

Redza Piyadasa – Razak’s Art Teacher and Lecturer

... these initial formative experiences of his unhurried, youthful past have certainly help shape his subsequent romanticised artistic vision as a practicing landscape painter of idyllic, scenic views. And, because his stylistic approach has been largely influenced by the art of 19th century French Impressionists, artists whom he has always admired, his paintings may be rightly described as expressive, impressionistic renderings of the Malaysian tropical environment. These landscape paintings, produced between 1996 and 2003, are thus notable for their subtle colour tonalities and harmonies, the interest in atmospheric light effects and the thick, vibrant brushstrokes and rich textures.....

Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal – Seniman Negara

... The Artist, Razak, relates his art with “impressionism”, even though I’m more inclined to call Razak’s work as “naturalism”, based on the influence of the impressionist movement in France. The impressionism credence goes against the academic flow, bringing realism into a seemingly extreme yet simple solution when viewed against the world of reality, through shatterings of shades and colours, use of complementary colours and the attempts at breaking prismatic shapes.

This artist presents the resonance of nature’s visions as he perceives them, reflecting a sense of freedom and abandonment without thought to the restraints and demands of the surrounding world of commerce. Note that Razak demonstrates a natural-born talent. His deftness and skill in manipulating his oil paints onto the canvass’ surface with his palette knife appears effortless, and the splashes of colours demonstrates an expert at work using techniques of controlling and managing colours with such ease and maturity, easily placing him on the forefront of Malaysia’s leading landscape artists.

Rahime Harun – Ketua Pengarah Balai Seni Lukis Negara (2005)

Tiada gambar secantik lukisan ...nak ku tunjuk perasaan ...

Sebaris lirik lagu Tan Sri P.Ramlee ini amat signifikan dari aspek metafora dan interpretasi terhadap gagasan karya landskap Razak Abdullah. Pelukis ini sedar akan proses kekreatifan bagi melahirkan sebuah karya yang mempunyai hubungan peribadi ...

... Pengalaman rasa indah dirakam dengan perlaksanaan yang bersesuaian dengan teknik pilihan tersendiri ... Teknik perlukisan diperkukuhkan melalui palitan berus mahupun pisau palet dikendalikan mengikut pengaruh aliran pasca impresionisme ...

... Sebagai pelukis yang ingin mempertahankan aliran pasca impresionisme bersama kesan-kesan sentuhan ekspresionisme yang dinamik diiringi dengan gerak syarat (gesture) yang bertenaga dipadukan terasa kesegarannya. Razak Abdullah bukan sahaja menghasilkan karya-karya yang bersandarkan kepada aliran atau idea lama malah pelukis ini berupaya menonjolkan semangat baru atau ciptaan semula (reinvention) yang tulen terhadap disiplin seni representasi di persada seni lukis tanah air.

Muliyadi Mahamood – Majalah Dewan Budaya, Isu Oktober 2008

Dalam konteks seni lukis kontemporari Malaysia, Razak Abdullah dikenali sebagai seorang Impresionis yang merakamkan keindahan dan kepermaian alam semulajadi. Beliau terkenal menerusi siri “*Monsoon Break*”, “*Lake Garden*”, dan “*Melawati Quartz*”. Kini beliau tampil dengan siri “*Portrait of Bidong*”. Seniman Negara Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal menyifatkan Razak sebagai seorang Impresionis yang merakamkan ketenangan alam; Redza Piyadasa menganggap Razak sebagai pelukis Lanskap Impresionistik dan beratmosfera; sementara Rahime Harun pula menyebut bahawa kemunculan Razak membawa semangat baharu dalam genre seni representasi di negara ini....

... Beliau melukis pengalaman dan pengamatannya, apa-apa yang dialami dan dirasainya, secara fizikal mahupun spiritual....
... Kekuatan seni Razak ternyata terletak pada karya landskapnya yang indah, permai, bening dan bersifat impresionistik.... Razak berupaya menterjemahkan keindahan dan kepermaian landskap tempatan dengan penuh seni, rasa puitis dan bermakna....

