbuhan. Sapuan berus dakwat yang ringan untuk menggambarkan gunung-gunung, seperti telah disapu dengan suatu lapisan warna yang nipis untuk mencipta suatu penzahiran alam yang bersepadu. Bukit-bukau dan gunung-gunung hijau kelihatan sangat terang. Ia lutsinar, bercahaya dan jelas.

Seorang pernah berkata bahawa Joseph Tan telah mengumpul suatu kefahaman tentang ekologi tempatan ketika hayatnya dalam industri pendidikan, dan bahawa dia bukan saja berpaut kepada subjeknya, malah bersatu dengan subjek alam semulajadinya. Sejauh menakah kebenaran ini? Mungkin cara yang terbaik untuk mengetahui lebih lanjut adalah menerusi kata-kata beliau sendiri... "Setiap waktu, saya melihat warna air bertukar di pantai, mengikut perubahan cuaca. Apabila ribut datang, pasir diganjak menjadi suatu benda kuning berterbangan di udara. Air bertukar, persisiran pantai bertukar, batu terhakis. Melihat keadaan ini mendatangkan rasa yang memuaskan walaupun sangat menakutkan. Ada gempita guruh dan hujan dan saat kemudiannya ia menjadi tenang."

Chai Chang Hwang (*trans. from English by HJS*)

RUJUKAN

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MY OTHER ARTISTIC PARENT

My Jolly Koh has a sky of rich yellow imbued with an aura of blood red rose. Where the sky touches the orange slashes of the horizon, the yellow is lovingly thinned to a rich luminous glow.

Like the promise of an oasis just beyond the hill.

The land mass in the mid ground has an implied denseness that seems at odds with the almost imperceptible shift in the yellow – it's tinge of rose is heavier and there is a hint of something murkier, an underbelly of umber.

Yet it is still a lovely yellow.

These skins of yellow have been built into a smoothness that fills the picture plane – it makes the surface tactile.

On either side of this window into a perfect yellow-orange world – just near the edges – are two downward stokes of bleached yellow, stripped to the canvas, that dramatically bleed into the larger dark yellow colourfield.

The main actors in this play of yellow color fields are the vibrant flora in the foreground, lovingly executed in the artist's signature calligraphic marks. Gestural arches of dense magenta and vibrant green are set against thin calligraphic arched underlays of black and umber, their dynamism born of the denseness of their marks – layered thick pigment which give them a weight that unexpectedly floats on the dark washes underneath.

These finishing marks are rich and pure – straight from the tube – their placement completely instinctive.

Finally, like some life-giving force or a benevolent custodian in the distance, the white moon floats, a pregnant tear welling over its side. I love my Jolly Koh painting.

Jolly Koh's art is an unashamed celebration of sheer Beauty. For decades, he has chosen to do this through colour and a dynamic mark-making that draws from classical Chinese painting as much as it does from his deep knowledge and experience of Western modern art idioms. Often using the abstract landscape

as a backdrop, he has always been conscious of creating an original visual language that is distinctly his own. He is adamant to a point of dogma, that quality or standard – excellence and a fine sensibility – be the cornerstone to good art...

My work seems vastly removed from Jolly's work.

Yet he has played a profound part in my development as an artist and a writer.

I am a figurative painter whose work is concerned broadly with issues of difference. My work has always used the narrative to draw upon autobiographical subject matter to express wider sociopolitical issues and develop philosophical content that goes beyond the purely private.

But the difference ultimately lies simply in the content... and if you were to ask Jolly, in the quality, of course.

I, too, do not think that art can change the world – after all, Guernica was made early in the last century... 70 odd years later, this is the nightmare which is the world as it is today. Still, I do not think that we can help but respond to the world around us – both as individual human beings and as artists.

Me and Jolly, we come from similar places – we just react to the world differently – he loves rocks and hills and I cannot get enough of the madness that is the Fox Channel and Bill O'Reilly.

But fundamentally, I too want to make beautiful paintings. I want to be able to analyse colour carefully and celebrate the subtleties of tone and value. I think about the in and out movement of a composition. Harmony and contrast help heighten the drama and excitement in my work. I want to learn how to plan my paintings and yet convey a convincing sense of the spontaneous through the dynamism of my mark making. I want to get past the act of mere rendering.

And over the years, I have learnt these things from Jolly Koh.

It hasn't been any easy ride.

One time I was thrown out of his Masterclass. Once – or trice – he has put a brush to my work because he found it lacking. Another time he came to the preview of my exhibition and proceeded to give a critique of my work, pointing out my most shameful flaws to any collector who would listen.

But Jolly has also painlessly taken time to share his thoughts with me – on art, painting, life, the world, canines and human behaviour over many years. He has been generous and magnanimous and hospitable. His acute sense of ‘honesty’ and his need to share that ‘honesty’ with the people around him is often abrasive and has led to situations but Jolly himself says that ‘he simply cannot help himself’.

He has always been a valued mentor, dogmatic critic, vocal supporter and constant friend... for me and I think for more artists in the Malaysian art movement than they would care to admit.

Anurendra Jegadeva acquired his Jolly Koh many years ago at a ridiculously discounted price and on a ludicrously long easy-payment scheme with the artist.

Anurendra Jegadeva

AYAHANDA ARTISTIK SAYA YANG LAIN

Jolly Koh saya memiliki langit yang kuning serta aura merah darah dan ros. Dalam mana langit tersebut menyentuh bukaan pemandangan yang jingga, kuningnya dinipiskan pula dengan penuh cinta menjadi sinar cahaya yang kaya.

Ia persis seungkap janji tentang sebuah oasis di sebalik bukit.

Bentuk tanah di pertengahan lapangan memiliki kepekatan yang seakan tidak seiringan dengan anjakan warna kuning yang hampir tidak kelihatan — sedikit warna ros yang lebih berat dan di sana hadirnya bisikan tentang sesuatu yang lebih terkocak, warna umber yang rendah.

Namun begitu, ianya tetap kuning yang indah.

Kulit-kulit kuning ini telah dibina menjadi suatu kelicinan yang memenuhi satah gambar — ia menjadikan permukaan kanvas memiliki sifat jalinan sentuh.

Di sisi jendela yang lain dalam dunia kuning-jingga ini — hampir kepada tepiannya — adalah dua sapuan ke bawah dalam warna kuning yang terhakis, menggariskan kanvas dan merebak secara dramatik ke dalam lapangan warna kuning gelap yang lebih luas.

Pelakon utama dalam permainan lapangan warna kuning ini adalah flora yang segar di depannya, dihasilkan dengan penuh cinta menerusi tanda-tanda kaligrafik yang telah menjadi identiti pengkarya. Bumbung-bumbung gestura dalam warna ungu yang pekat dan hijau yang segar dipadankan dengan bumbung kaligrafik di bawah lapisan warna hitam dan umber yang dinamikanya dilahirkan dari kepekatan tanda-tanda yang disapu — lapisan pigmen tebal yang memberikan ia keberatan dan ketimbulan tanpa jangkaan di atas bancuhan cair di bawahnya.

Tanda-tanda kemasan sebegini adalah kaya dan asli — terus dari tiub — dengan kedudukannya ditentukan secara intuitif.

Akhir sekali, seperti suatu tenaga yang memberi nyawa atau penjaga yang pemurah dan melihat dari jauh, bulan putih ditimbulkan dengan diiringi oleh tangisan yang penuh ditepinya.

Saya amat meminati catan Jolly Koh.

Seni Jolly Koh adalah suatu keraian tanpa segan-silu tentang Kecantikan. Untuk berdekaddekad, beliau telah memilih untuk melakukan ini menerusi warna dan dinamika membuat tanda yang merujuk kepada catan klasik Cina dan juga dari pengetahuan beliau yang mendalam dan pengalaman berkaitan idiom-idiom seni moden Barat. Seringkali menggunakan lanskap abstrak sebagai latar, beliau sentiasa sedar dalam mencipta bahasa visual yang asli dan berkeperibadian tersendiri. Beliau sentiasa kukuh hingga boleh dianggap memegang dogma, bahawa kualiti atau piawaian — kecemerlangan dan kehalusan — adalah tanda utama untuk seni yang baik.

Karya-karya saya kelihatan sangat jauh terpisah dari karya-karya Jolly.

Namun, beliau telah memainkan peranan yang sangat penting dalam perkembangan saya sebagai pelukis dan penulis.

Saya ialah seorang pelukis figuratif dengan karya-karya yang tertumpu kepada isu-isu berkaitan perbezaan. Karya saya sentiasa menggunakan naratif yang merujuk kepada subjek-subjek peribadi untuk menzahirkan isu-isu sosio-politik yang lebih lebar dan untuk membangunkan kandungan falsafah yang melangkaui sesuatu yang lebih peribadi.

Namun perbezaan ini pastinya terletak pada kandungan... dan jika anda bertanya kepada Jolly, juga berbeza dalam kualiti, tentunya.

Saya juga tidak berfikir bahawa seni boleh mengubah dunia. Bahawa 'Guernica' telah dihasilkan pada abad yang lepas... kini 70 tahun kemudian, mimpi ngeri perang tetap juga menghantui dunia pada hari ini. Namun begitu, kita tidak dapat mengelak dari memberi reaksi terhadap dunia di sekitar kita — sebagai seorang individu dan sebagai seorang pelukis.

Saya dan Jolly, kami datang dari tempat yang sama — kami hanya memberi reaksi terhadap dunia secara berbeza — beliau menyukai batu dan bukit dan saya pula tidak pernah puas dengan kegilaan yang dipaparkan dalam Fox Channel dan Bill O'Really.

Namun secara asasnya, saya juga mahu membuat catan-catan yang indah. Saya mahu berupaya menganalisa warna secara

cermat dan meraikan kehalusan tona dan nilai warna. Saya berfikir tentang pergerakan masuk serta keluar dalam komposisi. Harmoni dan kontras membantu meningkatkan drama dan keseronokan dalam karya saya. Saya mahu belajar mengatur catan-catan saya dan menyampaikan sensasi kespontanan yang menyakinkan menerusi dinamika membuat tanda. Saya mahu melepasi batasan melukis bentuk.

Dalam beberapa tahun yang lepas, saya telah mempelajari ini dari Jolly Koh.

Ia bukanlah suatu perjalanan yang mudah.

Pada suatu ketika, saya pernah dihalau keluar dari kelas beliau. Pernah sekali, beliau telah meletakkan berus pada karya saya kerana mendapatinya 'tidak lengkap'. Pada ketika yang lain, beliau datang ke prebiu pameran saya dan terus memberikan kritikan terhadap karyakarya saya, menunjukkan kelemahan-kelemahan saya yang memalukan kepada para pengumpul seni yang mahu mendengar.

Akan tetapi, Jolly juga telah dengan tekun mengambil masa untuk berkongsi pemikiran beliau dengan saya — tentang seni, catan, kehidupan, dunia ini, dan kemanusiaan. Beliau begitu pemurah dan pemberi dan melayan saya dengan baik. Beliau begitu jujur dan keperluan beliau untuk berkongsi kejujuran ini dengan orang lain sering menjadi kasar dan membawa kepada keadaan tidak menyenangkan, namun Jolly sendiri pernah berkata bahawa beliau tidak dapat mengawalinya.

Beliau sentiasa menjadi seorang mentor yang bernilai, pengkritik yang dogmatik, penyokong yang vokal dan rakan yang berkekalan... untuk saya dan juga ramai pelukis lain dalam pergerakan seni Malaysia yang mungkin segan untuk mengakuinya.

Anurendra Jegadeva memperoleh Jolly Koh beliau beberapa tahun yang lalu dalam suatu harga diskaun yang melucukan dan menerusi skim bayaran mudah yang tidak masuk akal atas ikhsan Jolly.

Anurendra Jegadeva (trans. HJS)

SCULPTURE

Early modernist sculptors in the West looked towards the indigenous forms and stories of other cultures for inspiration, while a basic tenet of modernist sculpture was “truth to material” which asserts that the characteristics particular to materials be considered in the conception of an artwork.

Pioneering modernist sculptor Anthony Lau fused natural, living and mythological elements from local and Southeast Asian sources in powerful works whose strength of expression relies on the artist’s extraordinary grasp of the qualities of the materials he employed – wood, stone, bronze and other metals.

Latiff Mohidin also made sculptures that were inspired by spiritual myths and natural and traditional forms from around Southeast Asia. His “Langkawi” series of wall sculptures was significant in that it built a link between sculpture and painting, transferring the painterly qualities of a two-dimensional artwork onto a three-dimensional one.

Later sculptors have continued to experiment with different materials like glass, wire mesh, granite, metal plates and found objects. Some take as their starting point traditional carving and metalwork, re-inventing craft techniques and materials, and often bringing out the metaphorical potential of Malay legend and folklore.

SENI ARCA

Pengarca moden yang awal di Barat melihat ke arah bentuk asli dan kisah-kisah budaya lain sebagai inspirasi, manakala prinsip asas seni arca moden ialah "kebenaran kepada bahan" yang menekankan bahawa sifat-sifat sesuatu bahan perlu diberi pertimbangan dalam menghasilkan kerja seni.

Pengarca moden perintis, Anthony Lau menghasilkan karya-karya yang sering dipenuhi elemen-elemen simbolik yang dipetik dari mitos lampau Asia Tenggara. Karyakarya ini dihasilkan dari kayu, gangsa, batu dan besi.

Latiff Mohidin juga menghasilkan arca yang diilhamkan daripada mitos spiritual, bentuk semula jadi dan tradisional daripada seluruh Asia Tenggara. Siri Langkawi beliau yang terdiri daripada arca-arca dinding adalah penting kerana ia membina pertalian di antara arca dan lukisan, memindahkan mutu kerja seni lukisan dua dimensi kepada tiga dimensi.

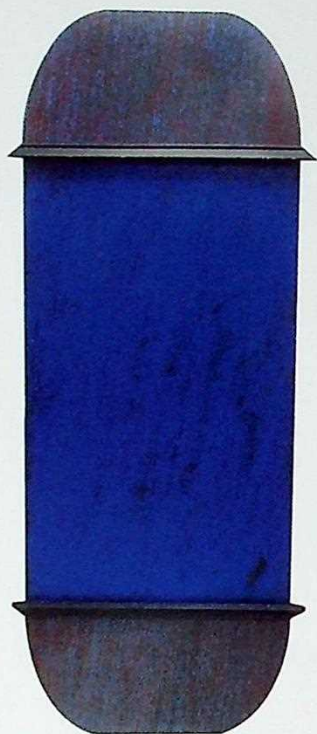
Pengarca dari generasi yang kemudian telah meneruskan eksperimen dengan bahan-bahan berlainan seperti kaca, jaring dawai, granit, kepingan logam dan objek-objek jumpaan. Ada di antara mereka yang bermula dengan ukiran tradisional dan kerja logam, mencipta semula teknik kraf dan bahan, dan kebiasaannya menampilkan potensi metafora legenda dan budaya rakyat alam Melayu.



Anthony Lau
Spirit of Fire, 1959
Wood carving mounted on plastic base
95 x 20 x 20cm
National Art Gallery Collection



Raja Shahrizan Raja Aziddin
Untitled, 2000
Metal
46cm (h)
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Latiff Mohidin
Langkawi Series, Late 1970s
Oil on wood
175 x 50.5cm
University of Malaya Collection



Latiff Mohidin
Langkawi Senja, 1979
Oil on wood
180 x 81cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

Image courtesy of Sharmiza Abu Hassan

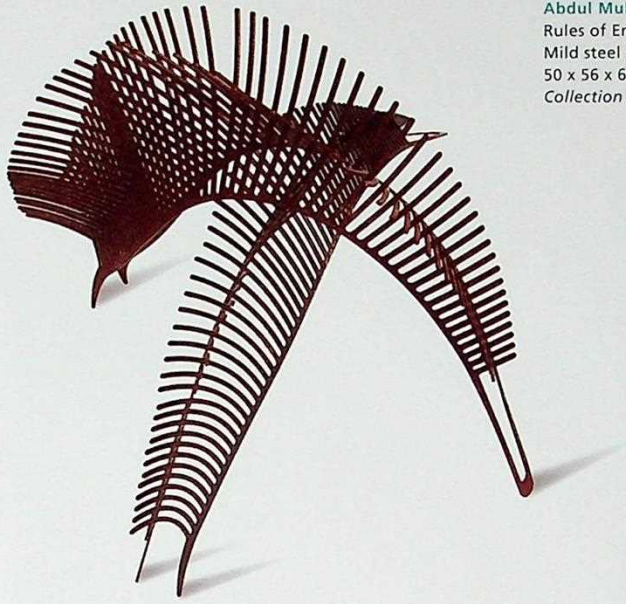


Sharmiza Abu Hassan
Recalling the Past, 1998
Copper, wood, metal
96 x 23cm
Artist's Collection

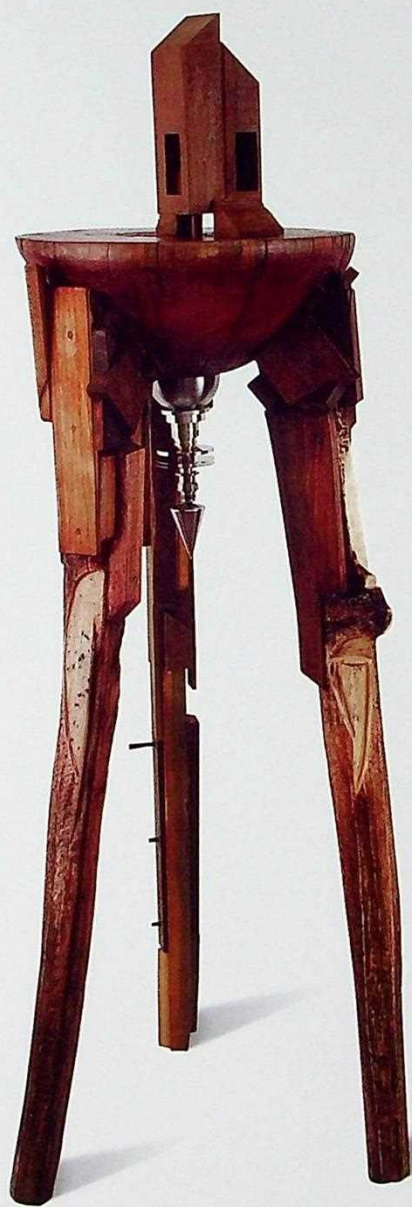
Image courtesy of Sharmiza Abu Hassan



Sharmiza Abu Hassan
Nur Pintu Hati, 1998
Copper, wood, metal
123 x 29cm
Artist's Collection



Abdul Multhalib Musa
Rules of Engagement, 2003
Mild steel
50 x 56 x 60cm
Collection of Ng Sek San and Carolyn Lau



Ramlan Abdullah
Still Standing- Home, 2007
Wood & metal
180 x 65 x 62cm
Artist's Collection

When Anthony Lau comes to one's mind, these thoughts blossom: his uncanny ideation, the process he underwent in treating his subject matter, masterful execution with careful selection of materials, most apparent in his detailing.

To me, Anthony is by far the most innovative sculptor ever to grace the Malaysian art scene. He was in fact an anomaly. To be able to conjure a mystical manifestation that was obviously foreign to him is by no means a small feat. His "Spirit of Fire" ("Semangat Jin Api") 1960 work punches through cultural indifferences that dictate largely on the region's common frame of mind.

