

Selected
Works
of

Fauzan Omar

The ideas and practices of Fauzan Omar's paintings

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Installation view of Selected Works of Fauzan Omar exhibition features from left to right; *Luminosity (Sunny Days)*, *Bracing The Heat (Hot and Humid Night I)*, *Bracing The Heat (Hot and Humid Evening)* and *The Certificate of Fitness (Construction in Progress) No 2*



The ideas and practices of Fauzan Omar's paintings Fauzan Omar was a painter who first appeared in the local art scene around the late 1970s through paintings from the *Layer Series*. The ideas on the perception, process, material and representation of painting, produced by him, have given a variation in bringing the practice of painting in Malaysia to different levels. This feature has made Fauzan Omar as an important local artist in terms of experimenting and challenging the legitimacy of modern painting. The exploration of paintings by Fauzan Omar, particularly through the *Layer Series*, has influenced or opened up space for other generations of artists in Malaysia, to explore other or different possibilities of painting. The significance of Fauzan Omar in the context of painting practice in Malaysia lies in his contribution in providing an alternative to the language of painting in critical and vigorous manner.

Generally, Fauzan Omar has placed quite differing characteristics in constructing ideas as well as perceptions about paintings. Whilst still adopting and using several traditional approaches, such

as still utilising canvas and the medium of paint, broadly, the paintings produced by Fauzan Omar cannot be categorized as ordinary conventional paintings. This is because ordinary conventional paintings only give importance to the exploration of the paint medium solely on the surface of the canvas. Fauzan Omar, on the other hand, has tried to build an explorative and aggressive approach to the production of paintings through certain processes.

Fauzan Omar's purpose and aim in creating paintings is to challenge the creation of formal aspects such as lines, colours, shapes and textures which are normally done by exploring and suggesting other or different possibilities. This is done for several reasons, among them, to question as well as challenge the legitimacy of the two-dimensional painting space, and at the same time in order to find freshness in the experience of creating a form, through the usage of different languages of paintings. To achieve his purpose and aim, some experimentation on the formation and production process intensively occurred in his works.

His artworks from his *Layer Series* are able to clarify the ideas and meanings expressed. If observed, the artworks from the said series were created as a field of questions and challenges on the nature of modern paintings itself. As is known, conventional modern paintings are related to the question of space built on a flat canvas surface, by making paint as its intermediary medium in constructing the illusion of form. In fact, the question of form and space in paintings is an issue that Fauzan Omar wanted to emphasize or challenge through works from the *Layer series*.

The question of the form and space of illusion was researched and challenged through several attempts, such as pasting pieces of canvas in layers on a painting with a certain appearance, tearing the surface of the canvas with a certain appearance, sewing part of the torn canvas and leaving part of the traces of torn canvas dangling. This treatment is a physical operation by him in making and constructing the form of his paintings. At other levels he would conventionally repaint the shape of a previously torn canvas near the area

of the actual canvas tear. Different colours were used in generating illusory images to visualize the said traces of torn canvas. At times he also drew the shape of the dangling canvas. This treatment, in turn, is an illusionistic operation in generating form and space in his paintings.

The treatment described above would be repeatedly and critically carried out until achievement of the desired aesthetic aim in terms of composition. In this context, the production of paintings for Fauzan Omar is related to radical and critical considerations in finding the appropriateness of an image or form. This process as a whole has revealed a serious and aggressive level of involvement by Fauzan Omar in relation to the idea of creating paintings intended to challenge conventional legitimacies connected to the question of the form and space of illusion.

At the next level, Fauzan Omar has begun to experiment with several other intermediary materials as an extension to his exploration of the formalistic characteristics in paintings. These other intermediary materials act as the mediums of his works, such



Installation view of Selected Works of Fauzan Omar exhibition features; Fauzan Omar, *Bracing The Heat (Hot and Humid Night II)*

as the use of industrial glue as a formation and finishing agent for the works. At different levels, the use of synthetic mediums, cloth or wood were made to provide an alternative to the expression of the language of paintings. The intervention on this medium aspect is an extension of his efforts to construct alternatives in challenging the flatness of paintings. At this level, we see that the works from his *Layer Series*, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, look rougher in terms of texture and more flamboyant in terms of presentation, especially from the aspects of colour and composition.

