

BROUGHT TO YOU
BY LIFE/STYLING**PULSE** living

A YOUNG boy rushes past his parents the moment they push open the glass doors of the Children's Library at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. He stands in front of a display unit that showcases a whole host of arts and crafts. He spreads his hands wide open and instructs his mother: "Mummy, take photo."

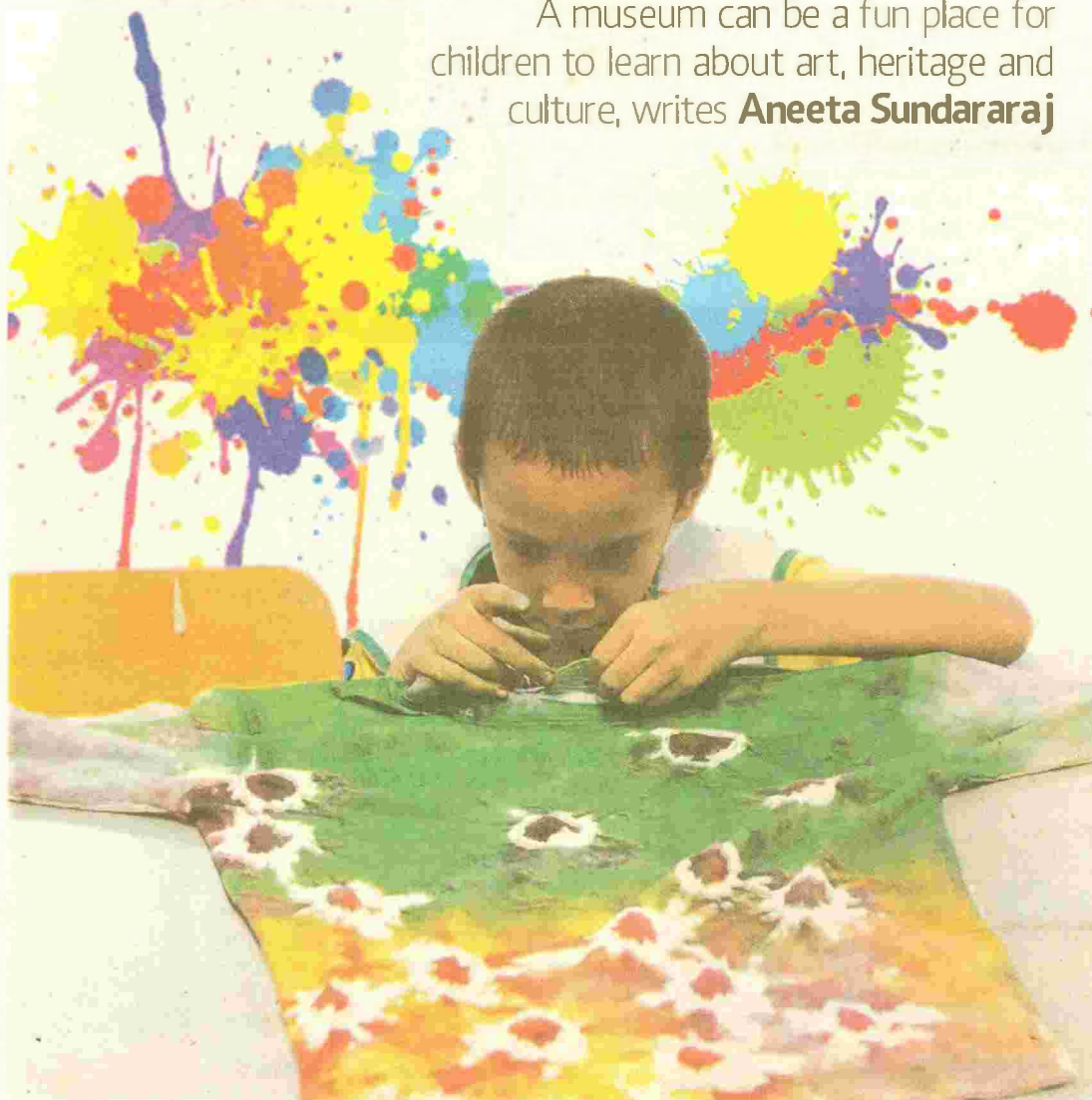
His mum quickly whips out her mobile phone and does her son's bidding. Wan Muhammad Iyrsad, 5, and I are quickly introduced to each other before he hurries to take his seat at a table set up in the middle of the library. His elder sister, Wan Arina Hanis, has already started on her work of art.

The theme the library has set for this craft-making Weekend Workshop is "rooster". It happens to be one of the many activities the museum is organising as part of the worldwide celebrations for International Museum Day on May 18. One aim of housing these workshops in the Children's Library is that the museum hopes to introduce both the children and their parents to its collection of more than 4,000 works of fiction and non-fiction in its Children's Library.



GO PLAY IN THE MUSEUM

A museum can be a fun place for children to learn about art, heritage and culture, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

**FUN AND FRIENDSHIP**

"If we stay at home, it's no fun," says Iyrsad's mother, Lily Suirani Md Saad, as we join the children at the table. The 35-year-old housewife then drops her voice and whispers: "It's better to come here. Better they draw here. Or else, they'll draw on the wall in the house."

