



NOSTALGIA TIMUR by Husin Othman

# Nostalgia Timur

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# Introduction

Written by: Elaine Loh

A quiet scene of derelict bridge...a common street scene with the much-forgotten phone booths of the not-so-long-ago Malaysia...boy scouts standing at attention... young boys hard at play under the gruelling sun...happy at a simple game of cans and bottle tops. These are the common themes in which emerging artist Husin Othman indulges in. His art subject matters have primarily been re-enactment of his childhood days, of the plays that once revelled in and of places that once was.

Born as a twin boy, it comes as a natural consequence for artist Husin Othman where his works are rarely lonesome. And when they say twins are closely intertwined from birth, this rings particularly true for Husin Othman and his brother who are both naturally artistically inclined, distinct from their other siblings. Hailing from a large family in the town of Kuala Kurau, Perak, Husin has been in love and drawn to art since his naïve kindergarten days.

A *kampung* boy at heart, drawing has always been his thing, his life's passion. As the seventh child within the family of eight siblings, Husin grew up in a closely-knit family where his days were mostly enlightened with the hopes of looking forward to the times where he and his siblings would run off to play around his native village, after a hard day's work of studying and helping with the family. As he runs off into the sunset, playing by the river or merely hanging out at the local *warung* (Malay for hawker stall), these scenes remain close to the heart of the artist and are often irrevocably revitalised within his many art repertoires.

Growing up to the humble and quiet man that Husin is, he is truly a man of few words where he silently observes and refines his drawing and painterly skills to the hilt, often duly narrating his life experiences, of his good times and bad onto the art medium of choice be it the canvas or the modest paper. Drawing after drawing, he quietly rose to prominence representing his school in various art competitions. While pursuing his life's passion through his art diploma studies in IKIP, Husin came forth as a finalist in the art competition by our very own National Arts Gallery during just his first year of diploma studies. Then onward, Husin quietly gained recognition as a promising young art student, duly attaining the Best Achiever Award during his final year 2010 diploma show at IKIP.

A fine arts graduate with a minor in graphic from our locally renowned arts institution MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Husin underwent various fine art techniques during his undergraduate years. It was in the course of his thesis study in 2012 that he chanced upon the concept of nostalgia, of the old ways and realised its bearing and importance in the contemporary era of today. As a *kampung* boy, his growing up years were truly reflective of the life and times of the Malaysian life, yet it puzzled him as to how many of us were keenly unaware of the livelihood and nature scenes of dear Malaysia. Thus Husin took it in stride to rekindle lost memories, gently granting his take on the development of the contemporary society of Malaysia today, thereby augmenting his role within our local arts scene as a documentary narrator of the cultural heritage and society of contemporary Malaysia through the years.

Fresh upon graduation in 2013, Husin garnered recognition as a finalist to the MEA (Malaysian Emerging Art) Award and in a short span of a year later in 2014, he won the UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia) award as the Most Promising Artist of the Year within the emerging artist category. Painted against a white background that is suggestive of the sunny days of Malaysia, his painting titled *Antara Dua Unit* speaks of the normal day out for Malaysian students carrying out their daily school activities. Simplistic, the somewhat misshapen boys stand at attention, seemingly begrudgingly sweltering from the heat of the sun. The void spaces within the painting paints the mood, suggestive of the vast empty school field which each and every one of us has assembled at during our school years and rekindles our memories of the heydays schooling in Malaysia. The boys, seemingly distorted, paint a lighter mood within the painting, granting it a comical flair as Husin takes inspiration from the renowned Lat comics.

