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12.06.2007  
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# Impressions, Expressions and Tourism

By ANNA VIVIENNE



**P**AINTINGS on paper, canvas, wood or glasses are modes of representing, documenting and expressing the artist's various intents and ideas.

And this is exactly what artist Awad Bajeraï does. He expresses himself with his paintings. He will work intently, letting his feelings and emotions take him into a world where only he understands. When he gets his inspiration he will spontaneously allow it to sweep him into a whirl of expressions, the colours will flow from his brush and hours later he will have produced a masterpiece...well, at least to him it's a masterpiece, since he 'gave birth' to it.

Awad Bajeraï in his 30's is an artist. He has been painting since a teenager under the tutelage of the renowned artist, Pok.

He was very active, showing extreme enthusiasm for arts. He frequented the Sabah Art Gallery and produced various works of art. He started in water colour and then advanced to acrylic.

In fact, the Sabah Art Gallery Director Datuk Yaman Ahmad Mus has very fond memories of young Awad. He says Awad was and still is (of course!) very imaginative.

"He likes to learn and apply new mediums and approaches in his works. He was never content to stay at a certain level and that is where he was different from other budding artists," he says. Awad who attended Malaysian Institute of Art, Kuala Lumpur has since participated in various exhibitions, including Aryatty color Exhibition, Kuala Lumpur 1989, Art Exhibition at Kuala Lumpur in 1991 Invitation Work Exhibition, Sabah Art Gallery

Water Color Exhibition, Sabah Art Gallery in 1995, Kinabalu Water Color Group Exhibition, Sabah Art Gallery in 1996 and Invitation work Exhibition, Sabah Art Gallery

In 1997. In 2001 he participated in the "Sub-Cultural" Art Exhibition of Post-modernist Art, Maemas Art Gallery and "Sub-Cultural" present 'Subsist' Monsopiad Cultural Village.

In 2002 he participated in the Science Inspired Arts Camp, an event that is part of the International Year of Mountains Celebra-

tion at Kinabalu Park and then in 2004 he joined in the Art Exhibition Invitation at Sabah Art Gallery. As Awad is from Penampang he is very familiar with the traditional daily lives of the Kadazandusun people.

This has influenced Awad's expressions in his artwork, mostly quite abstract and will invite contemplations from art appreciators.

One of his artwork particularly attracted me, even though I managed to look at it from the internet. It's called A Landscape, untouched and unperturbed. An interesting title. This artwork grabs me as it made me think of waking dreams where the ethereal laces the cobwebs of the

mind. He shares that he wants people to look at his paintings and interpret what they see according to their understanding. But he has his own specific idea about his painting.

Awad takes anything from two weeks to two months to complete his paintings, he says, but once he starts he will never wipe out or retouch his paintings.

"What comes out of me is what gets on the canvas," he says, adding that this is one of the main reasons why he does not sell his paintings easily.

Be that as it may, Awad is now involved in tourism and it is interesting how he put together art and tourism.

He wants to promote Sabah and of course the Cultural House to tourists.

"If you look at my painting now, you can see that the subjects are mostly people; the Kadazandusuns of Sabah. You can see them in dancing positions on canvas." "You will also see that their eyes are mostly closed. It shows that our people, in all their elegance, are blind to the shortcomings of others," he says.

"The very fact that the painting is mine, a local of Sabah, from the Cultural House, makes it (painting) a tourism product. Maybe not the main or major product like sites and sights, but its off-shoot, like souvenirs," he says.

According to him, he can part with his paintings for a price. The price he quotes seem to be quite reasonable. They do come cheap considering that they come from the heart and soul of a man.

Awad spends most of his time at the Monsopiad Cultural Village; he can be seen walking the grounds and watching the goings on like a lone sentinel. Get hold of him to know more about his paintings.

Art appreciators can see those paintings in one of the traditional house there.

