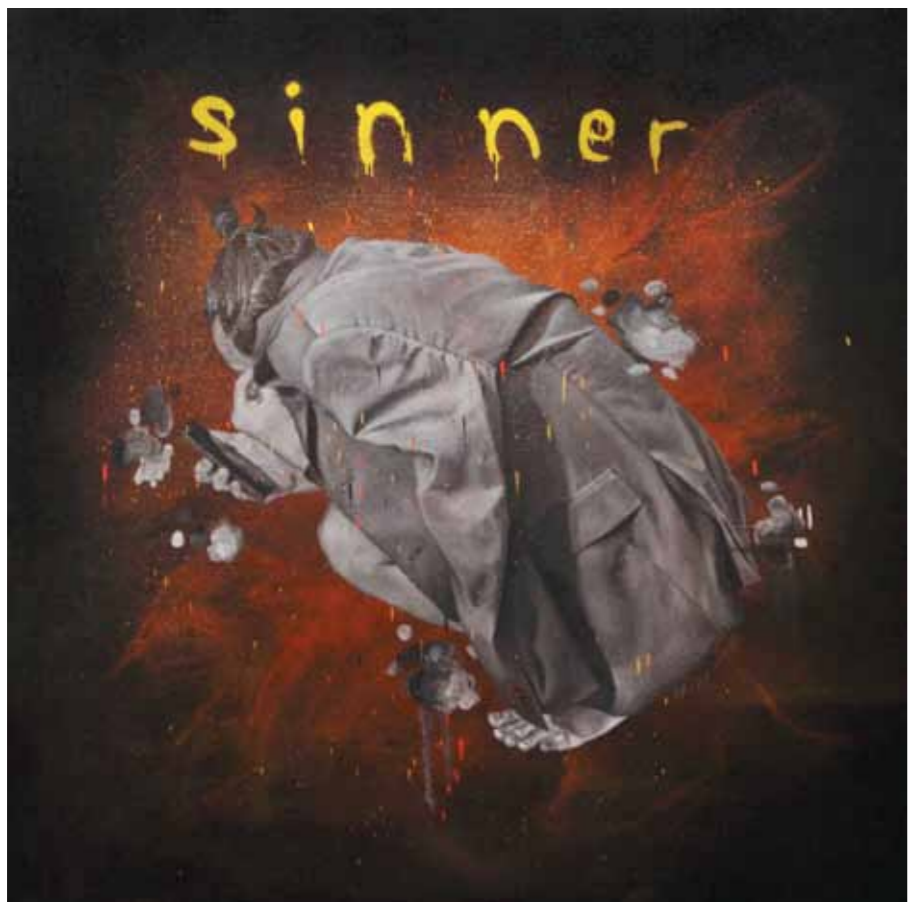


The Tinker
Oil on jute
152.5cm x152.5cm
2017



Sinner
Oil and MTN spray paint
on jute
152.5cm x 152.5cm
2017



Oppressed
Oil on jute
152.5cm x152.5cm
2017



Dark Saint
Oil and MTN spray paint
on jute
152.5cm x 152.5cm
2017

Cover image:
King Culprit
Oil and MTN spray paint
on jute
195cm x 130cm
2017

Playing GOD

RUZZEKI HARRIS



To accompany Ruzzeki Harris's 'Playing GOD' from 4th - 31st July 2017 at Wei-Ling Gallery.



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Playing GOD

Playing GOD features eight paintings, each painted with Ruzzeki Harris' sense of playful sarcasm. In comparison to *Gone Viral* – the artist's previous solo exhibition with the gallery – the works have taken on a much darker visual tone. A majority of the paintings comprise of two colours; phthalo green and black, blended together to create a "smoky-mysterious" background, as the artist puts it. The title also references a phenomena that seems to be occurring more often than not in recent times. A piece of news or a video goes viral, netizens who are driven by anonymity are quick to explode, and they leave a comment expressing distaste. Hence, with no direct consequences to their actions, they lead themselves to believe they have the level of authority equivalent to that of a judge of law.

Quotes of religious law are scribbled in the form of capital letters and exclamation marks. Apparently, even the layman can be an expert in such a topic; so long as they are in possession of a smartphone and a social media account. To which the artist responds with *Gavel*. The title implies an object used by judges in a court of law, slamming the hammer would usually signal attention or order. Though in this case, Ruzzeki has instead painted a toy hammer of his daughter's. He reasons this by stating that the law is not being taken seriously. To add insult to injury, the word 'LAW' is spray painted in red as if to mimic graffiti and bright colours of pink, purple and blue are splattered all over depicting the comical nature with which the law is treated.

Playfulness is portrayed with a tongue-in-cheek approach in *'the promise cart'*. Depicting a man in a suit-and-tie riding an ice cream cart and popsicles floating about. Across the left side of the cart is what appears to be the logo of a made up company *Janji & Co.* Ruzzeki references this from the recent trend of hipster restaurants adding the words '& Co' to the names of their businesses. The front of the cart has Mr. Monopoly – previously known as Rich Uncle Pennybags – in a sprint, clasp a bag of money in one hand, the other holding on to his hat. Mr. Monopoly symbolises our money being stolen while the popsicles area metaphor for the "sweet promises" handed out to the *rakyat*.

Two-faced people appear to be the ones making "sweet promises" the most. In *Two Face*, Ruzzeki merges a figure of a man facing two ways into one, exemplifying the confusing nature of such people. The artist explains that the crown portrays a sense of faux royalty. The man's body is seen twisting and turning, just like his words, smooth-talking to get what he desires. At the end of the day, he is nothing but a culprit.

But who really is the *King Culprit*? That would be none other than the self-proclaimed "*Raja Bomoh*" (Shaman King). "*Raja Bomoh*" first gained recognition back in 2014, in which he was ordered to perform a shamanistic ritual to assist in locating the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 (MH370). The pair of sticks that were used as "binoculars" have been changed to a pair of bananas, symbolising masculinity and the fact that he was gutsy enough to ridicule himself in front of a large public audience.

It seems evident from "*Raja Bomoh*", that just by wearing a coat – one would automatically be considered – or at least consider themselves to be superior. Such is pictured in *Dark Saint* and *Sinner*. Ruzzeki paints himself squatting in the dark with nothing but the glow of his phone's screen lighting



Two Face
Oil and MTN spray paint on jute, 150cm x 180cm, 2017



'the promise cart'
Oil and MTN spray paint on jute
155.5cm x 180cm
2017

Gavel
Oil and MTN spray paint on jute
82.5cm x 155cm
2017



up his face and a coat loosely wrapping around his body. The two paintings are a mockery of netizens, who comment with a holier-than-thou attitude, on just about any post that catches their eye.

As "*Saints*" and "*Sinners*" begin to engross themselves in all their new found glory, they begin to make others feel *Oppressed*. In this painting, Ruzzeki seems to have taken the meaning of "armchair" quite literally. As the chair depicted in the painting has human arms extending from the bottom of it. Situated on top of said chair, is a snake; hinting towards a forked tongue person who would deliberately say one thing and mean another or act in a duplicitous manner.

Eventually, as one rises up this imaginary ladder of ego, *The Tinker* then comes forth. A man, who appears to be wearing nothing but a '*Taqiyah*' – a cap worn by Muslims for religious purposes – is shrouded behind an Illuminati symbol, clinging to his phone. Hovering above his head is an academic cap, followed by a crown, fully rendered, unlike *Two Face*, signifying that he is the true king and lastly a halo hangs above the rest. The variety of headgear represents the amount of boastfulness that *The Tinker* has. The man is a personification of the extreme in today's ridiculous society. The insanely vast-spread amount of fake news has driven this man to paranoia; which in turn, causes him to spread rumours like wildfire about how the Freemasons' are taking over the world.

As one moves through this body of work it is apparent that there is a hierarchy present in the paintings. From the layman thinking they are the judge in *Gavel*, to the sweet talking businessmen in *'the promise cart'* and the fake Shaman King in *King Culprit*, holier-than-thou attitudes in *Dark Saint* and *Sinner*, the forked-tongue snake in *Oppressed* and eventually... GOD. Ruzzeki Harris sees himself as an observer of life, and his paintings serve as a platform to record what is happening around him. *Playing GOD* references the netizens on social media, taking advantage of the anonymity it provides to demean and slander at every window of opportunity.