Reaching out to show her younger brother how to paint a rooster, 9-year-old Arina says she likes to come here. "*Kongsilah, adik*, (Share-lah, younger brother)" she urges her brother, pushing the palette closer to the middle of the table. This is so that another boy, Mohammad Aiman Arfendi, can use some of the scarlet-coloured acrylic paint.

It is these developing friendships and camaraderie among the children that Aiman's mother, Nurhalina Abd Latif, wants to foster. In fact, it was Aiman who insisted his mother took him to the workshop.

"At least here he gets to meet other children, get new ideas and try something new," she adds. "Anything. As long as they are not playing with the phone or in front of the TV."

The reliance on technology as a form of entertaining today's children is something that Rozela Mohamad Dahlan is desperate to avoid. This 36-year-old has been an avid museum visitor from young. Today, she is trying to instill that same love in her two children.

WHY A MUSEUM

Why take a child to a museum? Why not go to a theme park or even the cinema? Certainly, as a manager in the Education Department of the museum, Rozela has come across many children who think it's torture to endure a visit to a museum.

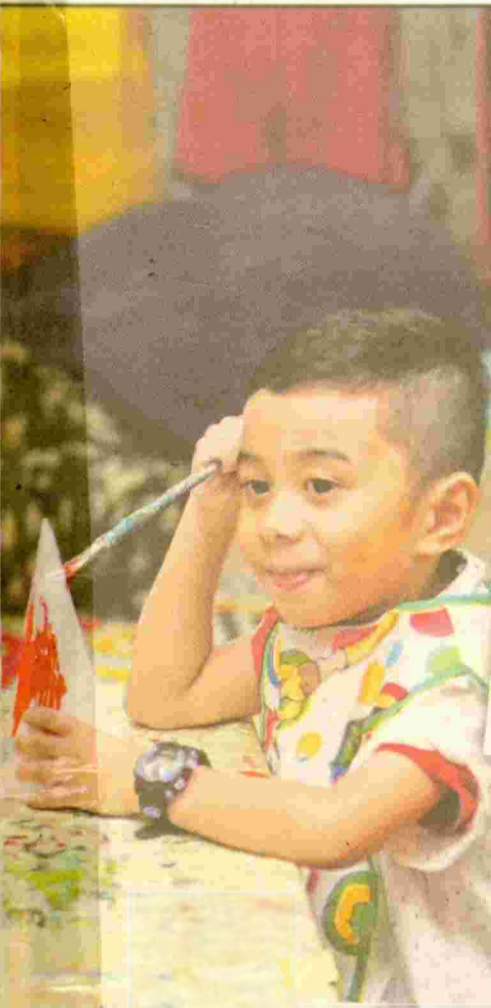
Many children don't appreciate the exhibits and the stories behind the artefacts on display. Instead, they are eager to go to the gift shop where they can harass their parents into buying them more toys. In a matter-of-fact tone, she adds: "A museum is much cheaper than a theme park. And what can they learn in a theme park? It's all temporary."

Indeed, Rozela's daughter, Iman Adeleia has already been exposed to museums from the National Museum to the Royal Museum and the Malaysian



Creative learning may be one of the ways to entice children to our museums.

living **PULSE**



PICTURES BY ZUNNUR AL SHAFIQ

Royal Air Force Museum. "Every time we go on holiday, we make sure we go to a town or city with a museum," says Rozela. One of the best museums they've visited is the Perak Museum in Taiping. What impresses Rozela most about one of the



(Left) Painting by Chua Jia Lin. (Below) Ceramic ewer from Iznik, Turkey.

oldest museums in the country are the exhibits in the Nature Gallery.

HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

Unable to avoid completely the impact that technology has on her child, Rozela has found an interesting way to embrace it and use it to her advantage. In the museum, Adeleia will be given an iPad. Instead of playing games though, she will be asked to take photos of the exhibits and artefacts that she likes. At home, she is then encouraged to research on these artefacts and, in some cases, draw them. This way, Rozela hopes that her child will



benefit from learning something about history, art and culture.

This is precisely the sort of learning that the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia hopes to achieve. Children are encouraged to paint on paper plates, ceramic tiles or even glass. The designs they choose to feature will be based on what they are exposed to in and around the museum. There are also workshops on Arabic calligraphy as well as a museum safari.

In fact, in the accompanying exhibition, Cultivating Creativity Through Arts And Stories, there are exhibits that showcase some of the arts and crafts created by children who have participated in the workshops.

One such work is a painting by Chua Jia Lin dated 2008. After learning about a ceramic ewer from Iznik, Turkey in the Ceramic Gallery, Chua painted it.

"Mummy," Iyrsad cries out suddenly. "Sudah keha tangan" (I've got it on my hands). His mother quickly assures him that the smudged acrylic paint on his hand can be removed with water later. As their project is almost complete, what will these children do with what they've created?

While the little boy looks at his mother for a response, Arina replies with a shy, but proud, smile: "Bring it home."

Cultivating Creativity Through Arts And Stories

WHEN Ends May 22
WHERE Open Space Gallery, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Jalan Lembah Perdana, KL
DETAILS www.iamm.org.my

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