

# Philip Morris Art Awards 1995

By REDZA PIYADASA

THE National Art Gallery in Kuala Lumpur is currently featuring 83 art works selected from the 254 works submitted for the 1995 Philip Morris (Malaysian Level) Art Competition. This is the second time that the competition has been sponsored by the well-known multinational corporate group.

The first Philip Morris competition was held in 1994, signalling the multinational's active participation as a sponsor of the visual arts in this country and the Asean region. This Malaysian level affair is, in fact, part of a larger regional exercise involving all the Asean countries.

The separate national level competitions just concluded mark the first round endeavours towards the selection of the 30 Asean finalists who will take part in the 2nd Philip Morris Asean Art Awards 1995 exercise to be held in Jakarta in late August 1995. All the finalists will be invited to Jakarta and their works shown in an exhibition to be officially opened by the First Lady of Indonesia, Ibu Tien Suharto.

The judging for last year's Asean level competition took place in Singapore and all the works of the finalists were later shown at the Tressors 1995 Art Fair in Singapore. This year's finalists will also have their works exhibited at Tressors 1995 in Singapore, thereby allowing for a wider exposure for Asean's creative artists. The Philip Morris group has been one of the major sponsors of the international Tressors art fairs in Singapore.

The Philip Morris Group of Companies, which has its headquarters in the US, describes itself as "the world's largest consumer goods company, manufacturing, marketing and selling more than 3,000 different products worldwide". Incidentally, they are also the people responsible for the very famous "Come to Marlborough county" advertisement.

The Philip Morris Group of Companies has been a patron of the arts in the US and around the world for nearly 40 years, supporting the visual and performing

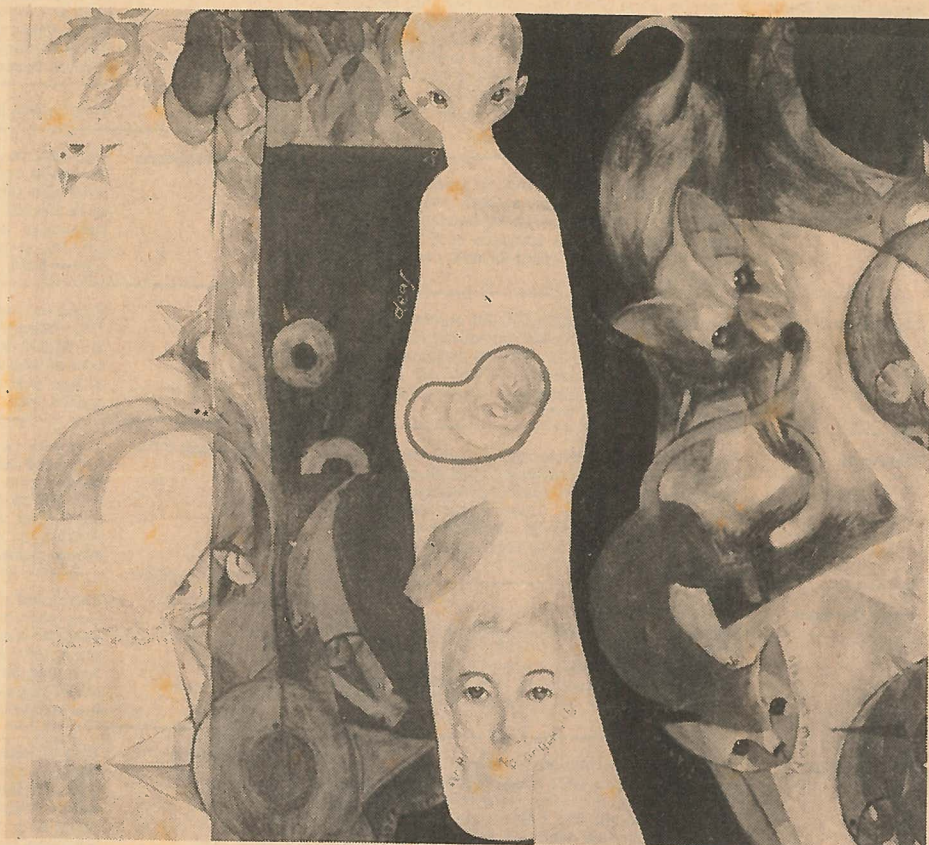


FIGURE 5: Isaac by Wan Hui Jyu, 1995. Oil on canvas. 147cm x 152cm.

arts. In the words of the group's vice-president Donald Harris: "We believe it is important to stay close to the creative process; the arts add vision, vitality and creativity to our people and to our company. In the end, we benefit and contribute to the quality of life in the 180 countries and thousands of communities where we do business."