"Lau's adherence to the 'truth to material' aesthetic is also discernible in his biomorphic "Spirit of Fire"(1960). Evoking the mythical essence of fire, he personifies the element in this vertical, flame-like wood carving. His interest in this highly polished work in the aesthetic quality of the medium, emphasizing its block-like origins, its tonal gradations and organic wood grain patterns."

(Excerpts from the "Encyclopedia of Malaysia, Craft and the Visual Arts", Kuala Lumpur: 2006)

Anthony, who received his formal education in the UK in mid 1950's and further pursued his MA in art education at Indiana University was persistent with his creation, mainly wood-based, metal and concrete sculpture with minimal treatment in form and idea. Abstraction, yet accentuated with astonishing craftsmanship.

My first impression when confronted with Anthony Lau's work was nothing short of amazement. To emulate his success would be an impossible task. He is still in a class of his own.

Personally, I only knew him from afar, his works being one of our major references back when I was a student in ITM Dungun and later through exhibitions in major galleries while working as the National Museum sculptor in the early 1980s.

When I obtained my Masters in the US, I came back to Malaysia with quite a huge pride and was convinced the local art scene then, was waiting for a unique sculptor like me. I was wrong. Anthony was there all along and I was just trailing his footsteps.

Meeting up with Anthony humbled me to no end. We met face to face at the old National Art Gallery while I was exhibiting my Generation of Raw piece. It was in the early 90's. His presence along with his physical stature was at once felt. It literally radiated the whole gallery space and I was awestruck.

He possesses an impeccable manner with a very commendable command of language, very fluent with his Malay and pretty articulate in conveying a piece of his mind. If a sculptor would ever be judged only by appearance, Anthony would be the ultimate example.

His fascination with wooden materials was also apparent when our conversation revolved mainly on wood and its significance as a medium of expression. I would unashamedly admit that he is my idol.

Ramlan Abdullah

Apabila **Anthony Lau** terlintas dalam minda, beberapa pemikiran berikut mekar: ide-ide beliau yang pelik, proses yang dilalui oleh beliau dalam menangani subjek persoalan, penghasilan yang penuh kepakaran disertai pemilihan bahan yang berhati-hati dan yang paling ketara, perincian beliau.

Bagi saya, Anthony ialah seorang pengarca yang paling inovatif pernah menghiasi arena seni rupa Malaysia setakat ini. Malah, beliau merupakan seorang yang luar biasa. Kemampuan menzahirkan manifestasi mistikal yang jelas sekali adalah asing baginya merupakan suatu pencapaian yang bukan kecil. Karya beliau "Spirit of Fire" 1960 (Semangat Jin Api) menembusi perbezaan budaya yang serentak menggambarkan pementakan minda sepunya yang dikongsi bersama di wilayah ini.

"Ketaatan Lau kepada estetika 'kebenaran bahan' juga boleh dilihat dalam karya biomorfiknya "Spirit of Fire" (1960). Untuk menimbulkan intipati khalayan tentang api, beliau menggambarkan elemen ini menerusi ukiran kayu tegak yang menyerupai api. Minat beliau dalam menghasilkan karya-karya yang halus adalah menerusi kualiti estetik medium yang digunakan, menekankan asal-usulnya yang bersifat ketulan, jaluran tonal dan corak organik kayu."

(Petikan dari "Encyclopedia of Malaysia, Craft and the Visual Arts", Kuala Lumpur: 2006)

Anthony, yang menerima pendidikan formal beliau di United Kingdom pada pertengahan 50an and meneruskan pengajiannya di peringkat M.A dalam Pendidikan Seni di Indiana University, sangat kental dengan ciptaannya, kebanyakannya berasaskan kayu, besi dan arca konkrit dengan pengolahan bentuk yang minimal dan ide abstrak yang mempernyatakan lagi kemahiran beliau yang mengagumkan.

Pandangan pertama saya apabila berdepan dengan karya Anthony Lau adalah penuh dengan rasa terpegun. Untuk mengikuti

kejayaan beliau adalah tugas yang mustahil. Beliau masih dalam kelas beliau tersendiri.

Secara peribadi, saya hanya mengenali beliau dari jauh. Karya-karya beliau merupakan rujukan semasa saya menuntut di ITM Dungun dan kemudiannya menerusi pameran-pameran di beberapa galeri utama ketika saya bekerja sebagai pengarca untuk Muzium Negara pada awal 80an.

Apabila saya memperolehi Ijazah Sarjana di Amerika Syarikat, saya pulang ke Malaysia dengan rasa bangga dan yakin bahawa arena seni tempatan pada ketika itu sedang menunggu seorang pengarca seperti saya. Saya tersilap. Anthony telah berada di persada arena seni selama ini dan saya cuma menjejaki langkah-langkah beliau.

Perjumpaan dengan Anthony membuatkan saya merasa rendah diri selamanya. Kami bertentang mata di Balai Seni Lukis Negara lama ketika saya mempamerkan karya "Generation of Raw". Ini berlaku pada awal 90an. Kehadiran beliau dalam bentuk fizikal dapat dirasakan tenaganya. Tenaga ini mencerahkan keseluruhan ruang galeri dan ini membuatkan saya terpegun.

Beliau memiliki adab yang sempurna dengan penguasaan bahasa yang sangat terpuji. Sangat fasih berbahasa Melayu dan agak petah dalam menyampaikan pandangan beliau. Jika seorang pengarca dinilai dari segi penampilan, Anthony tentunya satu contoh yang pasti.

Sifat beliau yang sangat tertarik pada bahan-bahan kayu juga jelas dalam perbualan kami yang berlegar sekitar kayu dan kepentingannya sebagai suatu medium ekspresi. Saya tanpa segan mengakui beliau sebagai idola saya.

Ramlan Abdullah (trans. HJS)

'the past is neither severed nor separated, yet still exists and has not departed. The old still is brought to the present. No matter how I take the distance, shifting, revolving and crawling far from the old to the new series, the past is still felt and can be seen rising, bobbing up and down, becoming a lively and fresh connection... as though to fortify the present...'

18.1.1967

Kuala Lumpur

Notes from the diary of **Latiff Mohidin**, copied on 24.7.2004 during the drawings exhibition and launch of "Fables of Dawn – selected poems by Latiff Mohidin", translated by Salleh Joned, at Valentine Willie Fine Art gallery.

These significant notes recorded by Latiff serve to guide us every time an idea is needed to create art. It is demonstrated here that our new works cannot escape from the emotional template of work that has come before.

Latiff's "Langkawi Series" has been referred to as a trigger to the sculptures born out of the evolution of my own works. The "Langkawi Series", produced around 1976 – 1979, represents a phase where Latiff synthesises both the 3-dimensional and 2-dimensional aspects of his art. Without a doubt this archetypal body of work (in my opinion) has brought forth a form which expresses Islamic values that are imbued with meditative and personal spiritual considerations. The controlled and disciplined expression in the gilt colours and textures manifests a cognisant and introspective experimentation. The symmetry of the forms opens up a central space as a focal point bringing the observer far into a peaceful and contemplative mental state. Furthermore, the pendant or shield or even 'sampan' shapes are synonymous with his early works, which raise the core concept of 'Tenggara', or the integral culture of Southeast Asia, an

approach that would be acknowledged as "glocal" (globally local) in today's context.

According to an excerpt from Baha Zain, Latiff puts across his own metaphor in "uniting the force of verbal art with visual art". He tried to investigate the testimony present "in human life and in the depths of the soul" in his collection of poems published in the 1970s. Perhaps this is relevant to the visual appearance of his "Langkawi Series" which is far more candid than his other abstract works. Until today, I am impressed with the modest elements of normal, simple everyday subjects that chart his mind in his poems, like a blue bus, tickets, dust, a tortoise, the floor, a mattress, that are more tangible and come closer to the reader's heart.

Symbolically, "Langkawi" has its own celebrated legend, which is general knowledge. How it relates to Latiff's own contemplation with the island's tale is something I am still searching for and questioning until today.

Sharmiza Abu Hassan (*trans. AR*)

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- 2 Latiff Mohidin *Fables of Dawn – Selected Poems*; trans. Salleh Ben Joned. (Maya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 2003).
- 3 www.bernama.com

'yang lampau itu tidak terputus atau terpisah, malah masih wujud dan tidak hilang. Yang lama tetap terbawa kedalam yang kini. Betapapun jarak ku ambil, beranjak, beralih, berkisar dan berangkak jauh dari siri yang dulu ke siri yang baru, yang lalu masih dirasakan dan dapat pula dilihat bangkit lagi, tenggelam — timbul lagi menjadi jalinan yang rancak nan segar... seolah-olah ingin memperkuat yang sekarang...'

18.1.1967

Kuala Lumpur

Satu catatan diari Latiff Mohidin, disalin pada 24.7.2004 semasa mengunjungi pameran sketsa dan launching buku puisi "Fables of Dawn — selected poem Latiff Mohidin translated by Salleh Jones" di galeri Valentine Willie Fine Art.

Catatan Latiff inilah yang signifikan dan terlekat di minda sebagai panduan setiap kali memulakan idea untuk karya yang akan dibentuk. Nyata membuktikan setiap kali terbit niat menghasilkan karya baru kita tidak boleh lari dari membawa sentimen imej pemula yang pernah dibuat sebelumnya.

"Langkawi Series" Latiff pernah dirujuk sebagai pencetus bentuk arca yang pernah lahir dalam evolusi karya-karya saya sendiri. Sebagai gagasan karya yang tercipta sekitar tahun 1976–1979, siri "Langkawi" mewakili satu fasa dimana Latiff mensintesis aspek 3 dimensi dan 2 dimensi sekaligus. Keunggulan gagasan karya ini tidak dapat dinafikan telah membawa satu bentuk bernilai Keislaman (pada pandangan saya) yang berintipatikan persoalan diri yang meditatif lagi spiritual. Ekspresi yang penuh kawalan dan tertib pada kemasan warna dan tekstura membayangkan eksperimentasi yang penuh sadar dan tafakur. Rupa simetri yang membuka ruang tengah sebagai focal-point jauh membawa penghayat ke dalam minda yang tenang dan kontemplatif. Secara keseluruhan bentuk seakan pending, perisai ataupun mungkin sampan sinonim dengan

karya awalnya yang mengungkap persoalan intipati Tenggara yang wajar diiktiraf "glokal" jika dikaitkan dengan konteks masa kini.

Menurut petikan dari Baha Zain, Latiff membawa metafora tersendiri dalam "menyatukan daya seni verbal dengan daya seni visual". Pada sekitar 70 an terbit himpunan sajak-sajak beliau yang minimalis dimana beliau cuba menyelami kenyataan-kenyataan yang ada "dalam sukma insan dan terjun ke dalam kejiwaan". Mungkin ini relevan dengan jelmaan visual "Siri Langkawi" beliau yang juga jauh lebih tulus dari karya-karya abstraknya yang lain. Saya sehingga kini kagum dengan kesederhanaan unsur-unsur subjek harian yang biasa lagi naif yang memeta minda beliau dalam puisi-puisinya seperti bas warna biru, tiket, debu, kura-kura, lantai, tilam yang lebih hakiki dan dekat dengan hati sesiapa yang membacanya.

Secara simbolik umum maklum tentang "Langkawi" punya lagenda agungnya tersendiri. Apakah ada kaitannya ketafakuran Latiff dengan ceritera pulau tersebut... saya masih mengkaji dan menyoal sehingga kini.

Sharmiza Abu Hassan

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- 2 Latiff Mohidin Fables of Dawn — Selected Poems; trans. Salleh Ben Jones. (Maya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 2003).
- 3 www.bernama.com

REVISITING DIVERSE TRADITIONS

It is only natural for those who live within a multi-ethnic society such as Malaysia to engage in discussions on multiculturalism and to grapple with questions of artistic identity. Issues such as the 'self' and 'the other' become multi-layered and complex in a heterogeneous society such as ours, and more so because of our colonial past. As such, the question of who we are and where we come from encourages one to delve into the past in search of one's own ethnicity and cultural tradition. Art works driven by this impulse are thus variegated in their approach, artists often deliberately immersing themselves in a specific historical artistic tradition for a deeper understanding of their cultural roots.

Syed Thajudeen, who studied in Madras, began his early career exploring Indian myth and legend, but later used the aesthetic he developed to explore Malaysian stories past and present. Nik Zainal Abidin transposed the characters of the wayang kulit theatre into his rich watercolours, reclaiming and re-inventing a traditional form that is both very localized and shared by many Southeast Asian cultures. The 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a Malay-Islamic

revival within the Malay community that advocated the linking of art forms to religious, moral or didactic functions, and a turning away from secular, figurative art. Sulaiman Esa's "Waiting for Godot" series meditates on the issues of this development. Ahmad Khalid Yusof became one of the first artists to incorporate Jawi script into his paintings. His use of symbols and his compositions were formulated from Malay-Islamic artistic and cultural traditions.

Contemporary artists today continue to excavate the rich layers of individual cultural histories to bring meaning into their work, and in some cases to reassert their identity within a multi-cultural society. As the artists do this, they recover not only their cultural identity but also become conduits for the continuation of particular cultural traditions, adding a new dimension.

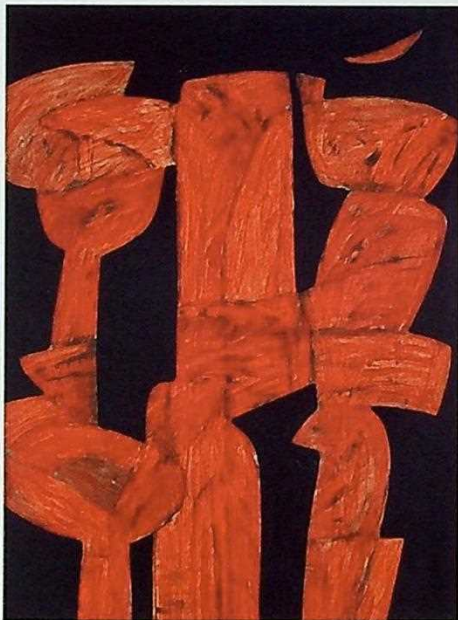
MENEMUI KEMBALI KEPELBAGAIAN TRADISI

Memang lumrah bagi mereka yang tinggal di dalam masyarakat berbilang bangsa seperti Malaysia melibatkan diri dalam perbincangan tentang kepelbagaian budaya dan bergelut dengan persoalan identiti seni. Isu-isu seperti "diri" dan "orang lain" menjadi berlapis-lapis dan rumit dalam masyarakat majmuk seperti kita, lebih-lebih lagi kerana zaman penjajahan dahulu. Oleh yang demikian, persoalan tentang siapa diri kita dan dari manakah kita datang menggalakkan seseorang itu menyelidik sejarah silam dalam mencari keetnikan dan tradisi budaya mereka. Kerja seni yang dipacu oleh dorongan ini mempunyai pendekatan beraneka ragam dan para pengkarya kebiasaannya dengan sengaja memberikan tumpuan mereka terhadap tradisi seni sejarah tertentu untuk memahami dengan lebih mendalam asal usul budaya mereka.

Syed Thajudeen, yang telah menyambung pelajaran ke Madras, memulakan kerjaya awalnya dengan menerokai mitos dan legenda India, tetapi kemudiannya menggunakan deria estetik yang terbina untuk menerokai kisah-kisah Malaysia masa silam dan masa kini. Nik Zainal Abidin mengubah karakter persembahan wayang kulit melalui cat airnya yang kaya, menggunakan semula dan mencipta kembali satu bentuk tradisi yang sangat setempat

dan pada masa yang sama dikongsi oleh banyak budaya Asia Tenggara. Tahun-tahun 1970an dan 1980an menyaksikan kemunculan kebangkitan Melayu Islam dalam masyarakat Melayu yang menyokong perkaitan bentuk seni dengan fungsi agama, moral atau didaktik, dan menjauhkan diri daripada seni sekular dan figuratif. Siri "Menanti Godot" oleh Sulaiman Esa mendalami isu-isu berkenaan kebangkitan ini. Ahmad Khalid Yusof menjadi antara pengkarya yang pertama yang menggabungkan skrip Jawi ke dalam lukisannya. Penggunaan simbol dan komposisi kerja beliau dirumuskan daripada tradisi seni dan budaya Melayu Islam.

Para pengkarya kontemporari pada hari ini masih terus mengungkai lapisan sejarah budaya individu yang kaya untuk membawa makna kepada hasil seni mereka dan dalam sesetengah keadaan menyerlahkan semula identiti mereka dalam masyarakat berbilang budaya. Semasa melakukan semua ini, para pengkarya bukan sahaja menemui kembali identiti budaya mereka tetapi menjadi penyambung kepada kesinambungan tradisi budaya tertentu dan menambahkan dimensi yang baru.



