



Razak Abdullah is a prominent artist in Malaysia who started painting seriously when he was in Form III, Secondary School. He enrolled in Institut Teknologi MARA's School of Applied Arts to take up Graphic Design. Razak entered the advertising industry upon completing his studies, and formed his own company Razak Grafik two years later. In 1980, Razak left advertising to establish a trading business which was highly successful. However, he abandoned this business in 1995 to fully devote himself to his lifelong interest in art. He began with painting in the impressionism style, influenced by his academic training in graphic design and six years in the industry after graduation. He sold his first painting in 2003 for a grand sum of RM5,000 eight years after he turned into a full-time artist.

It was definitely eight years of struggle, and he managed to survive only through his wife's staunch support and belief in his vocation. But the hard years taught him many things in life: to appreciate his surroundings, his very existence and the things that are most dear to him. Perhaps, these lessons are vital to the development of an artist's soul and creative energy. His frequent travels abroad during his fifteen years in business also exposed him to the famous works and museums of art in Europe, USA, West Asia and Asia. He found the "House and Gardens of Monet" in Giverny, France to be his favourite place for meditation and inspiration.

Razak Abdullah's early works from 1995 reflect these experiences and feelings in his Impressionist style paintings. His works attracted much interest from the local art scene and some of them have been acquired and displayed in various private and institutional galleries, among them being the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, the National Art Gallery, Petronas Art Gallery, Permodalan Nasional Berhad's Galeri Tun Ismail Mohamed Ali, to mention a few.

Only until three years ago, he began to dabble into abstract expressionism, a style which he found allows him to give full vent to his emotions without restrictions of shape, form and accuracy. He also discovered that this style frees him from the chains of conventions and norms expected by society. His newfound freedom allows him to comment on injustice, disorder and discontent then pervasive in his beloved nation without fear of persecution due to penned words that could be construed as slanderous or anyway unlawful.

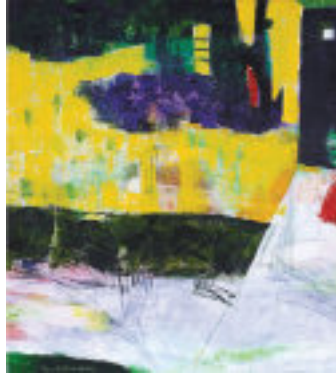
Bbollog, a local Terengganu Malay slang that can mean "topsy turvy" or "chaotic" is the latest series in his paintings in the abstract expressionism school. What makes Bbollog important, interesting and pertinent is that this spectrum of 24 painting marks the time of the "New Malaysia". It captures the turmoil, hopes and aspirations of Malaysians in the moments before and after the 14th General Elections held on May 9th 2018 that saw a new government voted into power by a people that wish to see change for the better from a government regime who had held power for the last 61 years.

The Bbollog series is being displayed at Khaya Rendang, Razak Abdullah' studio-cum-gallery-cum-home in Kuang, Selangor, situated just outside the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. To find out more about Razak's work, kindly visit his official website: www.razakabdullah.com.



#8 PERCATURAN

This is the period where the chess pieces are arranged after the victory of the new Government, spelling hope for a better future.



#9 EQUANIMITY

A thunderbolt effect was felt by the country's decent folks when such extravagance and hedonistic going-ons were exposed. This painting is what the artist sees of the devilish "mystery".



#10 THE HUNTED (EQUANIMITY II)

A deeper exploration of the infamous Equanimity phenomenon.

Though the artist has never physically sighted the luxurious yacht, the scene imprinted his mind is of the coastal steamer that plied the waters of his seaside village during his childhood years.

#11 RED CARPET TO PRISON

... arrogance needs to be accounted for, especially when wrongdoings affect the people. Punishment is a must!

Red Carpet To Prison is a satirical piece and a reminder to those in power to be more careful and cautious when handling the peoples' trust. The power you have been entrusted with is not yours to dispense with indiscriminately without a sense of guilt.



The sadness felt after seeing the gross misuse of power practised by some national leaders has inspired the artist to paint this piece as a form of a reminder and self-realization.

A prison cell, complete with all the facilities and amenities worth millions annually has been built specially for those wealthy ingrates or those who manipulated the nation's assets for their own benefit. A window facing the Qiblat serves as a symbol for the miscreants to self-reflect and seek the forgiveness of Allah The Almighty for their sins.

