

Sunday Vibes

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A ROYAL
collection

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Shaharudin Abdul Razak

art/



A HEART'S BREATH-TAKING LANDSCAPES

Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah Al-Haj ibni Almarhum Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Al-Haj's personal art collection makes its impressive debut at Galeri Prima, writes **Sarah NH Vogeler**



Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths
Enwrought with golden and silver, light
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light
I would spread the cloths under your feet
But I, being poor, have only my dreams
I have spread my dreams under your feet
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The Cloths of Heaven
W. B. Yeats

It's always the stories behind a particular art collection which engages us the most. How a collector begins accumulating works, his first purchase and buying processes, and how the collection itself echoes the personality of the owner. An exceptionally breathtaking assemblage of works can open up endless worlds. And good art does one thing without fail: it makes references to our existence.

Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah is delightfully approachable, and his passion for the arts is profound as he took us for a personal tour of his splendid collection recently. In the beginning, it was difficult to concentrate



as a throng of people with cameras and more cameras were clicking enough times to blind you for the next 10 days. But as Tuanku speaks, everything else thankfully disappears. There's only him and his art. There are various types of collectors, and each one is stirred by a mass of impulses. Tuanku knows each painting and its story by heart. His art is deeply personal; it's his very own pleasure principle.

There are 33 works altogether, rendered by 14 artists; Chuah Thean Teng, Anisa Abdullah, Jaafar Taib, Datuk Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, Royal Painters Datuk Hoessein Enas, Ahmad Nazri Abdullah and Datuk Azman Yusof, Shafie Hj Hassan, Ilse Noor, Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid or

lovingly known as Lat, Datuk Ibrahim Hussein, Haron Mokhtar, Raja Azhar Idris and Abdul Fatah Ngah. We take a look at the "superstars" of the show, works which not only beguile, but leave ineradicable marks in the spine.

SHOWCASE IN MASTERPIECE

Six of Ibrahim's works are on show: *Kimono* (1996), *Helmet* (2000), *HRH Tengku Ampuan Rahimah, Selangor* (1985), *Mix* (1983), *Lovers* (2002) and *Father and Son* (2008). Looking at these works up close overwhelms and evokes stirrings of nostalgia. They remind us of how much we've lost with the artist's passing. *Father and Son*, the painting chosen as the catalogue's cover, condenses



WHAT: Terrains of the Heart
WHEN: Until Oct 20. Monday – Friday, 10 am – 6 pm (Saturday/ Sunday by appointment)
WHERE: Galeri Prima, Balai Berita, 31, Jalan Riong, KL
galeriprima@mediaprima.com.my

ABOUT THE GALLERY
Founded in 1994, the NSTP Art Gallery is considered one of the most renowned public galleries in Bangsar. It owns some of the finest collections of art, and has featured over 6,000 works encompassing various genres. The gallery moved to a newly-renovated building in 2016 and has since been re-named Galeri Prima. It now plays an important role in promoting our country's art. Galeri Prima offers an expansive space and its contemporary new look and exclusive location makes it a prime destination for art enthusiasts.

Clockwise from far left: Datuk Azman Yusof's *Halal*; Datuk Azman Yusof's *S.Y. Jugra*; *Rewang* by Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid (Lat); Layla, Sultan Selangor's Granddaughter by Anisa Abdullah; Datuk Ibrahim Hussein's *Father and Son*; Datuk Ibrahim Hussein's *Helmet* and Jaafar Taib's *Ayam Hutan*.

LOVE FOR LOCAL ARTISTS

Another which would certainly delight audiences is Lat's *Rewang*. His largest scale drawing to date, (and Tuanku is doubtful Lat would ever do anything of this dimension again) the scene is of a grand *kenduri* after a circumcision ceremony. The mosque is inspired after the one in his own village, and in this charming "riotous" scene, as Lat is so loved for, a million things are happening at once, both seen and unseen.

People milling about at every corner partaking in gleeful eating, animated conversations, gossiping, children running after each other and from each other; it's a celebration which makes us yearn for simpler times.

There's also the resplendent *S. Y. Jugra* by Royal Painter Azman, a testament to Tuanku's adventurous spirit as he sailed around the world covering almost 30 thousand nautical miles, crossing three oceans and 159 ports from Feb 4, 1995 until Nov 10, 1996.

Royal Academy Schools. After a sojourn to France and Italy, Ib came home to Malaysia and became a resident artist at Universiti Malaya. In 1991, he initiated The Ibrahim Hussein Museum and Cultural Foundation in the Langkawi tropical forest, a non-profit establishment and museum devoted to the elevation, growth and expansion of art and culture.

Father and Son, painted in a shadowy manner of a patriarch and offspring huddled in a fierce embrace is at once peculiar and haunting. Ib was a genius at permutations; it exceeds immediate grasp. He was an extraordinary painter and left the nation a mammoth archive of works which most of us would give up limbs to see again. And *Lovers* is another outstanding piece. It's a wild and anarchic vignette; opaque, gripping and rootless. This is what love is — a schizophrenic-nervous-breakdown, a drug which kills and raptures and plunges into heart-breaking oblivion. It's quite difficult to think of another artist who can transport you to unbelievable realms yet still remain within the peripheries of this world. These are works which mysteriously make stunning sense.

Only Ib comes to mind.



We won't give away too much of the show but must say that *Terrains of the Heart* is intensely special. The works displayed are a reflection of Tuanku's love for local artists. Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah "lives" with his art; it's daily bliss and unending inspiration, and one he hopes the public would share and thrill in.

Perhaps the Selangor Government would want to seriously consider building a private museum to host Tuanku's massive collection. It'll be a way for the *rakyat* to become closer to their beloved King. Because the saying really is true: Paradise can be found, but you must quest for it.