Razak Abdullah bukanlah seorang Impresionis biasa, tetapi seorang pelukis yang kaya dengan rasa dan prihatin akan alam sekelilingnya.... Kaya dengan jiwa, nilai-nilai puitis, alunan dan simfoni warna. Meskipun begitu, dalam keriangian warna, ada rasa kesunyian dan kerinduan, malah kegelisahan tentang alam yang diluakannya.



#1 TERKILAN
(A DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT)
SIZE : 32" X 36" YEAR : 2016
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#2 BBOLLOG
SIZE : 36" X 48" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



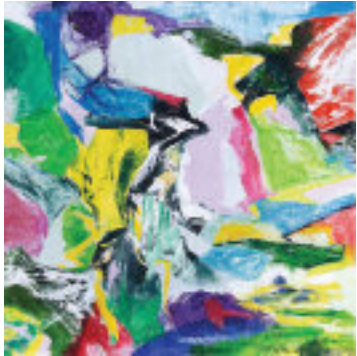
#3 BERSIH
SIZE : 36" X 40" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#13 PRIVATE WING CELL
SIZE : 44" X 62" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#14 BUMI KENYALANG
SIZE : 50" X 70" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#15 NEGERI DI BAWAH BAYU
SIZE : 60" X 60" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#4 BANGSAWAN
SIZE : 36" X 44" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#5 BAHANG
(FEVERISH MAY 09)
SIZE : 48" X 76" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#6 CONDOR (GARUDA)
SIZE : 44" X 64" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#7 GOBO "SSELLING"
(KETENANGAN OR "CALM AFTER THE STORM")
SIZE : 44" X 74" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#8 PERCaturan
SIZE : 42" X 62" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#9 EQUANIMITY
SIZE : 36" X 32" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#19 TUNJANG IV
SIZE : 42" X 62" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



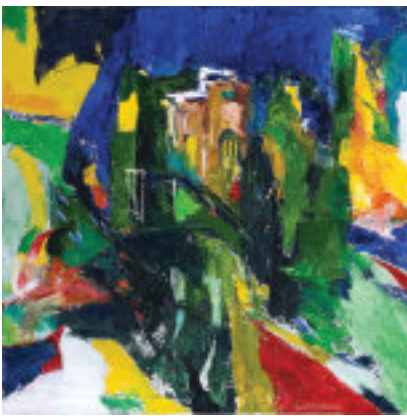
#20 TUNJANG V
SIZE : 36" X 48" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



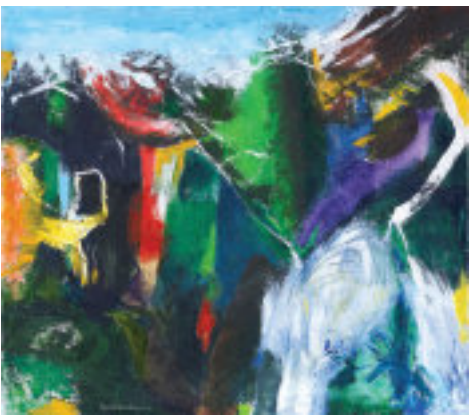
#21 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK I
(DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)
SIZE : 60" X 60" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#10 THE HUNTED (EQUANIMITY II)
SIZE : 37" X 36" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#11 RED CARPET TO PRISON
SIZE : 36" X 36" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



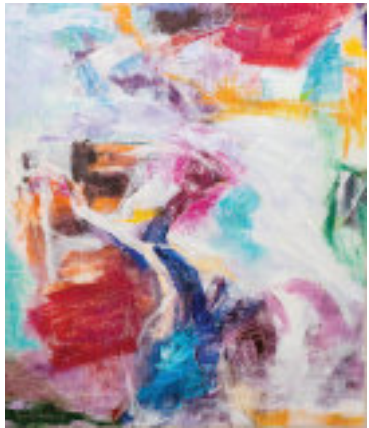
#12 PRESIDENTIAL WING CELL
SIZE : 36" X 44" YEAR : 2018
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#22 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK II
(DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)
SIZE : 60" X 70" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#23 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK III
(DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)
SIZE : 60" X 70" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS



#24 WABALLAGHO
(WAU BALAM GHO)
SIZE : 36" X 24" YEAR : 2019
MEDIUM : OIL ON CANVAS

OUR GUEST OF HONOUR

YG. BERBAHAGIA DATO' DR. NOORUL AMEEN



Dato' Dr. Noorul Ameen bin Hj. Mohamed Ishack spent his early years in Taiping, Perak where he attended King Edward's Primary and Secondary Schools. He continued his education abroad and obtained his medical degree in 1976.

