

PSYCHEDELIC 2.0

Psychedelic 2.0

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a collaboration project



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a group exhibition

Psychedelic 2.0

Zena Khan

Psychedelic was a group show and curatorial project conceived by Dua Konsultasi in 2021 to showcase the state of Malaysia today via the vibrant practices of a diverse group of Malaysian contemporary artists. The original exhibition was staged at the Hotel Art Fair in November 2021, in a partnership between Dua Konsultasi, founded by sister duo Leila and Zena Khan, and Core Design Gallery as part of Artober 2021, CIMB's annual art festival. In 2022 this curatorial project has been given a second showing under the title *Psychedelic 2.0*, in an examination of the ways young Malaysian contemporary artists are building on the foundations laid down by their seniors through a group exhibition by Fawwaz Sukri, Fazrin Abd Rahman, Hisyamuddin Abdullah, Khairul Arshad, Najib Bamadhaj, Shafiq Nordin and Syed Fakaruddin.

The seven artists exhibiting works at *Psychedelic 2.0* have found prominence in the Malaysian contemporary art scene through their informal banding together as a collective that has been known to date as Ara Damansara Artists (ADA). All seven of these artists are Fine Art graduates from across three batches at UiTM, Malaysia's leading university art programme. Coming from across differing graduating years their meetings were organic. Najib, who was Fawwaz's senior and is known to be an avid art collector, came across Syed's work as a young artist and acquired it. Struck by Syed's practice he invited Syed to join him in discussions and working together informally. Syed brought with him his close friend Shafiq, and the group continued to expand with the inclusion of Hisyamuddin, Khairul and Fazrin. In this way their origins differ from other major local artist collectives; they met post-graduation and found each other through a great deal of soul searching.

In their earlier years, as they began to form their network, these seven young boys helped one another find studio spaces in the tight radius of shophouses in Ara Damansara, a move that led to their being known in Malaysian art circles as the Ara Damansara artist collective. Today their studios are spread out. While several remain in the area, others have moved out. Furthermore, several artists have established studios in Ara Damansara, such as Anniketyni Madian or Azrin Mohd. While Fawwaz, Fazrin, Hisyamuddin, Khairul, Najib, Shafiq and Syed have strong ties with the wider artistic community, they began to seek a way to highlight the artistic ties that exist between them. Viewing *Psychedelic 2.0* as a showcase that cements the seven of them as a single collective they are announcing their new title at this show: Rumpun.

This change of name indicates a new beginning. Each of the artists in Rumpun has achieved success as an artist in the early years of their practice, winning awards, exhibiting regularly and being well collected. Now as they move into the next phase of their careers, from young mid-career artists to more established mid-career artists whose voices resonate in the Malaysian art ecology, they are taking a moment to understand what will elevate them individually and as a group- and lead to a leap forward for the art movement in which they operate and are deeply passionate about. Through increased technical refinement, strong conceptual content and attention to detail, Fawwaz, Fazrin, Hisyamuddin, Khairul, Najib, Shafiq and Syed have been shifting their focus towards producing seminal or turning point works that describe the current moment for them. A selection of these are being unveiled here at *Psychedelic 2.0*.

Dua Konsultasi's curatorial decision to invite Rumpun as an artist collective to produce a series of new turning point works for *'Psychedelic 2.0* lay behind Leila and Zena's interest in the significant role artist collectives have played in Malaysian art, and how they are one lens through which we might understand the movement's growth. The Modernist era saw the burgeoning of artist collectives as a model, such as with the Wednesday Art Group or Anak Alam artist colony. This formation of artist collectives continued in the early advent of a contemporary art movement. Malaysian artists found that by banding together to provide practical support, spaces for intellectual discourse and a sense of camaraderie, they could find a base of support to fill gaps in the wider artistic support structures in this nascent period of creative contemporary growth.

One of the most interesting early contemporary artist collectives in Malaysia was Empat Persepsi, founded by Fauzin Mustafa, Mohd Nor Mahmud (also known as Matnor), Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Taufik Abdullah. These four young Malay artists met as students while studying Fine Art at UiTM between the years of 1985 to 1988. As they came together with distinctly individual opinions, observations and creative approaches they named themselves Empat Persepsi, which translates to Four Perspectives. Looking at this choice of name today we might ascribe it to the understanding that a multitude of viewpoints were merging together to form the broader contemporary art movement, in which the Empat Persepsi members have gone on to be influential.

