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• Senator Kamarul Ariffin looking at Nirmala's exhibits.

Ugliness of war in black and white

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — An emotional intensity surfaces from the painting — an intensity that strips naked the painter's share of the sufferings and anguish of the victims of war, slums and famines.

It is a sensitivity to the destruction of landscape made ugly in the name of progress.

The sombreness and hopelessness is represented in her use of black and white and sad shades of brown, on canvas and photography similar to the techniques used in Bob Fosse's brilliant "Lenny" (the film documentation of the 60's comedian crucified by

By JON TAN

his 'backward generation).

Nirmala Shanmughalingam, 39, portrays her inner self on her works which disturbs the viewer.

"Pollution Piece" is a well-documented statement in photography.

The dumping of industrial waste into rivers; emission of thick black smoke, rubbish and scrap strewn all over the land shouts: "Man is destroying the landscape."

"Vietnam" speaks of the suffering of the victims.

Nirmala hopes to draw the viewer to that level of consciousness and appreciate or even feel the pain and sufferings of war.

She wishes to communicate to the world through her works that man in his strife for progress, has forgotten his basic emotions by defacing the beautiful landscape.

And that is a shame. Nirmala is holding her first solo exhibition at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka from Jan 9 — 16.

Her quest for artistic individualism took her to a non-graduating course at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington in 1966.

In 1970 she attended courses in the history of art at the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard.

She is deeply shocked by the environmental pollution and decay in Kuala Lumpur.

Penang-born Nirmala is married with two children.