

An abstract painting featuring a rich, layered texture. The composition is dominated by a deep, dark red background. Overlaid on this are various colors and textures, including vibrant green, bright yellow, and earthy brown. The colors are applied in thick, expressive strokes, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is one of complexity and visual richness.

TALES
OF SOLACE

DATO SHARIFAH FATIMAH SYED ZUBIR

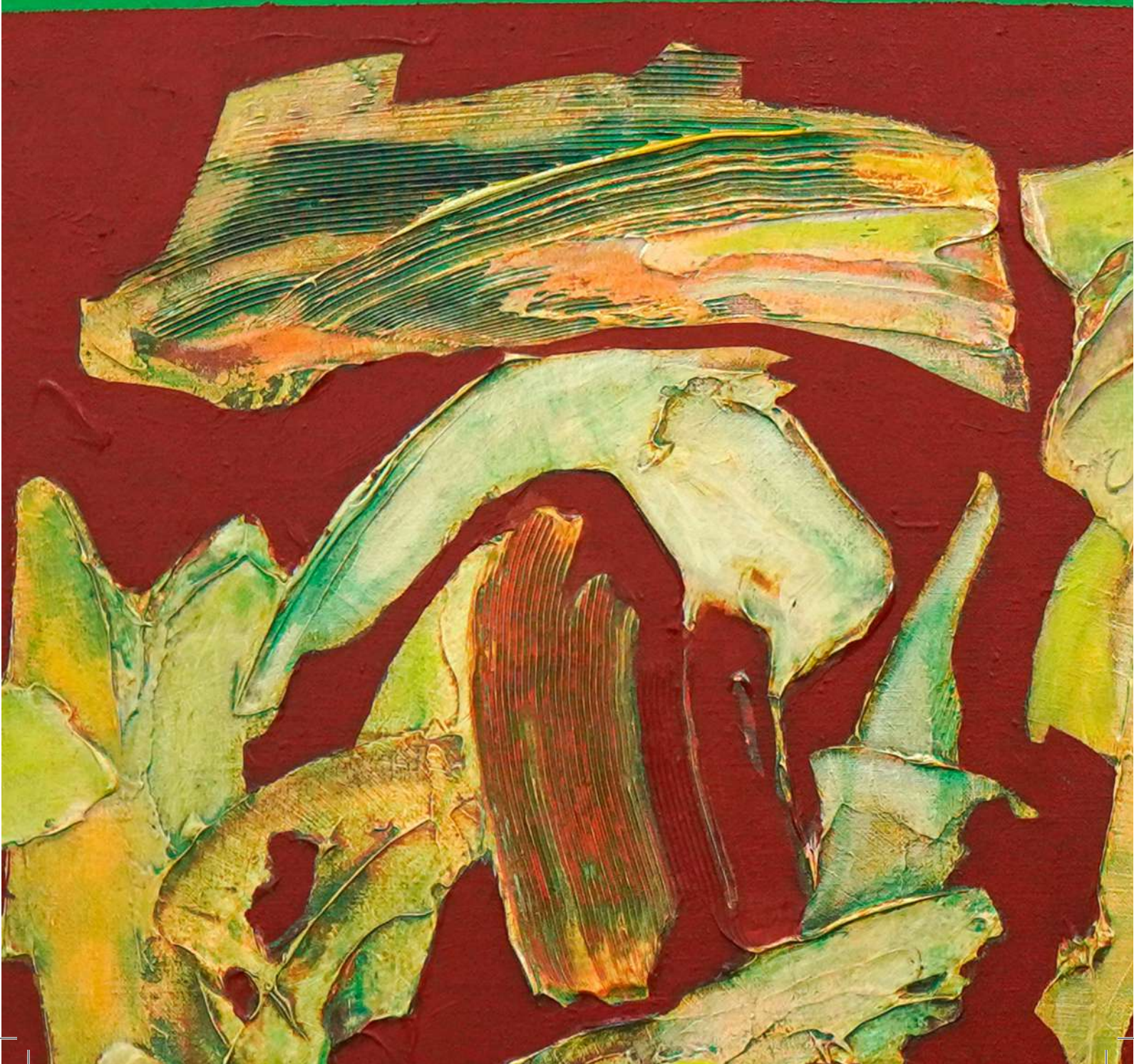
A SOLO EXHIBITION BY

DATO SHARIFAH FATIMAH
SYED ZUBIR

TALES OF SOLACE

"The nights have always been my friend. Even as a child I had difficulty in falling asleep. I was never afraid of the dark. I would sit outside watching the stars and fireflies. I have never been afraid of being alone and never felt lonely, for God's ministering angels are with me."

- Sharifah Fatimah



Silent Enchantment in the Paintings of Dato' Sharifah Fatimah

"Tales of Solace" is Dato' Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir Barakbah's latest visual chronicle, inspired by her past travels to the Middle East and the Balkans. Her personal stories of solace and solitude are expressed in the purest form: elegant patterns of streaks and markings of the palette knife on the canvas, spread over and across mesmerising voids in a harmonious mélange of colours.

The regal 73-year-old Grande Dame of Malaysian abstract art, who traced her ancestry to Imam Ali al-Uraidhi ibn Ja'far al-Sadiq, the brother of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kadhim during a visit to Baghdad, Iraq in 1988, has enjoyed a prolific career with many formidable accomplishments that spans five decades.