For Husin, his art repertoire is primarily of figurative realism. Armed with a minor in graphics, his art carry traces of illustration, owing to his profound liking for the works of Norman Rockwell and Ashley Wood. Minimal in essence, Husin's paintings are mostly of muted palette, of whites, blacks and shades in between. His play with void spaces and expressionistically smeared and abraded paint handling masterfully grants his works with dreamlike state of time that once was, yet enabling his audiences to connect easily through the skilful play by interweaving contemporary elements of today. *Siri November: Terik Pagi* and *Rih Petang* from the 2014 *Soya Cincau* exhibition was a keen testament to Husin's painterly skills where he works of shades of black, white and grey that attests to the two vastly distinct time of the day; from the sunny morning to the rainy evening.

From minimal colour palette of white-black-grey tones, Husin's repertoire steadily grew as he took on more vibrant colours into his portfolio. Works such as *Buah Haji* and *Kehidupan Yang Judi* bore witness to Husin's expanded portfolio as he took on vibrant colours of green, blue, red and gold with ease. Consequently in 2017, Husin proved yet another talented repertoire as he rose to the challenge to attest to his drawing skills through his latest work, *Random Access Memory*. A stark contrast from his previous acrylic on canvas works, his latest acrylic-cum-charcoal work *Random Access Memory* proves to be his first puzzle work. Inspired by the Rubik's cube, the work consists of four by four panels and is made up of a myriad of random scenes. Husin skilfully works his pure undulated lines across the 16-panelled work to create a singular image above all, while keeping each panel scene intact and undisturbed. Garnering much attention from the audience, *Random Access Memory* was a clear attestation to Husin's keen figurative skill where each scene is adequately composed and of accurate proportions.

A man of few words, Husin often paints from the observations of the world around him. His art is expressionistic and unassumingly belies a journey of his life, as he expresses his thoughts and emotions on canvas. As a native Malaysian, he brings with him Nusantara traces of his heritage, sharing a glimpse of the Malay culture, of traditional games, craft and livelihood. The colour hues of the Nusantara and raw undulated lines and strokes concede to the very heart of the Malay culture.

Nostalgia in art is not a new subject matter. Nostalgia is essentially a sentimentality for the past, of good times and / or preferred places where one carries joyful personal associations. As a concept, Husin's choice of nostalgia is

befitting to his nature, granting him an avenue not only to share with his audience the ways of the past but also as an avenue for expression. Closely intertwined, we are shaped by our life experiences both good and bad. The concept of nostalgia is a common one as we do, in one time or another in our lives, keenly reflect and reminisce of the past. It is a concept and an experience that everyone engages in, be it through art or indulging in our self-thoughts. After all, nostalgia more often than not, promotes good mood, happy thoughts and improves social connectivity as we look back on the happy times.

Naturally so, nostalgia lies as a foundational element for the rise of Romanticism movement in the 1800s, acting as an escape reaction from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. The Romantic era beckoned much growth in the arena of visual arts, literature and music; thereby contributing to its economic growth. The Romanticism movement too led to the birthing of many key artists and poets, establishing its historical mark and contributions to today's society.

True to its words, it is important to know your past to help understand your present and thus allowing one to shape our future. This is further reiterated in the famous words of Theodore Roosevelt when he quoted 'I believe that the more you know about the past, the better you are prepared for the future'. Shaped by our life experiences, many a times, we reflect on our bygone days, learn from our past actions in an attempt to pave a better future. Taking this to mind, the concept of nostalgia and its contributory ways are keenly important and helpful for the development of many a thing.

Husin's portfolio of works is deeply enshrined around the concept of nostalgia as he paints his reflections of the

nostalgic ways of our Malaysian society. His creative and artistic talent is duly commendable as he skilfully marries the times that-once-was in the contemporary manner of today, duly testifying to his ability to connect with his audiences of today. Through the years, it is clear that his artistic career is a progressive one, not only in terms of his skills but also in the development of his nostalgic concept.

Within this show *Nostalgia Timur*, Husin paints fond memories of his carefree days at the funfair. Funfair games, toys, superheroes and kiddie rides lie amass throughout the show. He brings to mind many bygone games and toys and of familiar scenes at the bus depot and village hangout, concurrently reflecting his feeling of longing. Contrary to his previous nostalgic works, the paintings shown here take on a different tone, of increased vibrancy and solidity. As simplistic as it may seem, the paintings carry many a meaning beyond its literal visual. While his paintings document a narrative of our Malaysian cultural heritage and its development through the years, it now too carries a more in-depth reflection and personal insight of the artist.