Intensive, radical and aggressive experimentation on the mediums with repetitive tempos has led to other ideas connected to his paintings, namely the nature of the process itself. Fauzan Omar has viewed the processes involved in the creation of his works not only as an aim but also as a unique experience. The process of constructing paintings with diverse techniques, methods, ways and mediums has been "frozen" to highlight the alternative side of a painting - rough and raw but unique. These characteristics

are highlighted through works from the Certificate of Fitness series. It brings the idea of mediums and processes as agents of presentation in foreign yet significant paintings.

Apart from paying attention to the physicality and formalistic aspects of paintings, Fauzan Omar has actually highlighted the idea of nature and its phenomena as the core of the creation of artworks since the mid-1980s. Nature was viewed and appreciated by him as a source of force, energy and amazing process of creation. He drew parallels between what he did in paintings with what naturally existed in nature, being the representation of a unique creation, the effect of the elements of process and change.

This representation can be seen through works that display the elements of nature such as fungi, shrubs, undersea plants, rotting leaves, trees, flowers, roots or bark. These natural elements are characterized by unique features based on the aforementioned painting process. His series of works, such as *The*

Reef, *Luminosity* and *Rejuvenation* have highlighted Fauzan Omar's character and attitude towards nature.

To him, nature is an inspiration to evoke feelings of admiration and amazement with its gradual yet impactful changes in terms of form and life. The forces and evolution of nature is an important context for understanding Fauzan Omar's artworks from the mid-1980s to the present. He does not marvel at nature with immature feelings of romance, but the value and energy of nature has been interpreted by him through paintings after "experiencing" the elements of nature that he wanted to interpret. He explored tropical forests, dived to the bottom of the sea, witnessed forest fires, researched plant growth and witnessed the effects of land formations. These experiences were integral and critical in terms of the practices of his painting production as they would be the basis of inspiration and imagination, providing dimension to the manifestation of an image and form as well as the processes involved in it.

As a formalist, Fauzan Omar's paintings, as a whole, exhibit a very high and critical consideration of elemental aspects and the principles of art. Every element and image appearing in his paintings will undergo an in-depth consideration process. No element or image will be unintentionally left to appear or merely left as is without exhaustive and critical consideration. Organization is something critical in Fauzan Omar's paintings because this aspect will determine arrangement considerations to manifest nature or the imagery visualized by him. Overall, the creation of paintings for Fauzan Omar is an intensive cycle of processes to manifest nature as pictured by him. Nature, with all its force and energy, would be attempted to be presented harmoniously in certain arrangements. There is a saying, "learn from nature - when variety and complexity have united into a unique yet harmonious composition or arrangement". Indeed the vision of that feature has manifested itself in the paintings of Fauzan Omar.



Layer Series (Eroded 2)
Cut Canvas, Acrylic and Mixed
Media on Canvas
183cm x 153cm
1991-2020

Layer Series (Fossil 2)
Cut Canvas, Acrylic and Mixed
Media on Canvas
183cm x 153cm
1991-2020





*The Certificate of Fitness
(Construction in Progress) No.2*
Cut Canvas, Acrylic and Mixed
Media on Canvas
122cm x 107cm
1991-1994