Through her extensive oeuvre, the viewer is often transported to a tranquil universe that elevates one's spiritual being. A sense of order is restored amid the worldly chaos. The stillness of air is contained within the compositions illustrated in the colours of nature.

Fifteen artworks - created since July last year - will be on display at G13 Gallery in Kelana Square, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, from March 1 until 20, 2021. The exhibition features her distinctive celebratory-style paintings with tactile surfaces. The unique "Pattern of Dream", for example, uses acrylic, modelling paste and eucalyptus bark, with a sensational prism of colours.

Unconventional materials

Sharifah Fatimah's preference for media such as acrylic, modelling paste and fibre (papyrus) on canvas as a conduit to her innermost being has been established since "Risalah Dari Malaysia: An Exhibition of Paintings by Five Malaysian Artists" at the Jordan

"The nights have always been my friend. Even as a child I had difficulty in falling asleep. I was never afraid of the dark. I would sit outside watching the stars and fireflies. I have never been afraid of being alone and never felt lonely, for God's ministering angels are with me."

- Sharifah Fatimah

National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan, and the "Touch the Earth" series from her solo show at Balai Seni Menara Maybank, Kuala Lumpur, both in 1992.

Her exploration of unconventional materials and techniques continued in her exhibition "Garden of the Heart", at NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, in 2007. Sharifah Fatimah incorporated collages of traditional textiles and crafts, such as woven mengkuang mats embellished with embroidery and gold leaf, to create exquisite artworks that convey an intimate narrative.

The idea of integrating eucalyptus bark into her paintings was sparked by a trip to Guangzhou, China, in 2014. She introduced the peeling bark in a series of works that was featured in an exhibition titled "Recent Works by Dato' Sharifah Fatimah" at The Edge Galerie, Kuala Lumpur, in 2015 and later "Song of Eucalyptus", in celebration of her golden jubilee as an artist at Segaris Art Center, Kuala Lumpur in 2017.

Self-contemplation

Sharifah Fatimah says she was taught "patience, the value of silence and solitude" by her great-grandmother, Sharifah Kamaliah al-Qadri. She describes her as "an ancient figure, astute, quiet, silence the absolute poise, balance of body mind and spirit, so calm, unshaken, dignified, reverence. She was a Sufi."

Her great-grandmother often performed the Islamic devotional acts of zikir (remembrance of God) - repetitive utterances of short phrases glorifying God. To Sufis, "zikir is seen as a way to gain spiritual enlightenment and achieve union or annihilation in God".

An example of fikir (contemplation) in Islam is when one reflects on the creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. How everything is arranged in this universe is a spectacular thought. The planets of the earth and others, countless stars, all revolve around their respective places we cannot count.

Both spiritual terms are reflected in Sharifah Fatimah's work, which visually elucidates the notion of self-contemplation and solace that she attempts to convey.

The matriarchs in her family - grandmother, great-aunt, mother and aunt - were skilled artisans in the traditional craft of kain telepek and tenun textile weaving.

Her mother, Rokiah Hassan, trained in tenun weaving at a palace near the Balai Besar in Alor Setar, Kedah, in the mid-1930s, while her grandmother and a great-aunt made and sold kain telepek as a trade. Regrettably, none of their handmade telepek was retained as a family heirloom.

"My aunt, Sharifah Sham Barakbah, made a pillow cover using the traditional technique of tekat benang emas (gold embroidery) and it is the only tekat

inheritance I have. I do not have any telepek as all works by my great-aunt and aunt were sold. It was their only source of income and my great-aunt was a single mother. They stopped producing telepek during World War II and did not continue after [the war] due to a lack of money and patronage. I never got to know my great-aunt as I was just a child when she passed away in the early Fifties," recalls Sharifah Fatimah.

Kain telepek is an endangered traditional craft that was revived by woodcarving master artisan Adiguru Norhaiza Noordin in 2014. Small wooden blocks are used to stamp gold foil on textiles in floral motifs - akin to the patterns found on songket such as pucuk rebung and bunga tabur.

Globetrotting

Unperturbed by the Movement Control Orders imposed to halt the spread of Covid-19, Sharifah Fatimah has been practising "work-from-home" for most of her career and is reaping the benefits in productive ways.

"The pandemic does not affect me nor my work much as I have always worked alone and do not go out much. But it has disrupted plans for overseas travel with my family and I miss the scene. So, I create a lot of recollection works of the places that I have been to, such as landscapes and the texture of the earth and caves especially," she says.

"Faces of Postojna" depicts Postojna Cave in Slovenia, the world's longest publicly accessible cave, which also serves as a concert hall. The cave trail is 5.3km long. "My trip to the Balkan states with family was in August 2018."

There are three versions of "Faces of Postojna". Two have found a permanent

place in a collector's home after being shown at Pipal Fine Art, Janda Baik, Pahang, last year.

Another distinctive series of paintings, inspired by the iridescent colours of the Rose City's eroded quartzose sandstones and the glorious archaeological wonder of Petra - include "Floating", "Solace", "Standing Forms", "Link", "Solitude" and "Redscape".

"My first trip to Jordan was in the autumn of 1990 to attend my friend Laila Shawa's exhibition at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Amman. There, I met HRH Princess Wijdan Ali, President of the Royal Society of Fine Arts Jordan. She suggested I coordinate an exhibition of Malaysian art there. She selected five artists: Ahmad Khalid Yusof, Khalil Ibrahim, Nirmala Dutt Shanmughalingam, Ismail Latiff and myself.