Upon his return to Malaysia, he initially served under the Ministry of Health in various hospitals. In 1981 he joined the Malaysian Armed Forces as a Regimental Medical officer until 1984. During this period, he became actively involved in Sports Medicine. He was the team doctor for the National Football team from 1983 to 1984.

In 1984 he left the Malaysia Armed Forces and entered private practice. He joined a group practice known as Kum-pulan Medic. In 1997 he was appointed to the board of the Selangor Medical Centre to oversee the development of the Hospital. He was part of the team that built and commissioned the Selangor Medical Centre. He continued as director on the board as well as holding the post of Medical Director of Selangor Medical Centre until 2006

Also in 1997, he launched a company called "Qualitas Medical Group". This is a healthcare organization focused on Primary Healthcare. Currently, the company is an international corporation having operations in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and India. Dato' Dr Noorul Ameen heads the company as the Chairman and Managing Director from its inception.

From his school and college days to the present, he has always been passionate about art and music. Even though he does not paint, he learned to play a few instruments. He started collecting art 35 years ago mainly to encourage young budding artists. His preference is landscapes and street scenes, painted using oil on canvas. Occasionally, he buys water colours, but invariably gives them away as presents to friends. He makes it a point to visit art galleries in every country he visits, and brings back paintings by local artists. He buys what he likes, and is seldom guided by any particular artist's fame.

He has been honoured by various organizations for his work in the healthcare Industry. He was awarded the Commerce-Ventures CEO of the Year in 2006. He was the top Nominee for the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2011 and received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Society of Medical Graduates in 2013.

We are indeed deeply honoured by the presence of Malaysia's very own successful entrepreneur in the healthcare industry. Dato' Noorul Ameen's involvement in other industry sectors and his standing as a philanthropist and patron of the arts have caused us to respectfully invite him to grace our event by being our Guest of Honour and to officially open our Bbollog Exhibition.

Dato' Dr. Noorul Ameen bin Hj. Mohamed Ishack

BBOLLOG – An Expression of a New Malaysia History Through the Eyes of an Artist

Political Landscape in Abstraction

Inspiration is certainly everywhere for 69-year-old painter, Razak Abdullah. Having led a successful career as an experienced graphic designer in the late seventies and later thrived in the risky world of business, Razak Abdullah's flaming passion for artmaking can never be relinquished.

Razak Abdullah has been painting since the late sixties. A treasured oil painting dated 1969 illustrating a pair of fishing trawlers moored on a muddy beach at low tide - currently hangs in his private studio - serves as an aide-mémoire of his childhood in Terengganu.

Painted in the style of French Impressionism, the painting entitled *At Rest* is a testament to Razak Abdullah's early influence in visual arts. Ever since his first solo exhibition, *Melawati Quartz* that showcased his paintings from 1996 to 2003 - in conjunction with the opening of his former art gallery, Impressionists Colonnade in City Square, Kuala Lumpur in 2003 - his artistic style has evolved significantly.

Deconstructing reality

Today, Razak Abdullah has arrived at - what Western art scholars call "the pinnacle of high modernism" - where his practice "stands at the apex of individual self-expression" with his latest series, *Bbollog*, rendered in abstract expressionism.

"*Bbollog* is an expression of my thoughts and observation on current affairs conveyed through the medium I know best - visually," explains Razak Abdullah.

His arrival at Abstract Expressionism has given him the utmost freedom to articulate his visceral emotions like the joy of painting his disenchantments about life in a way that he could not have done with Impressionism. The shift in Razak Abdullah's subject matter also depicts his confidence in conveying socio-political concerns previously absent in his creative oeuvre.

