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Living the dream

Artist Hamidi Hadi fulfils his father's hopes for him
→ pages 10 & 11

BROWSER

PARTY-READY
ATTITUDES

→ FAMILY PAGES 2-3

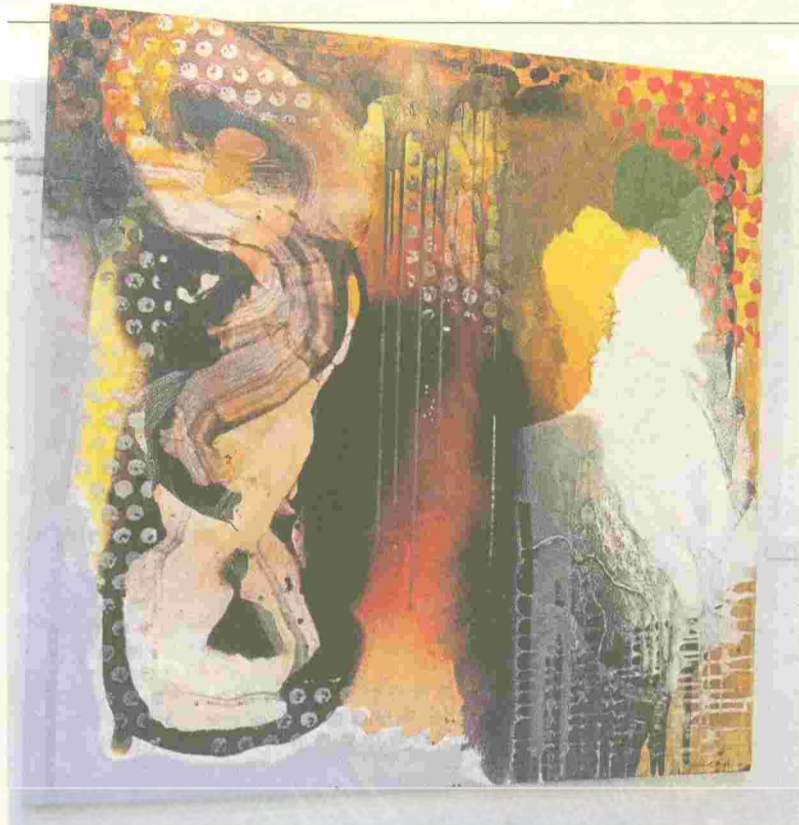
RIGHT ENERGY
FOR NEW YEAR

→ FAMILY PAGE 7



Signing
in to
Kyoto
Protocol

→ SHOWBIZ
PAGE 15

LIFE&TIMES **ART**

Untitled III

The spirit of creation

Living up to his father's dream, Hamidi Hadi tells **Aneeta Sundararaj** why his artworks strike a balance between spirituality and nature

IMAGINE the scene: On a cool morning, as the mist evaporates, a young man cycles along a dusty road. He smiles softly, thinking of his unborn child. He lifts his head and looks around at the serene vista of rural Malaysia and thinks to himself, "Wouldn't it be lovely if my child becomes an artist who is able to capture the beauty of God's creation?"

"This was the dream my father had when my mother was pregnant with me," says Hamidi Hadi on how he was destined to be an artist, particularly since none of his ancestors were artists.

Art, for Hamidi, is something that makes us humans more sensitive. "Through art, we understand more about life.

For example, when you understand your landscape, you can understand more about your environment," he explains.

Hamidi grew up in a kampung in Dengkil. It was only when he visited his sister in Klang that he got to visit libraries and read about famous artists of the West. "I like the works of Impressionist artists, particularly Monet. The colours they used were vibrant," he says.

Take a look

What: Antara, a solo exhibition by Hamidi Hadi

When: Until Feb 2

Where: Wei-Ling Contemporary, The Gardens Mall, Kuala Lumpur

Tel: 03-2260 1106/2282 8323

He counts Ponirin Amin, Hasnol Jamal Saidon and Awang Damit as those who influenced and encouraged him during his early years as an artist. "Once, I tried to copy the Mona Lisa. Then I changed the face and drew one of a girl crying from a postcard," he recalls.

ART SCHOOL

Hamidi was not too sure about his calling at first. "I used to visit Central Market in Kuala Lumpur and see the artists there and think, 'What can I do with art?'"

Heading the advice of his teachers, he enrolled in Universiti Teknologi



Antara is Hamidi's latest exhibition. It can take up to **four months** for Hamidi to complete an artwork. His pieces sometimes exceed the length of a tall man

Mara, KL, and soon learnt to appreciate the theory and practical aspects of art. "I learnt every 'ism' one could think of, such as Romanticism and Cubism," he recalls.

Upon graduation, he pursued his Master's in Art and Design Network (Painting) in the UK. It was there that he explored the principles of abstract painting.

Some of his earlier works were singular life-sized figures, often painted from oblique angles, on a dark background, giving his works a mysterious and dramatic feel. Gradually, through experimentation with materials, his works became less representational and more abstract.

Today, the 40-year-old Hamidi is regarded as one of the country's most radical and bold painters. His large,

confident canvas of work speaks volumes about his skill. He has exhibited extensively here and abroad, including the UK, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and China.

Antara is his latest exhibition. As he explains the media used and the concept behind each piece, it's obvious that his shy demeanour belies a determination to succeed.

FINDING BALANCE

"When I was a child, I liked to stand in the open field and see the horizon. I could see a clear distinction between the sky and the earth. I would think of the sky as God and how he was watching over me.

"Today, when you look up, you may not see the sky. You'll just see buildings. Sometimes, you can't

even see the horizon. Buildings are man's creations, not God's. I want to see God's creations," says Hamidi emphatically.

Not surprisingly, one of the pieces in his exhibition is called Can't See The Blue Sky From Here.

"Through art, I want to create that balance between spirituality and nature," explains the father of three.

His work process is somewhat unconventional: He lays a blank canvas on the floor and uses a "drip" technique, where he mixes the materials (from aluminium plates and polyurethane to resin, glue and enamel) and places them on the canvas. When the materials are about to dry, he lifts the canvas at an angle to see how the materials will flow —



How Amazing If I Could Fly



Something Beautiful and below, Can't See The Blue Sky From Here

"Today, when you look up, you may not see the sky. You'll just see buildings. Sometimes, you can't even see the horizon."

Hamidi Hadi

some will coagulate and harden to give the work a three-dimensional effect.

ART AS METAPHOR

Indeed, his works such as *Tertakung 1*, *Unavoidable* and *Just Let It Be* reveal how they "act as a metaphor to the physical world, and vice versa. These materials are used in the construction industry and I like to understand and control them," he explains. "I like their translucence and want to see how their 'hardness' can translate into works of art."

Sometimes, the ideas for his art come to him subconsciously in flashes of colours and pictures. He uses what he feels, sees, thinks, reads and collects to develop his art. The practical aspect of the creative process takes



place in the studio, where experimental procedures are planned and executed meticulously. "I take my time to create. Each work may take up to four months," he says.

As he completes the tour of his art-

works, Hamidi says: "I love to see how these materials, which are sometimes soft and light, can be used in such a way that, when hardened, become a visual language and dialogue to our world."