



JURNAL HUSIN

Jurnal Husin

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First published in Malaysia in 2020
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About Us

Core Design Gallery is an exclusive boutique art gallery that represents the face of Malaysian contemporary artists and their cutting edge artworks.

With its main philosophy of holding major shows that have critical values and museum qualities, Core Design Gallery aims to create massive awareness on the significance of Malaysian contemporary art through solid art management and important publications.

The gallery is committed to promoting and developing the artists to achieve international standard and global recognition for their quality artworks.

After launching Husin's surprisingly first solo Nostalgia Timur in Maya Gallery Singapore with well received responses, Husin was eager to share his art stories of the daily Malaysian scene with the Malaysian audience. We spent close to 6 months discussion on how to curate a different concept of Husin to the platter of Malaysian audience. The eureka moment came when he posted on instagram a series of meticulous and skilful ink pen drawings on his sketch book during the lockdown period that subsequently sparked the idea of immortalising his sketch journals on canvas with a more three-dimensional approach. If we compare the technical skills of drawing on two different mediums, one is of ink pen on paper and the other acrylic paint on canvas. The latter poses a higher technical difficulty as Husin had to use different sizes of brush to mimic the strokes of the lines. Interestingly the different thickness, depth and stroke of the lines that emerged the brush strokes along with the seemingly disarray movement of figures provides a whole new magnetic approach to this body of works.

When we spoke to Husin, his source of inspiration has been drawn much from Lat a renown Malaysian cartoonist. Like any young Malay boys growing up, the artist was very much influenced by comic magazines such as Gila-Gila. Not that far off from magnum opus Kampung Boy by Lat which is based on a young boy's experience growing up in rural Perak in the 1950s, Husin's approaches similarly to visually illustrate his life in the village in today's times which is year 2020. The year 2020 is a very different time as worldwide pandemic has caused many nations to lockdown especially for Malaysia the period of MCO (movement control order)

a solo exhibition by **Husin Othman**

by Scarlette Lee

from the March to June has shifted the mindset of people to new unprecedented levels. The question arises, is there a paradigm shift between the Kampung Boy of the 1950s and Jurnal Husin of the year 2020.

Born in Perak the same state as Lat, Husin was brought up in the little sleepy village known as Kuala Kurau. During the period of lock down, like any other villages everyone went about to doing their homey activities : people enjoying their morning coffee, children at home crying refusing to do their homework, adults taking their afternoon naps or lazing on the sofa, playing carom with their close ones or even trying to shave their hair (during the lockdown no businesses were opened especially barber shops). The best part about Husin's visuals is that anyone and everyone be it in the village or urban centre can relate. When all the bustling day to day activities were ceased, we find ourselves spending more quality time with ourselves especially with our families.

Jurnal Husin should be seen as an overall narrative that not only captures daily Malaysian scene of a village boy in the year 2020 which is known to be the year of the pandemic crisis. Instead, if we scrutinise deeper, it is more of a self-reflection of our times and during this pandemic times.

“drawing as painting”

by Hawa Basery

“Drawing... forces the artist to look at the object in front of him, to dissect it in his mind's eye and put it together again.” (Berger, 2005)

Drawing has been known as a form of communication in visual arts and also known to be one of the oldest approached through cave drawings since Stone Age era. Producing scratching lines and raw materials to initiate a story telling of the medieval history, have expanded to a beyond contemporary presentation which resulting many experimentations and explorations happened in between the timeline. Expressively through various techniques of art such as two and three-dimensional forms, multiple layered of mediums, texturize mark-making surfaces, digital approaches, and others. These studies have identified as drawings due to technology advancement and new knowledge of new media.

Some theories inquired into observational drawings while others seek drawing in broader views through performative or gestural drawing as well as the interpretation of drawing as visual thinking and situated cognitive. One of the well-known theories is observational drawing by the renowned art and social critic, John Ruskin through his published book in 1857, *Elements of Drawing*, he strongly justified the importance of capturing an observational object within the naked eyes as it forces the eyes to capture details. Generally, in drawing there are a few factors that may contributed in perfecting and refining the technical skills as John Ruskin shares the importance of elements of art in drawing that should be implied on every artworks such as line, shape,



Top: *Dah Sampai Belum...* (2015)
Bottom: *Dah Sampai Kot...*(2015)

form, space, texture, and tone. Ruskin even mentions how subtly that drawing and painting combines its nature not just by colours but the need to understand how to achieve tones of light and shadow effects to provide the various suggestion of studies in producing an artwork.

