

bracing the heat

by fauzan OMAR

PREVIEW

5 SEPTEMBER 2018

6PM

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

6 - 19 SEPTEMBER 2018

11AM - 7PM

(Closed on Mondays and public holidays)

THE **EDGE**
GALERIE

G5-G6, Mont'Kiara Meridin,
19 Jalan Duta Kiara, Mont'Kiara,
50480 Kuala Lumpur



Detail of the work, *Panas Di Dalam Hari 2*, on page 15

BURNING ISSUE

Recently-retired art educationist Fauzan Omar has reached a milestone in his art career. Finally free from the rigours of academia, 67-year-old Fauzan has devoted all his energies in the past year to come up with an astonishing 200-odd pieces of artworks that form 13 captivating sets to express his long-burning concern about the dire straits of our natural environment.

In his latest solo exhibition, *Bracing the Heat*, Fauzan — one of Malaysia's most respected contemporary artists — offers scorched wood collages and images of orbs as well as his signature paintings and carved motifs to reflect the flora of the Malaysian rainforest under threat from climate change.

But given his technique of intense layering of motifs and colours, Fauzan's latest works are not overtly concerned about death and destruction. Rather, they are about nature coping with the dire consequences of mankind's unbridled greed for land resources, and so on.

Land clearing schemes — whether legal or not — come immediately to mind. Large-scale destruction of rainforests in the name of progress to come up with modern plantations will eventually bring consequences, as Fauzan alludes to in his work. To depict bare landscapes would be too conventional a composition. His contemporary works always have a certain delicate element of beauty. To fully appreciate the full extent of their impact, the artworks have to be viewed in a proper gallery setting.

Fauzan has been involved in the arts for some 30 years, devoting most of his waking hours to educating and nurturing art students. He has been a mentor to quite a few artists, including Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, whose *Made in Malaysia* exhibition was held at The Edge Galerie from Sept 27 to Oct 13 last year. The senior artist is also a close friend of Shukri's wife and fellow artist Umibaizurah Mahir @ Ismail, who has also exhibited with The Edge Galerie (*Fragile*, July 20 to Aug 5, 2016). In fact, it was Umibaizurah who suggested that Fauzan show his work in our gallery.

Since retiring from Universiti Sains Malaysia last year, Fauzan has worked feverishly to transform the long-simmering ideas in his head into the works that we see today. The pieces selected for this exhibition are deemed to be the best in his new series.

We congratulate Fauzan for his devotion to his art and the utter discipline in committing himself to this exhibition.

Ho Kay Tat
Publisher and CEO
The Edge Media Group

EVER-CHANGING NATURE AND ART

By Chris Cheng and John Lim

With the wildly irregular weather patterns and major fluctuations in temperature, it is quite apt and timely to have an art exhibition that focuses on heat.

Veteran artist Fauzan Omar's latest solo exhibition is called, *Bracing the Heat*. The 67-year-old, who lives in Penang, explains that it is "an everyday engagement and reaction to the excessive and unbearable heat".

Fauzan's well known leaf-motif paintings are featured in this exhibition, together with smaller bodies of works that are combined to form sets. The 10 major works of leaf-motif paintings entitled *Blazing Flame 1 & 2*, *Enormous Heat 1 & 2*, *Panas di Malam Hari 1 & 2*, *Ready to Ignite 1 & 2* and *Tropical Heat 1 & 2* are in three sizes. They each span between 1.5m by 1.5m and 1.5m by 1.8m. The four sets of installations are entitled *Matahari*, *Bara*, *Without Rain* and *Kemarau*.

In his latest series, Fauzan has added collage material such as fabric and plastic as well as a complex layering technique and minute painting details that resemble pressed flowers and leaves.

For example, in *Blazing Flame 1*, he layers plastic material on the canvas. Points out Fauzan, "It depicts the unpredictable effects of burning, so I do not have to paint an image of the flame. And the flowers used are fabric so it produces a three-dimensional look.

"The process of my work include flattening, gilding, levelling, attaching and detaching. My art is all about being modular. When I talk about levelling, all those motifs are carved, then they need to be covered and levelled.

"Such a technique also offers an element of surprise. There's no more tearing. I sometimes go back to the technique of collage in order to enhance it."

'NOT A CLIMATE CHANGE ARTIST'

In the *Matahari* works, Fauzan seems to have drifted towards a much more abstract approach than usual. According to him, the circular two-dimensional discs are signs and symbols of "unavoidable, unimaginable and uncontrollable tragedies that might happen". These discs also appear in the *Kemarau* and *Bara* series.

"I was thinking of ways to translate [my thoughts] about the weather in a way that would not categorise me as a 'climate change artist'. I didn't want that," says Fauzan, pointing out the change in his aesthetic approach. "I look at signs and symbols that lead to the unavoidable, unimaginable and uncontrollable tragedies that might happen."

The discs are slightly imperfect and have a slight relief in the paint, adding another dimension to the artworks. This is intentional as the circles resemble Earth.

Fauzan remarks, "It's a spiral of time, something that constantly moves round and round. The circle isn't perfect because Earth isn't, with its pollution and environmental destruction."

As for his *Bara* work which comprises strips of scorched wood, the artist alludes to the detrimental effects of pollution.

“I pick up the burnt wood and strip off the layers. The magnitude of the flame as you can see has been intense. The planet is no longer perfect, parts of it have been blackened because of pollution.”