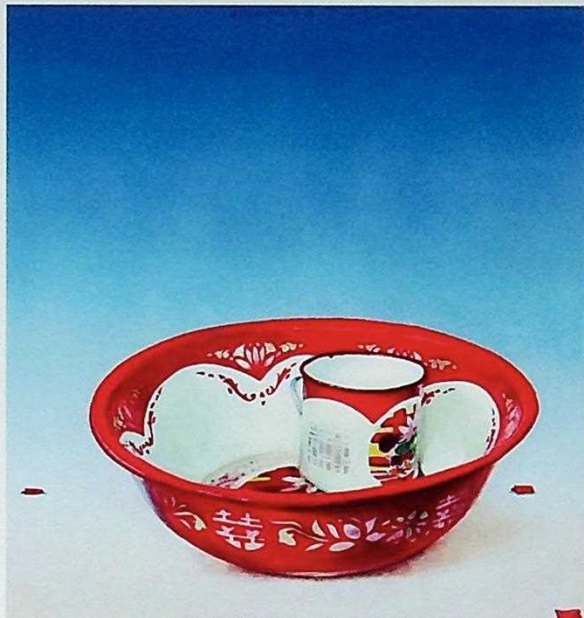
Latiff Mohidin
Imago Kelam (Dark Imago)
Pago-Pago Series, 1967
Acrylic on board
105.5 x 73.5cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Tengku Sabri Tengku Ibrahim
The Warrior, 1988
Wood Sculpture
62cm x 52cm x 35cm
Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman

Chai Chang Hwang
Siri Pelukan I: Kau Takde Hati, 1992–1996
Mixed media on canvas
177 x 170.5 cm (triptych)
Artist's Collection

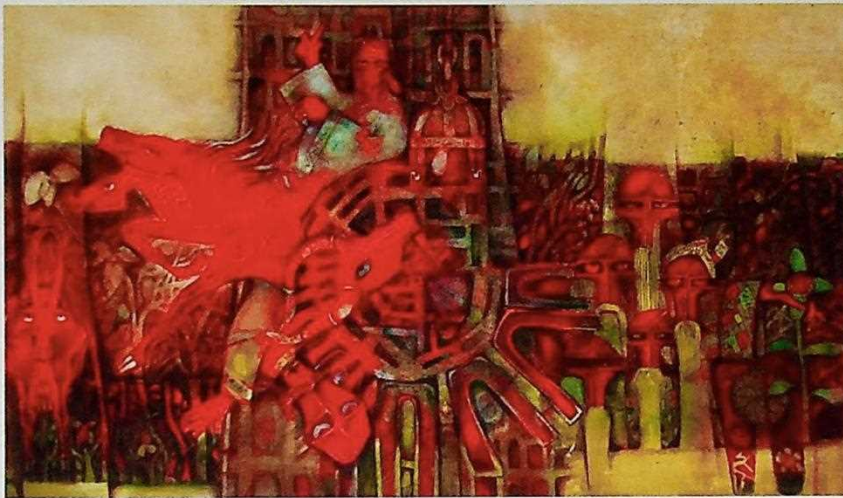




Chuah Chong Yong
Hun Li Wu Yu Series: Washing Basin and Mug, 2001
Acrylic on canvas
62 x 62cm
Private Collection

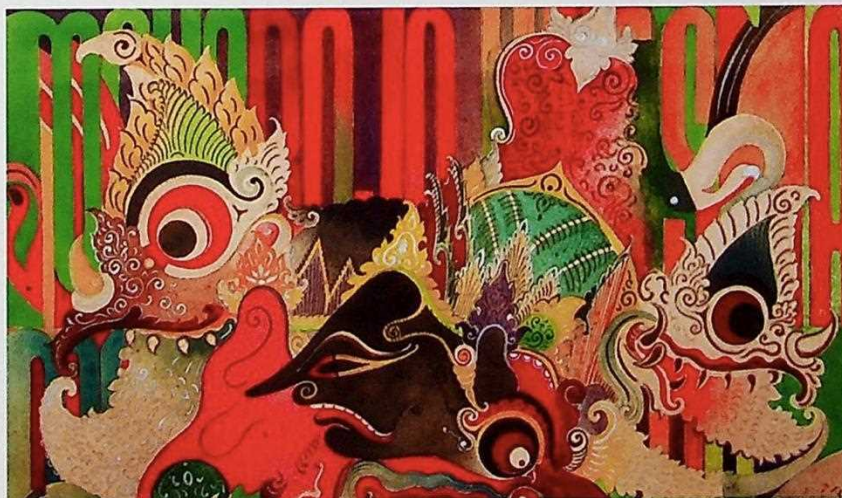


Chuah Chong Yong
Hun Li Wu Yu Series: Wedding Clogs, 2001
Acrylic on canvas
62 x 62cm
Private Collection



Syed Thajudeen
Justice, 1970
Oil on Canvas
60 x 95cm
Private Collection

Khairul Azmir Shoib aka Meme
'Kala' with Guard, 2007
Acrylic & ink on canvas
61 x 46cm
Artist's Collection

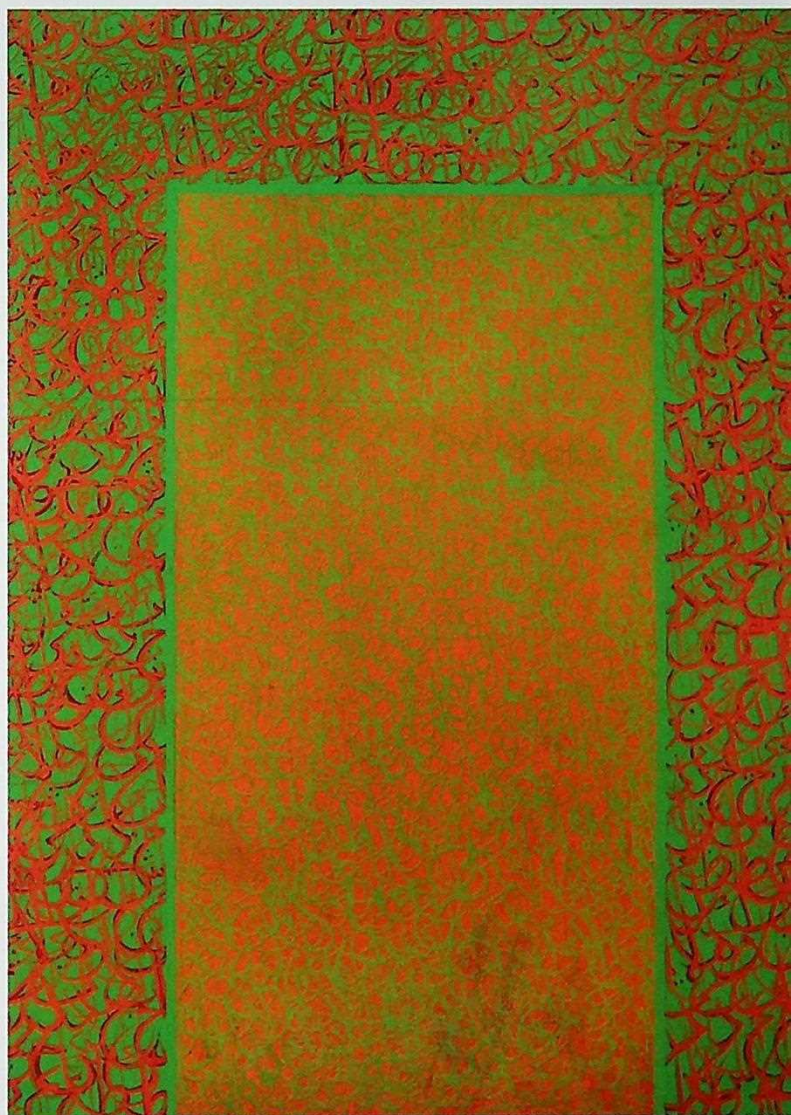
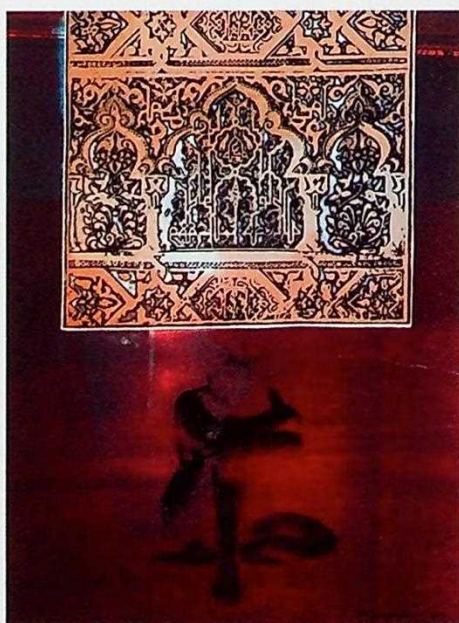


Nik Zainal Abidin Salleh
Wayang Kulit, 1973
Watercolour on paper
28.5 x 38.5cm
Petronas Art Collection

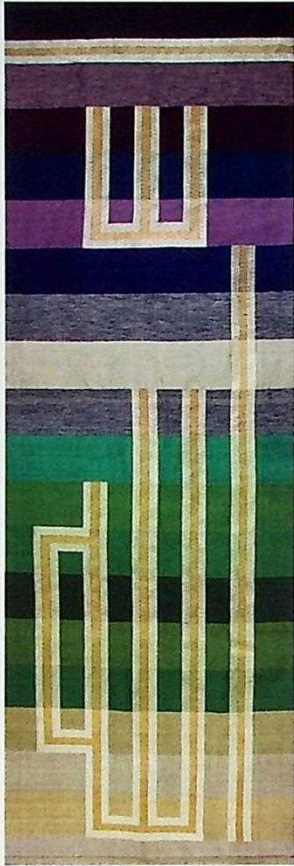


Nur Hanim Mohd Khairuddin
Grimoire, 1996
34.5 x 26.5 x 9cm
Mixed media
Collection of Pakhruddin and
Fatimah Sulaiman

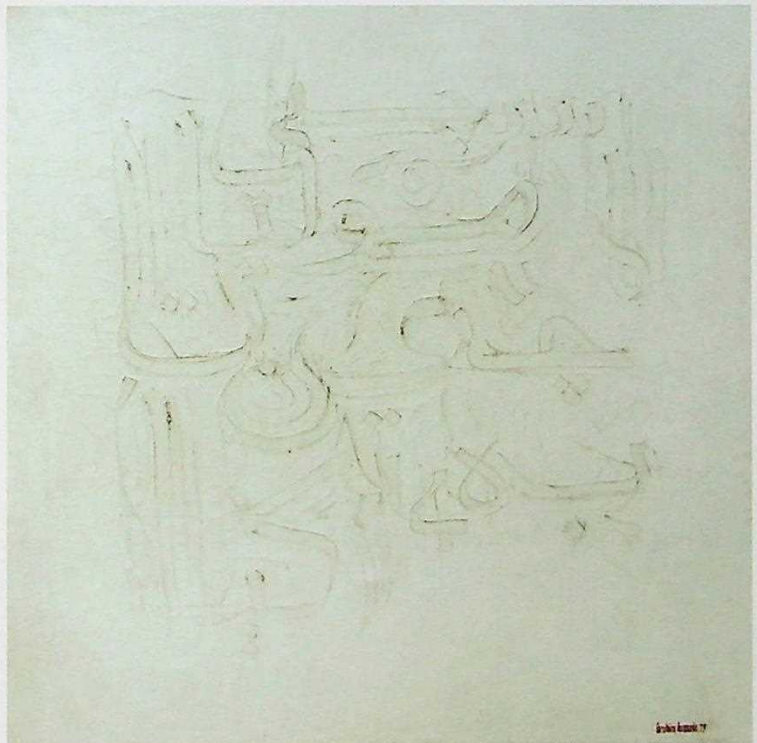
Sulaiman Esa
Waiting for Godot VIII, 1977
Silkscreen
53 x 40cm
Artist's Collection



Ahmad Khalid Yusof
Alif Ba Ta, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
137 x 107cm
Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Syed Ahmad Jamal
Allah, Late 1970s - 1980s
Songket
271 x 101cm
University of Malaya Collection



Ibrahim Hussein
Suci Mulia Cinta Bahagia, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
152 x 152cm
University of Malaya Collection

Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1934, Ahmad Khalid Yusof was a respected artist, teacher and visual arts manager. He died on the 15th of January 1997 at the age of 62. When I was at ITM (now UiTM) Shah Alam around 1993, I would frequently run into him when he was the Director of Galeri Shah Alam (GSA). Once, when one of my artworks was rejected from the GSA Open Exhibition, he spoke to me soothingly in a persuasive manner to “try again next year”. Those words were our introduction to each other. That encounter compelled me to learn and discover the works of Ahmad Khalid Yusof. Without a doubt, my works have been greatly influenced by the concept of the local advocated by him, especially during the last two semesters of my Fine Art course when I was experimenting with ‘jawi’/calligraphic elements in my works, which ultimately led me to choose “Taslimans From A Visual Arts Perspective” as my research thesis.

I got to know Ahmad Khalid more intimately in the course of the last two years before his death, when he was a member of the committee for the Ipoh Town Arts Festival (Festival Pekan Seni Ipoh – PSI), Perak in 1996. It was a shame that he played his key role as merely a contributor for the first festival; in the following year his works were shown in the tribute exhibition ‘Remembering Ahmad Khalid Yusof’, guest curated by Sharifah Zuriah Al-Jeffri.

Like most of his artist colleagues in his time, Ahmad Khalid’s early works were greatly influenced in the beginning by conventional Western realist, cubist, impressionist and expressionist approaches, even more so when he attended Kirkby Teacher’s Training College (1956-58), Winchester School of Art (1965-69) and Ohio University (1975-78), where he encountered works by major Western artists. Nevertheless, his later works served as an important indicator in the rise of traditional Malay-Islamic elements within the historical context of Malaysian

visual arts. His “Alif, Ba, Ta” series is in line with the Akar-akar Pribumi concept that was proposed during the National Cultural Congress in 1971. Through the congress came a significant effort to re-emphasise Malay-Islamic elements in socio-politics as well as in local culture and arts. Even until the last of his works, Ahmad Khalid held fast to the concepts he had developed. He was faithful to his exploration of the composition of Jawi letters, ‘pantun’ (malay poetic form), ‘awan larat’ (leafy clouds) and friezes. His works were more decorative and abstract, in line with Islamic art concepts that advocate certain rules in the making of art. Even after 30 years, his subjectivity was never compromised by new concepts and media that expanded the purview of our visual arts. He was passionate and uncompromising in his painting of Islamic calligraphic shapes that are perfect in nature. Unspoken maybe, as a reflection of love to a sweetheart. Maybe too, as a mantra, while applying the colours, to be closer to the All-Mighty. Remarkably enough, he never did insert any Quranic holy verses but instead only “borrowed” letters which he felt were perfect for his works.

“The broken Jawi letters appear like Arabic scripts but he would intentionally mix, bind, grind, pile the letters lam-alif, nun, ‘ain, sad, dad, ya, min, and hamzah. The letters are considered as brush strokes painting soft and warm colours.” – Zakaria Ali (2004)

“Jawi is always used for practical purposes, but I use Jawi to create art and forms. The artwork is an aesthetic language built to be a personal symbol, outside of social needs but derives from a creative individual” – Ahmad Khalid Yusof (1972).

Ahmad Khalid’s last works have quite a few linguistic elements added in such as ‘pantun’ and trope. It was possible that a strong literary influence was impressed upon him in his early days by his uncle, the great Malay scholar and author,

Za'ba. Among the works displayed in the PSI (1996) exhibition were "*Ada rasa berisi pandan, Hendak menganyam tikar sembahyang, Tujuh syurga di dalam badan, Di situlah tempat berkasih sayang*" and "*Semenjak keladi menjadi gulai, Ubi tidak berguna lagi, Sejak wang menjadi pemakai, Budi tidak berguna lagi*". In the acrylic and oil works on canvas, the 'pantun' were painted using jawi writings arranged in a fascinating composition. The way colour is used here seems to balance the softness and the special quality of every calligraphic letter painted. The letters, from the Semitic character grouping, not only represent phonetic symbols but also possess apparent semantic and arithmetic values.

This emphatic manifestation of the Malay arts says something about the 'form and soul' of Ahmad Khalid who had liked to see the arts, with its many-layered cultural and local nuances, go back to basics and develop appropriately. It was from there that I was moved to re-look the huge potential that can be unearthed from local subjects through the "Azimat" series that has gone beyond literal meaning and become far more universal. Whether for defense or destruction or even medication, talismans possess strong visual qualities and characteristics. The Jawi script was manipulated in the series "Protector" and "Grimoire" to present a mystical aura to archaic replicas of artefacts of the Nusantara world. This series has become an important milestone in my art practice. It is my search for an artistic identity drawn from our local influences which serves as a resource in preparation for the challenges of wider and more complex contemporary forms of art.

Nur Hanim Mohamed Khairuddin (*trans. AR*)
July 2007, Ipoh

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- 2 Hj Abdul Ghani Samsudin & Lain-lain (1992). *Seni Dalam Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Melayu UM
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- 5 Katalog Pameran Identiti Islam Dalam Senirupa Malaysia: Pencapaian dan Cabaran. BSLN, KL, 1992.
- 6 Katalog Pameran Kesenian Islam: Suatu Perspektif Malaysia. BSLN, KL, 1995.
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Ahmad Khalid Yusof merupakan seorang pelukis, pendidik dan juga pengurus seni tampak yang dihormati. Beliau lahir pada tahun 1934 di Kuala Lumpur. Beliau meninggal dunia tatkala berusia 62 tahun pada 15 Januari 1997. Sewaktu di ITM (kini UiTM) Shah Alam sekitar 1993, saya kerap terserempak dengan kelibat Ahmad Khalid ketika beliau menyandang tugas sebagai Pengarah Galeri Shah Alam (GSA). Pernah sekali, ketika catan saya ditolak dari menyertai Pameran Terbuka GSA, beliau menghampiri dengan nada memujuk supaya saya "cuba lagi tahun depan". Itulah kalimah pertama yang menjadi salam perkenalan antara kami. Perkenalan yang 'mewajibkan' saya mengambil tahu tentang karya-karya Ahmad Khalid Yusof sesudah itu. Tidak dinafikan, pengkaryaan saya turut dipengaruhi konsep lokaliti yang ditatang Ahmad Khalid, bilamana bermula pada dua semester terakhir dalam kursus Seni Halus yang saya lalui, saya mencuba-cuba bermain dengan elemen khat/jawi di dalam karya yang akhirnya membuahkan minat untuk menjadikan 'Azimat Dari Perspektif Seni Tampak' sebagai kajian tesis.

Dalam hampir dua tahun terakhir hayatnya, saya berpeluang mengenali Ahmad Khalid secara lebih dekat apabila beliau dilibatkan sebagai ahli jawatankuasa Festival Pekan Seni Ipoh (PSI) di Perak pada tahun 1996. Sayang sekali, peranan penting beliau hanya sempat disumbang bagi festival yang pertama. Pada tahun berikutnya, hanya karya-karya beliau sahaja yang hadir di Festival PSI melalui Pameran Memperingati Ahmad Khalid Yusof; sebuah pameran tribut dengan kurator tamu Sharifah Zuriah Al-Jeffri.

Ahmad Khalid sepertimana pelukis-pelukis sezamannya mula berkarya berkiblatkan pengaruh seni Barat. Gaya realis, kubis, impresionis dan ekspresionis yang konvensional tetap hadir dalam karya-karya awal beliau. Sementelah pula pengalaman menyaksikan karya-karya pelukis besar Barat sewaktu belajar di Kirkby Teacher's Training College (1956-58), Winchester School of Art (1965-69) dan Ohio University (1975-78) meniupkan semangat untuk pengkaryaan sebegitu. Walaubagaimana pun, karya-karya Ahmad Khalid selepas itu adalah penting sebagai indikator bangkitnya elemen tradisional Melayu-Islam dalam konteks persejarahan seni tampak Malaysia.

Siri 'Alif, Ba, Ta' yang dihasilkan adalah sejajar dengan konsep Akar-akar Pribumi yang dicanang melalui Kongres Kebudayaan Nasional pada 1971. Melalui kongres tersebut, wujud usaha yang ketara untuk membangkitkan semula unsur Melayu-Islam, dalam sosio-politik mahupun kebudayaan dan kesenian tempatan. Sehingga ke akhir pengkaryaan, Ahmad Khalid tetap kukuh dengan konsep yang dibina sejak itu. Beliau tetap setia bermain dengan komposisi huruf-huruf Jawi, karangan pantun, awan larat dan kerawang. Catan-catannya lebih dekoratif dan abstrak sejajar dengan konsep seni Islam yang meletakkan syarat-syarat tertentu dalam pembikinan seni. Betapa menebalnya jatidiri tempatan sehingga selepas 30 tahun, beliau tidak langsung tergugah dengan konsep-konsep dan media-media baru yang membusungi senario seni tampak kita. Beliau romantis dan taksub dengan bentuk-bentuk kaligrafi Islam yang sempurna sifatnya. Mungkin dalam diam diibaratkan seolah lakaran cinta untuk yang tersayang. Mungkin juga dijadikan zikir sewaktu mencalit warna untuk lebih dekat pada yang Esa. Namun yang menarik adalah, beliau tidak pernah menyelitkan mana-mana kalimah suci Al-Quran tetapi sekadar meminjam huruf-huruf yang dirasa tepat untuk pengkaryaan.

"Jawinya yang terputus-putus itu menyerupai skrip Arab tetapi huruf lam-alif, nun, 'ain, sad, dad, ya, min, hamzah sengaja dia bancuh, ikat, tenyih, tindih. Huruf-hurufnya dianggap sebagai sapuan berus mengecat warna lembut dan panas."
— Zakaria Ali (2004).

"Jawi selalu digunakan untuk tujuan praktikal. Tetapi saya guna Jawi untuk membina bentuk seni dan bentuk hiasan. Karya seni itu ialah pengucapan estetika dibina menjadi lambang peribadi, terletak di luar keperluan sosial tetapi berpunca dari individu yang kreatif" — Ahmad Khalid Yusof (1972).