"We named the exhibition "Risalah Dari Malaysia". It was held two years later in 1992. I have visited Petra twice, in 1990 and 1992. I started painting the Petra series in 1991. Princess Wijdan is familiar with Malaysian art and included it in a major show called "Contemporary Art from the Islamic World" at the Barbican Centre, London, in 1989, organised by the Royal Society of Fine Arts," says Sharifah Fatimah.

As a young adult, Sharifah Fatimah was actively involved in international art exchanges, organising art exhibitions of Malaysian artworks abroad in her capacity as a curator at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (1982 to 1989) and later as an art consultant, at the same time pursuing a career as an artist.

"Starting in 1990, I have coordinated several shows in Indonesia, Seychelles, Jordan, France, Germany (three shows) as well as several in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (coordinated with Ilse Noor). I also organised "Gerak Rasa" held at the National Museum,

Kuala Lumpur, in 2002. In 2006, I coordinated an exhibition called "Muhibah Seni Rupa Malaysia-Jordan" held at Galeri Shah Alam," she says.

As part of her intense passion for genealogy and learning about her forefathers, Sharifah Fatimah discovered that her ancestors had fled Hadhramaut in present-day eastern Yemen and settled in Indonesia in the 18th century.

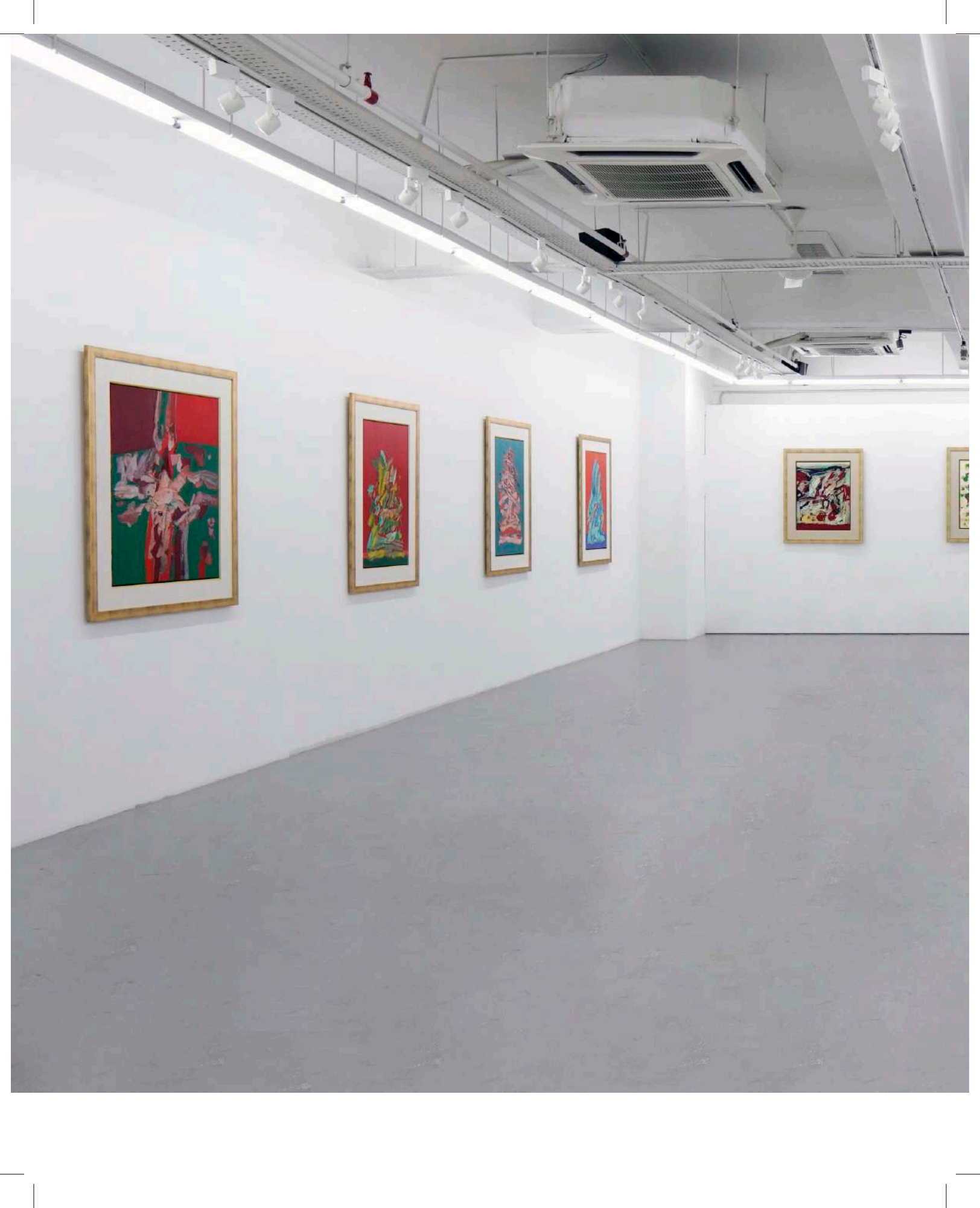
"Before making trips to Europe and the Middle East, my family regularly travelled to Indonesia, mostly to visit relatives and friends in Palembang, Jambi, Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Malang, Madura and Bali," she says.