"It's crucial for me to illustrate the current political landscape through abstract expressionism. It allows me to focus on my emotions and energy when transmitting my inner thoughts on canvas," describes Razak Abdullah.

The title *Bbollog* is derived from the Terengganu dialect meaning "topsy-turvy" or "chaotic" as the artist has intended. But I cannot disassociate the term phonetically (in plural) with the English variant, though uncouth, it crudely describes the absurdity, nonsensical yet factual episodes of Razak Abdullah's paintings.

This ultimate transition has taken Razak Abdullah decades to evolve - demanding the mature state of one's mind, an able-bodied and a spirited soul. The gestural and symbolic characteristics of *Terkilan* or aggrieved, for instance, ambiguously illustrates a pair of wild boars obstructing the movement of a horse.

In an artwork entitled Bahang, Razak Abdullah illustrates a spectacular wildlife event to symbolise an episode in Malaysian history. "It depicts the migration of wildebeest crossing the river because the grass is greener on the other side. This work marks the day after the 14th general election when Barisan Nasional mourns their defeat," explains Razak Abdullah.

¹ Modern Art: A Critical Introduction, Modernism and Realism in US Art, Pam Meecham, Julie Sheldon, page 166.

Executed in gestural clusters of yellow, green, blue, white and red, the harmonious composition evokes a sense of celebratory rather than bereavement as Razak Abdullah implies. Among the 24 provocative artworks that ignited his feelings of resentment towards the affairs of policymakers include *Percaturan*; *Presidential Wing Cell*; *Bangsawan*; *Bumi Kenyalang*; *Red Carpet to Prison*; and *Tunjang*.

The tree of life

Set amidst the lush greenery of his residential estate named Khaya Rendang in Sungai Buloh, Razak Abdullah's studio - attached to his gallery and home - overlooks the inspirational mahogany tree that was planted even before a brick was ever laid on the one-acre land.

The artist collects rare botanical plants such as Flacourtia Jagomas or *buah kerkut*; Garcinia atroviridis or *asam gelugur*; Goniothalamus or *mempisang*; Dialium indum also known as tamarind-plum or *buah keranji*; and 100 others that are grown and cultivated within the vast compound of Khaya Rendang.

Razak Abdullah has acquired these plant species from the Terengganu State Museum to commemorate his carefree days as a young boy picking and consuming wild fruits. He shares his interest in horticulture with his wife, Bahiyah Abdul Aziz, whom during my visit was elated with their first harvest of yardlong beans.

When asked about the significance of the name "Khaya Rendang", Razak Abdullah delightedly elucidates: "Khaya represents *pokok khaya* or mahogany tree and Rendang means "lush canopy" in Bahasa, which is what we call our tree because it doesn't grow as tall as it should due to the stream and pond creating a high water table here."

The stream flows into a pool as inspired by Claudé Monet's water lily pond in Giverny, France. Complete with a Japanese bridge, Razak Abdullah replicates the Impressionist master's garden in his private sanctuary purely out of admiration.

Using upcycled materials to build his seven-bedroom and nine-bathroom abode such as salvaged terracotta roofing tiles made by Guichard Carvin et Cie in Marseille St. Andre, France that are over a century-old; and Chengal wood as doors, among others, Razak Abdullah describes his living space as a "liveable sculpture".

"I have never ventured into sculpture-making but Khaya Rendang is my living sculpture," says the multi-talented artist who observes sustainable livelihood.

One can perceive that the kaleidoscopic colours in the *Bbollog* series are subconsciously appropriated from the wealth of natural beauty that surrounds Khaya Rendang. Razak Abdullah has instinctively captured the essence of authoritarianism - no matter how menacing - and illustrated it with the vividness of an Impressionist's palette - unwittingly immortalising his garden of life.

Sarah Abu Bakar
Khaya Rendang
23 October 2019



BBOLLOG: An Expression of a New Malaysia History Through the Eyes of an Artist
(Razak Abdullah's solo exhibition 2019 - Khaya Rendang, Selangor)

As an academician, I am often intrigued by the world of paintings: the sheer beauty of each painting that are interspersed with unique expressions and interpretations, often related to the artist's significant journeys through life or by specially impactful events.