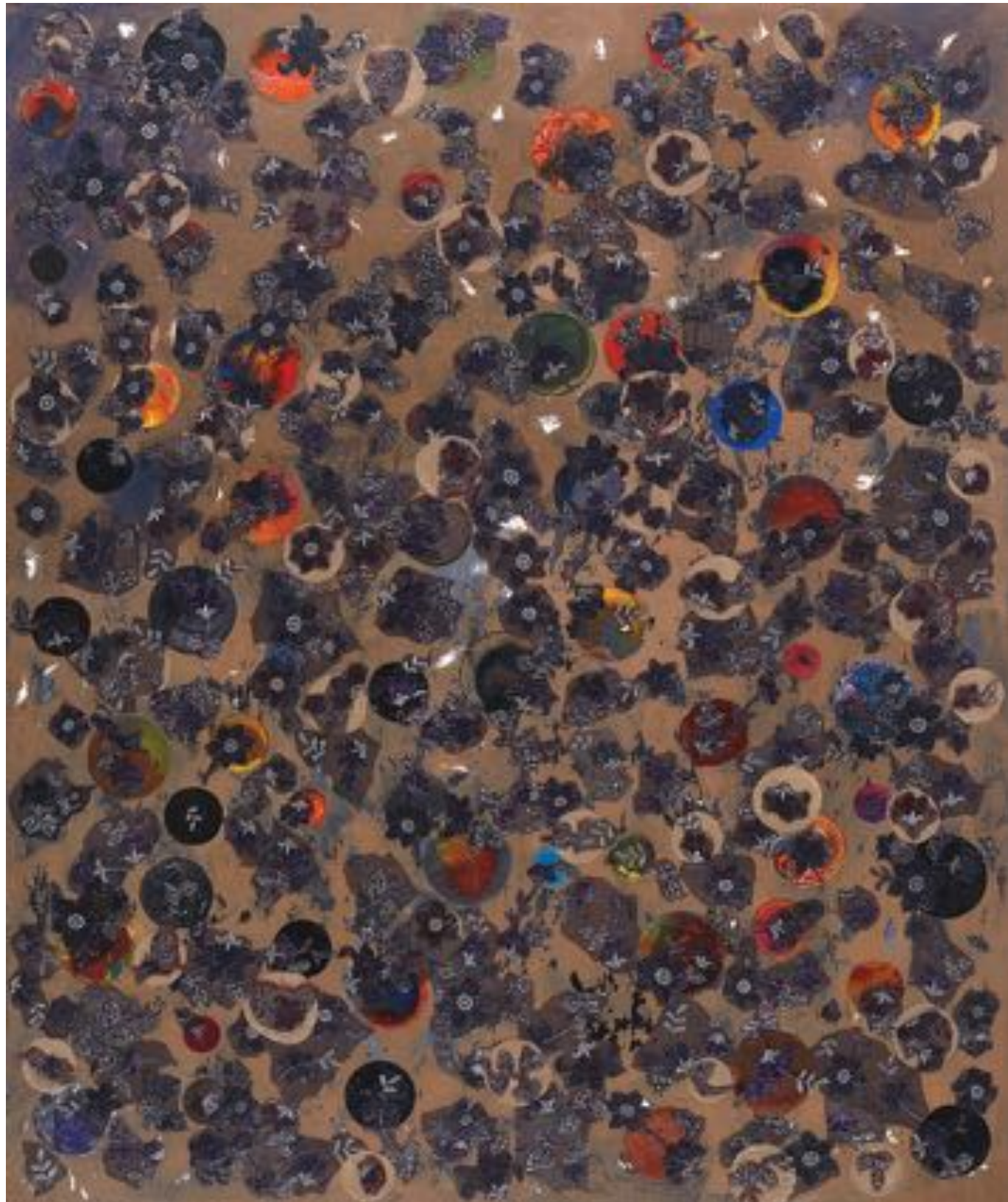
*The Certificate of Fitness
(Construction in Progress) No.3*
Cut Canvas, Acrylic and Mixed
Media on Canvas
122cm x 107cm
1991-1994



*Fauzan Omar, Bracing The Heat
(Hot and Humid Night I)*
Fabric, Acrylic and Dry Acrylic on
Canvas
183cm x 153cm
2018-2019

Fauzan Omar, *Bracing The Heat*
(*Hot and Humid Night II*)
Acrylic and Dry Acrylic on
Canvas
183cm x 153cm
2018-2019





Bracing The Heat (Hot and Humid Evening)
Fabric, Acrylic and Dry
Acrylic on Canvas
183cm x 153cm
2018-2021



Luminosity (Sunny Days)
Cut Canvas, Artificial
Flowers Pasted on Wood
61cm x 50cm each
(6 Panels)
1991-2020



The Reef Series
(Beneath The Waves)
Cut and Pressed Canvas
on Wood
42cm x 53cm each
(6 Panels)
1991-2020



Hazardous Beauty
(Weakened by Heat)
Grinded Wood
57cm x 57cm each
(6 Panels)
2017-2019