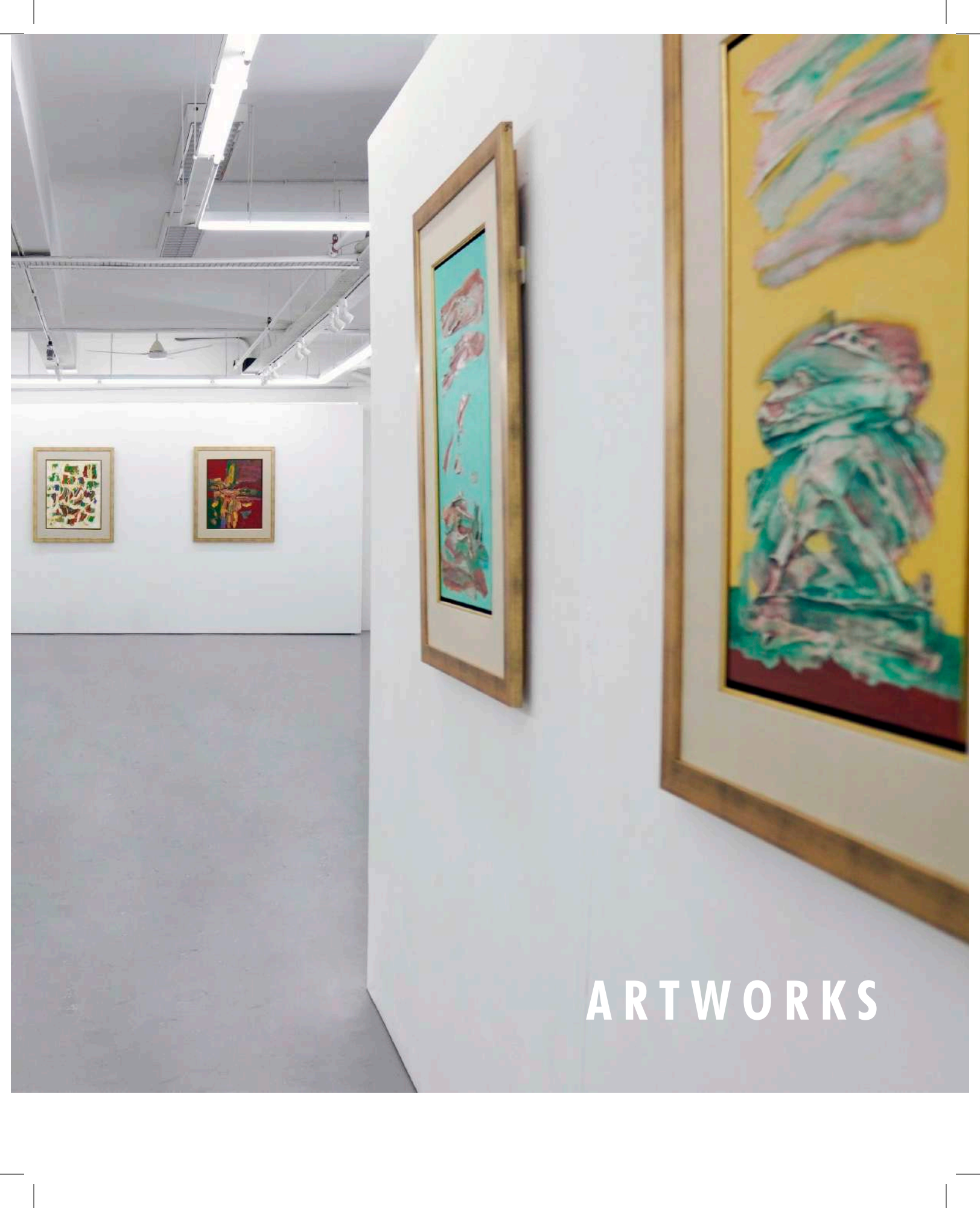
Between September 2019 and January last year, Sharifah Fatimah had a health scare. She was admitted to hospital several times and finally underwent surgery. "After my collapse in September 2019, I do not paint large-scale works. I am not as strong as before. I get exhausted easily and cannot lift heavy canvases. Hence, I am making smaller artworks now," she says.

But that does not mean she is slowing down, soon after her recovery she was seen attending an art fair, gallery hopping and has been producing artworks, which are on show in this exhibition.

Sarah Abu Bakar
12 February 2021

1. "Chasm of Light: Works of Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir", exhibition catalogue, Artfolio Singapore, 1996, page 21.
2. Ibid, page 20-21.
3. "Siri Khas Bengkel Online Telepek: Workshop 2 with Norhaiza Noordin", Langkasuka/Movement, December 5, 2020, <https://www.schoolandcollegelisting.com/MY/Petaling-Jaya/1082634901839447/Langkasuka-Movement>.