Razak Abdullah is one such artist. His famed "*Portrait of Bidong*" series showcased the best impressionist techniques in Malaysian art, weaving stories about our nation's rural fishing villages and the beautiful symphonies of underwater flora and fauna, together with his fishing boats and layers of colours as an impressionist's hallmark.

That was more than a decade ago. Today, Razak Abdullah is on a different mission. Gone are the days of subtle impressionism; his Bbollog series comprise paintings in the Expressionist style, featuring strokes of colours in bold mannerisms. When asked about the change, his answer was simple - his failing eyesight, but more importantly, his keen desire to express his feelings and frustrations of the events unfolding in his beloved country circa 2016-2018.

The Bbollog series documents the changes of the nation, the narration of a Marhaen (common people) of the events leading towards the change of power in Malaysia on 9th May, 2018, and of the hopes and anxieties thereafter.

"*Terkilan*" or "Deep Disappointment" opens the series, a narration of Razak's exasperation with the state of the nation; by which, circa 2016, when he saw his country caught in a state of authoritarian rule, a country entrenched in corruption, scandals, rising cost of living, and ultimately, bad press. His dark mood is reflected in his strokes of colours; an anger contained, unable to be released. His "*Bersih*" or "Clean" painting is eponymous with the Marhaen series of street demonstrations demanding fair elections among others, a demand for change and being fair to the people.

"*Bbollog*", a Terengganu slang for "topsy-turvy, chaotic", is Razak's interpretation of the then government's attempts to suppress the peoples' power - either through the media, through inconsistent rules or a "black-out" imposed on Malaysia's beloved senior statesman - all-in-all depicting the total ridiculousness of a government desperately hanging to power.

His interpretation of what the 9th May, 2018 Elections meant to the people is embodied in his "*Bahang*" (heat) or "*Feverish09*" painting. The rushes of red are manifest of herds of horses running away from their restrains, endeavouring to chart their own destinies. Bahang fittingly expresses the mood of the people, of their desire for change regardless of the preconceived beliefs ingrained in them since Independence (1957). It was a gamble, but the Marhaen seized the opportunity nevertheless, hence bringing down a government that they couldn't identify with anymore.

"*Gobo*" (Terengganu slang for "Ketenangan") or "Calm", on the other hand, reflects the aftermath of the Election day. The hope of the people craving for a fair government, better living conditions and a return of the peoples' voices - the right to speak and be heard.

The Bbollog series also showcases Razak's strong opinions in matters close to his heart. "*Percaturan*" or "Arranging the Pieces" symbolizes his feelings of disquiet concerning the post May09 government; their vision, direction and the constant wrangling for power, causing worries and uneasiness to the people on the street. The changes in the racial landscape, with constant challenges to the nation's Constitution, is manifested in "*Tunjang*" or "Main Root". His bold shades of red symbolizes the Malay's rightful place in this country.

"*Bumi Kenyalang*" or "Land of the Hornbills" is the elucidation of Sarawak, the nation's biggest state and long-time power-broker in Malaysian politics. The mighty Rajang River, interspersed with the rich bio-diversities and indigenous cultures, are depicted in the elements of yellow strokes symbolizing challenges of influences either from external sources or within.

The tongue-in-cheek "*Bangsawan*" or "Aristocrat" and "*Red Carpet to Prison*" describe the on-going trials of the rich and powerful; of their many exploitations and misdemeanours, and perhaps, their future accommodations, should they be found guilty by the courts of law.

This solo exhibition is a labour of love and pride to Razak Abdullah. His paintings tell of a journey in a New Malaysia's history; a priceless expressionist's interpretation of Marhaen showcasing the best of Malaysia art that should be hung in renowned galleries in Malaysia and across the world.

By the collective penmanship of:
Razak Abdullah, Cikgu Mohd, Iruadee Husin, Professor Dr. Noor Azah Aziz, Shaharuman Shahadan and Khalid Shah.
Khaya Rendang - September 2019