Could these paintings then be considered as predictions? “Maybe,” says Fauzan. “Heatwaves have struck both Greece and California. Malaysia has not been hit as badly yet, but it very well might.”

WHY NATURE?

Looking at his career spanning more than three decades, it is evident that Fauzan loves to paint nature. As he says, “My scope of interest is strictly confined to nature. The manifestation of my art is all about nature.”

Why?

“I’m fascinated with and captivated by the mysterious [phenomenon] of irregular weather patterns, I am trying to understand the underlying structures, the patterns of change in our climate.”

Citing his older works, Fauzan says, “My last series was *Hazardous Beauty*. It was about [the haze], a catastrophic and disastrous phenomenon. And how do I see the beauty in it? Can fire and charred wood become art? Before that, I had a series in which I talked about sustainable development.”

Nature remains the main theme in the artworks as the interconnection between it and people is obvious.

“We are nature. It is part and parcel of our lives. You cannot detach yourself from the environment; it will be with you forever. [It is our duty] to safeguard it, to be responsible for it,” says Fauzan.

The artist poses the following questions.

“Water is a sort of security for us now, but what happens when it runs out? Especially with the heat right now, what if our dams run dry? What happens then? What will be the consequences?

“This is why I think the environment is very important.”

STRUGGLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Born in Kelantan, Fauzan is the fourth of nine children. He is also the only one of his siblings who studied art while the rest became teachers.

“It was a difficult time growing up in the 1960s, because nobody respected you when you graduated with an art degree,” recalls the artist.

“There was a point in time when I almost gave up. The institutions provided no support, the National Art Gallery held only exhibitions by big names like (Datuk) Syed Ahmad Jamal, (Datuk) Ibrahim Hussein and Latiff Mohidin. If you tried to exhibit there yourself, you would always be compared with them.”

EDUCATION HERE AND IN THE US

Fauzan cites Ismail Zain and the late Redza Piyadasa as two people who influenced him the most. He adds that Yeoh Jin Leng, Dr Sulaiman Esa and the late Syed Ahmad Jamal are artists that he holds in high regard.

Fauzan recalls fondly, “They were my teachers when I was at UiTM. Jin Leng came in as an external assessor and he ‘walloped’ me!”

“When I was a student, Piyadasa was all for my work, but Dr Sulaiman Esa was against my work! If they were teaching, they would quarrel constantly and I would be caught in the middle. They were very direct, very shrewd and aggressive. But at the end of the day, we were all like friends.”

Fauzan went on to further his studies in the US and was accepted into the Maryland Institute College of Art. There, he had the pleasure of meeting American artists such as Sam Gilliam, Jim Dine and the late Alice Neel.

“Speaking with them provided me with different perspectives. Jim Dine said to me, ‘Throw away the books and forget about the writers. Always do something that you think is right.’ But I disagree. I need the books because I can’t make something out of nothing.”

On differences in the art scenes of Malaysia and the US, Fauzan comments, “There was very strong support from institutions in the US ... there are so many galleries. There was no such thing as an exclusive contract where you would sign and only show your works with one gallery.

“In Malaysia, it’s more about connections, about ‘who you know’. If I wanted to exhibit at gallery ‘A’, then I would have to know person ‘A’, and so on.”

Studying art in the US truly impacted Fauzan’s career as an educationist and artist.

Recalling his early years in the 1980s as a lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Fauzan found it “difficult” especially where people there were taught to be rigid and stuck to the conventional way of teaching and learning. “Teaching was not that easy when they made everything simple,” says the former art lecturer who also faced criticisms of his art.

In 1985, he finally won the first prize in the Permodalan Nasional Berhad Art Competition in Kuala Lumpur after getting only consolation prizes in 1972 and 1982.

“It was a turning point. The people who condemned my work earlier, they kept quiet after that,” remarks Fauzan, who still rankles at the thought of the rejection of his art when he first started out.

And he still holds dear to his early works such as the painting he submitted in 1971 to the Great Malaysian Landscape Art Competition organised by the National Art Gallery. Instead of painting a landscape, the work was about natural forces such as thunderstorm and soil erosion that brought disasters. That work won a consolation prize.

“I have never detached myself from nature. It has become my main subject and it is manifested in my art,” adds Fauzan, who has experienced his fair share of disappointments and achievements.

“In 1988, I won the major award in the mural competition organised by the Association of Banks Malaysia at the National Art Gallery. And that was a high point. The prize was RM20,000.”

Buoyed by his success in art competitions, Fauzan felt confident enough to hold his first solo exhibition in 1991 at the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. But not a single one of his works sold.

But his luck soon turned for the better. In 1995, he won another major award in the Philip Morris Art Competition at the National Art Gallery. And in the same year, he received the Australian Cultural Award from the International Cultural Relations Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

Although over the past three decades, Fauzan has been involved in group exhibitions in Japan, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, Indonesia and the United States, he has kept his career as an artist on the back-burner as he was spending most of his time teaching.

But in recent years, Fauzan has become more active in reigniting his art career. In 2016, he participated in a couple of residency programmes. One was at Thaksin University in Thailand and the other at University of Dhaka in Bangladesh.

Since January last year, Fauzan has retired as a lecturer from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and has devoted most of his waking hours to his art.

In fact, art has consumed him and he agonises over the minutest details of his work. “Each time I think about, how to make the artworks different because I do not want people to come and see the same things all over again.”