ARTWORKS



Standing Forms

83x107cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Link XX

90x80cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Link 9

71x56cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020





Floating X
90x60cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



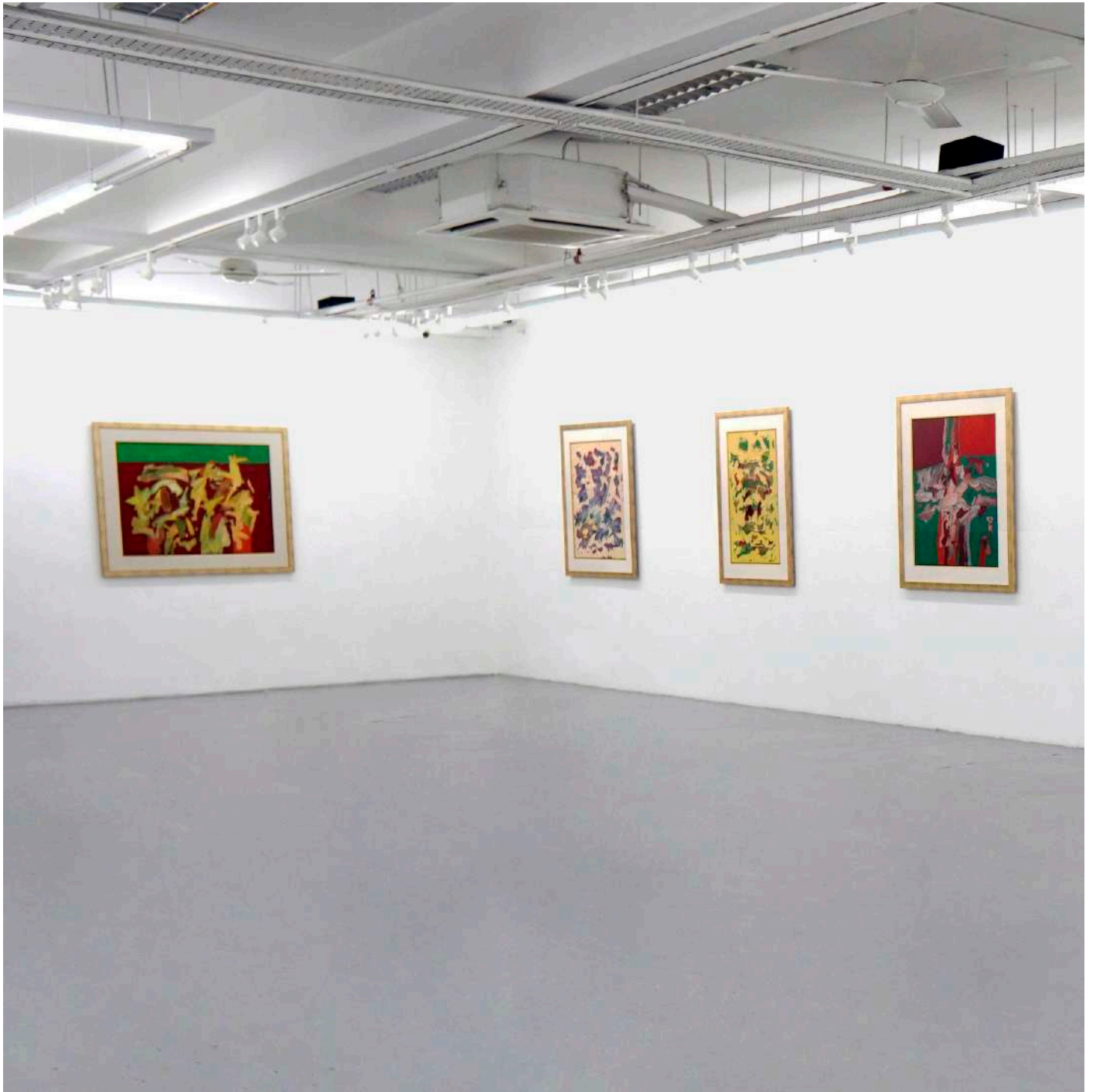
Floating XI

90x80cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Floating XII

76x61cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020







Solace 2

76x61cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020