This year's Malaysian level competition drew 245 entries, a 32 per cent increase over last year's competition. The National Art Gallery has helped organise both last year's and this year's competition for the Philip Morris group.

The Malaysian level judges at this year's competition were artists Joseph Tan, Ponir Amin, Wong Hoy Cheong and the National Art Gallery's acting director Wairah Marzuki. Incidentally, I will be serving as one of the three Asean level judges, working together with three other international judges at the final Asean level competition in Jakarta next month.

The prize money for this year's national level com-

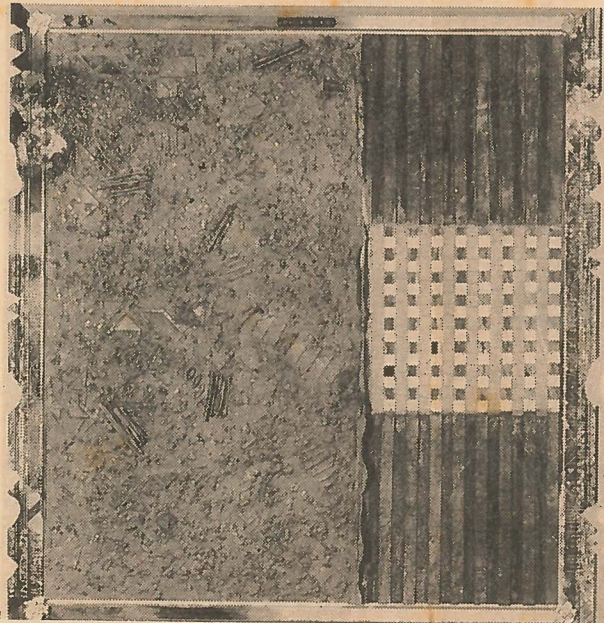


FIGURE 1: Certificate of Fitness by Fauzan Omar, 1965. Mixed media. 173cm x 173cm.

petition has been considerably enlarged — US\$25,000 (US\$1 = RM2.45) to be equally shared by the five winning artists. The five winners this time are Fauzan Omar, Puah Kok Yew, Hasnul Jamal Saidon, Rosli

Zakaria and Wan Hui Jyu (see illustrations).

Honourable Mention certificates were awarded to 22 other participating Malaysian artists. I have been told that all the five