John Lim
Wei-Ling Gallery
July 2017

RUZZEKI HARRIS (b. 1984)

EDUCATION

2007 Bachelor (Hons.) Fine Arts, Majoring in Painting, UiTM Shah Alam, Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 Playing GOD, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2016 Possessed, Mini Solo, Art Taipei, Taiwan
2015 Gone Viral, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2014 Point Blank by Ruzzeki Harris, CHAN HAMPE GALLERIES, Singapore
2011 Dictum by Ruzzeki Harris, R A Fine Arts, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2008 Gravitare by Ruzzeki Harris, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017 18@8 RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2016 Voice of the Voiceless, G13 Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2015 18@8 Heirlooms, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Art Kaohsiung 2015, THE PIER-2 ART CENTER, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Stories of 11 artworks, Group exhibition, HOM, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
FLUSH, Group exhibition by Sebijipadi, G13 gallery, Kelana Jaya
Young Guns Award group exhibition, Singapore
Cancer Society Charity Show, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2014 Art Basel, KL-Miami, Miami Florida, USA
Young Guns Award group exhibition, White Box, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Charity Show For Haiyan Disaster, White Box, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 KUL-SIN, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
18@8 KUL-SIN, ION Art, Singapore
2012 Transit A4 Exhibition, HOM, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Bright Young Things, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Precious Little Pieces, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Art Expo, MATRADE Exhibition and Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
The X Residence, Group Exhibition, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2010 Fragment, Exhibition #7, Malihom A.I.R. Programme, Penang, Malaysia
2009 Uncut, Group exhibition, Shambala Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark
MEA Award, Group exhibition, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Dazed in Mazes, 4men show, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Contemporary Rhetoric, Group show, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
B.A.C.A, 4 men show, R A Fine Arts, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Young & New: Part 2, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Open house Raya, Group show, Gallery Chandan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Young & New: Part 1, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Graffiti clinic instructor, Rakan Muda Klang & Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia
Quddinandfriends '08, Group exhibition, Mc Cann Worldgroup, Selangor, Malaysia
'Bukak Mata' Group exhibition, Studio Dikala jingga, Shah Alam, Malaysia
'Loveartpassion', Group exhibition, 360studio Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
'Young & New Part 1', Group exhibition, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 Mana Batik? Group Installation, Annexe Gallery Central Market, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Open Show Shah Alam Gallery, Malaysia
'SoSound' Experimental Music Group Performance, Pati Satu Studio, Malaysia
Finalist for PACT MACT Art Competition, Penang, Malaysia
Degree Show, Tengku Zaharah Gallery, UiTM Shah Alam, Malaysia
The Tanjong Heritage 2007 Art competition organized by Tanjong Public Ltd. Co. - consolation prize, Mixed media category, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Flora Fest Art Exhibition, Putrajaya, Malaysia
Global Logistic Art Exhibition, KL City Library, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2006 Open Show Shah Alam Gallery, Malaysia
The Tanjong Heritage 2006 Art competition organized by Tanjong Public Ltd. Co. consolation prize, printmaking, at Seri Melayu Restaurant, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2004 Open exhibition, Sri Pinang Gallery Penang, Malaysia
USM Penang public sculpture exhibition, USM Penang, Malaysia

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2013 Young Guns award, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2012 Nafa's artist in residence programme, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
2010 Malihom artist in residence programme, Penang, Malaysia
2009 MEA Award 50 finalist, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2008 MATAHATI Art Residency, House of Matahati (HOM), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 3rd Prize, Salon Meets Art Competition by Swartzkopf, Elle Six Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Consolation Prize The Tanjong Heritage 2007 Art Competition organized by Tanjong Public Ltd. Co. (Mixed Media category)
Finalist for PACT MACT Art Competition, Gurney Plaza, Penang, Malaysia
Consolation prize, My Wildest Dream Global Transportation, Global Logistic Art Exhibition, KL City Library, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2006 Consolation Prize The Tanjong Heritage 2006 Art Competition organized by Tanjong Public Ltd. Co. (Mixed Media category)