All in all, the paintings of Husin Othman just naturally brings a smile to one's face, promoting the positive emotions of nostalgia. For those that may be keenly unaware of the bygone crafts and games, it carries a delightful air to the playful mood it generates. Taking this in quiet contemplation, it is equally exciting of what good art can bring about, beyond its aesthetic visual. What's next you might say...it lies in your hands; shall we re-connect with our loved ones or shall we further innovate these lost games and toys...or do we reflect on the inspiring words of Tunku Abdul Rahman to better shape our future?

From Top Left to Right:

*Portrait*  
Oil on Canvas  
24cm x 18cm  
2014

*Adik Abang*  
Oil on Canvas  
41cm x 41cm  
2014

*Cuti Ulangkaji*  
Oil on Canvas  
37cm x 45cm  
2014

## the early days



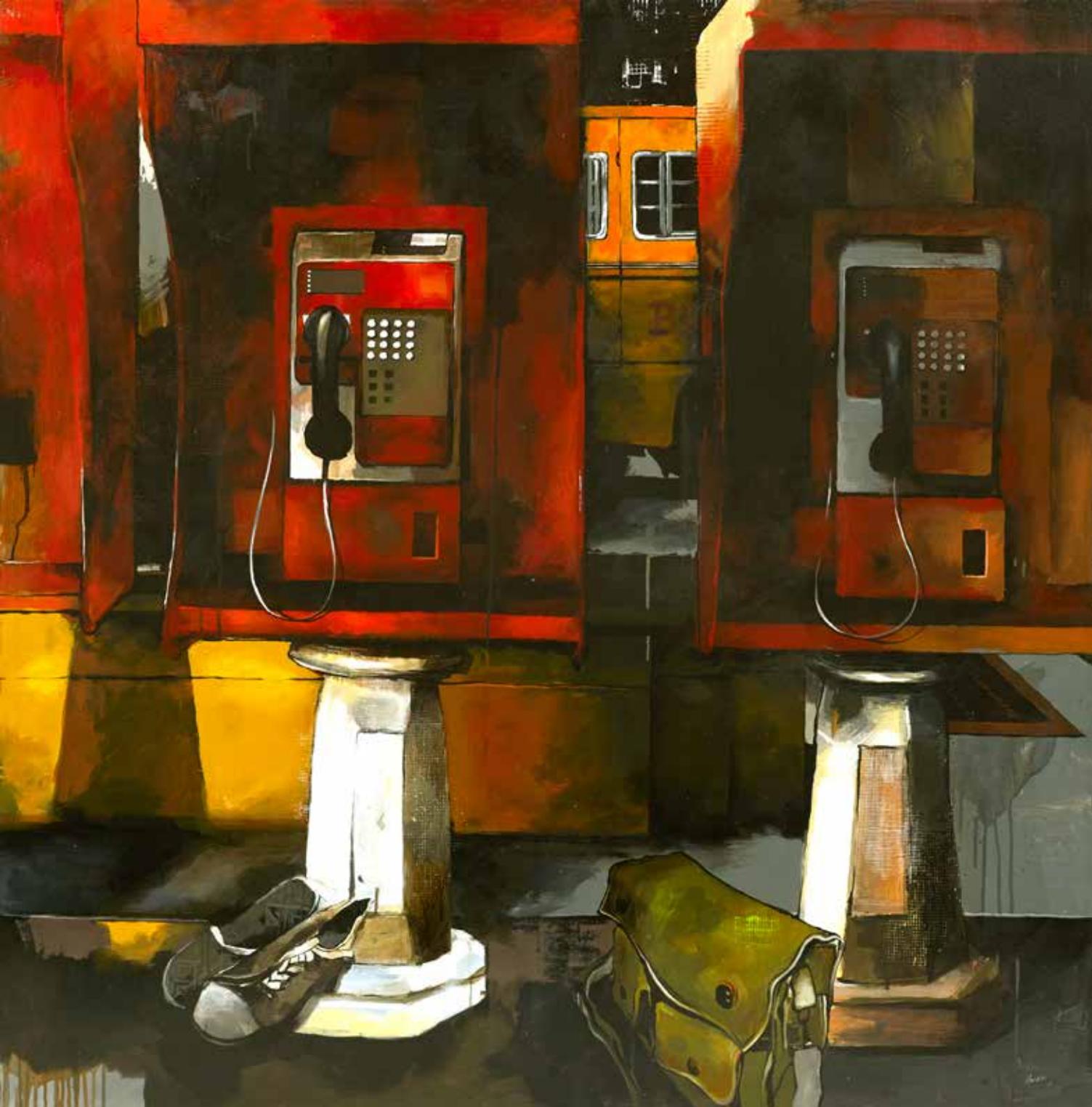
From Bottom Left to Right:

*Budak Pengakap*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
32cm x 33cm  
2014

*Budak Senapang*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
36cm x 39cm  
2014

*Budak Rakit*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
36cm x 39cm  
2014





*Pondok Merah*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
122cm x 122cm  
2015



happy childhood memories...

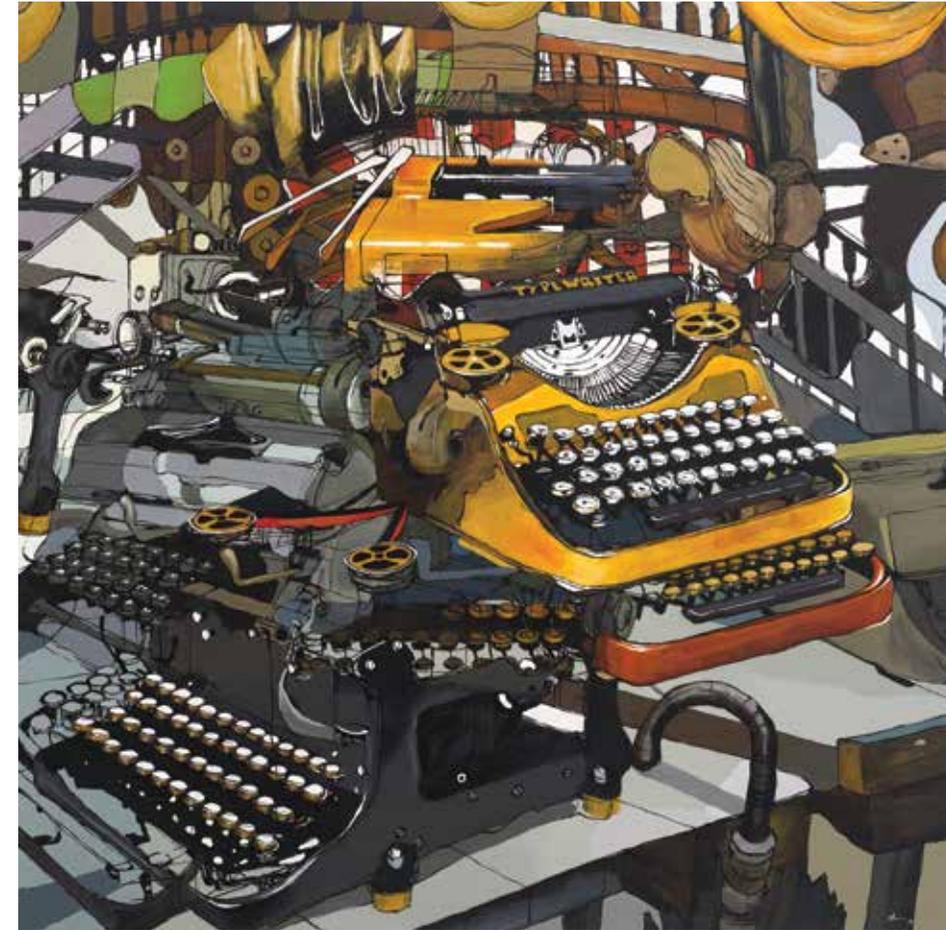
Pesta Token  
Acrylic on Canvas  
152 cm x 244 cm  
(2 Panels)  
2018