Empat Persepsi's key contribution in their emergence was in Malaysia's Mixed Media Art Movement, which they persevered in during a period when the established

art institutions and collectors were still heavily focused on conventional two dimensional painting works. All four of them had been taught at UiTM by Fauzan Omar, the Father of Malaysian Mixed Media. They were struck by Fauzan's advocacy for exploration and experimentation of technique, materials and the boundaries of the canvas, yet struggled when showing their radical new approaches in the art market of the time. Institutional support existed sparingly, mostly via competitions such as the Young Contemporary Show and the Creative Centre at the National Art Gallery, but opportunities to network and exhibit in a major way were few and far between. This led Fauzin, Matnor, Hasnul and Taufiq to band together in an intellectual, technical and emotional support system.

Soon after the establishment of Empat Persepsi Fauzin, Matnor, Hasnul and Taufiq met Normah Nordin and Najib Nor from Centre Stage, who were on the lookout for technical support. Normah and Najib offered the collective the chance for hands on experience and to stage a show of their work, a move that delighted the group. They expanded on the notion of four perspectives by presenting four aspects of art- painting, performance, music and intellectual discourse- in their eponymously titled debut solo. They staged this show in 1989 to extensive critical acclaim and media coverage. Shortly after they disbanded the formal collective, going to work on their individual practices and establish themselves as pillars of the local art community. It would remain their only group show until a retrospective in 2020 at National Visual Art Gallery Kuala Lumpur.

To date the most famous Malaysian artist collective has undoubtedly been The Matahati, founded by five

UiTM graduates: Ahmad Fuad Osman, Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Hamir Soib and Masnoor Ramli Mahmud. Having met while at university, where they were again taught by Fauzan, they found that they each had a similar drive to further themselves as 'true artists' in a time where non-commercial art was not finding great acceptance. Their decision to come together in a collective was not based on a formal conceptual position. Rather, much like Empat Persepsi, they sought out the intellectual, practical and emotional support that artists need.

The group's name translates to 'eye to the soul', and is revelatory. As Matahati exploded onto the scene in the early 1990's they were emblematic of a growing demographic of young, Malays who were educated, urbanised and a distinct sense of style. Embodying this demographic, Fuad, Shukri, Bayu, Hamir and Masnoor looked within themselves and the world around them to understand and communicate the radical socio-political shifts that not only affected them personally but was shaping Malaysia as a whole. Curatorially studied it becomes apparent that the opportunity for the Matahati to exist and produce their radical brand of contemporary art may be seen as the infiltration of successful national policies in Malaysia, through economic, educational and social arenas.

The Matahati's multi-disciplinary practices have only guided the development of Malaysian contemporary art in many ways since then. Clear examples are Hamir Soib setting the trend for monumental canvases in painting, or Shukri's continued advancement of the Mixed Media genre in Pop Art visuals. The collective has

exhibited art regularly, beginning with their first group exhibition in 1993 at Maybank Gallery. Since then they have gone on to show works in Malaysia and abroad, together, individually and with other artists, raising the awareness of what Malaysian contemporary art can be, and the value artist collectives hold locally.

If Empat Persepsi can be a window into the early years of Malaysian contemporary art through the lens of an artist collective, and Matahati are the definitive study of the Golden Period of Malaysian contemporary art through the lens of an artist collective, then studying Rumpun as a collective brings art audiences into the very current state of artistic production in Malaysia. The name of each collective has led us to understand Malaysia's art and broader society as well. Empat Persepsi opened up the notion that multivalent voices were needed to drive the contemporary world forward. Matahati looked at the socio-political, personal and historical issues shaping the rapid development of Malaysia into a world-class nation. And now Rumpun speaks to the need for a sense of community in the furtherance of Malaysian art and Malaysian society in the advent of the twenty-first century.