Karya-karya Ahmad Khalid di penghujung hidupnya juga banyak menyelitkan elemen-elemen bahasa seperti pantun dan kiasan. Berbapasadarakan Za'ba, pendeta nahu Melayu serta pengarang masyhur negara, kemungkinan besar pengaruh

kesusasteraan yang kuat telah menular dalam dirinya sejak awal. Antara karya-karya yang pernah ditampilkan sewaktu pameran di PSI (1996) bertajuk “Ada rasa berisi pandan, Hendak menganyam tikar sembahyang, Tujuh syurga di dalam badan, Di situlah tempat berkasih sayang” dan “Semenjak keladi menjadi gulai, Ubi tidak berguna lagi, Sejak wang menjadi pemakai, Budi tidak berguna lagi”. Di dalam karya akrilik dan minyak atas kanvas tersebut, pantun dilakar menggunakan tulisan jawi yang disusun dalam komposisi menarik. Warna-warna yang diguna seolah-olah mengimbangi kelembutan dan kualiti istimewa setiap huruf khat yang dilakar. Huruf-huruf yang berpunca dari kumpulan aksara Semitik, bukan sahaja mewakili tandatanda fonetik, malah memiliki nilai semantik dan aritmetik yang ketara.

Manifestasi seni Melayu yang begitu menonjol tersebut memperkatakan tentang ‘rupa dan jiwa’ Ahmad Khalid yang ingin melihat kesenian serta kebudayaan berteras dan bernuansa tempatan dan kembali ke akar terus dihormati dan diangkat sewajarnya. Dari situ, saya turut tersentuh untuk meninjau kembali potensi besar yang boleh digali dari subjek-subjek lokal melalui siri ‘Azimat’ yang kini sudah melepasi makna literal dan menjangkau makna yang lebih universal. Azimat yang berfungsi samada untuk tujuan pelindung, destruktif mahupun perubatan memiliki kualiti serta langgam visual yang kuat dan berkarektor. Untuk siri ‘Protector’ dan ‘Grimoire’, skrip Jawi dimanipulasi untuk menghadirkan aura mistikal kepada replika artifak silam alam Nusantara. Siri tersebut menjadi batutanda yang penting dalam lapangan pengkaryaan seni saya. Ia merupakan pencarian saya tentang identiti kesenian yang digali dari dunia warisan tempatan sebagai bekalan untuk menghadapi cabaran bentuk-bentuk seni kontemporari yang lebih kompleks dan luas.

Nur Hanim Mohamed Khairuddin

Julai 2007 Ipoh

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EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

Painting has been a dominant art form since the beginnings of fine art practice in Malaysia. However, during the 70s, Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa called for a drastic change in approaches to art making. In a joint installation exhibition in 1974 entitled, "Towards a Mystical Reality", the work presented was performative and consisted of elements in real time and space. Here, the two artists sought to move away from Western-centric modes that they felt had so far framed local art practice and instead proposed an approach to art making founded on Eastern mystical or spiritual considerations. This effort formed the beginnings of a post-formalist approach to art that challenged modernist modes of perception.

Similarly, Lee Kian Seng in his installations blurs the line between art and life, and introduced situational artworks—involving the viewer's experience of sculpture in real time and space—into the local art scene, while Ismail Zain pioneered the use of digital technology, addressing post-modernist concerns in his "Digital Collage" series.

Whether or not the artistic productions of today's Malaysian artists articulate a post-modernist stance on art, many artists have begun to liberate themselves from conventional or traditional modes of art making in search of new strategies and new media. The shift away from traditional media signals the emergence of a generation of artists and viewers who find new media more relevant, engaging and appropriate in communicating current, topical subject matters.

MENEROKA STRATEGI ALTERNATIF

Catan merupakan satu bentuk seni yang dominan sejak mulanya amalan seni rupa di Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, semasa tahun 70an, Redza Piyadasa dan Sulaiman Esa telah memperkenalkan satu perubahan drastik terhadap pembikinan seni. Dalam satu pameran bersama pada tahun 1974 bertajuk "Ke Arah Realiti Mistik", kerja yang dipamerkan adalah dalam bentuk performatif dan terdiri daripada elemen-elemen dalam masa dan ruang sebenar. Dalam pameran ini, kedua-dua pengkarya berhasrat untuk beralih keluar daripada mod pengaruh Barat yang dianggap selama ini membingkai amalan seni tempatan dan sebaliknya mencadangkan pendekatan seni berasaskan mistik atau kerohanian Timur. Usaha ini menjadi permulaan kepada pendekatan pasca formalis terhadap seni yang mencabar mod persepsi moden.

Begitu juga Lee Kian Seng dalam persembahan beliau yang mengabui garis di antara seni dan kehidupan, dan memperkenalkan kerja seni situasi — yang melibatkan pengalaman penonton dalam masa dan ruang sebenar — ke dalam senario seni tempatan, manakala Ismail Zain mempelopori penggunaan teknologi digital, dan menjawab persoalan pasca-modenis melalui siri "Digital Collage".

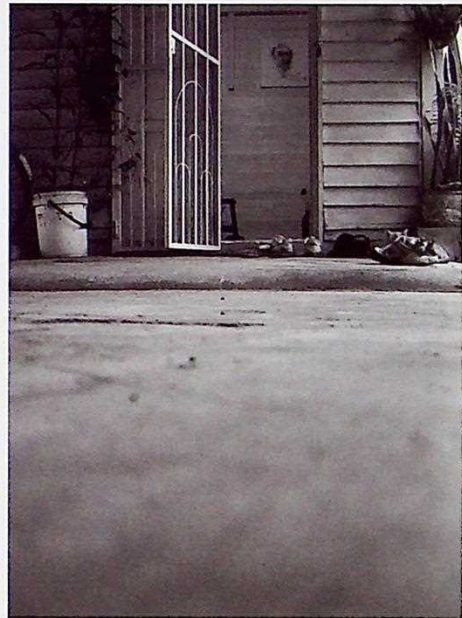
Sama ada hasil seni pengkarya Malaysia hari ini menjelaskan pendirian pascamodenis terhadap seni atau pun tidak, ramai pengkarya telah mula membebaskan diri mereka daripada mod penghasilan seni secara konvensional atau tradisional dalam mencari strategi baru dan media baru. Peralihan daripada media tradisional menandakan kemunculan generasi pengkarya dan penonton yang mendapati media baru lebih relevan, menarik dan sesuai dalam menyampaikan subjek semasa dan topikal.

© Mr. Lee Kian Seng



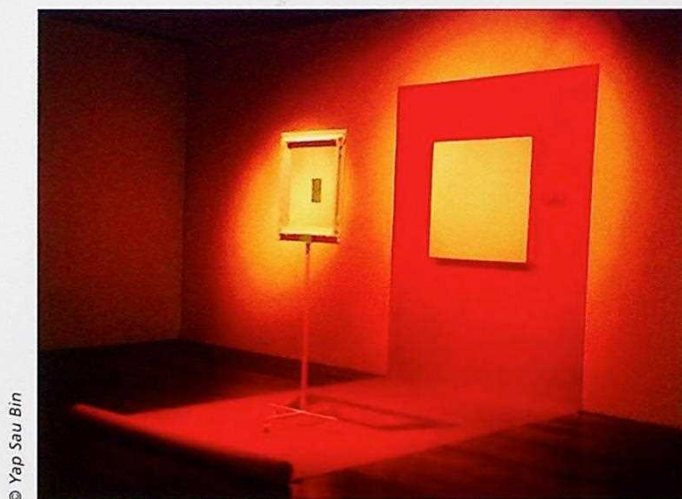
Lee Kian Seng
Hammer and Nail Series Part #3, 1977
Metal, wood and oil paint
34 x 10 x 12cm
Collection of Mr Lee Kian Seng
*View original installation at
www.leekianseng.com

Susyilawati Sulaiman
Rumah, 15th – 30th April 2006
Situation, installation and performance
*Photo documentation
Artist's Collection



© Farid Zainuddin

Yap Sau Bin
 "...who gave birth to the Great White One", 2002
 Mixed media installation
 Dimensions variable
 Artist's Collection



© Yap Sau Bin



Redza Piyadasa
 To Be Completed, 1978
 Wood and acrylic
 135 x 67cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection

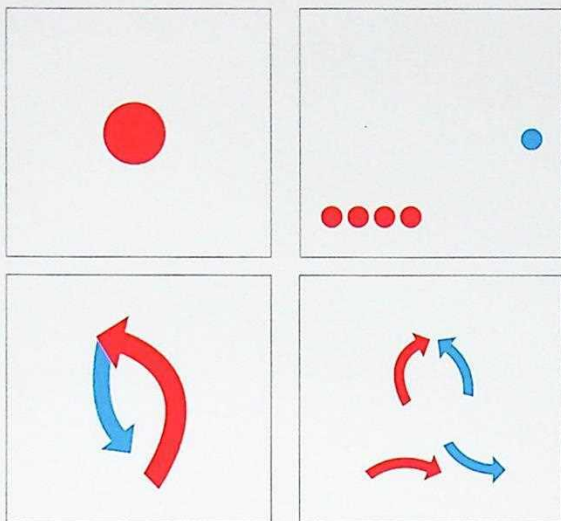


Ismail Zain
My Friend Lisa 6/15, 1988
Digital Collage
27.5 x 20.5cm
Private Collection



Image courtesy of Hasnul Saidon

Hasnul Saidon
Mirror Mirror on the Wall, 1994
Single channel video
15 sec (loop)



Vincent Leong
How To Be Bruce, 2004
Video projection
7 mins 11 secs

Sharon Chin
Making Night, 2006
Mobile phone video
17 mins



Roslisham Ismail aka Ise
Used the Technology I, 2005
Mixed media on canvas
54 x 54cm
Artist's Collection



Ismail Zain
DOT: The Detribalization of
Tam binti Che' Lat, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
121 x 183cm
National Art Gallery Collection

I THREADING THREE FIGURES AT NAG

For this little endeavor, I have been pondering hard my initial decision to dwell on the works of three artists, namely Ismail Zain, Redza Piyadasa and Lee Kian Seng, which I have encountered at different occasions, but nonetheless at the very same National Art Gallery (NAG).

I wasn't exactly blessed to be under the guidance of any of these artists, it was through seeing some of the available work at the gallery, and further stumbling upon articles and images reproduced in publications and websites that I got acquainted to some of their works.

Besides the late Ismail Zain, I only got to meet the late Redza Piyadasa and Lee Kian Seng in recent years. I could hardly write on them extensively as individual artists, their extensive oeuvre and influence, I have known them neither as a former student nor an intimate young associate nor apprentice. I could only see or 'get to know' them through their works, alongside each other's, at times under the same roof.

Missing a regimented training in Malaysian art history too, I find my knowledge and exposure fragmented, disjointed and still lacking awareness of a dominant narrative of Malaysian Art (History). Thus I resort to relating a personal reading and experience of the work seen – especially pieces that are memorable, much enjoyed and which are tempting to revisit.

2 ISMAIL ZAIN'S DOT

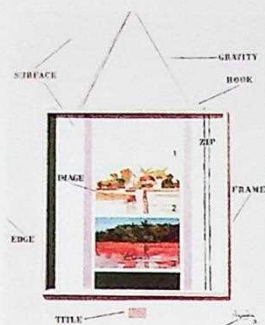
For a while (until 2006), Ismail Zain's "DOT: The De-Tribalization of Tam Binte Che Lat" (1983) was featured in the National Art Gallery's permanent collection display. It was one particular painting I always looked forward to. "DOT..." was akin to a post-Cubist attempt in presenting multiplicity on a single pictorial plane. It splits into four vertical sections, respectively dominated by a female hippie, Björn Borg, views of a Malay house interior and presumably Puan Tam binte Che Lat, in the bottom right corner a top down angle of Puan Tam's lap, reading the *Mingguan Malaysia*.

I recalled the idea of 'point-counterpoint' in one of Ismail Zain's papers deliberating on 'Nusantara' aesthetics; it just stuck as a point of my association with him. And I bring this along whenever I come to this work. There could indeed be a dialogue between these points and counterpoints of icons within the painting.

I recalled too the image of Ismail Zain's much earlier, seemingly painterly and textured rendition of Rembrandt's woman bather, in the 1995 publication for his 1964 – 1991 retrospective exhibition by the NAG.

It was interesting to meditate on an artist's choice of flat rendering (in "DOT...") in contrast to what he could do in the Rembrandt homage. The execution of images and the vague trail of pencil trace of the rattan chairs on the left suggest to me a process of forming – formed, maybe a play of (point counter-point in the) painting techniques.

Here I see a strategy of deconstructing the picture plane, questioning the imagery, formal space and pictorial elements. His celebrated digital art aside, Ismail Zain's approach to imageries – weaving ambiguous incongruous layers of images, signifiers as visual cues is to me more of a writerly text than a straightforward composition of images.



Redza Piyadasa
The Great Malaysian
Landscape, 1972
Mixed media
152.5 x 106cm
National Art Gallery Collection

3 PIYADASA'S FRAME

I first heard of Redza Piyadasa at the Rupa Malaysia show in 1998. Three years later, I was fortunate to see some of his work at 'Piyadasa: An Overview 1962 – 2000' at the NAG. Such a multifaceted and large personality to deal with, I still find his work from the 70's the most stimulating.

My entry point at the 'Overview' show was "The Great Malaysian Landscape" (1972), which put a smile on my face. Instead of saying what it is not in manner of Magritte's 'pipe' painting, this work tells you how to recognize its components – a case of making a conceptual analysis out of tautology.

What lies beyond the edge of "The Great Malaysian Landscape"? For me, it began as a succession of propositions, of unveiling the myth in Painting, in sculptural forms, the structure of art objects, and leading to the investigation of the cultural and social context of the production of art.

The project "Towards a Mystical Reality" by Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa in 1974 is a favorite too. It is an artists' collaboration still unrivalled, not because of the controversy generated, but for its vision to seize the day. In retrospect, the significance of the project lies not in the Zen/Mysticism overtone approach of art making in the show, but in the manifesto – the intention of articulating an eastern/localized aesthetic as an artistic identity.

From scrutinizing the picture frame, the canvas space, and to probing the conceptual framework of art, ultimately, it is about a critical investigation of notions of art, the art and its context. And I believe Piyadasa's enquiries had led him to a more immediate local context, but with the world in mind, and to claiming a stake in our history.



4 LEE KIAN SENG'S SPACE

I first caught glimpse of a Lee Kian Seng piece at the old Majestic Hotel building, the previous location of the NAG. A three-dimensional work titled "Mankind" (1972) with two sheets of metal plates, bent into an L-shape structure sitting on another larger metal sheet.

The structure is based on a simple idea of creating volume (three-dimensional) from a flat plane (two-dimensional), by merely folding and bending the cut-out middle part of a large metal sheet, as with making a complex accordion fold.

I later learnt that the original installation would have the two structures sitting on a bed of grass and earth, which came from his studio. The grass was no longer there in early 90's. An interesting idea by the artist to incorporate part of his reality, his environment into the work, as it extends the association of the space and material used beyond the exhibiting site.

Such contextual and visual plays are engaging, as in the simple parody of nails hammered through hammers in Lee's "Hammer and Nail" Series (1977) – the theatricality is part of the charm in Lee's work.

In another installation, "Of 'Image, Object, Illusion' – Off Series Mechanism" (1977) restaged in 2003 in the NAG – a play of shadow, illusion and perception; real and painted national flags, a large white canvas extending from the wall to the floor, yet again reminding us of the competitive nature of the space, as occupied by the art object and audience as well.

Lee's play with transforming objects, sculptural materials has been innovative. Reviewing his many sculptural works and installations from late 60's to the 70's suggests a keen awareness of spatial relationships and the manipulation of material, and more importantly a consistent probing of the limitation of canvas, gallery wall and space.

5 PLEASURE OF THREADING THREE FIGURES

It has been reassuring to learn that conceptual works were made during the time prior to the 80's. I would like to think conceptual approaches were not necessarily unfamiliar to the Malaysian scene.

A strand I enjoyed thinking through is, there were certain experimentations, dialectics within the work of these three artists. I am fascinated with them – the experimental spirit in their work along with this urgency to ask an intellectual question, to pose a philosophical tease.

Not that I have a fixation with cerebral artists, I am as interested in the playfulness in translating inquisitive ideas into artistic ploys of visual, material, object or even semantic change.

As important as it is to recognize the social milieu and cultural politics the time the works were made, I think it is worthwhile looking into the crafting of their visual language – the experimentation and strategies developed in their visual and conceptual play.

These artists, through their works, present to me an image of vigor in investigation and experimentation, perhaps, in an age of inquisition and enlightenment in our art.

Yap Sau Bin
August 2007

1 MENYULAMI TIGA INSAN DI BALAI

Untuk penulisan ini, saya telah memikirkan dengan tekun hasrat awal saya untuk meneroka karya-karya tiga pengkarya, yakni **Ismail Zain, Redza Piyadasa dan Lee Kian Seng**, yang telah saya lihat dalam tiga peristiwa berbeza, akan tetapi di tempat yang sama yakni Balai Seni Lukis Negara.

Saya tidaklah dikurniai peluang untuk dibimbing oleh tiga pengkarya ini. Saya membiasakan diri dengan sebahagian dari karya-karya mereka menerusi pemerhatian di galeri, dan artikel-artikel serta beberapa imejan dalam penerbitan dan laman web tertentu.

Selain Allahyarham Ismail Zain, saya hanya berpeluang untuk bertemu dengan Allahyarham Redza Piyadasa dan Lee Kian Seng pada tahun-tahun kebelakangan. Saya tidak dapat menulis secara panjang-lebar tentang mereka sebagai pengkarya individu, mahupun kerja dan pengaruh mereka yang luas. Saya mengenali mereka bukan sebagai bekas pelajar, dan bukan juga sebagai rakan rapat mahupun pembantu muda. Saya hanya mampu melihat dan 'mengenali' mereka menerusi karya-karya mereka, bersama dengan karya-karya pengkarya lain, adakalanya di bawah bumbung yang sama.

Oleh kerana saya terlepas dari latihan ketat dalam sejarah seni Malaysia, saya mendapati bahawa pengetahuan dan pendedahan saya adalah terpecah-pecah, terungkai dan kurang dari segi kesedaran terhadap naratif sejarah seni Malaysia. Oleh itu, saya beralih kepada pergantungan terhadap pembacaan peribadi dan pengalaman melihat karya — terutama sekali karya-karya yang mudah diingati, dinikmati dan dilawati berkali-kali.

2 DOT ISMAIL ZAIN

Untuk seketika (hingga 2006), karya Ismail Zain : "DOT: The De-Tribalization of Tam Binte Che Lat" (1983) telah ditampilkan di paparan koleksi tetap Balai Seni Lukis Negara. Ia merupakan sebuah catan yang sentiasa saya gemari.

"DOT..." seakan percubaan pasca-Kubisma dalam mempersembahkan percampuran di atas satah gambar yang tunggal. Ia dipisahkan oleh empat bahagian menegak, yang diisi oleh seorang wanita 'hippie', Bjorn Borg, pemandangan dalam sebuah rumah Melayu dan mungkin Puan Tam binte Che Lat, di bahagian bawah bucu kanan dalam pandangan ke bawah adalah riba Puan Tam, sedang membaca Mingguan Malaysia.