One of the artists who is known for drawing-like painting technique is Husin Othman and sort of starts his career as a painter who paints about his childhood memories, nostalgia art, family and things that surrounded him in his outskirt hometown. Growing up coming from Perak, he shares the experienced of living in the city of Kuala Lumpur during his student days where he usually hangs out with his friends and he admits the life he had gone through was so different and unusually hectic. Sometimes he does experience a few culture shocked moments that drives him to understand that this is how busy and bustling Kuala Lumpur city. Graduating from UiTM in 2013, he started to develop the concept of minimal black-and-white colour scheme depicting a hazy narrative from the past with figurative manner which represent his ideology of revisit the childhood memories in his artworks, *Dah Sampai Belum...* and *Dah Sampai Kot...*(2015). He demonstrates an in-depth observation and commentary on the scene when children were allowed a greater deal of freedom and adventure, due to the nature of a ruralized environment. He was later then developing the idea of using contouring lines which creates a whole different view of his works such as *Halaman* (2019) in East Look East IV. He produces such peaceful background of nature and hectic lines that comes in a panel of 4 canvases which later combines as one whole new image of artwork.

Husin collectively produces painted drawing that may distinctively put him in drawing category that plays a huge role in developing his artistic career also he had remained this platonic illustrative style for many years that coincidentally correlated to his latest solo exhibition. Jurnal Husin depicts his latest sets of 14 works that talks about his situation and his experienced during this outbreak pandemic Covid-19. Jurnal Husin was derived from his studies of recording the pandemic situation through his sketchbook where he expresses the villagers, and his family reacts towards the pandemic. Him as an artist may not felt so much different with or without this pandemic issue as he does practice isolation and distancing from people also Husin states the perception of this outbreak in his artworks that the issue might change people's perspective but however may not entirely change the human social behaviour.

Formally, there are a few classifications that comprehensively charge in producing different styles and techniques in drawing such as contour drawing, gesture drawing, emotive drawing, illustration drawing and others. Since the renaissance era, figurative is one of the essential skills to practice for painting and sculpting which resulting this foundation artistic skills to be mastered perfectly in order to excel any anatomy understanding. When attempting to draw figurative, there are a few reasons to abide in principle of art such as balance, emphasize, proportion, movement,

perspective, and others that controls the main function of figurative drawing. Similarly, in *The Winner of Warriors*, he executes manipulative of human figure and balancing out by creating a space to portray how he symbolically places the human figures riding on carousel that goes round and round in circles for chance to fight their way out also this was one of his challenge in exploring the oil paint colour to fully paint human figure.

Contour drawing emphasizes mass and volume of the subject rather than the details which mostly in a sketching ideation manner before to a fully functional technical drawing. Contour lines also helps to convey a three-dimensional perspective, length, width as well as thickness and depth to emphasize the shape of an object. This technique showed in various styles and is practiced for drawing development to master the subject characteristics. In *Much Ado About Drawing*, Husin executes continuous series of contour drawing in his artworks, *Random Access Memory (RAM)* as he creates 16 panels of canvases and draws a random images individually but when it is combined, it become one whole different images. Each panel is carefully composed and at a single glance, *Random Access Memory (RAM)* has seemingly rushed and chaotic look but accurately proportioned while grants finishing touches with shades of colours to immerse this scene in harmony.

Unlike gesture drawing, the primary purpose is to capture the human body movement within the short period of time which does not required a detail drawing but enough to understand the muscle movement of a body anatomy. For instance, Husin produces two artworks in *1Meter Apart* titled *Social Distancing* and *Anti-Social Distancing* (2020) where he uses a monochromatic colours to enhance the atmosphere happened in between two session of time and shares the idea of the pandemic situation also uses the gestural line effect to create the movement of him while distancing from others. Slight movement from sideways or perhaps just simply a gesture of looking out the window which enhance the mood that he expresses sitting alone with the handphone which he was trying to portray the unaffected changes of social behaviour but just merely the perception alike.