Reflecting on how teaching has benefited his artistic career, Fauzan says, “It’s about approach, methodology, teaching, commitment and knowledge. Teaching art is different from being an artist. You have to know the right methodology, the right technique in teaching. It gave me a proper structure to work with, and vice versa, it also benefited my teaching.”

What stage of his career is he at? He simply answers, “I don’t know where I stand right now. All I can say is I am more mature and can distinguish between the wrong and right.”

APPRECIATION

Fauzan expresses gratitude, “I just want to give my thanks to all who have supported me. I am really grateful for the opportunity to have an exhibition. I see this as something new. When I was offered to have a show here, I worked non-stop for one whole year.”

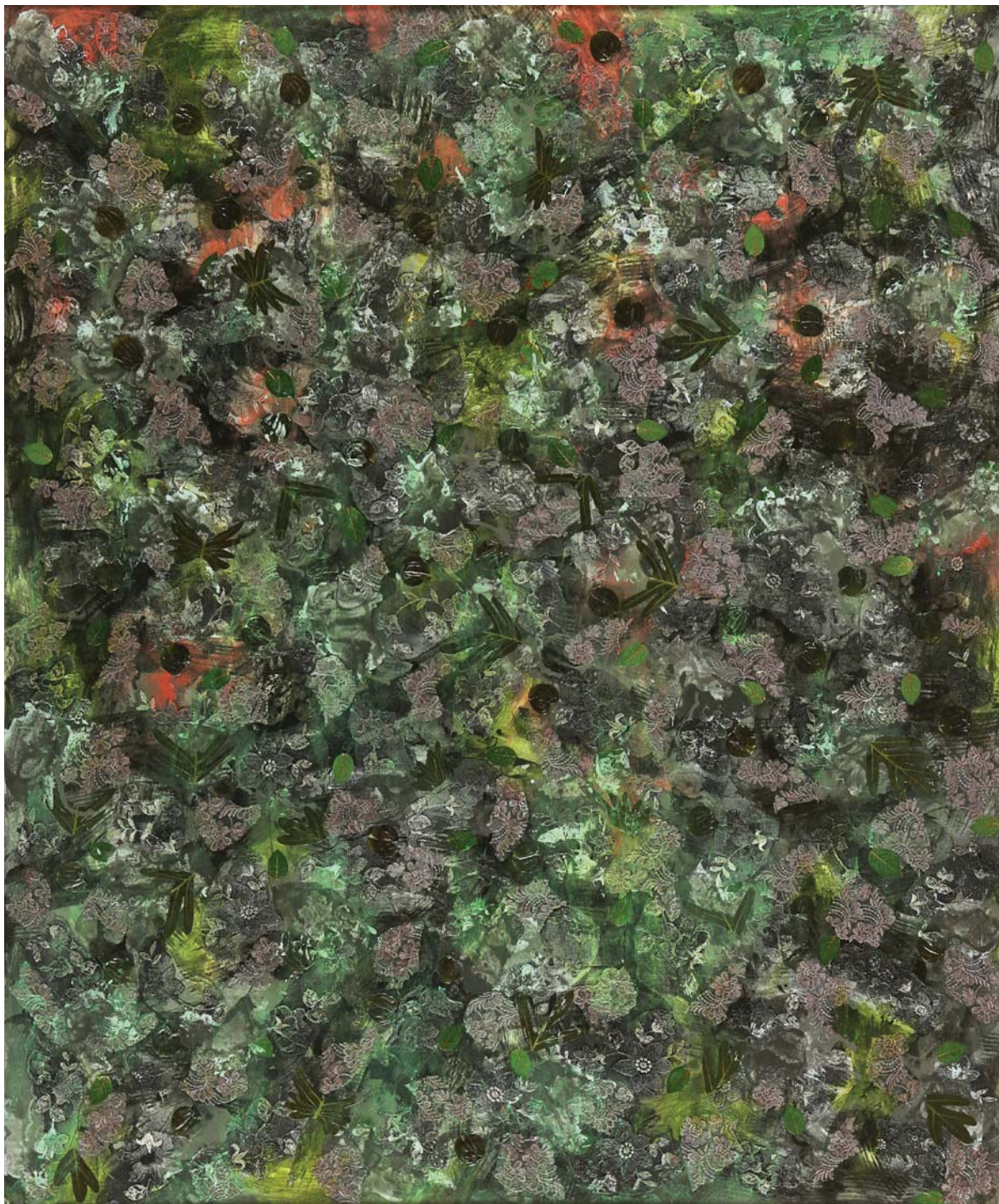
artworks



TROPICAL HEAT 1
2018
183cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



TROPICAL HEAT 2
2018
183cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



PANAS DI MALAM HARI 1
2018
183cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



PANAS DI MALAM HARI 2
2018
183cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