Saya teringat ide tentang 'point-counterpoint' (maksud dan penyanggah maksud) dalam salah satu kertas-kerja Ismail Zain yang menerangkan tentang estetika 'Nusantara'; ia seperti melekat sebagai satu hujah untuk mengaitkan saya dengan beliau. Saya membawa hujah ini bersama setiap kali saya berdepan dengan karya ini. Malah mungkin terdapat dialog antara 'beberapa maksud dan penyanggah maksud' ikon-ikon yang terkandung dalam catan ini.

Saya juga terkenang imejan karya-karya Ismail Zain yang lebih awal, yang kelihatan seperti suatu gambaran yang penuh jalinan dan sapuan berus seorang wanita sedang mandi yang pernah dilukis oleh Rembrandt. Karya ini diterbitkan dalam satu penerbitan tahun 1995 untuk pameran retrospektif beliau (1964-1991) oleh Balai Seni Lukis Negara.

Adalah menarik untuk merenung tentang pilihan beliau dalam mengolah secara mendatar (dalam "DOT...") jika dibandingkan dengan apa yang boleh beliau lakukan dalam penghormatan beliau terhadap Rembrandt. Penghasilan imejan-imejan dan kesan pensil pada kerusi rotan di sebelah kiri mencadangkan kepada saya tentang satu proses pembentukan — mungkin satu permainan (maksud dan penyanggah maksud) teknik-teknik catan.

Di sini saya melihat satu strategi menyahbina satah penggambaran, menyoal imejan, ruang formal dan elemen gambar. Di sebalik seni digital beliau yang dihormati, pendekatan Ismail Zain terhadap imejan — seperti menyulam lapisan-lapisan kabur dan tidak berkaitan, menjadikan penanda sebagai pembayang tampak, pada saya lebih merupakan satu teks bertulis, bukannya sekadar komposisi imejan yang mudah.

3 PIYADASA'S FRAME

Saya mula mendengar tentang Redza Piyadasa dalam pameran 'Rupa Malaysia' pada tahun 1998. Tiga tahun kemudian, saya bertuah kerana dapat melihat beberapa karya beliau dalam pameran 'Piyadasa : An Overview 1962 – 2000' di Balai Seni Lukis Negara. Dengan personaliti yang besar dan pelbagai wajah untuk digarapi, saya masih mendapati bahawa kerja beliau pada tahun-tahun 1970an adalah yang paling menguja.

Pintu masuk saya ke dalam pameran 'Overview' adalah "The Great Malaysian Landscape" (1972), yang membuatkan saya tersenyum. Di sebalik menyatakan apa yang tersirat mengikut cara catan 'paip' Magritte, karya ini memaklumkan kita bagaimana mengenal komponen-komponennya — satu contoh analisis konseptual yang timbul dari 'tautology'.

Apakah yang terdapat di luar batasan karya "The Great Malaysian Landscape"? Bagi saya, ia bermula sebagai satu turutan beberapa usul, yang mendedahkan mitos catan menerusi bentuk-bentuk arca, struktur objek-objek seni, dan menuju ke arah penyelidikan terhadap konteks sosial dan budaya dalam produksi seni.

Projek "Towards a Mystical Reality" oleh Piyadasa dan Sulaiman Esa pada tahun 1974 adalah merupakan pilihan utama juga. Ia merupakan satu usaha-sama pengkarya yang masih belum dapat ditandingi, bukan kerana kontroversi yang dijana, tetapi atas visinya dalam merebut peluang. Apabila direnung-kembali, kepentingan projek ini bergantung bukan pada pendekatan bernada mistik Zen dalam penghasilan pameran, tetapi dalam manifestonya — hasratnya untuk mengkhuraikan estetika timur sebagai identiti artistik.

Dari penelitian terhadap bingkai gambar, ruang kanvas dan menerobos pemingkaian konseptual seni, penerokaan beliau akhirnya menjurus kepada penyelidikan kritikal berkenaan seni dan konteksnya. Saya percaya bahawa pertanyaan-pertanyaan Piyadasa telah membawa beliau ke arah konteks tempatan, namun dengan kesedaran global dan mempertaruhi sejarah kita.

4 RUANG LEE KIAN SENG

Saya mula melihat karya Lee Kiang Seng di Bangunan Hotel Majestic yang lama, lokasi Balai Seni Lukis dahulu. Karya tiga dimensi berjudul "Mankind" (1972) dengan dua kepingan besi, dibengkokkan menjadi rupa L dan diletak di atas kepingan besi yang lebih besar.

Struktur ini berdasarkan ide ringkas tentang penghasilan kepadatan tiga dimensi dari satah rata dua dimensi, dengan hanya melipat dan membengkok bahagian tengah kepingan besi yang terpotong, seakan membuat lipatan 'accordion' yang rumit.

Saya mendapat tahu kemudian bahawa instalasi asal sepatutnya menampilkan dua struktur yang diletakkan di atas tanah dan rumput, yang dibawa dari studio beliau. Rumput asal sudah tiada lagi pada sekitar awal tahun-tahun 90an. Arca ini menampilkan ide menarik oleh pengkarya untuk memasukkan sebahagian dari realiti dan persekitaran beliau ke dalam karya, sekaligus mengembangkan pertaliannya dengan ruang dan bahan yang digunakan melangkaui tapak pameran.

Perancangan tampak dan kontekstual ini amat menarik perhatian, seperti juga parodi ringkas beliau menerusi paku-paku yang diketuk menembusi penukul dalam karya beliau "Hammer and Nail Series" (1977) — unsur teater adalah sebahagian dari tarikan karya-karya Lee.

Dalam instalasi yang lain, "Image, Object, Illusion – Off Series Mechanism" (1977) yang dipasang-semula pada 2003 di Balai Seni Lukis Negara — permainan bayang, ilusi dan persepsi; bendera Negara yang sebenar dan yang dilukis, sebuah kanvas putih merentas dari dinding ke lantai, kesemuanya sekali lagi mengingatkan kita tentang sifat persaingan dalam ruang, yang dipenuhi oleh objek-objek seni dan para penontonnya sekali.

Permainan Lee dalam mengubah objek-objek dan bahan-bahan seni arca adalah inovatif. Menilai karya-karya seni arca dan instalasi beliau yang banyak dari lewat 60an hingga 70an mencadangkan satu kesedaran yang tekun terhadap hubungan keruangan dan manipulasi bahan, dan lebih utama lagi, penerokaan berterusan terhadap keterbatasan kanvas, dinding dan ruang galeri.

5 KENIKMATAN MENYULAMI TIGA INSAN

Adalah menyakinkan untuk mengetahui bahawa karya-karya konseptual telah dihasilkan sebelum tahun-tahun 80an. Saya ingin memikirkan bahawa pendekatan konseptual tidak semestinya asing dalam arena seni di Malaysia.

Seperkara yang suka saya fikirkan adalah bahawa terdapat beberapa percubaan dan perdebatan dalam karya-karya ketiga pengkarya ini. Saya amat kagum pada mereka — semangat mencuba dalam kerja mereka seiring dengan keinginan untuk mengutarakan persoalan intelektual, untuk mengajukan usikan falsafah.

Bukanlah bermaksud saya terlalu taksud dengan para pengkarya yang banyak berfikir. Saya berminat dengan sifat bermain dalam menterjemahkan ide-ide kepada perancangan artistik elemen tampak, bahan, objek dan perubahan semantik.

Tanpa meminggirkan kepentingan gambaran sosial dan politik budaya zaman ketika karya-karya mereka dihasilkan, saya berhasrat untuk kembali kepada kaedah kerja mereka, sekiranya boleh, termasuk penciptaan bahasa tampak mereka, permainan tampak dan konseptual, selain aspek-aspek formal.

Para pengkarya ini, menerusi kerja mereka, memberi saya satu gambaran kecerdasan dalam menyelidik dan mencuba, mungkin dalam era yang penuh dengan pertanyaan dan kefahaman dalam kesenian kita.

Yap Sau Bin (*trans. HJS*)
Ogos 2007

There are two important things I've learned from my readings and exposure to the late Redza Piyadasa's works and writings. The first is in regard to his role as a visual artist in pre and post Merdeka Malaysia. Among many of his sculptures and installations, it was his "May 13, 1969" sculpture (a critique of the racial riots which took place that year, in which he joined together with artists Syed Ahmad Jamal and Ibrahim Hussein), and his "Towards a Mystical Reality", a collaboration with Sulaiman Esa in 1974, as well as Salleh ben Joned's reaction, in an open letter "The Art of Pissing", that have had such a heavy impact on my thinking, about what it is and means to be a visual artist or otherwise in Malaysia.

I am convinced that the practitioners of the creative and expressive arts have a social responsibility, when circumstances call for it, to be a voice of reason amidst a chaos manufactured through socio-political manipulation, through the cacophony of extremism fanned by parties with vested interests. The artist has a dual role, that of a social critic and commentator against the asinine, an instigator of change against any creeping 'isms' dogmatically adhered to or imposed, that stifle creativity, critical thinking, free thought and action. The other equally important role is that of a bringer of dreams and alternative utopias which celebrate diverse value systems, perspectives and potentialities of being or becoming.

The second is Piyadasa's (and those who played a pivotal role in shaping his thinking such as Ismail Zain, T.K Sabapathy, Krishen Jit, etc) tireless efforts in documenting works and presenting the processes and circumstances that led to what is now modern Malaysian contemporary art (specifically the visual arts). Chief among his many writings, his collaboration with T.K. Sabapathy as writer and editor of 'Vision and Idea', published by the National Art Gallery (NAG) is in my opinion both precious and invaluable. Precious because 'Now' we can look back and say with pride 'This is *more or less* how it all began!'. Invaluable because it provides context and background that allow a deeper understanding and appreciation of the artworks (selected artworks in the NAG's collection in particular and all artworks in general) beyond mere formalistic and flighty, subjective, aesthetic considerations. This book is extremely useful to students, art lovers, art historians and teachers of modern Malaysian visual arts.

Tan Sei Hon

Terdapat dua perkara utama yang telah saya pelajari dari pembacaan dan pendedahan saya kepada karya-karya dan penulisan Redza Piyadasa. Pertama adalah berkaitan dengan peranan beliau sebagai karyawan seni rupa di Malaysia untuk era pra dan pasca merdeka. Antara karya-karya arca dan instalasi beliau yang banyak, karya arca beliau berjudul "Mei 13, 1969" (kritikan terhadap rusuhan kaum yang berlaku pada tahun itu, dalam mana beliau menyertai pelukis Syed Ahmad Jamal dan Ibrahim Hussein), dan pameran "Towards a Mystical Reality", suatu usahasama dengan Sulaiman Esa pada tahun 1974, dan juga reaksi Salleh ben Joned dalam surat terbuka beliau berjudul "The Art of Pissing" yang memberi impak besar terhadap pemikiran saya tentang apakah maknanya menjadi seorang karyawan seni rupa di Malaysia.

Saya yakin bahawa para pengamal seni kreatif dan ekspresif mempunyai tanggungjawab sosial apabila keadaan meminta, untuk menjadi suara pertimbangan di celah-celah keadaan tidak teratur yang dihasilkan menerusi manipulasi politik, menerusi dendangan sumbang pelampau yang dikipas oleh segelintir pihak yang berkepentingan sempit. Karyawan memiliki dua peranan, yakni sebagai pengkritik sosial dan komentator yang menentang kebodohan, sebagai pemula perubahan yang menentang sebarang aliran-aliran bersifat dogmatik atau dipaksakan secara senyap yang boleh menyekat kreativiti, fikiran serta tindakan yang kritis dan bebas. Peranan penting yang lain adalah sebagai pembawa mimpi dan impian alternatif yang meraikan sistem nilai, pandangan dan kemungkinan hidup yang pelbagai.

Perkara kedua adalah usaha tanpa lelah oleh Piyadasa (dan mereka yang memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk pemikiran beliau seperti Ismail Zain, T.K.Sabapathy, Krishen Jit dll) dalam merakamkan kerja-kerja dan mempersembahkan proses dan keadaan-keadaan yang membawa kepada apa yang kini dipanggil seni moden kontemporari Malaysia (secara khususnya seni rupa). Paling utama dalam banyak penulisan beliau adalah kolaborasi beliau dengan T.K. Sabapathy sebagai penulis dan penyunting untuk buku 'Vision & Idea' yang diterbitkan oleh Balai Seni Lukis Negara. Pada pandangan saya buku ini adalah sangat berharga dan tidak ternilai. Berharga kerana 'kini' kita boleh melihat-semula dan nyatakan dengan bangga 'beginilah segalanya bermula'. Tidak ternilai kerana ia menyediakan konteks dan latarbelakang yang mengizinkan kefahaman dan penghayatan lebih mendalam terhadap karya-karya (terpilih dalam koleksi Balai Seni Lukis Negara secara khususnya atau kesemua karyakarya secara amnya) lebih dari sekadar hal formalistik dan pertimbangan estetik yang subjektif dan tinggi-tinggi. Buku ini adalah sangat berguna untuk para pelajar, pencinta seni, ahli sejarah seni dan guru-guru seni rupa moden Malaysia.

Tan Sei Hon (trans. HJS)

'PAK MAIL', NUSANTARA MUSIC AND AN OLD GRAMOPHONE

One lazy afternoon sometime in late July 2005, I was contacted by an official from the National Contemporary Museum of Korea requesting my proposal for a residency programme at Goyang Studio, Gyeonggi Do, Korea which was commencing in August of that year. I didn't have a proposal because it was against my normal practice. Instead, I forwarded a testimony on my basic principles, and trust of a residency programme, its objectives and its importance to an artist. In my testimony, I pointed out that in order to work creatively in a residency, one must first plant one's feet in the country, and the area of the residency, breathe the surrounding air, listen to the local dialect, eat and drink the local fare, appraise the local culture and lifestyle. And at a certain moment, the ideas and feelings that pulsate in the heart and mind, are the true benefits born out of the seeds of a new experience. This then, should be the inspiration of a residency artist.

I had been in Korea for a while when, on one cold and still night, while listening to traditional Korean music on my iTunes, as the snow fell gently from the sky outside my studio, my mind suddenly flew back to 1989, to a Fine Art Faculty studio at ITM (now UiTM). I was in my third year there when I was introduced to the late Ismail Zain, or 'Pak Mail' as the students fondly called him then.

That morning at 9am, the students were busy preparing materials for the class when 'Pak Mail' ambled in carrying batik cloths and a gramophone. With help from a few students, he started arranging the cloths and gramophone amid an interlaced wooden assembly, a mannequin lacking a few limbs, a chair and a table, pots, palm fronds and some old twigs. He then proceeded to explain a few points on the techniques, objectives and benefits expected from the morning class. Somehow, his words were far too abstract and foreign to us and to our regret, we all kept quiet. Thinking that we had understood what was to be seen and felt, he started to play the gramophone that had formed part of a small composition in the middle of the studio. With instrumental 'nusantara' music in the air, we started to work.

Ten minutes had passed with 'Pak Mail' sauntering around the studio looking at our works. Half an hour later, I stole a look at him walking and taking out a handkerchief to dab the perspiration on his frowning forehead, still mutely watching

us work as though everything was going according to his plan. An hour had passed when suddenly in a small but sure voice, he pointed to my friend's artwork saying "if you were to dip a gecko in paint and then let it run loose on this paper, maybe your work would actually mean something!" Embarrassment coloured my friend. Some of us laughed but I failed to grasp the intention of his words. I didn't know whether to laugh along or to contemplate on those uttered words.

Almost two hours had passed and at a corner he came to a halt, stared down at the floor covered with speckles of paint accumulated over the years from generations of art students. He bent down a little, formed a window frame with his hands and said "this, if we were to cut it out and frame it, wouldn't it look better?" I got more confused. All of us just went on working. He started to look a bit agitated and disappointed. Clearly, no one understood what was required out of the art class. This went on throughout other following classes.

The years went by. Early one particular day, it felt like a morning fog had gathered and then was thinned away by an ephemeral breeze.

'Pak Mail' passed away in 1991. On that quiet night in Korea, all those questions I had on 'Pak Mail's' techniques and objectives used in his art classes suddenly began to unravel themselves. The senses, feelings, essence and soul of an individual, a society and of a people. That was what 'Pak Mail' tried to unearth, to open and to give life to. Subconsciously, the 'nusantara' melody was still playing in my head. My awareness and testimony on the basic principles of a residency artist were born and given life out of the seeds that 'Pak Mail' had planted in my soul.

More than fifteen years to comprehend? I could only smile to myself, silently.

Ahmad Fuad Osman (*trans. AR*)
Rimbun Dahan, 16 July 2007

PAK MAIL, IRAMA NUSANTARA DAN GRAMOFON TUA.

Lewat Julai tahun 2005, di suatu petang yang santai, aku telah dihubungi oleh seorang pegawai dari National Contemporary Museum of Korea, memintaku menghantar proposal untuk residensi programku di Goyang Studio, Gyeonggi Do, Korea yang akan bermula pada bulan Ogos berikutnya. Aku tidak mempunyai sebarang proposal kerana ianya diluar praktisku. Aku sebaliknya hanya menghantar kenyataanku tentang prinsip asas dan kepercayaanku terhadap program residensi, tujuan dan kepentingannya pada seseorang seniman. Di antara isi kandungan kenyataan ini menyebut bahawa bagi tujuan berkarya dalam sesebuah program residensi, seorang seniman itu seharusnya terlebih dahulu menjejakkan kaki di tanah negara, daerah dan tempat residensi itu, menghirup nafas dalam udara persekitarannya, mendengar bahasa percakapan masyarakat setempat, minum dan makan makanan tempatannya, memperhati dan membandingkan cara hidup dan corak budaya masyarakat sekelilingnya, lalu dalam beberapa waktu tertentu, apa-apa rasa dan ide yang terdetik dihati dan minda, itulah hasil yang sebenar-benarnya lahir dari benih pengalaman baru, dan inilah sepatutnya menjadi intipati karya seorang seniman yang bermastautin dalam sesebuah residensi.

Setelah beberapa waktu di Korea, dalam pengalaman baru yang serba asing itu, disuatu malam dingin yang sunyi, dalam irama tradisional Korea yang lembut berkumandang dari iTunes, sambil salji melayah jatuh dari dada langit di luar kamar studioku, kenanganku telah tiba-tiba melayang jauh kembali ke sebuah studio di Fakulti Seni Halus tahun 3, ITM (kini UiTM) dalam tahun 1989 yang telah memperkenalkan aku kepada Allahyarham Ismail Zain atau lebih mesra dikalangan pelajar waktu itu sebagai Pak Mail.

Pagi itu, jam 9, semua pelajar telah pun tiba, masing-masing sibuk mempersiapkan bahanbahan asas untuk kelas lukisan, Pak Mail melangkah masuk perlahan sambil membawa beberapa helai kain batik bersama sebuah gramofon. Beliau lalu bersama-sama beberapa pelajar mula menyusun kain dan gramofon tadi di celahan struktur kayu yang bersilang, mannequin yang hanya separuh lengkap anggotanya, kerusi meja, pasu bunga, daun palma dan ranting kayu tua. Selesai susunan, beliau cuba menerangkan beberapa perkara tentang teknik, tujuan dan hasil yang diharapkan dari sesi lukisan pagi itu. Walaubagaimanapun, segala apa yang diucapkan oleh Pak Mail terasa seperti terlalu asing bagi kami. Bicaranya terlalu abstrak, namun semuanya hanya diam membisu. Lalu, dengan anggapan bahawa semua pelajar telahpun faham akan apa yang harus diperhati dan dirasai, beliau menghidupkan gramofon yang membentuk sebahagian kecil komposisi objek di tengah studio. Irama instrumental nusantara mengisi ruang, kami mula melukis.

