



NORMA ABBAS (B.1951)

(Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

“My artworks are true expressions of my own inspiration, spirituality and reality. Love, peace and compassion flow through my heart and actions onto the canvas with absolute intent to cause other hearts to stir with passion and spreading consciousness to all like-minded souls all over the world. If art is true to the artist’s inner being, then this fact, above all, makes everything meaningful.” - Norma Abbas

She began exhibiting in 1975 in England and later with Malaysia’s National Art Gallery, Shah Alam Gallery, Art Salon Gallery, Maybank Gallery, Galeri Citra, Badan Warisan and Smith’s Gallery, London to name a few.

At Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), her classmates included Tajuddin Ismail and Fauzan Omar, and her teachers were Joseph Tan, Redza Piyadasa and Jolly Koh.

During her third year at UiTM, Norma decided to continue doing a Degree in Fine Art, but was told her prospects afterwards were limited. At the time, UiTM began offering student loans and after speaking to one of her teachers, she applied and was amongst the first to acquire one and journeyed to Manchester Polytechnic School of Art before completing her Diploma course.

In her third year at Manchester, Norma was offered to do her Post Graduate Studies but unfortunately, UiTM had ceased providing loans of that particular vein.

She soon returned to England, working part time and painting whenever time permitted and was soon accepted to do her Masters in Fine Art at Chelsea School of Fine Art.

In 1989, she held a two-person show with Khalil Ibrahim, ‘Liku-Liku Hidup’ at Galeri Citra and began a 20-year collaboration with the establishment.

At the urging of the late Tan Sri Zain Azraai, Norma began preparing for her first solo, and ‘Spreading Consciousness’ was held at Galeri Citra in 1995. ‘99 Names of Allah Part 1 in 1999’ was held at Galeri Citra, and ‘99 Names of Allah Complete Collection’ 2001 with Badan Warisan.

Even from the beginning of her artistic journey, Norma has always explored themes encompassing relationships, intimacy, love and contemplation as a way to commune with her Maker and those she is close to.

Her works in the 70s and 80s primarily focused on printmaking, leaning towards etching, monotypes and lithographs. Her love-affair with Cubism is apparent, but



Norma puts her own signature on every piece - colours are heavily stratified and exceptionally detailed, resulting in her 'characters' dancing their way out the frames.

Norma Abbas is one of Malaysia's most esteemed women artists, whose works stand alongside illustrious artists Ruzaika Omar, Nirmala Shanmughalingam, Siti Zainon Ismail, Fatimah Chik, Kalsom Muda and Sivam Selvaratnam.

Norma observes, "When it comes to my works, you have to read between the lines. The messages are there, albeit hidden. Those who can see would immediately understand."

A comprehensive collection of her works, 'A Colourful Journey to a Promise' (Kembara Pelangi Menuju Janji) was held at the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery in 2016.

Emerging from her hiatus were a set of deeply-reflective paintings with themes close to her heart that married semi-abstraction and figuration. 'Coded Diaries' (2022) paid homage to her feline companions and unveiled a spiritual awakening in its most profound sense. Norma managed to maneuver her way delicately between the nuances of printmaking-like qualities, exquisite angles, and a delicate color palette. Hints of a Cubist approach were sprinkled within this set of works. The works were the results of the unleashing of constraints and the unveiling of vulnerability. They exuded a sense of 'freedom', giving us a glimpse into the most intimate relationships of her life.

Norma Abbas currently works from her home-based studio accompanied by her feline family, Titat Girl, Matisse Boy, Hiyo Boi, Mavrik Girl, Bojie Boy and Poody Boy.



NORMA ABBAS (B.1951)

EDUCATION

- 1969 Pre-Diploma Foundation Studies in Art Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
- 1975 Bachelor of Arts, Printed/ Woven Textiles, Manchester Polytechnic School of Art, England
- 1982 Masters in Autographics Print Making at Chelsea School of Art, London.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Coded Diaries, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 18@8 pLAy, Wei-Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2023 CIMB ARTOBER – ART & SOUL, MITEC, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia