

BETWEEN

Colours splash and explode. Paint drips and stains blank canvases. A residue of the emotionally charged journey of creation, Hamidi Hadi's art celebrates the pure nature of painting concentrated in what is essential to it - making marks on a naked surface. His collection of paintings, as always, shifts the mood of the Malaysian artworld from emphasis on subject matter to the depiction of primal states of being. His raw language of colour and expressive use of marks is a style entirely his own in the art landscape he calls home. The expressionistic gesture and act of painting itself is of crucial importance, the result a manifestation of the process; the two inseparable and dissolvable.

Echoing the emotional intensity and existential struggle of the Abstract Expressionists - the likes of Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline – Hamidi Hadi's paintings resonate the words of 20th century renowned American art critic Harold Rosenberg:

“What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event”.

The emphasis shifted from the form to the struggle; art became an act rather than a product, a process rather than an object. Hamidi Hadi continues the radical and idiosyncratic traditions of artists who drove artmaking beyond existing boundaries by expanding and developing the definitions that artists had for the creation of new works of art. Although inspired by Jackson Pollock's rejection of easel painting and exploration of new painting methods, Hamidi is also greatly inspired by Caspar David Friedrich, a 19th century German Romantic painter. This odd, quaint inspiration comes from the artist's innovation in the portrayal and visualisation of landscape – his work is not just about capturing a beautiful view but an examination of the sublime, a reunion with the spiritual self through the contemplation of nature. Hamidi Hadi believes that all creative practice is an exploration of the self. He is an enigma who continuously juxtaposes paradoxes through his artmaking; Pollock and Friedrich, contrived and pure, exquisite and repellent. He uses toxic materials to create magnificent pieces of art,

allowing himself space, freedom and versatility to find all the possible varieties in the mark-making process using industrial materials such as aluminium plates, polyurethane, resin, glue and enamel paint. For him, materials and techniques are artistic expressions; an act to view the world through the use of media. It is a process of material dialogue, a series of material behaviour that acts as metaphors to the physical world and vice versa. The media itself is treated as “form”, and his works are built upon the understanding and control of this media.

In his fourth solo exhibition, entitled “Antara” (“Between”), Hamidi Hadi takes us on an almost narrative journey of his artmaking process where he struggles between the conflicting elements of his art, cajoling and coercing opposites into an amalgamation. A figurative painter at the start of his artistic journey, Hamidi Hadi has come a long way since his renditions of life-size figures painted from oblique angles, against dark backgrounds. Over the years, as a result of experimentation with materials, his work has become less representational and more abstract, paintings that have moved further and further away from the objective world. Hamidi’s previous exhibitions at Wei-Ling Gallery - Indelible Markings, Alun and Timang-Timang - demonstrate a variety resulting from consistent experimentation, as well as continuity of his signature style of staining unprimed canvas with floating circular forms in both soft and vivid shades. He uses vibrant enamel paint and the clear and smooth texture of resin, causing them to collide and then observing the reaction. It is his dialogue with his materials that provides the inspiration for his work and becomes the content of his paintings. Hamidi Hadi’s inspiration is his love of, and passion for, painting, in which sometimes the idea comes to him subconsciously in flashes of colour and visions during his everyday life experiences of what he feels, sees, thinks, reads and collects, which he then researches and further develops. All this is given rendition by the practical creative process in the studio, where experimental procedures are planned and executed meticulously. And meticulous he is with his painstaking choice of colours, rationally evaluating the effects of pigments and their potential relationships before using them on his canvas. Red is a dominant colour in this body of work, symbolizing the passionate reciprocal relationship between the artist and the artwork.

In Antara, Hamidi directly shares his journey as an artist with large, conspicuous paintings bearing abstract biomorphic forms set down with strident confidence. Three works in this exhibition - Stagnating in the middle, Tertakung I and Tertakung II - have been painted on the reflective surface of aluminium, acting as mirrors of our intuition, reason and perception. Large washes of soft colours seep to the middle of the surface, creating deep, intense and mysterious pools of vibrant indigo. These simple paintings are free from the portrayal of objects, instead they try to evoke and address the emotions, feelings and aesthetic experience within the artist and the viewers.

Just let it be, you can't stop him! is the artist's internal discourse during the creation of his largest painting in the exhibition - a multi-layered composition with oozing white paint bleeding into drips of maroon pigment revealing deep shades of brown and crimson splashes. With overlapping textures, juxtaposing colours and a jumble of mediums, this painting reflects the frustration and persistence of the artist during his long entanglement with the work. Although visually distinct, Wait and she will come! is also the artist's internal dialogue during the process of the second largest painting in the exhibition. The artist wills himself to be patient, while he meticulously tries to control his complex and rebellious materials to act in a desired manner. The painstaking painting process involved long waiting periods where the artist had to analyse his choices and make future decisions. The result is a multi-layered painting where translucent and fluid washes of gold, vermillion and indigo conceal, and at the same time, reveal.

As the title suggests, An unavoidable incident!, is the artist's effort to let the power of his subconscious mind control the nature of his creations. According to Hamidi Hadi, he uses the smooth and glossy material of resin to form an effect that "looks like you are driving in the car in heavy rain". After covering the canvas in drops, dribbles, splashes and smears, he flipped the almost-dry canvas onto the floor. The product is a textured painting which emphasizes the physical act of painting itself as an essential aspect of the finished work.

The simple and confident treatment of Triptych sums up Hamidi Hadi's involvement with the process of painting. The flowing luminous yellow, shimmering metallic silver and bold contrast of red and violet are an almost step-by-step peek into the painting process that consumes this contemporary painter. He is involved in an on-going process of exploring and questioning the very nature and essence of painting, starting with simple ideas and developing them into monumental works of contemporary art where the conflicts between form and content, realism and abstraction are reconciled by the fusion of light, floating spaces and heavy, solid colours.

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