Fawwaz Sukri

Fawwaz Sukri's Pop Art paintings are underscored with insightful socio-political commentary. This tendency places him firmly in the canon of Malaysian artists such as Hamir Soib or Tan Chin Kuan whose artworks reveal their own observations and readings on the world around them. In an increasingly transnational world the commentaries Fawwaz makes, which relate to the local and the global, feel increasingly necessary as a vehicle through which he encourages independent thought formed through personal observations and research, rather than following mainstream media narratives.

Fawwaz's two most recent paintings 'Rise of The East' and 'Here Come the Japs' form the basis of a new body of work and thought where he reacts to the cyclical nature of neo-imperialist narratives that rate non-Western societies which are gaining political, financial and technological power globally as inferior to traditional Western superpowers. These new paintings are built up from strips of imagery in the style he developed through his popular Comic Book series. Visuals and texts derived from posters, news media archives and Pop Culture sources such as tv shows are layered over one another to create an alternative story relating to how Fawwaz views societies in the East (here his focus has been on Japan, China and Korea) as not being culturally, morally, politically or economically inferior to the West.

Fawwaz's thinking reminds audiences of the 'Look East' policy Tun Mahatir Mohammed implemented in the 1980's, where Malaysia was

encouraged to study and emulate successful Asian societies in their quest for development. Parallels may be drawn between the 'Look East' policy, Fawwaz's own paintings and the rising academic desire to de-center cultural narratives that have historically privileged Western cultural production. We are reminded that from the early years of Malaysia's rapid development into a leading Southeast Asian nation the country has consistently taken pride in her own possibilities, creating an environment where truly Malaysian achievements could be reached and maintained.

Fawwaz's small scale sculptures are painted on sections of wall drawn from demolished buildings in Kuala Lumpur. They continue Fawwaz's fascination with painting on surfaces that connect material to concept, such as his box paintings which discuss mercantilism within neo-imperialism. Now as Fawwaz questions global political and economic systems such as Communism and Capitalism, his choice of materials found in an urban space takes on resonance by reminding us that our ideological beliefs shape our actual environments.

Left to Right >>

Here Come The Japs, Acrylic on Canvas, 155cm x 94cm, 2022

Rise of The East, Acrylic on Canvas, 155cm x 110cm, 2022



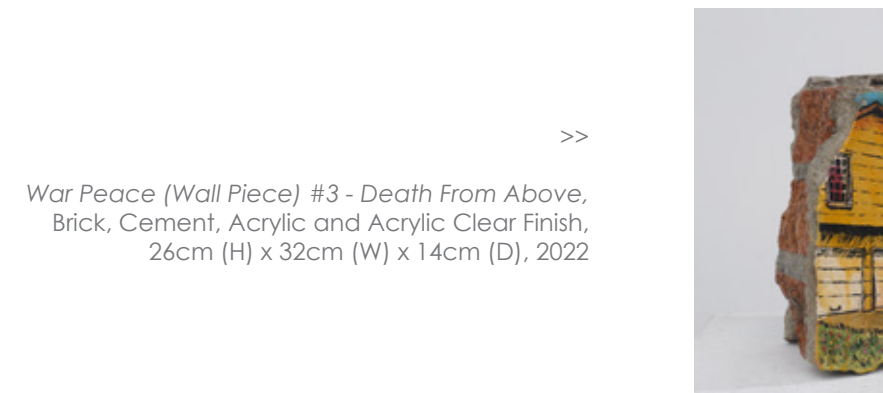


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War Peace (Wall Piece) #1 - The Duality of Men, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 30cm (H) x 30cm (W) x 30cm (D), 2022

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War Peace (Wall Piece) #6 - Ruins, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 21cm (H) x 25cm (W) x 16cm (D), 2022



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War Peace (Wall Piece) #3 - Death From Above, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 26cm (H) x 32cm (W) x 14cm (D), 2022



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War Peace (Wall Piece) #2 - War Pigs, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 35cm (H) x 18cm (W) x 16cm (D) 2022



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War Peace (Wall Piece) #5 - Nowhere to Run, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 21cm (H) x 27cm (W) x 10cm (D), 2022