In like manner, Illustration drawing explains, clarifies, illuminates, visually represents, or merely decorates a written text, which may be of a literary or commercial nature. Historically, book, magazine and newspaper illustrations have been the predominant forms of visual art, although illustrators have also used their graphic skills in the fields of poster art, advertisements, comic books, animation art and others. Most illustrative drawings were done in pen and ink, charcoal, or metal point which they are replicated using a variety of print processes including woodcuts, engraving

and others. Husin Othman has done many astonishing illustration drawings reflected on his study days minoring in graphic design and he had carried the cartoon-like style for years as he had developed to fineness.

During his two man show *The Frames of Two Culture*, he had created sort of fun and whimsical paintings such as *Gores dan Kena* (2018) where he was inspired by the concept of the many scratch and win contests, Husin paints the now-extinct game of tikam nombor that was a keen favourite amongst the village kids. Available in the heydays at the local kedai runcit (Malay for convenience store), village kids frequently hung out at these stores, trying their hand at the game in hopes of winning their favourite toy or gift. Simultaneously, presents itself as a documentary heritage of the long-forgotten game that was once a favourite among the kids of the heydays. And as the country progresses and evolves, it lies as an interesting concept how simplistic the tikam nombor game has evolved to today's scratch and win contests.

Sketching on contrary is another form of expression that in some ways produced more relax and spontaneous movement that does not required any perfection in projecting the exact subject or imageries. Designers have consistently used sketching as an important tool in the design processes. Whereas, sketching in the design



From Left to Right:

The Winner of Warriors (2019),
Random Access Memory (RAM)
(2017)



From Left to Right:

Social Distancing (2020),
Anti Social Distancing (2020),
Gores dan Kena (2018)

environment is not the same as classical sketching in the sense of making beautiful art-like drawings. Sketching in the design context is regularly not an objective in itself but can be considered as a tool to make better designs. Sketching is a very direct way of putting your thoughts down in two-dimensional and has several different useful effects as ordering your thoughts, better understanding of difficult shapes, functioning as a communication tool, and providing an iterative way of developing shapes. The ability to draw fast also plays a role in creative solution seeking processes, because creating more alternatives increases the chances for better ideas. Similarly, in Jurnal Husin, he shares the three-dimensional version of his sketchbook that consist of compositional records of daily lives in his surrounding town of Kuala Kurau, Perak. Out of the frame sketchbook of Husin leaves an impression how an artist document his reference, his images and before the execution to a bigger canvas. Mimicking the characters that plays a role during the period of lockdown which expressively contrast than his previous artworks.

Drawing from observation takes practice and requires maximum time to perfect the execution as well as studying objects close-up also needs patience to achieve great details. As John Berger had mentioned that whenever humans look at something, they observe the relation between the image and themselves which they are also aware that they can be seen by others. For example, one of Husin's latest artwork in *Juadah Kita I* and *II*, Husin studies the everyday scene in the kopitiam stall where his village neighbours gather around and nonetheless shares their

interest talks about the world current issue also he adds on gestural and transparent movement of the objects that surrounded him. Crowded and whimsically packed with old common objects such as phone booth, ice shaver machine, old rattan chair, chess, and carom game table also ambiguous human figurative shows in different side of canvases to depicts the great detail for portraying his observation.

However, emotive drawing is similar towards painting that emphasizes the exploration and expression of different emotions, feelings, and moods. These are generally depicted in the form of a personality by the artist wanted to share his essence of feelings or memories that portrays in his artworks. Emotions in drawing can be shown more than just facial expression which body language also plays a significant form in producing better expressive artworks. The stance of the subject may possible conveyed pain,

Top to Bottom:

*Siri November: Terik Pagi (2014),
Siri November: Riu Petang(2014)*



sadness, dejection, euphoria or practically any emotions. The image may be completely hidden but the emotions are able to perceive the feeling just by a simple moment of how the artworks are presented. The surroundings also contributed a huge role in portraying the emotional type of drawing which most probably relates with the person's current mood. Previously in his work, *Siri November: Terik Pagi* and *Riu Petang*, Husin demonstrates the eye for composition by balancing the visual weight of the elements in the painting through light and dark effects as well as the subjects and scenery. Husin also creates a sense of perspective and depth through the distant telephone poles in the background of the painting which represents a visual diary that examines two situations that are similar from the aspect of the location and characters, but starkly in contrast at the same time.