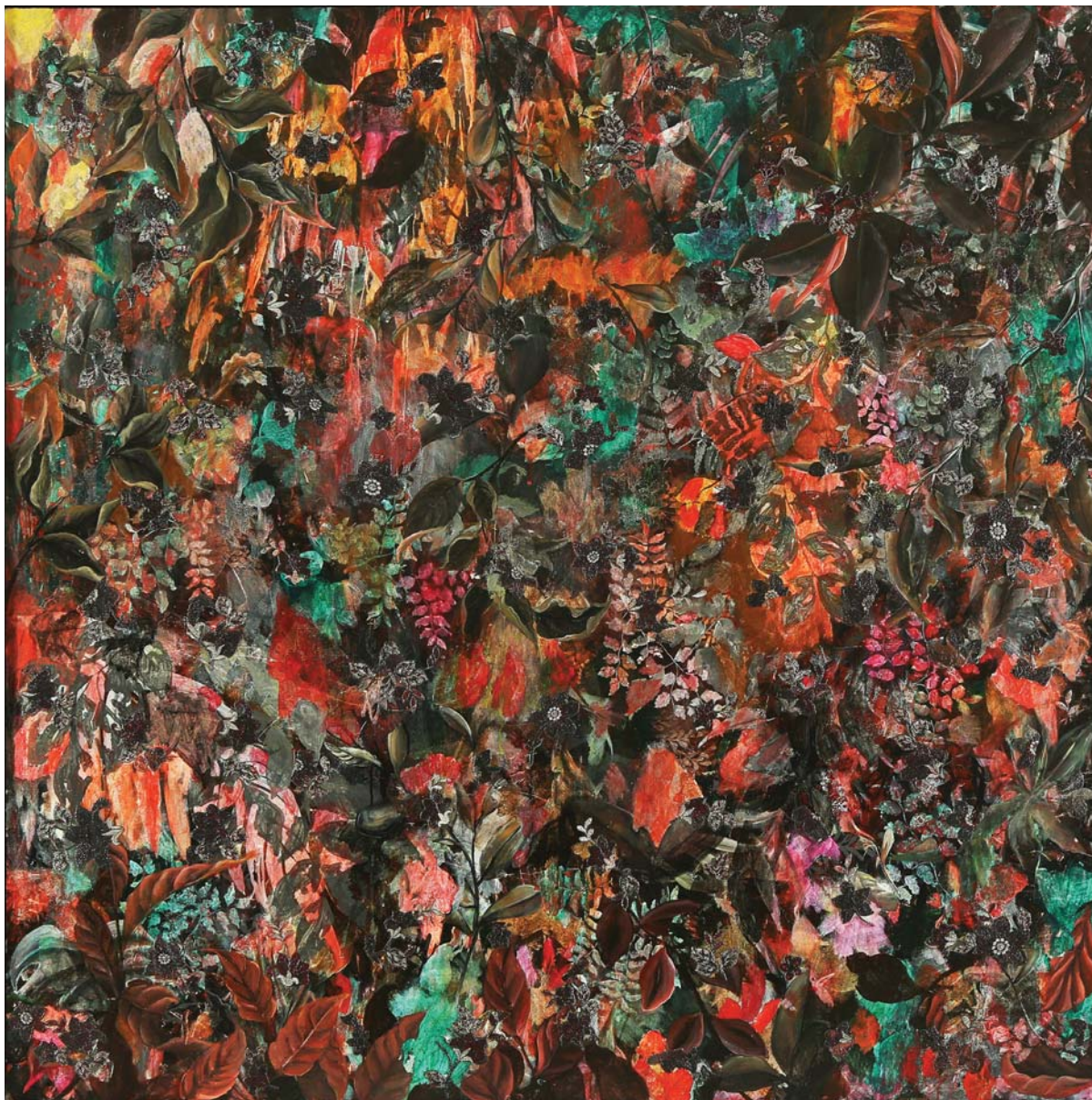
BLAZING FLAME 1
2018
152.5cm x 168cm
Mixed media on canvas



BLAZING FLAME 2
2018
152.5cm x 168cm
Mixed media on canvas



ENORMOUS HEAT 1
2018
152.5cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



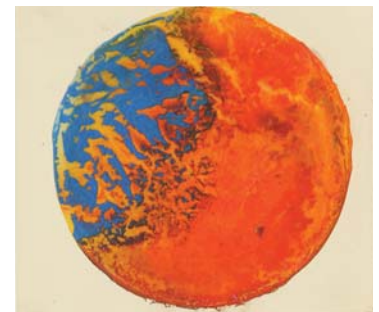
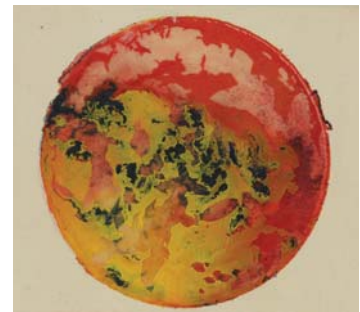
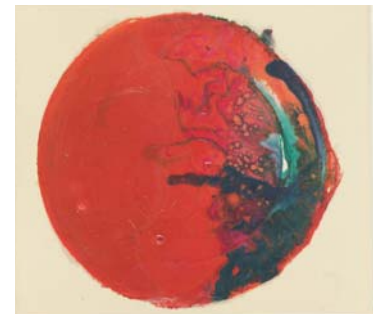
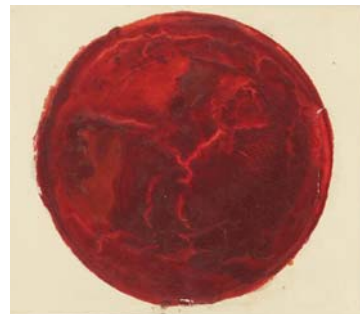
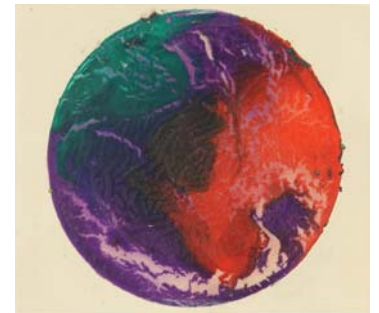
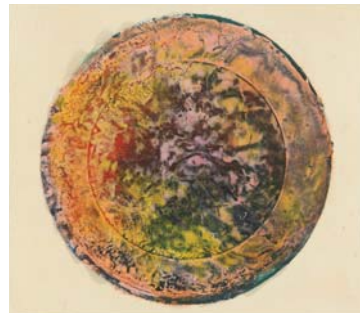
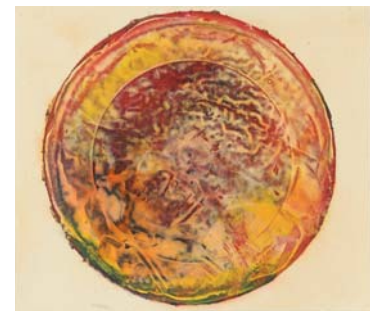
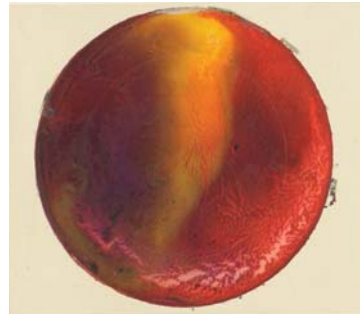
ENORMOUS HEAT 2
2018
152.5cm x 152.5cm
Mixed media on canvas