Solace 9

90x60cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Solace 10

90x60cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Solace 11

90x60cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Redscape 1

76x61cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020





Solitude 2

61x41cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



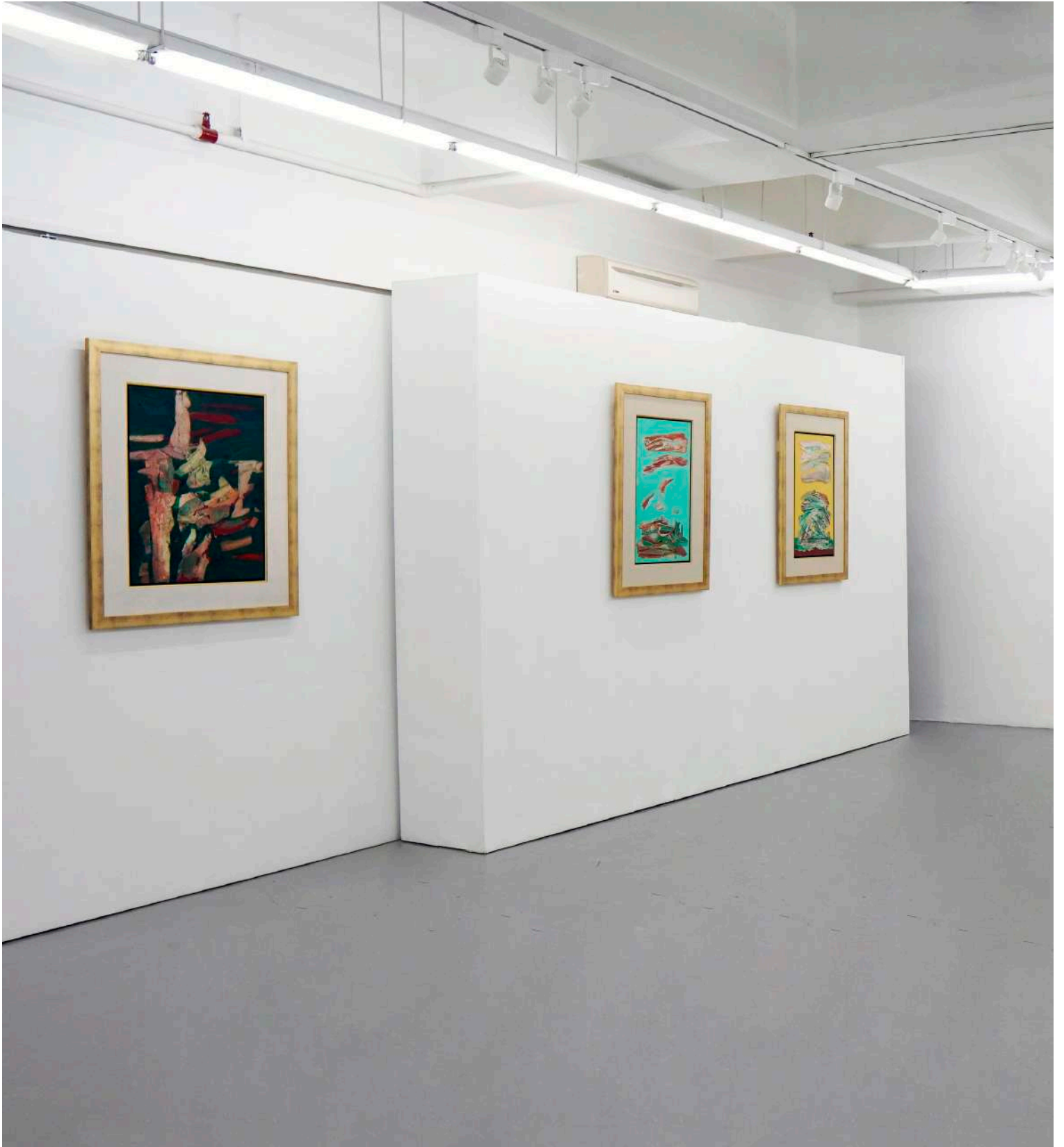
Solitude 3

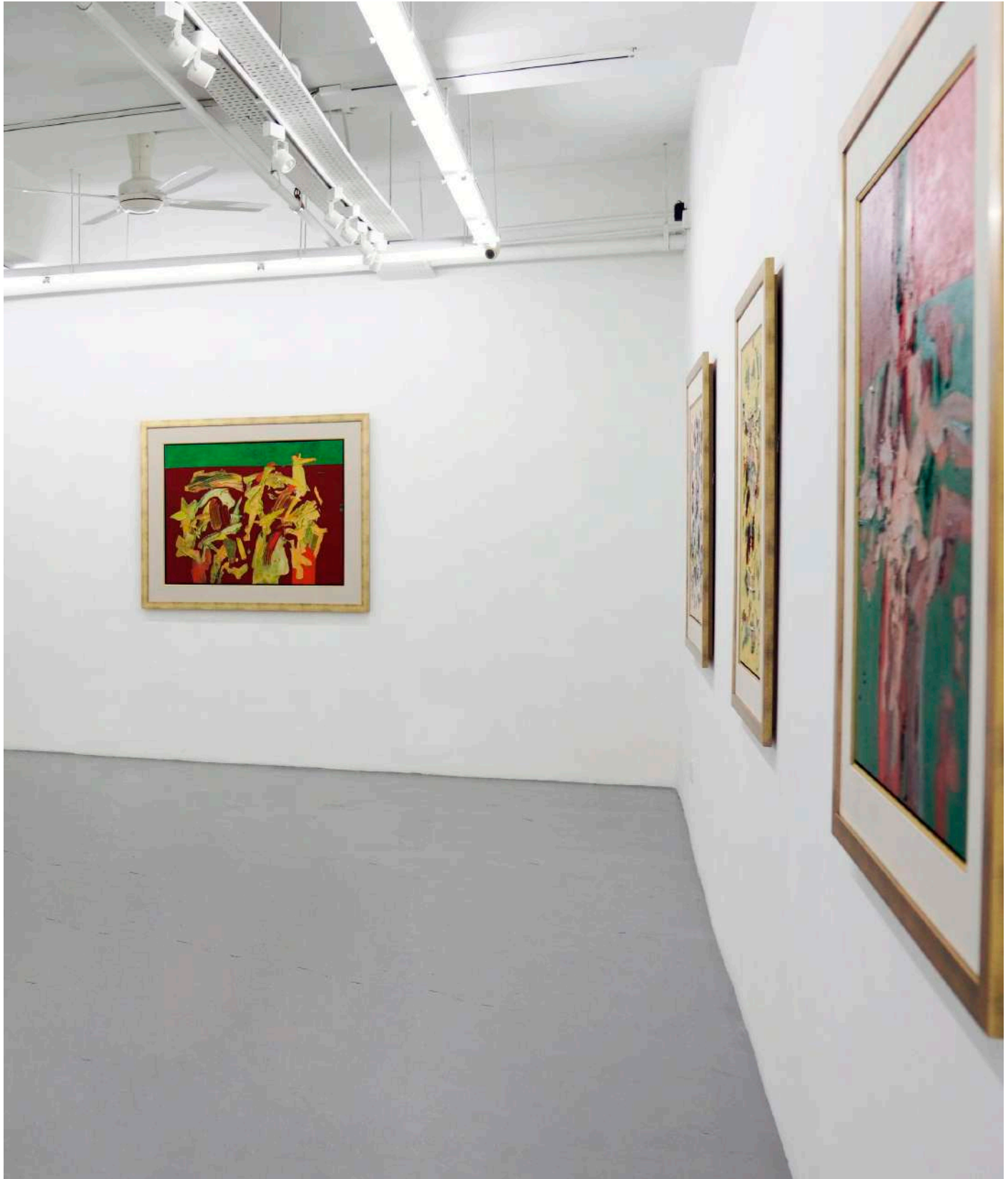
69x41cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Solitude 4