10 minit berlalu, Pak Mail berjalan mundur mandir di sekeliling studio sambil memerhatikan hasil lukisan kami. 30 minit berlalu, sesekali, dari ekor mata, aku mencuri pandang padanya. Sambil berjalan, dengan perlahan sapu tangan dikeluarkan dari kocek seluarnya lalu diusapkan di dahi dan kepalanya yang mula memancarkan peluh-peluh kecil, dahinya sedikit berkerut, tetap membisu sambil kami terus melukis dan melukis seolah-olah semuanya menepati kehendaknya. 60 minit berlalu, tiba-tiba dari satu sudut, dengan perlahan tetapi pasti, suaranya terpantul sambil menunjukkan sesuatu di dalam lukisan temanku, "Kalau kamu ambil cicak, lepaskan dalam cat, lalu cicak itu dilepaskan di atas kertas ini, mungkin lukisanmu akan jadi lebih bermakna!" Temanku itu tersipu-sipu malu. Ada pelajar lain yang ketawa, tetapi aku gagal menangkap maksud sebenarnya. Masih di antara mahu ketawa atau apa dengan kata-katanya itu. Hampir 2 jam berlalu, dari satu sudut lain tiba-tiba beliau berhenti, memandang beberapa ketika disatu sudut lantai yang telah bertahun-tahun mengumpulkan percik-percik warna dan garis dari beberapa generasi pelajar, membongkok sedikit sambil tangannya membentuk window frame lalu bersuara, "Ini, kalau kita boleh potong dan frame lebih cantik, kan?!" Aku bertambah bingung. Kami hanya terus melukis. Beliau kelihatan agak gelisah dan sedikit kecewa. Jelas tak seorang pun yang memahami dan menepati apa yang diperlukannya melalui sesi lukisan tersebut, malah begitulah keadaan dalam sesi-sesi berikutnya.

Tahun demi tahun berlalu. Pagi itu seakan telah lama hilang sebagai kabus dinihari yang mengapung, menipis berlalu di bawa angin yang sebentar.

Pak Mail kembali ke Rahmatullah pada tahun 1991.

Malam itu, di Korea, dalam sunyi, satu persatu persoalanku tentang kaedah dan tujuan yang digunakan Pak Mail dalam sesi lukisan tersebut tiba-tiba terungkai. Deria. Rasa. Essence. Intipati. Jatidiri seseorang, sesebuah masyarakat dan bangsa. Itulah yang cuba di carigali, dibuka dan dihidupkan oleh Pak Mail. Di bawah sedar, irama nusantara dari gramofon tuanya masih terus berkumandang dalam kotak fikiranku. Kesedaran dan kenyataanku tentang prinsip asas seorang seniman yang bermastautin dalam residensi, lahir dari kaedah yang telah membenih dan dihidupkan oleh Pak Mail dalam jiwaku.

Lebih 15 tahun untuk memahami sebuah ilmu? Dalam diam, aku hanya mampu tersenyum sendiri.

Ahmad Fuad Osman

Rimbun Dahan, 16 Julai 2007

**'KUIH', 'MEE MAGGIE', 'KAMBING QIQAH',
'BUNGA MANGGAR'
REMEMBERING PAK MAIL (ISMAIL ZAIN)**

Tales from Final Year Drawing Studio, School of Art & Design,
ITM (now UiTM)

1

It was 1988, about 19 years ago. I was in my final year. Pak Mail was running the final year drawing class. We had a short break. I went to my studio corner to work on my final year paintings. Pak Mail came to me, asking for a cigarette. I gave him mine. He stared studiously at my paintings. I began to feel uncomfortable, but didn't say anything.

After a few inhales and exhales, and pregnant silence, he asked, "Do you like Malay traditional deserts? So colorful and sweet".

I promptly answered "Yes, of course" followed by another odd silence, this time leaving me with anticipation. "I can see where you get your colors from," Pak Mail said while leaving for another student in the studio.

I was not sure whether it was a compliment or a provocation or an insult? At that time, I thought it was a compliment and continued to use colors that were so sweet, you could almost lick them out of the painting surface like icings on a cake. Next few weeks, perhaps upon noticing that I didn't really 'get the point', he brought a few children's coloring books. He dropped one in front of me and others in front of several other fortunate students. "Perhaps you would want to fill that empty space with your colors too", he said with a cynical smile. These days, on several fortunate occasions, I have been blessed to remember Pak Mail whenever I encounter artworks that feature such flamboyant use of colors.

2

In Pak Mail's rich dictionary of metaphors, 'Mee Maggie' connotes instantaneous artworks that can be produced within two minutes. Its mantra is "Instantaneously painted, delicious to look at". It also connotes a mindless quest for 'mass production' and 'things that come in a pre-conceived template or prepared packet' which compromises mindfulness that needs time to mature. Thankfully, the 'mee maggie' approach still persists until today and you can see the results in several over-rated pre-mature artworks by 'mee maggie' artists that crowd the local art scene. They bring a smile in my face, remind me of Pak Mail and eventually prompt me to offer him 'al-fatihah'.

3

If you were Pak Mail's students, you didn't want to be labeled 'kambing qiqah', or a herd of soon-to-be-slaughtered goats. One day during one of our drawing sessions, he criticized the copious abstract expressionist mode of paintings (employed by some of us and even several of our lecturers) only to receive a dumb silence from us. "Do you know what is 'kambing qiqah'?", he asked in frustration. "We don't know Pak Mail. What is it?" "You!" he answered while leaving the studio for a tea break in the School canteen downstairs. A few weeks later, we were informed (not by Pak Mail) that such 'goats' are known to appear 'willing' to be sacrificed without much resistance. Our dumb silence was perhaps fitting with such tagging. We were so willing to be 'intellectually' attacked or 'slaughtered' by him, that we forgot about resisting or fighting back – a quality that he would really want to extract from us. I still use 'kambing qiqah' albeit only when circumstances call for it, during my own lectures or studio sessions with my students. I can understand his frustration.

4

A group of female students were chatting noisily while engaging in a drawing exercise. Instead of scolding them, Pak Mail went to join in their chatting. "Do you like the ambiance during a wedding preparation?" Pak Mail intercepted. "Ya... ya! Lots of fun", a student replied. "Ya... gossiping, chatting, preparing the gifts, the bridal dais, the 'bunga manggar', chatting, chatting...", said Pak Mail. "Ya... ya... very jovial", and "You like making 'Bunga Manggar' (decorative paper flowers used during Malay wedding ceremonies)", asked Pak Mail. "Ya...ya..we like!" A dead silence... "Well, this is not a wedding preparation," Pak Mail said in a strong voice and left the group. Today, 19 years later, I can still witness the lingering presence of 'Bunga Manggar' echoing its legacy in a drawing studio or an art gallery. Pak Mail was an avid reader of the Malay cultural psyche.

Hasnul J Saidon

**'KUIH', 'MEE MAGGIE', 'KAMBING QIQAH',
'BUNGA MANGGAR'
MENINGGATI PAK MAIL (ISMAIL ZAIN)**

Kisah-kisah dari Studio Lukisan Tahun Akhir, Fakulti Seni Lukis & Seni Reka, ITM (kini UiTM)

1

Ketika itu tahun 1988, lebih kurang 19 tahun yang lalu. Saya sedang berada dalam tahun akhir. Pak Mail sedang menjalankan kelas lukisan tahun akhir. Kami mengambil sedikit masa untuk berehat. Saya menuju ke arah ruang studio untuk menyiapkan karya-karya catan tahun akhir saya. Pak Mail datang menuju ke arah saya, meminta sebatang rokok. Saya serahkan rokok saya kepadanya. Dia melihat catan-catan saya dengan penuh teliti. Saya mula merasa kurang selesa, namun tidak berkata apa-apa.

Selepas menyedut dan menghembus asap, dan selepas sunyi yang penuh makna, dia bertanya, "Awak suka kuih Melayu tak? Warna-warni dan manis-manis."

Saya segera menjawab, "Ya, sudah tentu" diikuti oleh satu lagi sunyi yang tidak begitu kena, meninggalkan saya penuh dengan tanda-tanya. "Saya dapat lihat sekarang dari mana awak dapat warna-warna yang awak pakai", kata Pak Mail sambil meninggalkan saya untuk ke ruang pelajar lain pula.

Saya tidak begitu pasti samada itu merupakan satu pujian, atau cemuhan atau provokasi dari Pak Mail? Ketika itu, saya mengambilnya sebagai satu pujian dan terus menggunakan warna-warna manis ini hingga seakan-akan boleh dijilat dari permukaan catan saya persis gula di atas kek... Beberapa minggu selepas itu, mungkin selepas merasakan bahawa saya 'tidak begitu faham', dia membawa beberapa buku mewarna kanak-kanak. Dia menjatuhkan satu buku di depan saya dan baki buku-buku lain di depan beberapa orang pelajar lain yang bertuah. "Mungkin awak mahu mengisi ruang-ruang kosong ini dengan warna-warna awak tu," kata Pak Mail dengan senyuman yang sinikal. Kini, pada beberapa majlis yang bertuah, saya telah diberi restu untuk mengingati Pak Mail setiap kali saya terserempak dengan karya-karya yang memaparkan penggunaan warna yang begitu bersuka-ria ini.

2

Dalam kamus metafora Pak Mail yang kaya, 'Mee Maggie' mencadangkan karya-karya segera yang boleh dihasilkan dalam masa kurang dari dua minit. Mantranya adalah "Cepat dibuat, sedap dilihat." Ia juga mencadangkan suatu hasrat tidak berakal untuk menghasilkan 'produksi massa' dan 'benda-benda yang datang bersama format yang telah sedia-ada atau peket yang sudah disediakan. Ini mengorbankan pemikiran tinggi yang memerlukan masa untuk menjadi matang. Nasib baik juga, pendekatan 'mee maggie' masih kekal hingga ke hari ini dan anda boleh melihatnya pada beberapa

karya pra-matang terlebih pujian oleh beberapa orang pelukis yang membanjiri arena seni rupa tempatan. Karya-karya sebegini membawa senyuman pada wajah saya, mengingatkan saya pada Pak Mail, yang seterusnya mengingatkan saya untuk menyedekahkan 'alfatihah' untuk roh beliau.

3

Jika anda seorang pelajar Pak Mail, anda tidak mahu digelar 'kambing qiqah'. Suatu hari ketika sesi lukisan kami, dia menkritik penyalinan kaedah melukis ekspresionis abstrak (yang digunakan oleh segelintir kami, dan juga beberapa orang pensyarah kami) hanya untuk kemudiannya menerima suatu reaksi diam bodoh dari kami semua. "Awak tau kambing qiqah? tanya Pak Mail dalam nada kecewa. "Tak tau Pak Mail. Apa tu kambing qiqah?" "Awaklah" jawab Pak mail sambil meninggalkan studio untuk minum petang di kantin tingkat bawah. Beberapa minggu kemudian, kami diberitahu (bukan oleh Pak Mail) bahawa kambing sebegini sering kelihatan seperti 'sudi' disembelih tanpa banyak melawan. Diam bodoh kami mungkin sangat sesuai dilabel sebegini. Kami begitu 'sudi' dan 'rela' untuk diserang dan di'sembelih' secara intelektual oleh Pak Mail, hingga kami lupa untuk menentang dan melawan semula, suatu kualiti yang Pak Mail ingin keluarkan dari dalam diri kami. Saya masih menggunakan 'kambing qiqah' walaupun hanya jika keadaan memerlukannya, ketika sesi kuliah atau studio bersama para pelajar saya. Kini saya amat memahami kekecewaan Pak Mail.

4

Sekumpulan pelajar wanita sedang bising berbual sambil membuat kerja lukisan. Walaupun mungkin patut dimarahi, Pak Mail sebaliknya menyertai perbualan mereka. "Awak suka suasana persediaan kahwin tak?" Pak Mail mencelah. "Ya...ya! Seronok sangat" jawab seorang pelajar. "Ya... mengumpat, bersembang, menyediakan hantaran, pelamin, bunga manggar, bersembang-semang..." kata Pak Mail. "Ya... ya... begitu ceria", sambung seorang lagi. "Awak suka buat 'Bunga Manggar' tak?" tanya Pak Mail. "Ya... ya... kami suka!" Sunyi sepi seketika... "Hah! ini bukan persediaan kenduri kahwin ya?" Pak Mail menyergah dengan suara yang tinggi, lalu meninggalkan kumpulan pelajar tersebut. Hari ini, 19 tahun kemudian, saya masih boleh menyaksikan kehadiran 'Bunga Manggar' menggemakan sakanya dalam studio lukisan mahupun galeri seni. Pak Mail merupakan seorang pembaca tekun budaya alam Melayu.

Hasnul J Saidon

THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

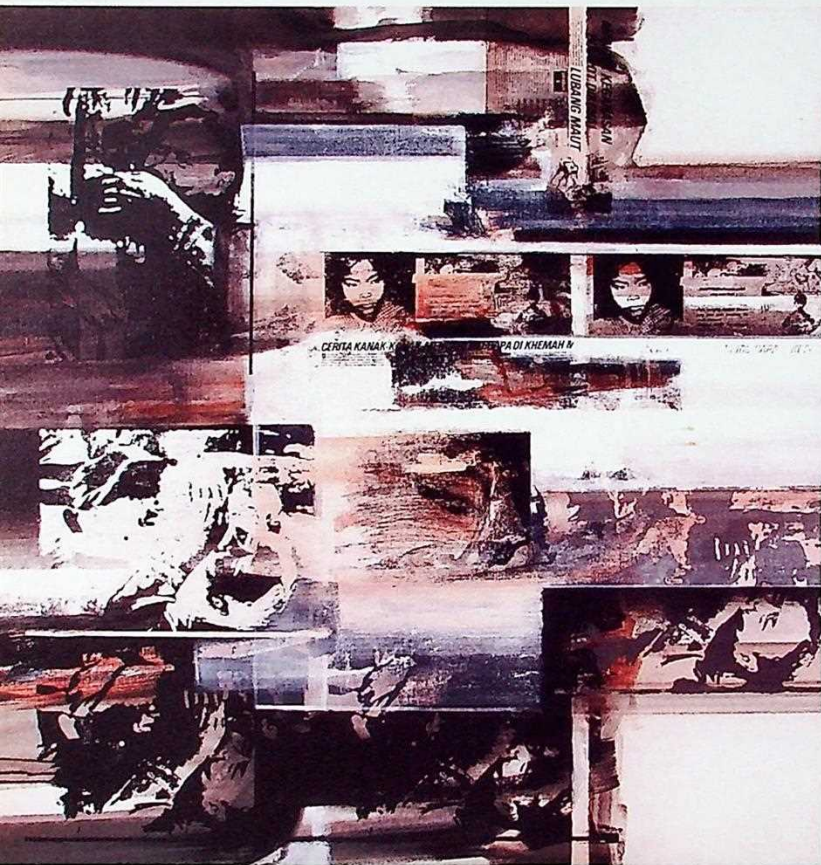
Complex socio-political issues have emerged out of the changing social fabric of our developing nation and region, signaling a call for artists to play the role as the voice of conscience or social commentator. Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam rose to that call in the 1970s and continues in this role up to today. Also pioneering in being one of the earliest artists to use installations and photography in her work, she has gone beyond socio-political boundaries to highlight the problems of environmental abuse, poverty, and social injustice, and also comment on states of conflict in war-torn countries.

Throughout the nineties, Wong Hoy Cheong's works were significant in their investigation of existing constructed historical narratives that have not been properly examined. In his works, a wide range of media including drawing, video, installation and photography have been employed to address issues such as migrancy, post-colonialism and race politics. Bayu Utomo Radjikin, on the other hand, in his early work, employs a thought-provoking and sometimes rather brutal spin on his artwork to stimulate dialogue on issues such as child abuse, the ravages of war, and the plight of indigenous peoples amongst others.

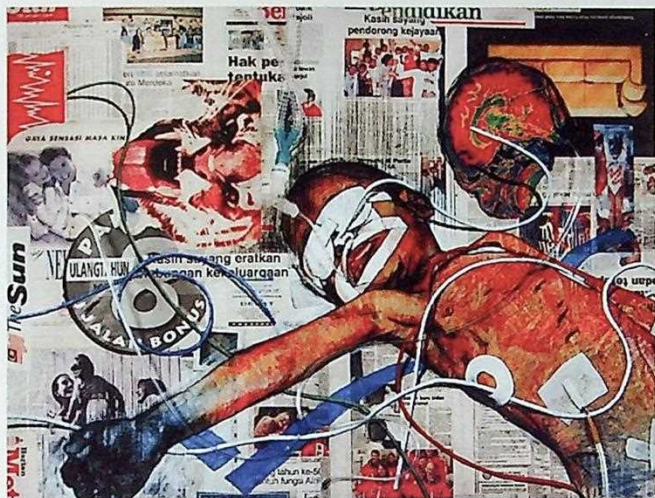
KESEDARAN SOSIAL

Isu-isu sosiopolitik yang kompleks muncul daripada perubahan corak sosial Negara dan rantau kita yang membangun, lantas memberi isyarat kepada para pengkarya untuk memainkan peranan sebagai suara hati nurani atau sebagai pengulas sosial... Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam menyahut panggilan ini pada tahun 1970an dan meneruskan peranan beliau sehingga hari ini. Sebagai salah seorang pengkarya yang mempelopori penggunaan pemasangan dan fotografi dalam kerja seni, beliau telah menjangkau sempadan sosiopolitik untuk menonjolkan masalah pencemaran alam sekitar, kemiskinan dan ketidakadilan sosial, dan juga memberi komen terhadap suasana konflik negara yang mengalami peperangan.

Sepanjang era sembilan puluhan, hasil seni Wong Hoy Cheong adalah penting dalam pemerhatian terhadap naratif sejarah sedia ada dan yang tidak diperiksa dengan teliti. Dalam kerja seni beliau, pelbagai rangkaian media termasuk lukisan, video, pemasangan dan fotografi digunakan untuk menyentuh isu-isu seperti perpindahan penduduk, kesedaran pasca penjajah dan politik bangsa. Bayu Utomo Radjikin, sebaliknya, dalam kerja-kerja awal beliau, menggunakan olahan yang mencabar minda dan kadang kala usikan yang keras dalam kerja seninya untuk merangsang dialog terhadap isu-isu seperti penderaan kanak-kanak, bencana peperangan dan nasib pribumi.



Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam
 Lubang Maut, 1980
 Silkscreen and acrylic
 122 x 122cm
 Universiti Sains Malaysia Collection



Bayu Utomo Radjikin
Newspaper, 1995
Mixed media on paper
90 x 122cm
Artist's Collection

Wong Hoy Cheong
(in collaboration with
Mohamad Arifwaran)
Re:Looking, 2002 – 2003
Video
27 mins



RE-VISITING A 'LONE VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS'

1.