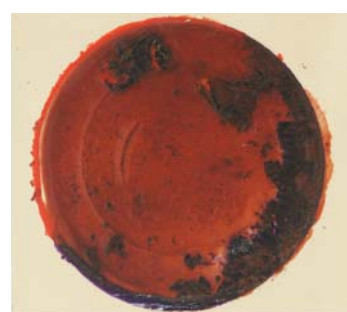
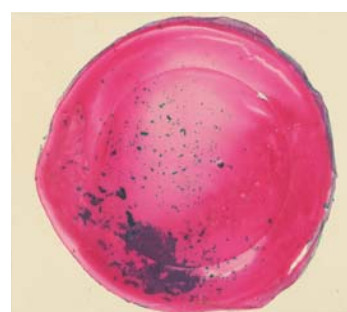
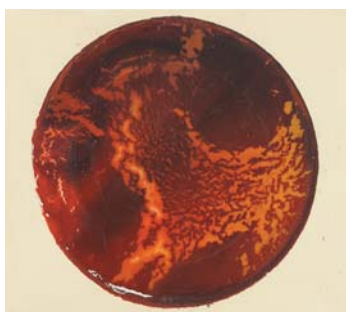
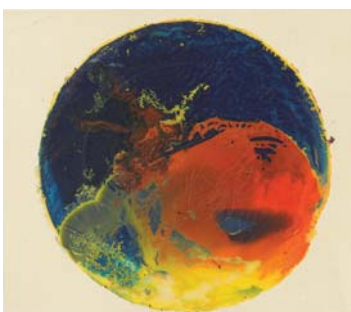
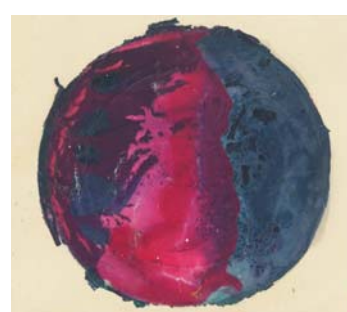
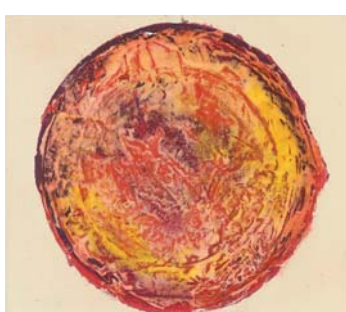
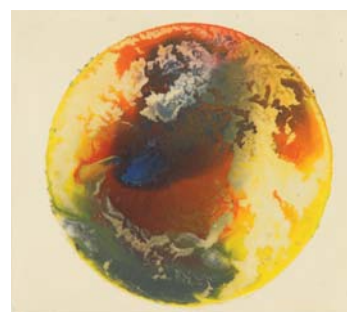
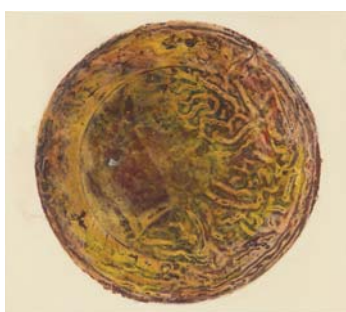
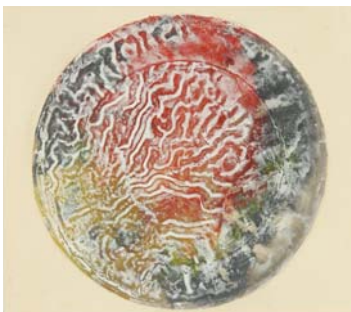
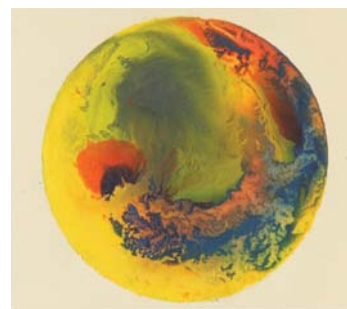
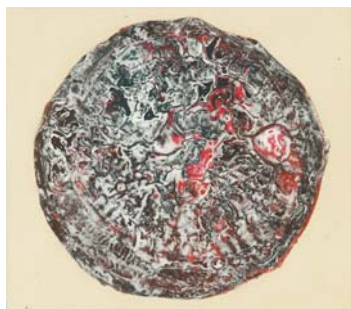
READY TO IGNITE 1
2015-2017
153cm x 153cm
Acrylic on canvas