#1 TERKILAN (A DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT)

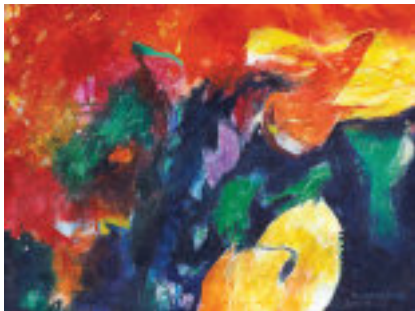
To an artist, it is a reality that every emotion he deeply feels and consider important should be singularly interpreted. Whether it be in the form of a formally arranged visual format, or the interpreted emotion bursting forth spontaneously.



Terkilan was born from observations of an actual happening. Its existence is not fiction, in fact, it emerged from a powerful outpouring of emotion that simply needed to be brought out. This deeply felt emotion came through observations of current political developments that appeared to be heading south, an injustice that seemed very unjust. The feeling of sadness and frustration when a highly respected statesman

that has served the country well is being mistreated. Based on his remarks on the several misconducts of the government at the time, he was labeled as an enemy of the government and is considered to have shamed the nation. His noble actions were perceived as threats and his good intentions were swept aside. The ultimate denial was when he was not invited to the Installation Ceremony of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agung ke-15, a major national event in which his presence, as a former Prime Minister of the nation, is normally a given.

These incidents have stirred deep feelings of disappointment to this artist. Although the presentation of these emotional scars are abstract in composition, the presence of landscape is still evident in spaces and the use of colours. This change in artistic style has not been an easy transition, and neither was it done without reason. There existed a heavy sense of reponsibility for the artist to continue his life's work even when his natural abilities were slowly being restricted. With his eyesight reduced to only 65%, he continued to feel the strong urge not to abandon his career. Of utmost importance is the strong emotional drive to interpret what he sees.



#2 BBOLLOG

This is the main piece and the title of the "Bbollog" Series. Bbollog is the Terengganu term for chaotic, topsy-turvy, representing the political situation at that time (2017) in the artist's mind.



#3 BERSIH

An abstract rendition of the Bersih Movement prior to GE14 calling for a free, clean and fair election process.



#12 PRESIDENTIAL WING CELL

The special temporary abode for the Chief Perpetrator robbing the country's wealth.

#13 PRIVATE WING CELL

A sequel to the painting "Red Carpet To Prison", where a special prison cell is built to detain those rich white-collar convicts, and who are expected to pay for their keep to the government.



#14 BUMI KENYALANG

The sad devastation of a State's ancient rainforest by the greedy and powerful.

#15 NEGERI DI BAWAH BAYU

Underneath the beauty of the beaches and scenic natural wonders, powerful elements were undermining the pride and wealth of the state.



#4 BANGSAWAN

The high-nosed aloofness showed by those wealthy aristocrats, evidently unconcerned with the struggles and hardships of the ordinary people below. They are likened to a group of birds. Sketches of eagle-like birds, peacocks and other live birds occupying a space full of gaiety. This is depicted using several shapes that were simplified by using bright and cheerful colours.



#5 BAHANG (Feverish May 09)

"Feverish May 09" is a manifestation of emotion felt of the political situation leading up to and during the 14th General Elections (GE14) in 9th May 2018. The situation was quite different from what is normally seen in previous General Elections. From the early morning hours up to the final minute of the election day, the people were queuing up to discharge their responsibility in casting votes.

This is like an omen, and true enough, it really happened. The government that had held power for the last 61 years was swept away.

The experience of a voter that has participated in several past General Elections, though they were often marred by major issues and incidents. But, this time around, things were different. There were more people than usual, a mix of different age groups, in long queues according to their respective voting channels. The artist's own experience saw him standing in line for over two hours before casting his vote, even though he was in the Senior Citizens' channel. He felt it in his heart that something big was bound to happen when the election results were announced.

The scene was extraordinary, unlike what the artist has witnessed in General Elections past. This is interpreted through bright lines surrounded by darker colours on a lighter background, creating an inward effect of distance without a focal point.

The artist has purposely used black colour to dominate this painting to show the people exercising their power and to announce that the day is "a day of mourning" for a political party that has governed the nation for the last 61 years. "Feverish May 09" is a compelling extraordinary energy from the artist even though he may be handicapped by the factors of age and progressively poor eyesight. The wave of struggle of a people that yearn for a better and brighter future is likened to the "wildebeest" of South Africa that changes direction to a greener pasture that they perceive.