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War Peace (Wall Piece) #4 - Silent Ambush, Brick, Cement, Acrylic and Acrylic Clear Finish, 18cm (H) x 30cm (W) x 17cm (D), 2022



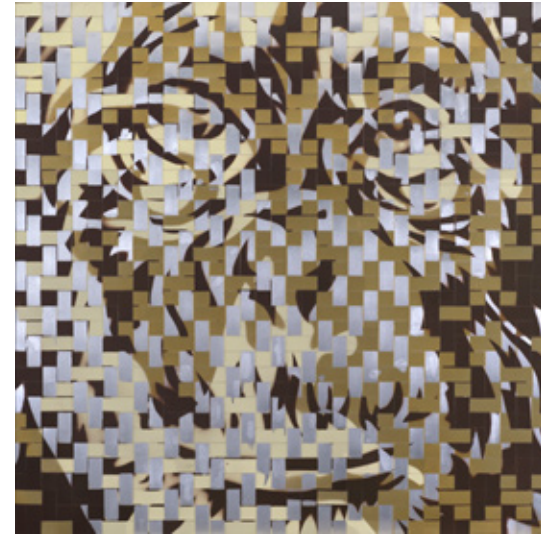
Fazrin Abd Rahman

In seeking out the meanings embedded within cultural systems, Fazrin Abd Rahman examines the act of weaving as a point of instigation. In Malaysian craft heritages weaving is prevalent, from the production of objects used daily such as textiles and baskets to consumables such as 'ketupat'. As Fazrin engages in the act of weaving using industrial strength metals he not only participates in a time honoured Malay tradition, he seeks to understand and communicate the relevance of this heritage within contemporary environments. As such Fazrin reminds us that culture is a constantly evolving entity.

While 'Reflection -1+2/+2-1' is a continuation of the wall based sculptures Fazrin presented at 'System', his solo show at HOM as part of his MEA Award prize, 'Animal Spirit I' and 'Animal Spirit II' show his new conceptual interest. Fazrin, who is trained as a 'kuda keping' dancer, reflects on the transformative power of dance and how it can lead an individual to become possessed by the spirit of an animal. On a mystical level the animal spirit is said to subtly influence the person's behaviour, but Fazrin comments that an animalistic side in fact exists within all people- it only depends how well we conceal it.

Animal Spirit I
Animal Spirit II

Spray Paint on Aluminium Strips,
91cm x 91cm each, 2022



Reflection -1+2/+2-1
Aluminium Strips, 152cm x 152cm, 2022

Hisyamuddin Abdullah

Hisyamuddin Abdullah's new paintings *'The Roots of Stability'* are supremely timely. These paintings were made in the period when the Malaysian General Elections were announced, following a period of political flux which saw the Prime Minister's seat change hands several times from the previous election. Hisyamuddin alludes to the changes through nine rocks, each representing a past prime minister from the declaration of independence to present day, with a pure white egg representing the potential new leader who will be decided on November 19th 2022.

Through his title it appears that Hisyamuddin is commenting on the idea that a government is what provides a country with stability, through the introduction and implementation of social, economic and political policy. This notion is one held the world over, and in The United Kingdom a similar swift change of Prime Ministers has occurred in the past few years as well, which means Hisyamuddin's concept could possibly relate to the local or the global. He clarifies his position as a Malaysian through the prawn, inspired by the Malay proverb 'udang di sebalik batu'. Translating to 'there is a shrimp behind the rock' this proverb is a cautionary