READY TO IGNITE 2
2015-2017
153cm x 153cm
Acrylic on canvas



MATAHARI
2018
30cm x 30.5cm
Mixed media on canvas





WITHOUT RAIN

2018

40.5cm x 8cm, 24.5cm x 50cm

Gloss paint on burnt wood & mixed media
on wood panel

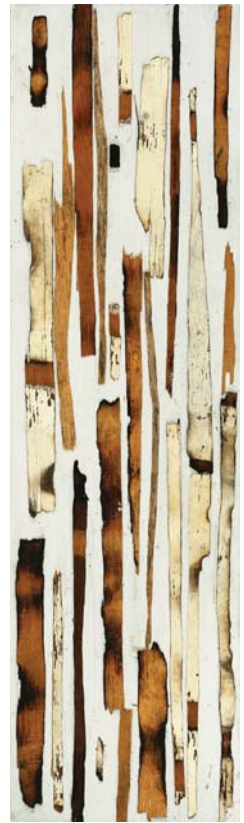
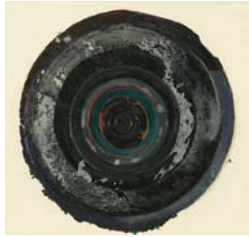




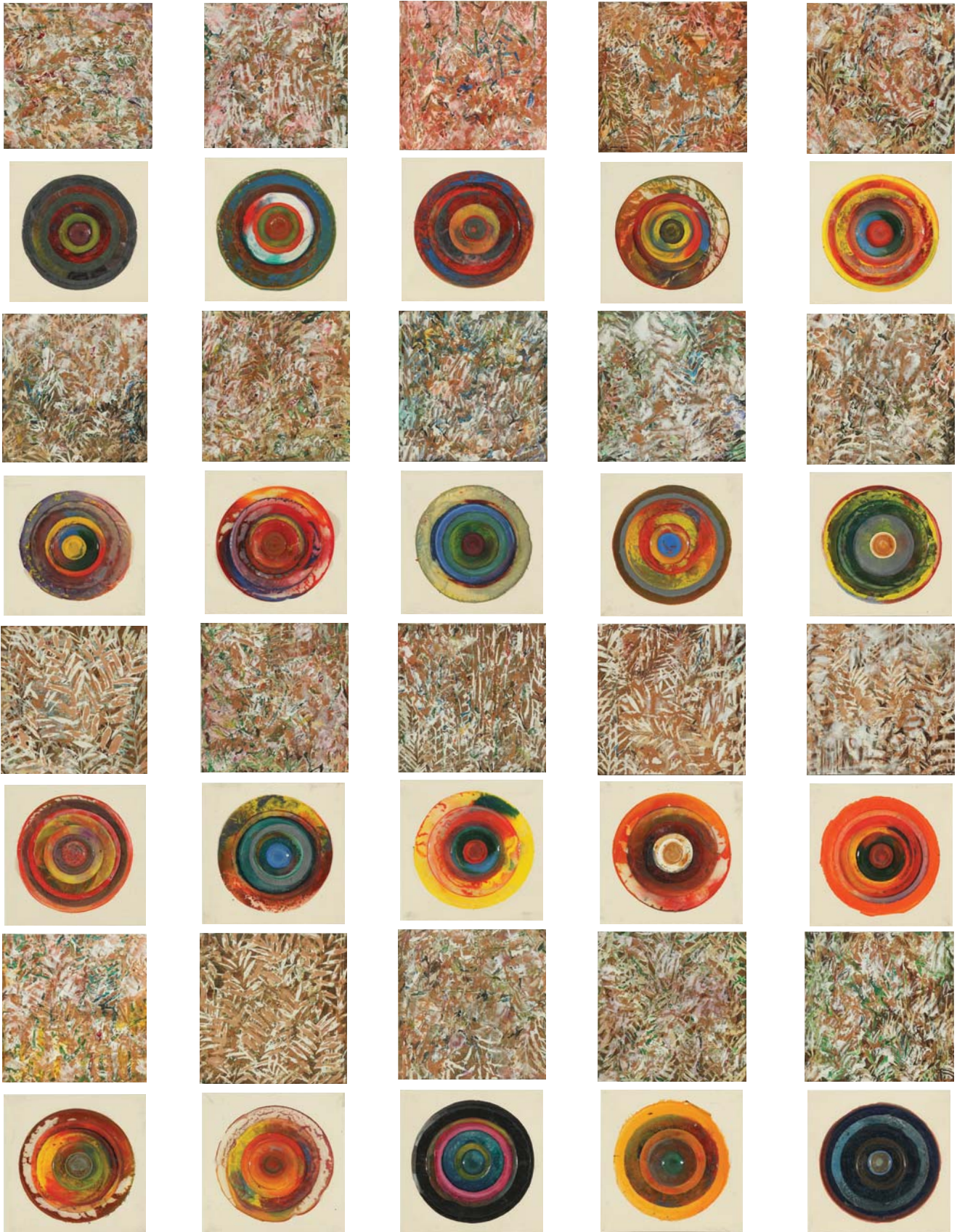




BARA
2018
31cm x 30cm, 106.5cm x 30.5cm
Plywood strips on canvas & mixed media on canvas