#16, 17, 18, 19 & 20 TUNJANG

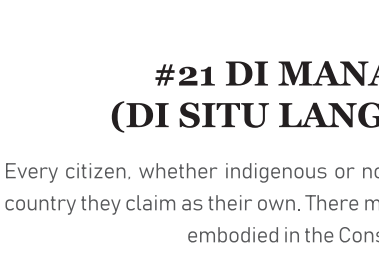
There are five individual paintings in this Group, beginning with Tunjang I through Tunjang V.

"Tunjang" symbolizes the citizens of Malay (Melayu) origins. A race that has inhabited this land for the longest time, developing their homeland with a civilization that is magnificent, with strong principles and beliefs, emerging as a highly respected entity.

The establishment of this beloved nation lies in the strength of the Malay race. A race that has high tolerance in sharing the nation with other ethnic races that came later, for the sake of the nation's unity.

The roots of this "Tunjang" need to be cared for and well tended to, not destroyed. This statement does not imply total acquiescence and enforced compliance to a single race or superpower. It is sufficient that a feeling of respect and a preservation of the status quo exist.

The combination of various colours in this collection is a symbol for all indigenous ethnic groups (Peribumi) in this country, its resulting effect forming a shape that is not duly expected. It came about spontaneously during the process of completing these paintings.



#21 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK (DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)

Every citizen, whether indigenous or not, must always stay loyal to the country they claim as their own. There must be respect for the provisions embodied in the Constitution by our nation's founders.



#6 CONDOR (GARUDA)

The fall of a government that has been in power for more than a half-century was at first thought an impossibility, but happened in the blink of an eye. To many, such an event was unexpected, and there were also many that were absolutely surprised at their loss of power, and many still that could not accept they no longer held power.



Devastated – a loss in the power to rule, as in the saying "dilanda Garuda" (swept away by a Condor).

Crumbled – a state of power that seemed invincible against any politial opposition. But, it did happen with the peoples' power that showed their might, and function.

Momentary stillness – there were a few that believed it was but a bad dream. The truth is that it is a nightmare that actually happened.

The violent sledgings of the palette knife, compositions and colour arrangements show the division of this piece into two parts as is a common tradition in landscape paintings. This painting needs to be viewed beginning from the top that shows dynamic movements going in one direction. Quite like the movements of a huge bird bringing devastation to the bottom part depicted in gloomy, bleak and dark colours.

#7 GOBO “SSELLING” (KETENANGAN OR “CALM AFTER THE STORM”)



Gobo is an adaptation of the artist's observations immediately following the GE14. The aftermath of the elections was significantly different from earlier projections – where a state of chaos was predicted should the government changed hands.

Instead, a state of calmness was seen. The people waited expectantly for what will transpire from this change (in government).

Each day, the people calmly and patiently waited, despite the colossal change that has emerged in the nation's political scene. This situation is nothing short of miraculous, affecting the artist with a valuable inspiration to create this painting.

This work was produced in a "mood of calmness" that prevailed and still fresh in the artist's mind as he blended his innermost feelings with oil and canvas. The sense of "freshness" was processed in the arrangement of colours depicting a beautiful scenery. The palette knife scrapings and surfings display the effects of soft and serene movements, and the mix of colours, that were not overly bright, brought forth the emotional motivations of the artist.



#22 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK II (DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)

A follow-up of "Di Mana Bumi Di Pijak I", re-stating the need for the country's plural society to unite and stand together as loyal citizens of Malaysia, properly observing and respecting the Constitution, the Malay Rulers' rightful place in the nation, Parliament and the Rule of Law, and giving full recognition of Islam as the official state religion while respecting the right of the people to practise their respective religions. Any interference or meddling by foreign powers are not welcome.

#23 DI MANA BUMI DIPIJAK III (DI SITU LANGIT DIJUNJUNG)

The concern that if things are not controlled, the situation may easily get out of hand (but still salvageable). This is the main message of this painting. To know more, ask the artist personally.



#24 WABALLAGHO (WAU BA LAM GHO)

Waballagho is Terengganu slang derived from Arabic (wau, ba, lam, gho) which has no definitive meaning but generally used to describe a state of confusion, without a sense of direction, u-turns and unclear objectives. In a way, this reflects the situation of the current government leaders of today. In the bold and harsh strokes employed, and the angry colours used, the Artist expresses his concerns and disappointments, with the fervent hope that time, common sense and experience will put things back right where they belong, and the country will once again enjoy everlasting peace and harmony.



As narrated by Razak Abdullah
Written in its original Malay text by Cikgu Mohd. Iruadee Husin except for Bahang (Feverish May 09) that was penned in English by Prof. Noor Azah Aziz
Edited and adapted into English by Shaharuman Sha'adan & Khalid Shah