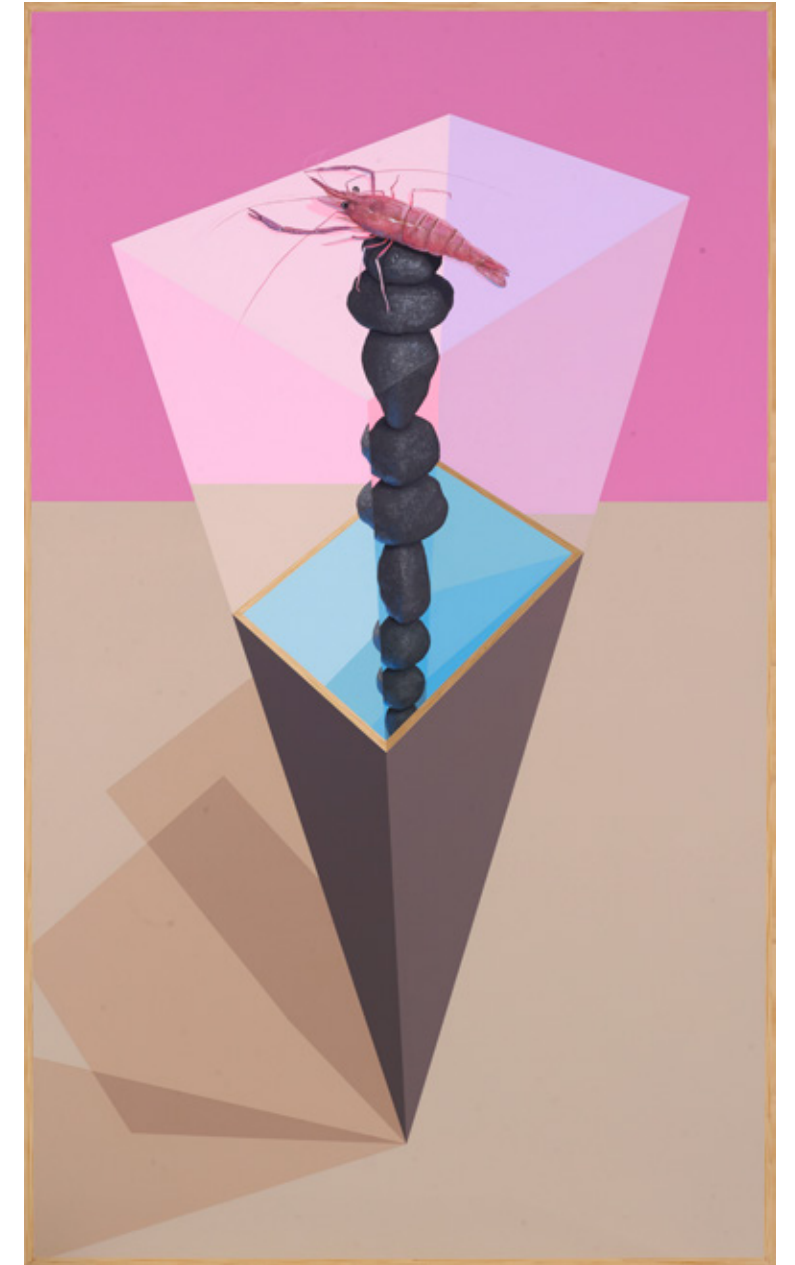
statement that acts have hidden motives. Might Hisyamuddin be commenting that when voting for a leader citizens have to carefully examine their statements and intentions so as to make choices that will lead to national stability?

Technically *'The Roots of Stability'* push Hisyamuddin in a new direction. One of his strongest signatures to date has been a pastel palette of delicious sorbets; now in these new works he moves towards a deepened jewel tone. If it accepted that for this thoughtful painter colour is a powerful conversational tool, then this move in colour may be read as a shift in tone. His painterly skill is reinforced. The stylisation of ballot boxes into pyramids and clever triangular shadows indicate Hisyamuddin instinctively understands perspective, while the subtle shading and texture of the rocks to create a sense of realism belies the difficulty of making flat inanimate objects come to life. Through realism and graphic stylisation it seems that the quietly thoughtful Hisyamuddin, who is known to make selected insightful comments, makes his boldest statements through his art.