KEMARAU
2018
20 x 20.5cm, 24.5cm x 25.5cm
Mixed media on wood panel & mixed media
on canvas



FAUZAN OMAR

Born on January 2, 1951, in Pasir Mas, Kelantan

EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

- 1982 - 1984 Master of Fine Arts (Paintings), Maryland College Institute of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, the US
- 1974 Art Teacher's Diploma (ATD), Institut Teknologi MARA (now UiTM), Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
- 1969 - 1973 Diploma in Fine Arts, Institut Teknologi MARA (now UiTM), Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Hazardous Beauty*, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur
- 2008 *Fauzan Omar: An Overview*, 12 (Art Space Gallery), Kuala Lumpur
- 2007 *Fauzan Omar: Reconstruct*, Ghara Seni Tanjung Art Gallery, Pulau Pinang
Resonance, Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Pulau Pinang
- 2006 *Sustainable Development Through The Arts*, USM-ABN AMRO Art and Cultural Centre, Pulau Pinang
- 2005 *Rejuvenation*, Artloft, Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
- 1991 *Recent Paintings by Fauzan Omar*, Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2018 *Teh Tarik with the Flag 2018*, Wei-Ling Contemporary at Balai Seni Negara, Kuala Lumpur
- 2017 *Negaraku*, Balai Seni Negara, Kuala Lumpur
Belantara, Segaris Art Centre, Kuala Lumpur
18@8 RIGHT HERE! RIGHT NOW!, Wei-Ling Contemporary, Kuala Lumpur
Abstr[action], Pipal Fine Art, Publika, Kuala Lumpur
- 2016 *From Penang to Dhaka Drawing and Print Exhibition*, Faculty of Fine Art Gallery, Dhaka University, Bangladesh
- 2015 *Art and Sustainable Development*, Andaman Art Museum, Krabi, Thailand
International Art Exhibition 2015, Prince of Songkhla University, Songkhla, Thailand
Making Connections: Southeast Asian Art @ ANU School of Art Gallery ANU, Canberra, Australia
ASEAN National Artists Convention and Exhibition, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand
Penang Art: Then & Now, The Edge Galerie, Menara IJM Land, Penang and Kuala Lumpur
- 2014 *Landmarks: Important Contemporary Artworks*, Artcube, Kuala Lumpur
International Seminar/Workshop/Exhibition Faculty of Fine Art, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand
International Thai Artist Workshop/Exhibition, Faculty of Fine Art, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand
Art and Sustainable Development, USM & TSU, Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Pulau Pinang

2012	<i>The Aliya and Farouk Khan Collection Exhibition</i> , Galeri Seni Rakyat, Melaka
2011	<i>Malaysian Contemporary Art Tourism (MCAT)</i> , Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Pulau Pinang
	<i>Signature Art Prize</i> , Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
2010	<i>Malaysian Contemporary Art: The Aliya and Farouk Khan Collection</i> , Bangsar Shopping Centre, Kuala Lumpur
	<i>Nationalism & Patriotism: The Aliya and Farouk Khan Collection</i> , Galeri Seni Perdana, Kuala Lumpur
2008	<i>Other Stories</i> , Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Pulau Pinang
2007	<i>Border Crossing</i> , Hatyai City Art Museum, Thailand
2006	<i>Oasis - Rupa 06 Creating The Future</i> , Galeri Adiwarna, USM, Pulau Pinang
2005	<i>Oasis - Rupa 05 Art and Sustainable Development</i> , Galeri Adiwarna, USM, Pulau Pinang
2004	<i>Pameran Pemandangan Dasar Laut</i> , Sabah Art Gallery, Sabah
	<i>Pameran Hutan di Bawah Bayu</i> , Sabah Art Gallery, Sabah
	<i>Pameran Lambaian Kelantan</i> , Maybank Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
2002	<i>Menjejak Kembali: 20 Years of Malaysian Art</i> , Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur

AWARDS

1995	Australian Cultural Awards International Cultural Relations Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
	Major Award Philip Morris Art Competition, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1992	Joint Winner (Printmaking), Minor Award (Printmaking), Minor Award (Painting), Salon Malaysia, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1990	First Prize/Major Award, Keluarga Bahagia/Negara Sejahtera, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1989	First Prize/Major Award, Malaysian Scenes Art Competition Kontena Nasional, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1988	First Prize/Major Award, Mural Competition, Association of Banks Malaysia, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1985	First Prize (Abstract Painting)/Major Award, Pemodalan Nasional Berhad Art Competition, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1982	Minor Award, Young Contemporary Art Award and Competition National Art Gallery, Malaysia
1972	Minor Award, Great Malaysian Landscape Art Competition, National Art Gallery, Malaysia

BRACING THE HEAT

The dramatic increase in temperature has a significant impact on our emotions and physical well-being as well as the environment.