In a sum that drawing is a foundation understanding that is important to excel in any forms of art such as performing arts, graphic design, architecture, and others. Not to mention that drawing is an essential movement before executing the bigger process making also drawing is a very flexible form that can be initiate in any art disciplinaries. In this latest body of works of Jurnal Husin, each work may appear to look like a painting, but with the use of different lines strokes and confident bold brush strokes of hatching lines clearly represents the artist's technical skill in drawing. Most evidently, through the use of different elements in drawing, Husin has definitely provided a robust meaning to concept of drawing as painting which signifies him as one of the talented painters for his own area.



Juadah Kita I
Acrylic on Canvas
152cm x 183cm
2020



Juadah Kita II
Acrylic on Canvas
152cm x 183cm
2020



Mesin Baru I
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 107cm
2020



Mesin Baru II
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 107cm
2020



Bantal Merah
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Bantal Putih
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Minum Petang I
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Minum Petang I
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Pakej COD
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Makan Luar
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Tekak Sejuk
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Angin Bawah Rumah
Acrylic on Canvas
92cm x 92cm
2020



Teriak Pagi
Acrylic on Canvas
76cm x 76cm
2020



Teriak Petang
Acrylic on Canvas
76cm x 76cm
2020

Biography of Husin Othman

by Elaine Loh

A quiet scene of derelict bridge...a common street scene with the much-forgotten phone booths of the not-so long-ago Malaysia...boy scouts standing at attention... young boys hard at play under the gruelling sun...happy at a simple game of cans and bottle tops. These are the common themes in which emerging artist Husin Othman indulges in. His art subject matters have primarily been re-enactment of his childhood days, of the plays that once revelled in and of places that once was.

Born as a twin boy, it comes as a natural consequence for artist Husin Othman where his works are rarely lonesome. And when they say twins are closely intertwined from birth, this rings particularly true for Husin Othman and his brother who are both naturally artistically inclined, distinct from their other siblings. Hailing from a large family in the town of Kuala Kurau, Perak, Husin has been in love and drawn to art since his naïve kindergarten days.

A kampung boy at heart, drawing has always been his thing, his life's passion. As the seventh child within the family of eight siblings, Husin grew up in a closely-knit family where his days were mostly enlightened with the hopes of looking forward to the times where he and his siblings would run off to play around his native village, after a hard day's work of studying and helping with the family. As he runs off into the sunset, playing by the river or merely hanging out at the

local warung (Malay for hawker stall), these scenes remain close to the heart of the artist and are often irrevocably revitalised within his many art repertoires.

Growing up to the humble and quiet man that Husin is, he is truly a man of few words where he silently observes and refines his drawing and painterly skills to the hilt, often duly narrating his life experiences, of his good times and bad onto the art medium of choice be it the canvas or the modest paper. Drawing after drawing, he quietly rose to prominence representing his school in various art competitions. While pursuing his life's passion through his art diploma studies in IKIP, Husin came forth as a finalist in the art competition by our very own National Arts Gallery during just his first year of diploma studies. Then onward, Husin quietly gained recognition as a promising young art student, duly attaining the Best Achiever Award during his final year 2010 diploma show at IKIP.

A fine arts graduate with a minor in graphic from our locally renowned arts institution MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Husin underwent various fine art techniques during his undergraduate years. It was in the course of his thesis study in 2012 that he chanced upon the concept of nostalgia, of the old ways and realised its bearing and importance in the contemporary era of today. As a kampung boy, his growing up years were truly reflective of

the life and times of the Malaysian life, yet it puzzled him as to how many of us were keenly unaware of the livelihood and nature scenes of dear Malaysia. Thus Husin took it in stride to rekindle lost memories, gently granting his take on the development of the contemporary society of Malaysia today, thereby augmenting his role within our local arts scene as a documentary narrator of the cultural heritage and society of contemporary Malaysia through the years.

Fresh upon graduation in 2013, Husin garnered recognition as a finalist to the MEA (Malaysian Emerging Art) Award and in a short span of a year later in 2014, he won the UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia) award as the Most Promising Artist of the Year within the emerging artist category. Painted against a white background that is suggestive of the sunny days of Malaysia, his painting titled Antara Dua Unit speaks of the normal day out for Malaysian students carrying out their daily school activities. Simplistic, the somewhat misshapen boys stand at attention, seemingly begrudgingly sweltering from the heat of the sun. The void spaces within the painting paints the mood, suggestive of the vast empty school field which each and every one of us has assembled at during our school years and rekindles our memories of the heydays schooling in Malaysia. The boys, seemingly distorted, paint a lighter mood within the painting, granting it a comical flair as Husin takes inspiration from the renowned Lat comics.