Left to Right >>

The Roots of Stability I, II

Acrylic on Canvas, 153cm x 92cm each, 2022



Khairul Arshad

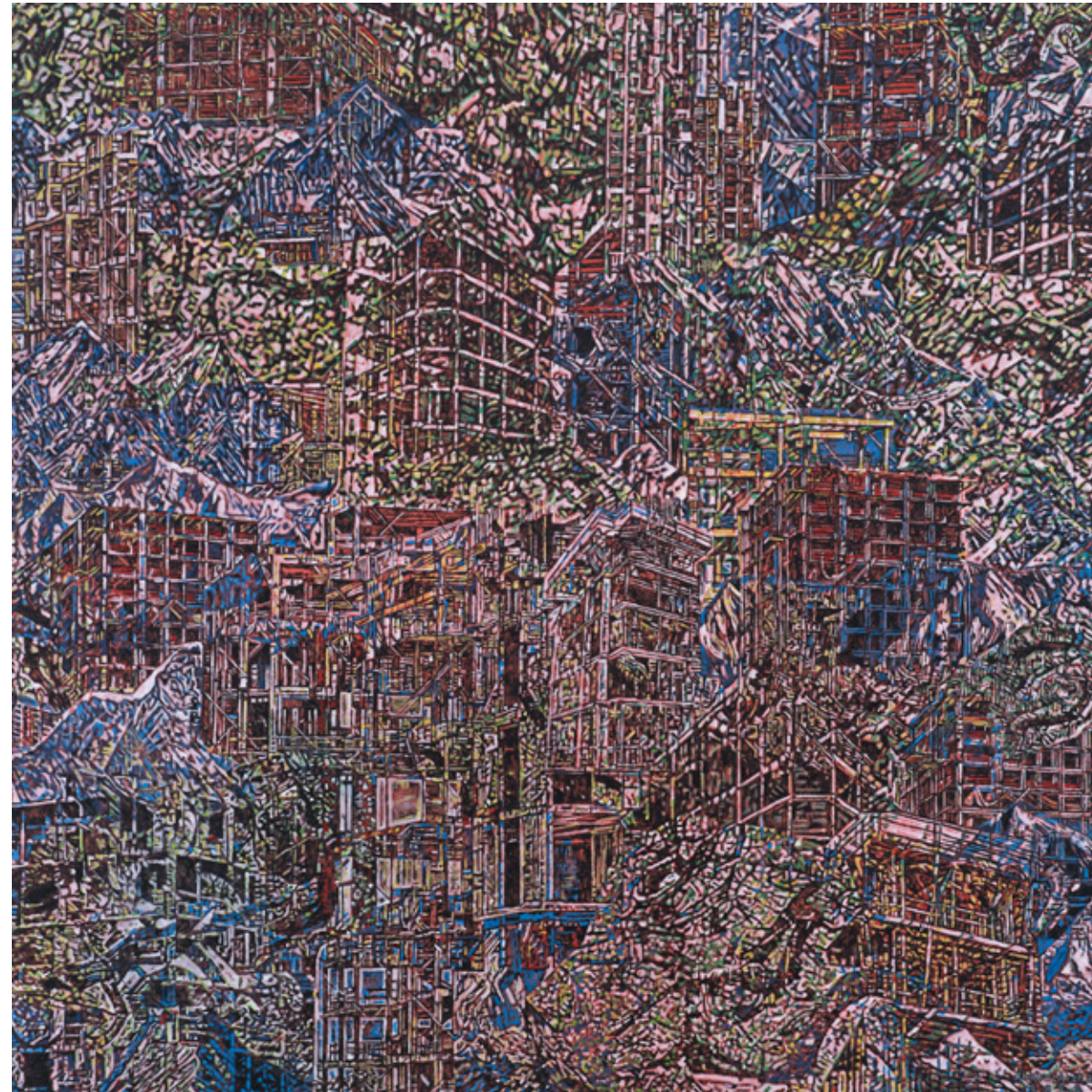
Left to Right >>

Suria, Empayar

Acrylic on Canvas, 153cm x 153cm each, 2022

Landscapes, be they natural or man-made, serve as a metaphorical ground for Khairul Arshad's reading of development in the post-colonial nation state. His densely layered canvases bring together segments of several landscapes, from mountain ranges to architectural sites. As Khairul carefully crops, compresses and layers fragments of natural and architectural structures over and beside one another he reminds us that physical sites are receptacles of memory and history. Often several strands of memory or history collide in a single space, particularly in a country such as Malaysia that has a rich and eventful past. Thus we are reminded that in any one place stratas of history, narrative and association are present, imbuing any one place with multi-faceted meanings and attachments.