Reducing an artist like Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam into a short essay is a risky undertaking and can perhaps be read as a preposterous effort. She is an icon and an inventive pioneer of social conscience in the visual arts, as far as Malaysia is concerned. Her empathetic somber visual temperament, bold style and conceptual approach that she was known for during the 70s and 80s were ahead of her time. Long before the visual arts became engulfed into the whole spectrum of cultural studies and taken as a trendy index of socio-political activism in late 90s, she was amongst few brave local visual artists who stood out through the period of predominantly 'moderated abstract expressionism' and 'arabesqued nationalism' in the 80s.

Her artworks were appropriately explicated as "a lone voice in the wilderness" of the local visual arts scene, representing a deeply-felt voice (during the 70s and 80s) of human conscience against war, political cruelty, economic injustice, the plight of the defenseless and voiceless especially women and children. Her iconic stature can be taken as a prelude to the 90s. In a way, she is a trailblazer, an original pioneer that has paved a way for more socially-engaged and vocal artworks to take center stage in the local, regional and international visual arts scene.

Ironically, as the Malaysian visual arts scene became growingly preoccupied by changing realities brought about by globalization, capitalist free market liberalism, the information revolution and digital technology in the past 15 years, Nirmala's 'lone voice' seemed to be gradually drowned by angst-ridden and dissonant post-modern raves, shouts, and screams of the predominantly loud and politically-incorrect 90s visual arts scene. Her stance or poise was somehow overshadowed by overlapping 'international' discourses of post-structuralism, postcolonialism, deconstruction, feminism and gender theories. The 'wilderness' has turned into an 'open fire' fueled by issues related to ethnic diasporas, imperatives of multiculturalism and racial alienation, cultural authority and contestation, critiques of history, media imperialism, hegemony and control, critiques of popular culture and rampant consumerism, critiques of globalization, crises of urbanization, and critical expositions of new media

and its influences. No more lone voices, but more likely a chaotic and random syncopated chorus where nobody is actually crying.

It is in the midst of such a chorus in the wilderness that I really miss Nirmala's voice.

2.

I never had a chance to know Nirmala personally. I could only gaze at her from a distance (literally and metaphorically). Fortunately, her artworks have never been far from my gaze and personal reading. In fact, her artworks have been amongst the most lingering emotional and mental features of my early exposure to modern art in Malaysia. Hers are my index and anchor for a true "voice crying in the wilderness". They touched my heart, perhaps more than my intellect. They were born out of love for humankind. They sprang from Nirmala's *kalbu*. *Kalbu* with a clear conscience is free from any haze or doubt. It even penetrates the supposedly superior mind or sophisticated intellect.

Nirmala's paintings and her persistence remind me of the undying spirit of unconditional love that connects all beings.

3.

As we gaze at Nirmala's paintings, let us also ponder conscientiously the 'recess space' in our palms as we scoop and try to contain a small reservoir of water in it. Does it form a reservoir in the shape of love, as if whispering to us that we are the containers of love? We are the containers and the contained, intertwined in a reservoir of love, far larger and finer than what we can imagine with the aid of our naked perception. Can we find the frequency...? deep within our heart and soul? Such a frequency is called the voice of conscience, the 'lone voice crying in the wilderness' of our own mind. Perhaps we should do more 're-visiting' of our own inner self.

Hasnul J Saidon

MENJEJAK-SEMULA 'SUARA TUNGGAL YANG MERINTIS DALAM BELANTARA'

I.

Menirukan seorang pelukis seperti **Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam** dalam sebuah esei adalah suatu kerja yang berisiko dan mungkin juga boleh dibaca sebagai usaha yang sia-sia. Beliau merupakan suatu ikon dan perintis kesedaran sosial dalam seni rupa di Malaysia. Ciri visual karya-karya yang sugul dan penuh simpati, stail yang berani dan pendekatan konseptual beliau yang sangat dikenali pada tahun 70an dan 80an adalah mendahului masa. Jauh lebih awal sebelum seni rupa disedut masuk dalam spektrum kajian budaya dan diterima sebagai indeks aktivisma sosio-politik yang menjadi ikutan pada lewat 90an, beliau telahpun menjadi antara segelintir karyawan tempatan yang berani dan kukuh berdiri sepanjang dominasi 'ekspresionisma abstrak yang dilembutkan' dan 'nasionalisma yang diArabkan' sekitar tahun 80an.

Karya-karya beliau telah diulas sebagai 'suara tunggal dalam belantara' oleh arena seni rupa tempatan, mewakili suara kesedaran kemanusiaan (sekitar 70an dan 80an) yang menentang peperangan, ketidak-adilan ekonomi, dan rayuan mereka yang tidak dilindungi atau tidak dapat bersuara terutama wanita dan kanak-kanak. Kedudukan beliau sebagai ikon boleh diterima sebagai prelud untuk era 90an. Dari satu segi, beliau merupakan seorang pendahulu, seorang perintis tulen yang telah membuka jalan bagi karya-karya yang lebih vokal dan terlibat dari segi sosial untuk diketengahkan dalam arena seni rupa tempatan, wilayah dan antarabangsa.

Ironiknya, ketika arena seni rupa Malaysia menjadi semakin sibuk dengan perubahan-perubahan yang dibawa oleh globalisasi, liberalisma pasaran terbuka, revolusi informasi dan teknologi digital sepanjang 15 tahun yang lepas, 'suara tunggal' Nirmala seakan ditenggelami perlahan-lahan oleh laungan, jeritan dan pekikan pasca-modern yang penuh marah dan sumbang. Pendirian beliau telah dibayangi oleh wacana bertindan antarabangsa berkenaan pasca-strukturalisma, pasca-kolonialisma, dekonstruksi, feminisme dan teori-teori gender. 'Belantara' telah bertukar menjadi 'lapangan tembak terbuka' yang dibekalkan oleh isu-isu berkaitan dengan diaspora etnik, tuntutan multi-budaya dan pluralisma, krisis representasi, pengasingan budaya, penguasaan dan persaingan budaya, kritikan sejarah, imperialisma, hegemoni dan kawalan media, kritikan budaya popular dan konsumerisma melampau, kritikan globalisasi, krisis urbanisasi dan eksposisi serta pengaruh

media baru. Tiada lagi suara tunggal, tetapi lebih kepada korus-korus rawak yang bertaburan dan tersangkut-sangkut dalam mana tiada siapa yang sebenar-benarnya mahu meratap atau merintah lagi.

Dalam suasana belantara korus sebegini, saya benar-benar merindui suara Nirmala.

2.

Saya tidak berpeluang mengenali Nirmala secara peribadi. Saya hanya dapat melihat beliau dari jauh (secara literal dan tamsilan). Namun demikian, karya-karya beliau tidak pernah jauh dari renungan dan pembacaan saya. Malah, karya-karya beliau telah menjadi antara sumber emosi dan mental yang berterusan ketika pendedahan awal saya terhadap seni moden di Malaysia. Karya-karya beliau menjadi indeks dan sauh untuk 'suara tunggal dalam belantara' yang sebenar. Ia menyentuh nurani saya, mungkin lebih dari intelek saya. Ia dilahirkan dari rasa cinta pada umat manusia. Ia muncul dari kalbu Nirmala. Kalbu Nirmala yang hadir dengan kesedaran yang jernih adalah bebas dari sebarang keraguan. Ia menembusi minda yang kononnya lebih mulia dan intelek yang kononnya canggih.

Catan-catan Nirmala dan kesungguhan beliau mengingatkan saya kepada semangat cinta yang tidak pernah luntur, dan yang mengikat kita bersama.

3.

Apabila kita merenung catan-catan Nirmala, marilah kita memikirkan dengan sedar tentang ruang lekuk pada telapak tangan kita apabila kita menceduk dan menakung air di dalamnya. Adakah ia membentuk takungan air dalam bentuk cinta, seakan membisik kepada kita bahawa kita adalah penakung cinta? Kita adalah penakung dan yang ditakung, saling berkait dalam medan cinta yang jauh lebih luas dan halus dari yang dapat kita bayangkan dengan bantuan mata kasar. Bolehkan kita menemui frekuensinya...? jauh di dalam hati dan jiwa kita? Frekuensi ini dipanggil suara kesedaran, 'suara tunggal yang merintis dalam belantara' minda kita sendiri. Mungkin kita perlu membuat lebih banyak 'jejak-semula' terhadap jiwa kita.

Hasnul J Saidon

BIOGRAPHY

ABDUL MULTHALIB MUSA *b. 1976, Penang* holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from MARA University of Technology, and also a Bachelors Degree in Design Studies, University of Adelaide, Australia. He was artist-in-residence at The Gunnery Studios, Sydney, Australia 2004, and at Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia in 2001. He has won numerous awards in Malaysia and received the Second Prize Award of Excellence in the '6th Oita Asian Sculpture Exhibition & Open Competition' in Japan.

AHMAD FUAD OSMAN *b. 1969, Selangor* graduated from Mara Institute of Technology in 1991. Since then he has taught in a number of local universities and colleges. A member of the Matahati group, Ahmad Fuad has won several awards and exhibited locally as well as internationally. In 2004 he took part in the Vermont Studios residency in the USA, and in 2005, the artist spent a year in Korea at the Goyang residency.

AHMAD KHALID YUSOF *1934 – 1997* gained his Diploma in Art and Design in the UK and his Masters in Fine Art and Art Education in the USA. He taught at the School of Art and Design, Mara Institute of Technology. Since 1969, his work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and collected by Bank Negara and the National Art Gallery, amongst others.

AHMAD SHUKRI MOHAMED *b. 1969, Kelantan* obtained a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Mara Institute of Technology, and subsequently became a lecturer there. A member of the Matahati group, he has won numerous awards and exhibited locally and internationally. His artworks demonstrate a keen exploration of new materials. His is well known for his interest in creating varied surface textures with found objects.

AMRON OMAR *b. 1957, Kedah* studied at the School of Art & Design at the MARA Institute of Technology. His figurative work mainly focuses on the art of silat. He is known for his dramatic use of shadows and unusual perspectives in his paintings. His powerful and expressive rendering of the figure has made an impact on the local art scene since the 1980s. His body of work although small, is significant.

ANTHONY LAU *b. 1933, Johor* received a Malaysian government scholarship to study at Brighton College of Arts and Crafts in UK and later a Fulbright grant to complete his graduate studies at University of Indiana in USA. Although known as a sculptor, Anthony is also respected as a teacher, being the Head of the Department of Arts and Crafts at the Specialist Teacher's Training Institute for eight years. He has exhibited extensively at the National Art Gallery, Malaysia and also in Europe from 1965-67.

ANURENDRA JEGADEVA *b. 1965, Selangor* obtained his Masters of Fine Arts from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Anurendra's first solo exhibition entitled "First Works" was held at the Australian High Commission in 1993. He has exhibited locally and internationally since then. Anu's vibrant colours and bold strokes are his signature style. He is primarily a figurative painter and his subjects in the past have included militant monks, migrant laborers and religious icons.

BAYU UTOMO RADJIKIN *b. 1969, Sabah* graduated from Universiti Teknologi MARA, majoring in sculpture. Over the past 15 years, Bayu Utomo Radjikin has held five solo exhibitions and participated over fifty various group exhibitions. He has won several awards such as the Young Contemporaries, One World No War, Salon Malaysia, and the Philip Morris Art awards. He is one of the founders of Matahati, an art collective formed in 1989. He is also active in the local and international theatre scene.

CHAI CHANG HWANG *b. 1969, Kuala Lumpur* is a member of Rumah Air Panas, an alternative space for artists established in 1997. Graduating with a Diploma in Fine Art from Malaysian Institute of Art in 1990, he is also a freelance writer, contributing to a few Mandarin art publications. Actively involved in the Malaysian art scene, he now lives in Kuala Lumpur.

CHANG FEE MING *b. 1959, Kuala Terengganu* is a self-taught artist who began his career in the early 1980s. He has since exhibited in Malaysia, Australia, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, China, Indonesia, USA, Canada, Hong Kong, UK, Sweden and Brazil. He is now one of Asia's leading artists working in watercolour, and has exhibited widely in the region over the past fifteen years.

CHANG YOONG CHIA *b. 1975, Kuala Lumpur* graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Art with a Diploma in Fine Art in 1996. He has since participated in numerous group exhibitions. He participated in KHOJ International Artists Workshop 2002 in Mysore, India, and in the 3rd Fukuoka Art Triennale in 2005. He was a founding member of Spacekraft, an artists-run space based in Kuala Lumpur and has helped organise art activities such as Comics? at the National Art Gallery 2001, and Chow Kit Fest in 2002.

CHEONG LAITONG *b. 1932, China* came to British Malaya in 1937. He studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, USA in 1961, and later studied at Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. One of the early members of the Wednesday Art Group, Lai Tong is renowned for winning the commission to create the historical mural on the walls of the National Museum in Kuala Lumpur. He has exhibited in Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Australia and Europe.

CHONG SIEW YING *b. 1969, Kuala Lumpur* studied at L'Ecole Des Beaux-Arts in Versailles, France in 1991. Later she studied and taught at Atelier 63 in Paris, while working as an artist. She returned to Malaysia in 1998. She was artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan in 1999 and at the Vermont Studio Centre, America in 2001. She has participated in several group exhibitions and held solo shows across Asia as well as Australia, Europe and America. Today she is based in Paris and Kuala Lumpur.

CHOY CHUN WEI *b. 1973, Kuala Lumpur* graduated as a full scholarship holder from the faculty of Graphic Design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, majoring in Illustration. He has been exhibiting at numerous locations in Kuala Lumpur since 1995. He was awarded Honourable Mention at the Philip Morris Arts Awards in 2003 and the Juror's Choice Award (2D) at the Malaysian Young Contemporaries Exhibition in 2004. In 2005, he was artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan. the Philip Morris Arts Awards in 2003 and the Juror's Choice Award (2D) at the Malaysian Young Contemporaries Exhibition in 2004. In 2005, he was artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan.

CHUAH CHONG YONG *b. 1972, Taiping, Perak* gained his Diploma in Fine Art from the Malaysian Institute of Art in 1993. Since then he has organized and participated in some important exhibitions such as the 2nd Fukuoka Triennale in 2002, Bakat Muda Sezaman '94 at the National Art Gallery, Expression '95 at Nanyang Gallery, Periphery at Galeriwan in 1996 and Three Young Contemporaries at Valentine Willie Fine Art. In 1996, he was a Winner of the Philip Morris Malaysian Art Awards, and gained an Honourable Mention at the Philip Morris ASEAN Art Awards. He is also one of the founding members of the Rumah Air Panas alternative art space.

CHUAH THEAN TENG *b. 1914, China* emigrated to Malaya in 1932. A graduate of Amoy Fine Arts Academy in China, he learnt batik techniques in Sumatra and pioneered the use of batik as a medium for pictorial art in the mid-1950s. He has participated extensively in group shows and also held one-man shows internationally in London, San Francisco, Dublin, Kilkenny and Cork. He was honoured by the Commonwealth Institute in London with a one-man show in 1965.

DZULKIFLI BUYONG *1948 – 2004* emerged in the early 1960s as something of a boy prodigy and produced some of his most famous works before he was out of his teens. Although primarily a self-taught artist, his early art education began under Patrick Ng at Victoria Institute. He was an active member of the Wednesday Art Group and the Arts Council and is best known for his iconic depictions of Malaysian children at play.

HAMIDI ABDUL HADI *b. 1971, Selangor* holds a Masters Degree in Painting from the University of Wolverhampton, UK. Despite his young age, Hamidi won several awards including the Philip Morris ASEAN Art Award in 2000, and Bank Negara's Kijang Award in 2004. Known for his unique "dripping" technique in abstract works, he has exhibited in Malaysia, Singapore and the UK.

HASNUL SAIDON *b. 1965, Perak* received his diploma from Mara Institute of Technology in 1988; BFA in painting from Southern Illinois University in 1991; MFA in Electronic Arts from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York in 1993. He is known for introducing post-modernist works in the local art scene during the nineties and has worked as a guest curator, writer and editor; producer, director and designer for stage and experimental performances, video productions, art talks, art camps. He is currently Director of Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah at USM, and also a lecturer there.

IBRAHIM HUSSEIN *b. 1936, Kedah* won a scholarship to study at the Byam Shaw School of Painting in London. In 1968, Hussein went to New York as a fellow of the JD Rockefeller Fund where he exhibited his interpretations of America. After his return to Malaysia he won many other awards and was granted the Darjah Dato Paduka Mahkota Perak by the Sultan of Perak in 1991. The same year, he set up a nonprofit foundation, "The Ibrahim Hussein Museum and Cultural Foundation" in Langkawi.

ISMAIL ZAIN *1938–1991* was once described by Tan Sri Zain Azraai as "arguably the most complete artperson the country has produced". Sent to Malayan Teachers Training College, Kirby in the early 1950s, he later studied at The Slade School of Art in London. He served as Director of the National Art Gallery, then Director at the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports, and then Director of the National Film Development Corporation. As an artist, and a writer his works were articulate, thoughtful and provocative.

JALAINI ABU HASSAN *b. 1963, Selangor* took his BA in Fine art at MARA, Institute of Technology in 1985 and was awarded a Malaysian Federal Scholarship to London's Slade School of Art. In 1994, he gained his MFA at New York's Pratt Institute. Jai has exhibited in Malaysia, Singapore, the USA, the UK and also in Australia, Spain and Iraq. His works are in the collection of the National Art Gallery in Malaysia and in private, corporate and gallery collections in the region and beyond. He is currently teaching at UiTM.

JOLLY KOH *b. 1941, Singapore* enrolled at the Hornsey College of Art in London for his training and received a doctorate in education in 1975 from America. Jolly is a master colourist, and his works are in public collections in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and the USA. In 2004, Jolly Koh published his first book entitled *Artistic Imperitive*.

JOSEPH TAN *1941 – 2001* studied in the National School of Art in Sydney, Australia; and later at the Art Institute of Chicago in USA. He returned to Malaysia in 1968 and immediately made an impact with his Pop Art and Graffiti series. He spent many years teaching in art institutions in Kuala Lumpur, and ran the Nanyang Gallery of Art from 1992 to 1995. His later work expanded on his deep interest in the Malaysian landscape.

KHAIRUL AZMIR SHOIB AKA MEME *b. 1976* obtained his Masters of Fine Art (Fine Art & Technology) at Mara University of Technology in 2004. He is an accomplished technician and skillful draftsman who is not only passionate about the art of story-telling, but also excels in visualizing his stories through intricate characterization, imaginative scenic, set and costume design, as well as dramatic film composition.

KHALIL IBRAHIM *b. 1934* won an international art scholarship to study at the St. Martin's School of Art, London, where he pursued post-graduate work. His participation in group exhibitions brought him to many parts of the world such as France, Germany, Japan, Sweden, UK and USA to name a few. Khalil has held solo exhibitions in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Switzerland. His works have been collected in many international private and public collections. Early on a proponent of batik painting, he is best known for his East Coast series, in which he developed a distinctive figurative-abstract style playing with colour and movement. best known for his East Coast series, in which he developed a distinctive figurative-abstract style playing with colour and movement.

KHOO SUI-HO *b. 1939*, Penang is most well known for his unique stylization of the Asian figure. Graduating from Nanyang Academy of Fine Art in 1959, his paintings have drawn international attention over the last 40 years. His best paintings create a state of inner peace and joy. His unique brand of gentle surrealism expresses a Southeast Asian ideal without losing its universal appeal. He is currently based in the USA, frequently returning to Malaysia.