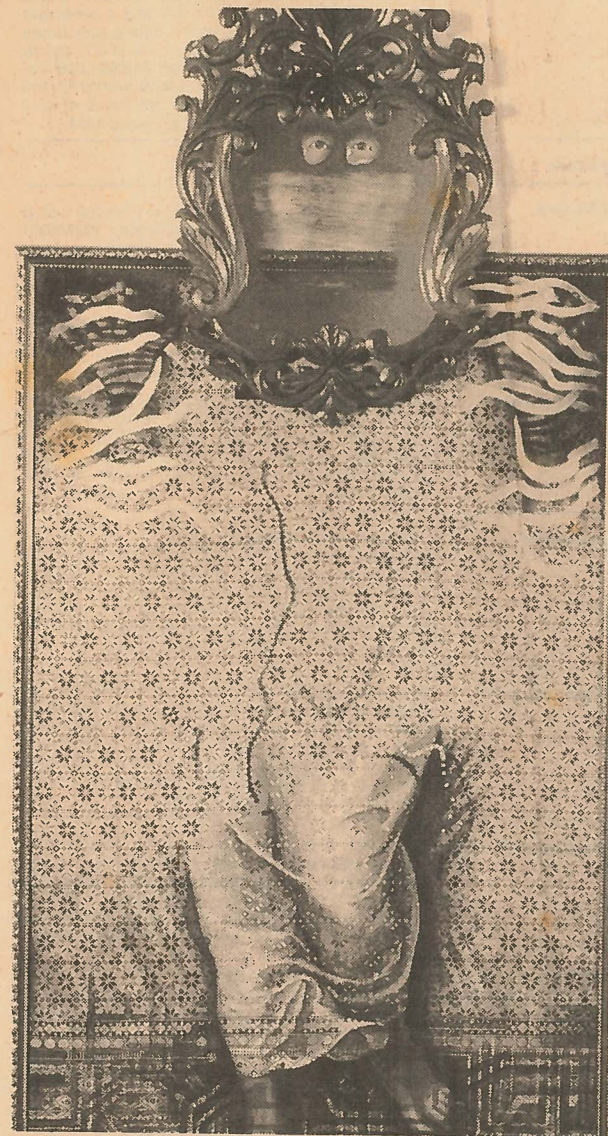


FIGURE 3: Magic Mirror on the Wall Free Me from the Poison of your Gaze by Hasnul Jamal Saidon, undated. Mixed media. 200cm x 90cm.

local finalists will be invited to Jakarta for the award-giving ceremonies on August 28.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, who officiated at the National Art Gallery prize-giving ceremonies on July 17, welcomed the cultural contributions made by the Philip Morris group and added that the participation of the corporate sector is always welcomed. Such competitions can only draw out the best among the region's artists, he added. Also at the ceremonies was Philip Morris (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd general manager John

Wareham.

What becomes clear to the serious visitor to the present exhibition at the National Art Gallery is the very high quality of most of the exhibited works. There is an undeniable energy and exuberance about the show that is most satisfying indeed. That almost all the participating artists are drawn from the younger generation of artists augurs well for the future of the visual art commitment in this country.

The unfortunate thing about all such art competitions is that there will be the few winners and the many non-winners. This remark

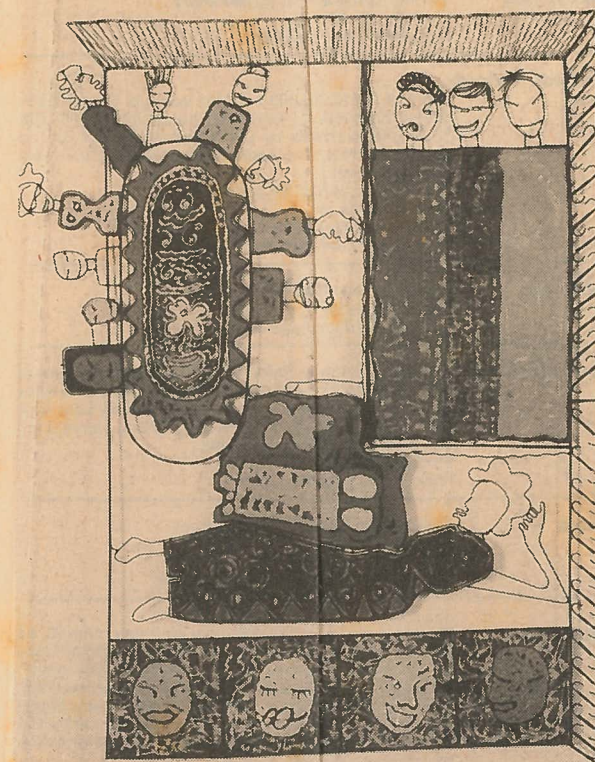


FIGURE 4: Malaysian Family Harmony by Rosli Zakaria, undated. Mixed media. 200cm x 150cm.



FIGURE 2: Camera View of Two Tourists in a Malaysian Town by Puah Kok Yew, 1995. Acrylic on canvas. 163cm x 163cm.

of mine should indicate the impressive overall quality of the show and the very high standards achieved by the participating artists.

The show at the National Art Gallery is well worth a visit. Most of the works are for sale. The exhibition ends on July 30.