Every inch of Khairul's canvases are filled with colour, texture and detail. This not only tells viewers that he has spent an incredible amount of time sitting at and working each canvas to finish it to a high quality, but that he takes a genuine joy in the act of painting art. Up close these paintings appear abstract; viewed at a slight distance they are easily legible. This feels like a philosophical inquiry into the intangible emotional associations each person brings to a particular space, and how when viewed broadly all these emotions may merge to form a collective understanding of a place, period or country. In the current political climate leading up to GE16, Khairul's thoughts feel particularly relevant.



Najib Bamadhaj

'Pride' and 'Prejudice' are a pair of seminal mixed media paintings that mark the transition from the Concubine chapter to the Kebaya chapter in Najib Bamadhaj's 'Pride and Prejudice' series. Both of these paintings draw on stylistic elements that Najib has consistently turned to during the development of his 'Pride and Prejudice' series, presented in strikingly new visuals. Both of these works are tied together most strongly by the layered sections of fabric that carefully construct the clothes and sense of figure on each of the women, reminding us that the 'Pride and Prejudice' series is intended to be a trilogy with the works in consistent dialogue with one another.

Colour is a key concern in 'Pride'. The antique green background is a colour drawn from 1960's and 1970's architectural elements in Malaysia, and reminds us of the notion of history embedded in the 'Pride and Prejudice' series which was instigated when Najib watched a cinematic adaptation of Jane Austen's famous novel. While this colour appears to be simply paint it has in fact been carefully built up via a lengthy mixed media process. Najib first applied a layer of white paint, which was then

washed over with watered down bitumen. Finally he added a specifically mixed layer of green paint, which was then varnished to seal it. The combination of these processes led to the specific colour Najib sought, and indicates his knowledge in the formal areas of colour theory and mixed media to a high degree.

'Prejudice', which is the first seminal canvas from the second chapter of the 'Pride and Prejudice' series, moves Najib into a completely new direction. His subject's casual pose is unusual, a new move from the more arranged poses that were reminiscent of vintage portrait photography. Across the background are a field of stylised flowers unlike any patterns Najib has previously used, whose marigold yellow again indicates that Najib is using colour a strong tool in determining atmosphere. The presentation of the figure and floral background are not the only fresh factors in 'Prejudice'; Najib mixes two highly distinct fabric patterns in the central figure's dress, adding to the high contrast visual that is so arresting. It is clear that 'Prejudice' is setting a new direction for Najib, indicating possible directions for his practice in the near future.



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Prejudice
Acrylic, Charcoal and Fabric Collage on Canvas, 156cm x 217cm, 2022

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Pride
Acrylic, Charcoal and Fabric Collage on Wood Panels, 183cm x 154cm, 2022



Shafiq Nordin



'All The Things We Love' is essentially Shafiq Nordin's rumination on the ways in which using art to make issues or personalities viral has become a huge trend. Currently the Western art world has been awash with climate change activists attacking famous paintings in museums with liquids, before attaching themselves to the artworks and proclaiming their manifestos. Often they ask "which is more important: art or life?" and question the resources spent to safeguard and house artworks in museums while ignoring the cost of living crisis or environmental disasters. While a debate rages on their actions one thing is clear: famous artworks are a quick way to go viral.

While reflecting on this notion of 'going viral' Shafiq thought back to the Malaysian art ecology. He comments that often it seems an artist will achieve fame through a sale or a piece of publicity, leading to a crowd of collectors rushing to commission work from that artist. He asks if this is a sustainable approach to supporting and collecting art? Instead of chasing a brand name artist without any focus on the work that they are acquiring, should collectors spend time researching and understanding an artist's practice, then selecting works that are true masterpieces or have a strong resonance with the collector themselves?