69x41cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020







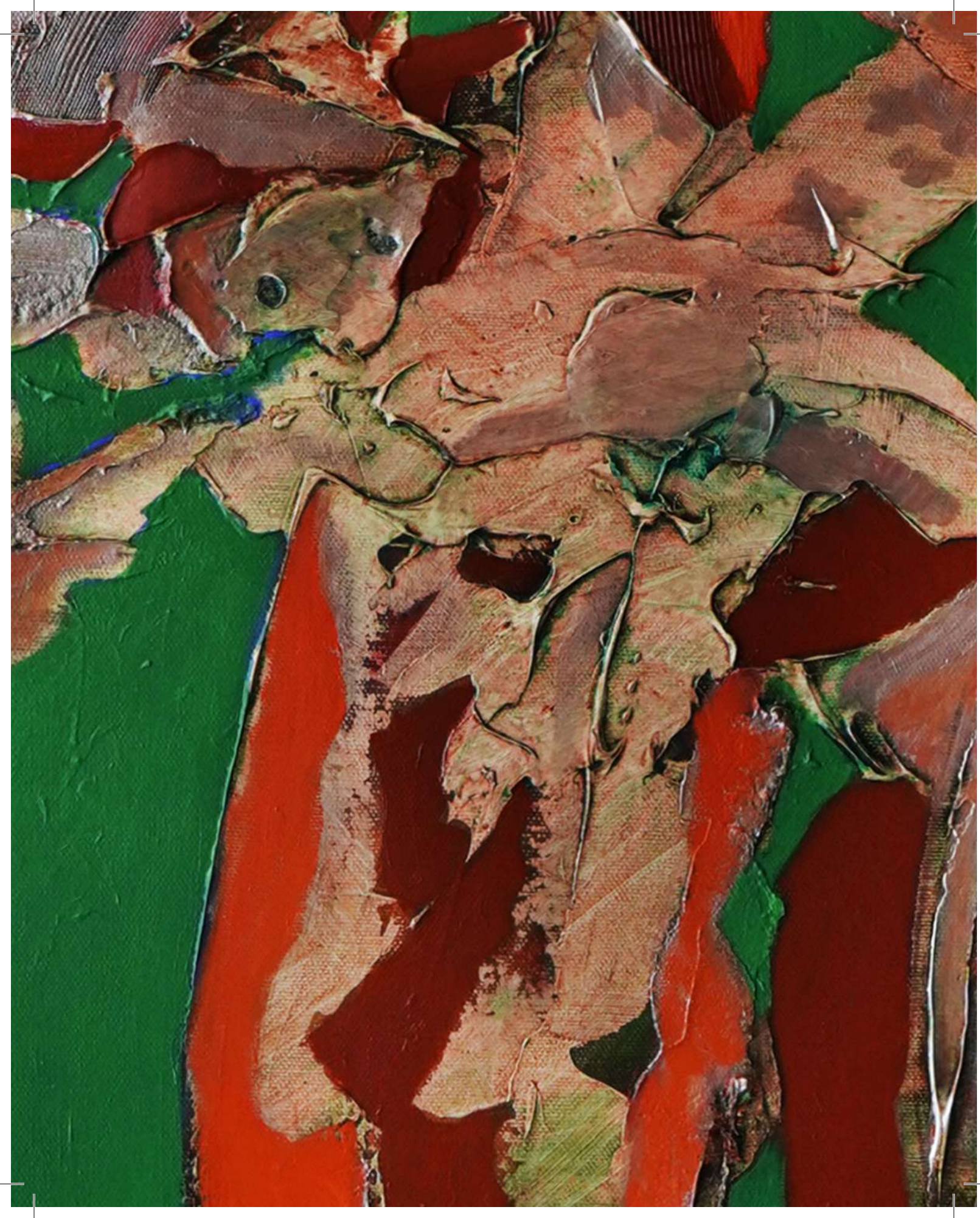
Pattern of Dream 20-2

80x70cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



Faces of Postojna 3

76x61cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2020



DATO SHARIFAH FATIMAH SYED ZUBIR

BORN 1948, MALAYSIA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 Tales of Solace, A Solo Exhibition by dato' Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, G13 Gallery, Malaysia
- 2020 Tales of Solace, Pipal Fine Art, Malaysia
- 2019 G13 Project Room: Dato' Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, G13 Gallery, Malaysia
- 2018 Dato' Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, Art Expo Malaysia 2018 with G13 Gallery, Matrade, Malaysia
- 2017 Song of Eucalyptus with Segaris Art Center, Malaysia
- 2015 Recent Works by Dato' Sharifah Fatimah Syed Zubir, The Edge Galerie, Malaysia
- 2011 Recent Works with Rafiee Abdul Ghani, Art Folio Singapore
- 2008 Notes of a Journey: 40@ 60, Art Folio Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2007 Garden of the Heart, NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2005 Art Space Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2001 Gallery Art Point, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
- 2000 Joy is the Theme, Green Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE
- 2000 Pancawarna Seri Citra, Galeri Citra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1999 Art folio, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1998 Avant Garde Gallery, Alor Star Kedah, Malaysia
- 1997 Joy is the Theme, NN Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1996 Takashimaya Gallery, Singapore
- 1996 Touch the Earth 2, Galeri Citra, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1992 Touch the Earth, Balai Seni Malayan Banking, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1990 Galeri Citra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1989 PERNAS International Building, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1987 Galeri Citra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1985 Alpha Gallery, Singapore
- 1984 Gallery 231, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1983 Nursiyah & Other Images, Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1980 Wisma Luke, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 1978 Institute Gallery, Pratt Institute, New York