KOW LEONG KIANG *b. 1970*, Selangor has garnered much attention and success since winning the Grand Prize at the Philip Morris ASEAN Art Awards in 1998. His depictions of nostalgic rural scenes of east coast Malaysia are captured through a masterful feather-light rendering. His prodigious skills and techniques are inspired by his documentation of the region he travels to. His paintings are like vignettes, conveying intimate stories of rural life, reminiscent of storytellers or “penglipurlara” of the past.

LAI FOONG MOI *1931 – 1994* a graduate of Nanyang Academy of Fine Art, studied at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris in 1954. She returned in 1958 to teach at the Academy and has been regarded as one of the most important of the Nanyang artists. Her portraits, drawn from the different races and communities are forthright and emotionally sympathetic. They have become iconic works in institutional collections. Her work in landscape has a similar still quality.

LATIFF MOHIDIN *b. 1938, Negri Sembilan* was hailed as the "Wonder Boy" of Malaysian art since his first solo exhibition at the age of 11. He was educated in the Academy of Fine Arts, Berlin, 1960; Atelier La Courriere, Paris, 1968 and Pratt Graphic Design, New York, 1970. Well known for his Pago-pago series, he is a painter, poet and sometime sculptor who consistently seeks to give form to the soul of Southeast Asia as experienced from within.

LEE KIAN SENG *b. 1948* is a self-trained, multi-media artist who has consistently received recognition at home and abroad. At the age of 18 (1966), he held his first solo exhibition to critical acclaim. He has held 21 one-man shows since 1966. He works in a great variety of media including lithography, etching, silkscreen and batik but is most well known for his installation pieces. Since 2006, he has written occasionally for Sin Chew Daily and Nanyang Siang Pao in Malaysia.

MOHAMED HOESSEIN ENAS *1924 – 1995* came to Malaya from Bogor, Java in 1947. Largely a selftaught painter, he was to become the leading proponent of academic realism, particularly in portraiture. In 1956, he spearheaded Majlis Kesenian Melayu, later called the Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung (APS). The APS was an important force in the development of artistic activity in Malaysia around Independence. In 1990, Mohd Hoessein Enas was appointed Royal Portrait Painter to HRH Sultan of Selangor.

NADIAH BAMADHAJ *b. 1968, Selangor* graduated from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand with a BFA in sculpture and sociology. She later worked with non-governmental organizations on HIV/AIDS prevention and human rights advocacy. In 2002 she was awarded the Nippon Foundation's Asian Public Intellectuals Fellowship. Her recent work looks at architecture as historical documents and carriers of memory, which is the topic of her PhD research that began at Curtin University of Technology in 2006.

NIK ZAINAL ABIDIN NIK SALLEH *1933 – 1993* was a self-taught artist whose important early work is based on local Malay culture. He is known for his re-interpretation of wayang kulit performances which were an integral experience of his upbringing. His work successfully captures the shadows and movement of this artform and bring to life ancient Hindu stories such as the Ramayana.

NIRMALA DUTT SHANMUGHALINGAM *b. 1941, Penang* might aptly be called the conscience of our times. She has been an unsung pioneer not simply as an early woman artist, but in her approach – making installations using photography, found materials and text from the early 70s, apart from painting. Nirmala has remained perhaps our most socially committed artist, her works speak out against war, abuse and social injustice.

NOOR AZIZAN RAHMAN PAIMAN *b. 1970, Malacca* gained an MA in Fine Art from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2001. He has worked as a junior curator at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, and is currently a lecturer in the Faculty of Art and Design (Fine Art) at Universiti Teknologi Mara in Perak. Since 1991, he has exhibited widely in solo and group shows, including the '1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial 1999' in Japan, when he was also an artist-in-residence.

NOOR MAHNUN MOHAMED *b. 1964, Kelantan* studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Braunschweig (1989 – 1996) in Germany and graduated with a Masters in Fine Art. In 2000 she was the Malaysian artist-in-

residence at Rimbun Dahan. She was awarded the Italian Government Scholarship to study printmaking at the International School of Print and Graphic Il Bisonte, Florence in 2003. Inspired by the Italian masters and true to her German training, Noor Mahnun's works are controlled and finely executed, with an underlying psychological strength.

NUR HANIM BT MOHAMED KHAIRUDDIN *b. 1969, Perak* graduated from Mara University of Technology (1994). Her artworks have been presented in numerous exhibitions in Malaysia, Asia (Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Indonesia) as well as in Europe (Germany, Czech Republic). She is the curator at the Perak Arts Foundation and currently secretary of the Perak Theatre Council. Her curatorial work includes the elaboration of concepts, research, as well as post-event follow-up. She is co-editor of *Sentap*, a quarterly art journal in Malaysia. curator at the Perak Arts Foundation and currently secretary of the Perak Theatre Council. Her curatorial work includes the elaboration of concepts, research, as well as post-event follow-up. She is co-editor of *Sentap*, a quarterly art journal in Malaysia.

PATRICK NG KAH ONN *1932–1989* was a member and sometime president of the Wednesday Art Group. He studied at Hammersmith College of Art, London, and Wimbledon and Southlands College of Education, London. Best known for creating the masterpiece *Spirits of the Earth, Sky and Water* (1959) in the National Art Gallery collection, examples of his later works have been difficult to trace. In the 1960s he left for London to study and never returned to Malaysia.

RAJA SHAHRIMAN BIN RAJA AZIDDIN *b. 1967, Perak* is one of Malaysia's most exciting contemporary sculptors. A graduate of Mara Institute of Technology, he works mainly in metal and is also a trained keris maker. Known for his series of dramatic sculptures, titled *Gerak Tempur*, he has represented Malaysia in major international exhibitions. These include the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane and Rupa Malaysia at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

RAMLAN ABDULLAH *b. 1960, Perak* attained his BA and Post Baccalaureate studies at The School Of The Art Institute of Chicago and Wartburg College respectively, and his MFA at Pratt Institute, New York in 1990. He has garnered numerous accolades including the Grand Prize for the 2nd Oita Asia Sculpture Competition in Japan and Best Sculpture at the APEC Sculpture Garden in Philippines. He currently serves as the Head Of Program in the Fine Art Department at Mara University of Technology.

REDZA PIYADASA *1939 – 2007* has played a number of roles in Malaysian art. Artist, critic, educator, his position has always been to nurture critical thought and self-reflection in local art practice. Crucially, he was a driving force behind the New Scene Movement, named after an exhibition at the National Art Gallery in 1969, which proposed more conceptual or "investigative" modes of art-making against existing trends.

ROSLISHAM ISMAIL AKA ISE *b. 1972, Kelantan* graduated from Mara University of Technology in 1997. He is a recipient of the Young Contemporary Award (Special Mention Award 2000) and the Philip Morris Art Award (Honourable Mention 2003). Having exhibited in Malaysia, Istanbul and India, he was selected for the Australian High Commission's Visual Arts Residency Award 2006, based in Gunnery Studios, Sydney. He is co-editor of *Sentap*, a quarterly art journal in Malaysia.

SHARMIZA ABU HASSAN *b. 1972, Taiping, Perak* obtained a Bachelor's degree from Mara Institute of Technology. Since 1992, she has won several awards and participated in exhibitions. She has lectured at Mara Institute of Technology as well as The One Academy. Sharmiza combines representational images together with metaphorical ones to create artworks drawing on history and legend, and her everyday life.

SHARON CHIN *b. 1980, Kuala Lumpur* graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture from the Victorian College of Arts, Australia, where she also received a Wallara Travelling Scholarship in 2003. She has exhibited in Australia as well as in and around Kuala Lumpur. Her works, consisting of drawings and installations explores the idea of transference, or the changes that take place within us as a result of moving from one environment to another. Sharon was recently awarded the Australian High Commission Visual Arts Residency.

SULAIMAN HAJI ESA *b. 1941, Johor* studied at the Hornsey College of Art in London, Atelier 17 in Paris and later Maryland College of Art in Baltimore, USA. He was known for his joint exhibition titled "Mystical Reality," with the late Redza Piyadasa (1975). Since then, the focus of his work has shifted towards Islamic concepts; his solo exhibition was titled Kearah Tauhid (Towards Unity in God) 1984. He was one of the pioneering lecturers at the Mara Institute of Technology.

SUSYILAWATI SULAIMAN *b. 1973* graduated in 1997 with a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts at Mara Institute of Technology. Since 1994, she has participated in numerous exhibitions and won several awards. She studies and explores different materials in order to create works which speak of conflicts that take place within one's "inner self." This year she participated in Documenta in Kassel, Germany.

SYED AHMAD JAMAL *b. 1929, Johor* studied at the Birmingham School of Architecture, and later at the Chelsea School of Art in London from 1951–1955. In 1973, he obtained a Master's degree in Art History from University of Hawaii, Honolulu and studied Philosophy of Islamic Art in Harvard University, Cambridge, USA, 1974. He is the only visual artist to have been awarded the rare accolade of Seniman Negara, or National Artist. Syed Ahmad Jamal has also published extensively on art, among the most well known being *Rupa dan Jiwa* (1992).

SYED THAJUDEEN *b. 1943, India* graduated from the Madras College of Art in 1974. He is known for his figurative works in which characters from the Ramayana and Mahabharata appear stylized and elongated. He has exhibited locally and internationally, including the Commonwealth Institute, London; the Asia-Pacific Museum in Pasadena, California; in Cologne, Germany; Brussels; Galeri Petronas; Menara Maybank Gallery; Cultural Foundation Gallery, Abu Dhabi; University of London Gallery; Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangdong, China. figurative works in which characters from the Ramayana and Mahabharata appear stylized and elongated. He has exhibited locally and internationally, including the Commonwealth Institute, London; the Asia-Pacific Museum in Pasadena, California; in Cologne, Germany; Brussels; Galeri Petronas; Menara Maybank Gallery; Cultural Foundation Gallery, Abu Dhabi; University of London Gallery; Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangdong, China.

TAN SEI HON *b. 1975, Melaka* is a graduate from UNIMAS who, since the 90s, has been contributing towards the construction of an alternative art scene. He does so through his talent as an artist, educator, organizer, writer, critic, and activist. Lately, his energy has been channeled towards the local underground music scene.

His role as singer-songwriter, band leader and organizer is of equal standing with his reputation in the visual arts. Tan Sei Hon lives and works in Kuala Lumpur.

TAY HOOI KEAT *b. 1910 – 1989* played a pivotal role in the early development of Malaysian art education and the art scene. He was appointed Inspector of Schools in charge of Art Education in 1952. He was co-founder of the Wednesday Art Group and the Penang Art Teachers' Group. His bold and pioneering modernist artworks has left us with some of the most distinctive interpretations of landscapes and townscapes, especially around Penang.

TENGKU SABRI BIN TENGKU IBRAHIM *b. 1961*, *Terengganu* graduated from Mara Institute of Technology in 1986. Later in 1999, he received an MA in Art & Design Education from De Montfort University, England. He learnt traditional Malay woodcarving and carpentry as a teenager from his mastercraftsman father. Tengku Sabri has also taught art at several art institutions since 1986. He was also the editor of *Tanpa Tajuk*, an independent quarterly art publication.

VINCENT LEONG *b. 1979*, *Kuala Lumpur* studied Communication Design at Centre of Advanced Design (CENFAD), Kuala Lumpur (1998–2000) and returned to Malaysia after graduating with Bachelors in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 2004. His work in a wide range of media, which is drawn from popular culture, reveals a sharp wit and a keen observation of contemporary life.

WONG HOY CHEONG *b. 1960*, *Penang* returned from the USA in 1987 with a BA in English Literature from Brandeis, an MA in Education from Harvard and an MA in Fine Arts from University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He has exhibited extensively in Asia, Australia and Europe. He has been a vital part of the Malaysian arts community as teacher, critic, curator, writer and artist. In 2004, a major retrospective of his work was held at the National Art Gallery.

WONG PERNG FEY *b. 1974*, *Kuala Lumpur* graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Art in 1998 on scholarship. This young artist has made a significant impact in the Malaysian artscene. His works have been collected by the National Art Gallery and Galeri Petronas. His artworks attempts to form an emotional bridge between man and his surroundings, exploring questions of belonging, memory, inhabitation, change and permanence.

YAP SAU BIN *b. 1974* is a conceptual artist who was one of the founding members of Rumah Air Panas, an artists initiative in Kuala Lumpur. Graduating from Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, in England, Yap won the Young Contemporaries Arts Award at the National Art Gallery in 2000. He currently teaches at the Faculty of Creative Multimedia, Multimedia University. This year he participated in the Migration Addicts exhibition at the Venice Biennial.

YAU BEE LING *b. 1972*, *Klang* graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Art under a full scholarship. She was selected by the National Art Gallery to represent Malaysia at the 9th Asian Art Biennale in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1999. In 2000, she was selected by T.K. Sabapathy to exhibit at Singapore Sculpture Square. In 2002, her paintings were chosen to exhibit at the 2nd Fukuoka Triennial, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum and are now part of the permanent collection.

YEE I-LANN *b. 1971, Sabah* was selected for the 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane, Australia in 1999. She received her BA in Visual Arts from the University of South Australia, Adelaide and studied painting at Central St. Martins School of Arts, London. I-Lann's visual vocabulary is extensive – drawn from popular culture, urban landscapes and everyday objects. I-Lann currently lives and works as an artist and production designer for feature films in Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur. Over the past few years, her works have been exhibited intensively around Europe, the Middle East and Australasia. She also took part in the 1st Singapore Biennale in 2006.

YEOH JIN LENG *b. 1929* has played a significant role in the early development of modernist art practice in Malaysia. Inspired by nature, his early depictions of Malaysia's expansive landscapes are lyrical, romantic and expressionistic works. His more recent interest lies with Indian Vedant philosophy and its profound influence on the arts and crafts of Southeast Asia. His works in bronze depict the mythic apsara of Southeast Asia and are shaped by spiritual considerations.

YUSOF MAJID *b. 1970* gained his Masters at the Chelsea School of Art in London on its Herbert Read Scholarship. His work is raw, instinctive, and dedicated to the process of drawing and painting. Some of his earlier works are reminiscent of 1970's minimalism, thickly textured and earth encrusted, while his later works are more playful and spontaneous. He constantly makes references to literature, urban life and popular culture.

ZULKIFLI MOHD DAHALAN *1952 – 1977* began his art education with Angkatan Pelukis Semenanjung when he was 15. Later he studied under an Indonesian artist in 1971. During the seventies, he cofounded "Anak Alam," which was known for their subjective interpretations of man and nature. Known for depicting strange, naked figures in unreal but familiar landscapes, Zulkifli was highly imaginative and provocative as an artist.

ZULKIFLI YUSOFF *b. 1962, Kedah* obtained a Diploma from Mara Institute of Technology (ITM) and an MA from Polytechnic Faculty of Art and Design, UK. He lectured at ITM between 1991–1994 and subsequently became a full-time artist. His artworks comment on social and political issues. An expressive painter, he experiments with all kinds of media and is particularly well known for his sculptural installations.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

BOOKS AND ESSAYS

Michelle Antoinette, 'Different Visions: Contemporary Malaysian art and exhibitions in the 1990s and beyond' in Caroline Turner (ed.), *Art and Social Change: Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005

John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art*, University of Sydney East Asian Studies, New South Wales, 1993

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Ong Ian Li, *Tradition & Change: The Eclectic Works of the Nanyang Artists*, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2007

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*among other Malaysian artists we have lost,
who have given us so much through their life and work.*

*antara pengkarya Malaysia yang telah meninggalkan kita,
dan yang telah memberikan sumbangan yang besar menerusi hidup
dan karya-karya mereka.*

CANCERLINK FOUNDATION



PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT SERVICE

Cancerlink Foundation enhances a philosophy of commitment to alleviate the trauma caused by the affliction of Cancer.

Cancerlink Foundation is a non-governmental and non-profit organization and it is registered under the Registrar of Companies Act as from 31st July 1986. It is gazetted as a tax-exempt charity.

Cancerlink provides emotional, practical and information support for patients afflicted with Cancer, members of the family and friends. Volunteer input is a major strength of these Programme of Support Services.

The "link" in cancerlink is indicative of the cohesive factor that unites people and circumstances requiring the support force through the Foundation.

Herein lies a better quality of life for those afflicted by Cancer.

INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

The Resource Centre stocks books, magazines, periodicals and audiovisual tapes on cancer, health and its related subjects. Booklets on Cancer are available upon request for complimentary distribution.

HOMESTAY FOR OUTSTATION PATIENTS

Temporary accommodation is provided without charge, for outstation patients and their carers, while they seek treatment in the Klang Valley hospitals or when they are required to be present for their regular check-ups.

CANCER COUNSELING

Telephone and face-to-face counseling is available for Cancer patients, members of the family and friends. This is the most critical need, when a person is first diagnosed with Cancer.

SUPPORT GROUP PROGRAMME

Support Group Sessions are convened for cancer patients and their carers, to assist them to cope with cancer and instill a desire for a better quality of life, even with cancer. Various activities are organized to enhance this.

CANCER-CARE EMPORIUM

Support equipment and physical aids which include wheelchairs, bedpans, urinals, crutches and walking distance sticks are available on loan to cancer patients. Individually fitted breast prostheses are made in Cancerlink and are dispensed at cost. In certain circumstances, these are provided with the compliments of the Foundation.

CANCER AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

Cancer Awareness is maintained through Information Support on the signs and symptoms of cancer, lifestyles causing cancer and the treatment for cancer. These are disseminated through posters, leaflets and booklets. Distribution is arranged throughout the country in schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals and the corporate sector.

CANCER CAMPAIGNS

Seminars, talks, exhibitions, socio-informative and health focused programmes are conducted regularly for the benefit of the public. Outreach Programmes are arranged in small towns and villages

SUNSHINE CAMP

This is an Annual Motivational Programme designed to assist cancer stricken children to regain confidence and develop their cognitive skills. It is held during the 3rd term school holidays. Children between the ages of six to sixteen who are afflicted with cancer attend this four-day camp. This camp is composed of multifarious activity. An on-going inter-active programme is arranged throughout the year with the children and their parents through Social Events.

SERI ENDON VICTORY VENTURES

A holistic and fun-filled programme of activity provided for youth, to enable constant recovery and revitalization of their living styles. The programme is planned to renew and strengthen the powerful aura of youth by developing skills to overcome the FAP Factor – Fear, Anger & Pain caused by cancer. No one is a loser, because of cancer. Together everyone is victorious through these ventures. Thus the CancerChamp Motto – “Victory Ventures Rock!”

RAINBOW CONNECTION

A comprehensive programme of motivational activity, inspirational enjoyment and fun for the adult CancerChamp – to culminate the on-going support programme available thorough Cancerlink Foundation. This holistic series of activity is very popular, particularly amongst those who are diagnosed with cancer for the first time. However, there now appears to be a great demand for this programme, as the registration for attendance is over subscribed.

NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter on the events of the Foundation and articles related to cancer are distributed complimentary to the public e.g. donors, volunteers, schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals, libraries and nursing schools. More than 5,000 copies are distributed throughout Malaysia.

PERSATUAN CANCERLINK MALAYSIA – BRANCH OPERATIONS

Currently, three vibrant branches in Penang, Kuantan and Ipoh have been set up, under the Societies Act. The objectives, activity and funding are similar to that of Cancerlink Foundation.

“We Care About Cancer”

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