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*Do You Need Genie?,
Acrylic on Canvas Mounted on Mdf (Cut Out),
92cm x 70cm, 2022*

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*All The Things We Love
Acrylic on Canvas, 183cm x 153cm, 2022*



Syed Fakaruddin

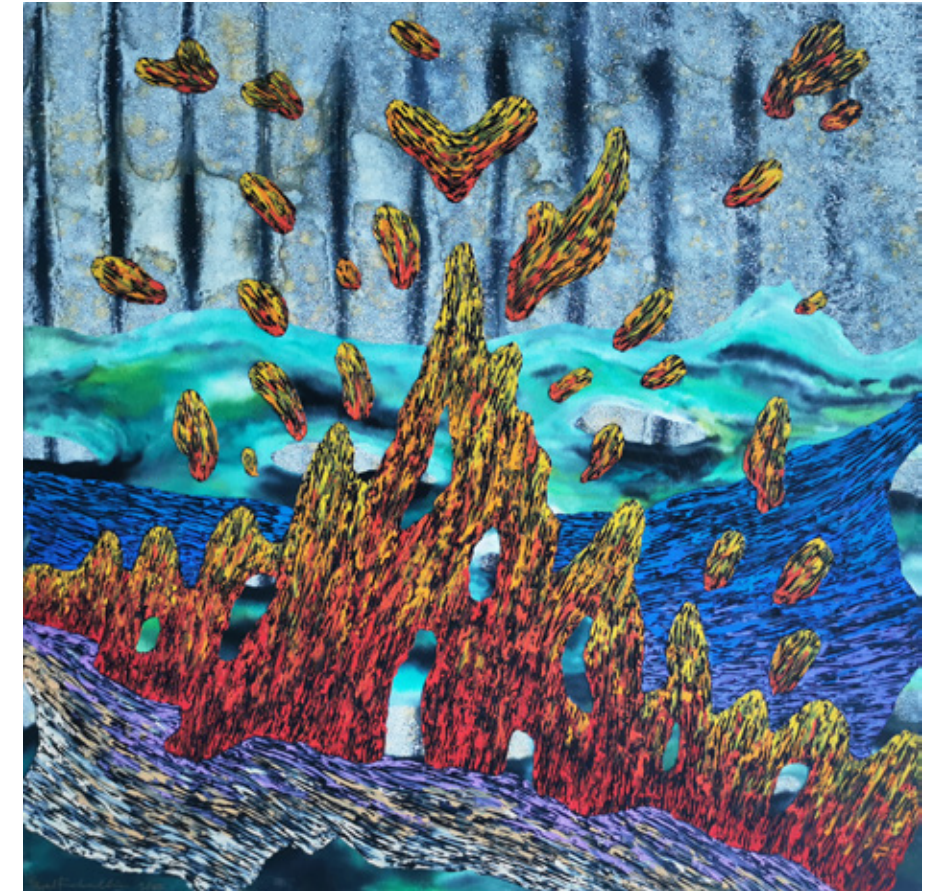
The Neo-Expressionist paintings, Syed Fakaruddin presents at 'Psychedelic 2.0' are inspired by his discoveries in process and aesthetic from his time as artist-in-residence at Rimbun Dahan, Malaysia's premier artist residency which was founded by local starchitect Hijas Kasturi and his wife Angela. In these works Syed moves forward from the question "how can landscapes be a way to record our memories" to a rumination on the parallels that exist between geographical events and human emotions.

Syed continues to blur the line delineating Abstraction and Landscapes by bringing together several self-led styles of painting in three main layers. Each canvas was first washed with watery layers of paint, followed by a second layer of blurred imagery. These formed a foundation for his third and most detailed layer of thick impasto, formed by several layers of oil paint that are mixed together and scratched into to create jewel-like palettes. These dense textural areas remind us that Syed originally trained as a sculptor, having graduated from UiTM with a BA in Sculpture in 2012.

These canvases call to mind the portrait app on the iPhone camera, where central images are pulled into focus while the backgrounds are blurred. Thus these images of geographical explosions, such as the historic volcanic explosion of Krakatoa, frozen for a moment in time are reinterpreted in a highly contemporary manner that audiences today can easily relate to.



DEGHH!(Psychedelic Atomic Explosion)
Oil on Canvas
91cm x 91cm
2022



DUZZ!(Psychedelic Atomic Explosion)
Oil on Canvas
91cm x 91cm
2022



KRAKK! (Psychedelic Atomic Explosion)
Oil on Canvas
152cm x 152cm
2022



PUFF! (Psychedelic Atomic Explosion)
Oil on Canvas
152cm x 152cm
2022