- 1978 Penang State Art Gallery & Museum
- 1972 Alpha Gallery, Singapore

AWARDS

- 2007 Anugerah Darjah Dato' Setia Di Raja Kedah oleh DYMM Sultan Kedah
- 2006 Anugerah Sijil Penghargaan Kerajaan Negeri Kedah Darul Aman Sebagai Wanita Kedah Cemerlang diatas Bakti dan Khidmat Cemerlang yang telah disumbangkan kepada Negara
- 2003 Third Prize Second Biennial of Contemporary Painting of the Islamic World, Museum of Contemporary Art Tehran, Iran
- 1987 British Council Fellowship
- 1981 Minor Award Young Contemporaries, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
- 1979 Major Award Salon Malaysia, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
- 1977 Studio Scholar Award, Pratt Institute New York Art Gallery
- 1976 University Prize Reading University, England
- 1978 The JDR III Fund Fellowship
- 1976 Federal Government Scholarship for Further studies in England
- 1972 Minor Award Malaysian Landscape, Exhibition National Art Gallery, Malaysia
- 1971 Best Student Award, MARA Institute of Technology
- 1968 Batik Design Competition, National Art Gallery, Malaysia



ABOUT G13 GALLERY:

G13 Gallery identifies and collaborates with the artists that show potential, relevance, and depth in their works. The gallery aspires to develop synergy between artists domestically and internationally, and it achieves this through cross-border collaborations, residences, and exhibitions.

G13 Gallery aims to realize a greater appreciation for Asian art, has been actively participating in multiple regional art fairs over the past few years.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition :

TALES OF SOLACE DATO' SHARIFAH FATIMAH SYED ZUBIR 1 - 20 MARCH 2021

Publisher

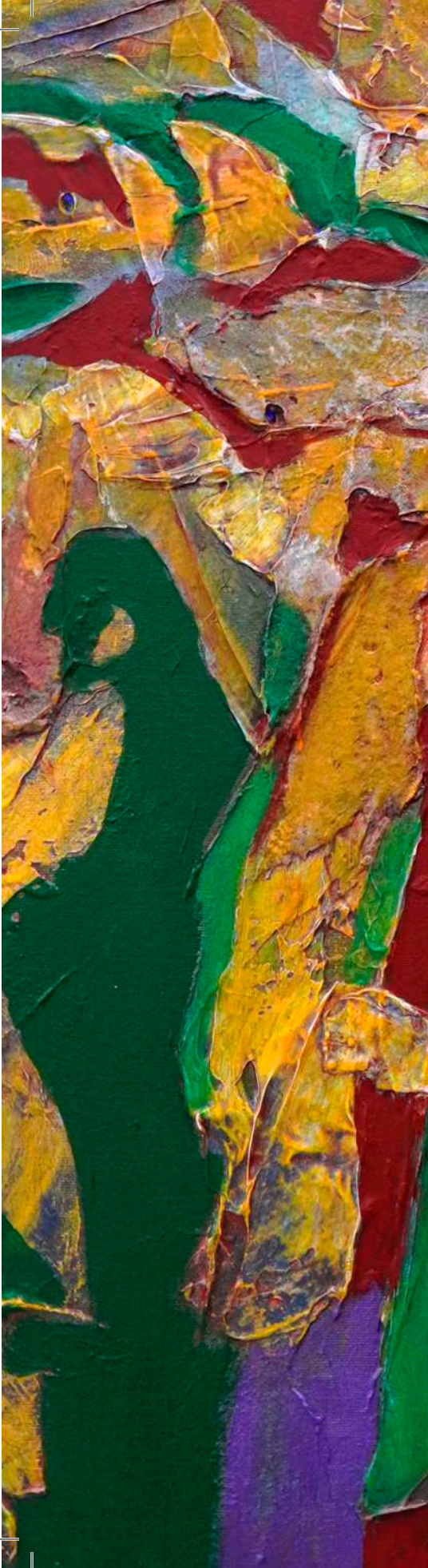
Art Valley Sdn Bhd

G13 Gallery, GL 13, Ground Floor, Block B, Jalan SS7/26, Kelana Square, 47301 Kelana Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.
T: 03-7880 0991 | F: 03-7886 5755 | E: info@g13gallery.com W: g13gallery.com | FB: facebook.com/G13gallery

Design: Khair Abd Muin

Copyright © 2021 Art Valley Sdn Bhd

All right reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted or published in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner(s). The views expressed in this catalogue are not necessarily those of the publisher.



G13
gallery