For Husin, his art repertoire is primarily of figurative realism. Armed with a minor in graphics, his art carry traces of illustration, owing to his profound liking for the works of Norman Rockwell and Ashley Wood. Minimal in essence, Husin's paintings are mostly of muted palette, of whites, blacks and shades in between. His play with void spaces and expressionistically smeared and abraded paint handling masterfully grants his works with dreamlike state of time that once was, yet enabling his audiences to connect easily through the skilful play by interweaving contemporary elements of today. *Siri November: Terik Pagi* and *Riuh Petang* from the 2014 Soya Cincau exhibition was a keen testament to Husin's painterly skills where he works of shades of black, white and grey that attests to the two vastly distinct time of the day; from the sunny morning to the rainy evening.

From minimal colour palette of white-black-grey tones, Husin's repertoire steadily grew as he took on more vibrant colours into his portfolio. Works such as *Buah Haji* and *Kehidupan Yang Judi* bore witness to Husin's expanded portfolio as he took on vibrant colours of green, blue, red and gold with ease. Consequently in 2017, Husin proved yet another talented repertoire as he rose to the challenge to attest to his drawing skills through his latest work, *Random Access Memory*. A stark contrast from his previous acrylic on canvas works, his latest acrylicum-charcoal work *Random*

Access Memory proves to be his first puzzle work. Inspired by the Rubik's cube, the work consists of four by four panels and is made up of a myriad of random scenes. Husin skilfully works his pure undulated lines across the 16-panelled work to create a singular image above all, while keeping each panel scene intact and undisturbed. Garnering much attention from the audience, *Random Access Memory* was a clear attestation to Husin's keen figurative skill where each scene is adequately composed and of accurate proportions.

A man of few words, Husin often paints from the observations of the world around him. His art is expressionistic and unassumingly belies a journey of his life, as he expresses his thoughts and emotions on canvas. As a native Malaysian, he brings with him Nusantara traces of his heritage, sharing a glimpse of the Malay culture, of traditional games, craft and livelihood. The colour hues of the Nusantara and raw undulated lines and strokes concede to the very heart of the Malay culture.

Nostalgia in art is not a new subject matter. Nostalgia is essentially a sentimentality for the past, of good times and /or preferred places where one carries joyful personal associations. As a concept, Husin's choice of nostalgia is

befitting to his nature, granting him an avenue not only to share with his audience the ways of the past but also as an avenue for expression. Closely intertwined, we are shaped by our life experiences both good and bad. The concept of nostalgia is a common one as we do, in one time or another in our lives, keenly reflect and reminisce of the past. It is a concept and an experience that everyone engages in, be it through art or indulging in our self-thoughts. After all, nostalgia more often than not, promotes good mood, happy thoughts and improves social connectivity as we look back on the happy times.

Naturally so, nostalgia lies as a foundational element for the rise of Romanticism movement in the 1800s, acting as an escape reaction from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. The Romantic era beckoned much growth in the arena of visual arts, literature and music; thereby contributing to its economic growth. The Romanticism movement too led to the birthing of many key artists and poets, establishing its historical mark and contributions to today's society.

True to its words, it is important to know your past to help understand your present and thus allowing one to shape our future. This is further reiterated in the famous words of Theodore Roosevelt when he quoted 'I believe that the

more you know about the past, the better you are prepared for the future'. Shaped by our life experiences, many a times, we reflect on our bygone days, learn from our past actions in an attempt to pave a better future. Taking this to mind, the concept of nostalgia and its contributory ways are keenly important and helpful for the development of many a thing.

Husin's portfolio of works is deeply enshrined around the concept of nostalgia as he paints his reflections of the nostalgic ways of our Malaysian society. His creative and artistic talent is duly commendable as he skilfully marries the times that-once-was in the contemporary manner of today, duly testifying to his ability to connect with his audiences of today. Through the years, it is clear that his artistic career is a progressive one, not only in terms of his skills but also in the development of his nostalgic concept.



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