Heat generated by the extremely hot weather affects our everyday life, health and work. Too much exposure to the humid and oppressive heat not only brings discomfort but also other health consequences.

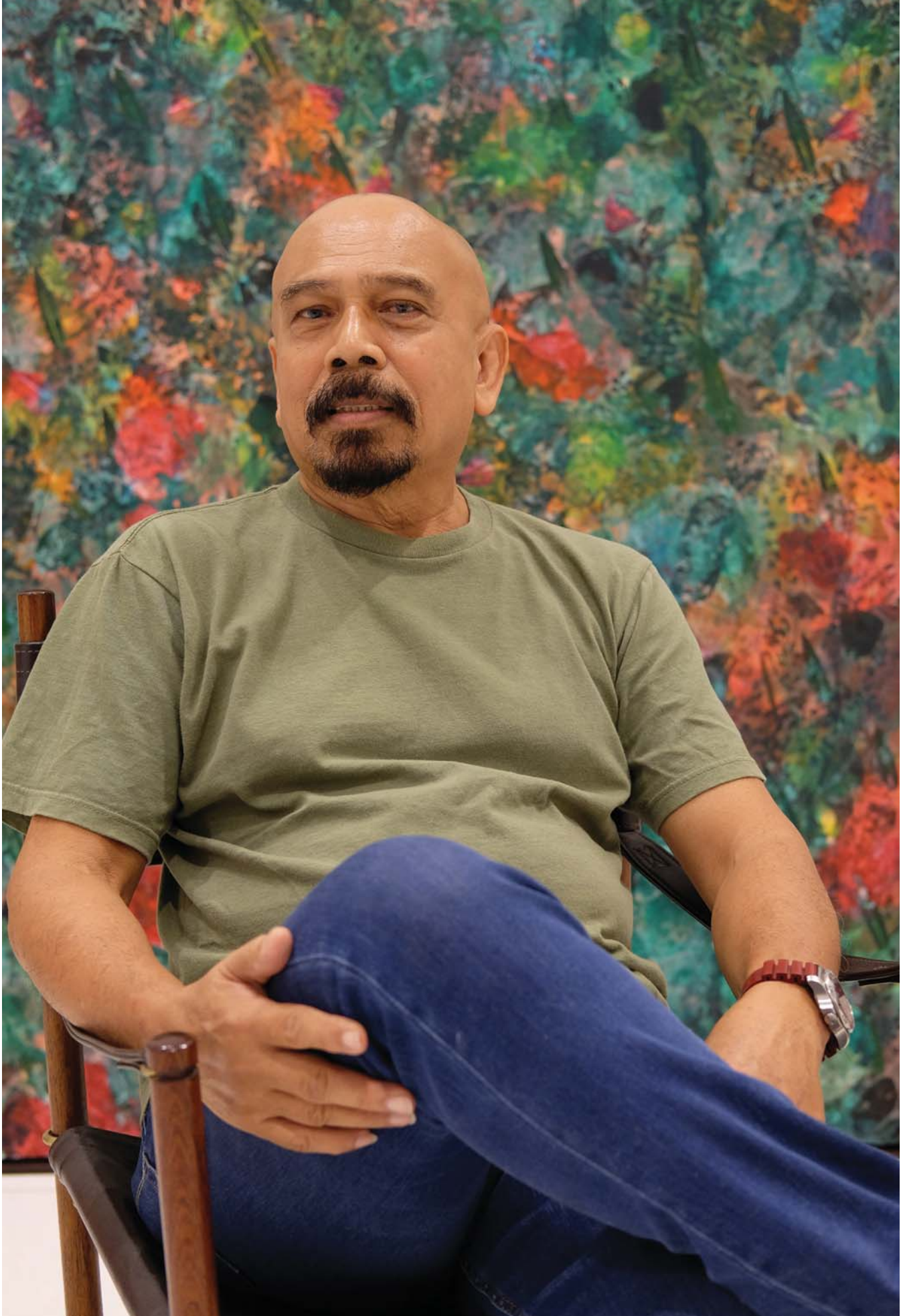
But excessive heat, if it were to be considered as a source of creative response, can also be a formidable challenge. With the mysterious nature of our erratic weather conditions, I want to create a meaning that is attributed to heat.

The changing surfaces and irreparable damage to earth forms and other fragments caused by heat has become my main idea to construct and reconstruct a new artistic landscape. I believed the pattern of the invisible field of energy possessed by the heat is amazingly exciting.

Bracing the Heat is evidence of my involvement in collecting, capturing and recording the hidden visual field of energy, caused by the intense heat we live with today. The impression obtained has enabled me to see hot weather in different perspectives.

Fauzan Omar

August 14, 2018



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dr Tetriana Ahmed Fauzi and Hasanul Isyraf Idris, Tethasanul Studio Penang

Mohamad Adzan Zaini, Studio Mudik ke Hulur, Penang

Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, Umibaizurah Mahir

and Mohd Al-Khuzairie Ali, PatiSatu Studio, Kuala Lumpur

Roxx, Jinjit Station, Puncak Alam, Kuala Lumpur

Syed Khairuddin Syed Rahman and Mohd Noor Mohamad,

Perniagaan Syed Khairuddin Al Hadad, Kuala Lumpur

Fellow artists, student apprentices and friends

Last, but not least, my family, who have always been there





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6 - 19 September 2018

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COVER

Tropical Heat 2, 2018

183cm x 152.5cm

Mixed media on canvas