*Humor Kota Raya*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
152 cm x 122 cm  
2018



*Gores dan Kena*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
152 cm x 122 cm  
2018



From Left to Right:

*Satu Dail Panggilan II*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
92cm x 92cm  
2019

*Air Batu Campur II*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
92cm x 92cm  
2019

*Halaman Surat Taip II*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
92cm x 92cm  
2019

framing lost memories...

reminiscing the carefree life...



*Meja Warung I*  
Charcoal and Acrylic on Canvas  
75cm x 75cm  
2019



*Meja Warung II*  
Charcoal and Acrylic on Canvas  
96cm x 96cm  
2019



*Kami*  
Charcoal and Acrylic on Canvas  
135cm x 135cm  
2018



*Juara No. 1*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
135cm x 135cm  
2018



*Buah Chess I*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
35cm x 35cm  
2019



*Buah Chess II*  
Acrylic on canvas  
43cm x 43cm  
2019



*Buah Congkak*  
Acrylic on canvas  
31cm x 31cm  
2019

## BIODATA

*HUSIN OTHMAN*, 1987  
Perak, MALAYSIA.

### Education

2013 Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art  
MARA University of Technology (UiTM),  
Malaysia

### Exhibitions

#### *Two Man Show*

2018 The Frames of Two Cultures  
Core Gallery, Subang

#### *Group Show*

2019

East Look East II, Hotel Art Fair Bangkok  
Core Design Gallery, W Bangkok, Thailand

East Look East I, The 8th Shanghai Citizen  
Art Fair  
Twelve at Hengshan, Shanghai, China

XIX: Nineteen Exhibition  
Segaris Art Center, Kuala Lumpur

Gerak Movement, Penang Art Open  
Exhibition 2018  
Penang State Museum, Penang

2018 UOB Painting of the Year 2018 Exhibition,  
Menara UOB, Kuala Lumpur

MORPHOSIS  
Galeri Prima, Kuala Lumpur

Bintang 5 FINALE Exhibition  
Segaris Art Center, Kuala Lumpur

Meraki 3.0 Art Exhibition, Art Festival &  
Carnival  
REAL School, Cheras.

2017 Much Ado about Drawing  
Core Gallery, Subang

Possibilities of Impossibilities  
Chandan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

HOMEDEC 2017 -Part 2  
Kuala Lumpur Convention Center (KLCC),  
Kuala Lumpur

2016 Mosaic Art Project, Art Expo Malaysia 2016  
HOM Art Trans, Matrade Exhibition and  
Convention Center, Kuala Lumpur

Transit A2  
HOM Art Trans, Kuala Lumpur

Grande III  
Core Design Gallery, Subang Jaya

Youngsters  
HOM Art Trans, Subang Jaya

2015 Art Expo Malaysia 2015  
Core Design Gallery, Matrade Exhibition and  
Convention Center, Kuala Lumpur

Grande II  
Core Design Gallery, Subang Jaya

Figure Out  
HOM Art Trans, Kuala Lumpur

The Grass is Greener on this Side  
Core Design Gallery, Subang Jaya

MERU Exhibition  
Segaris Art Center, Kuala Lumpur

Young and Blooming  
Chinahouse Gallery, Penang

2014 Soya Cincau Exhibition  
Core Design Gallery, Subang Jaya

UOB Painting of the Year 2014 Exhibition  
Menara UOB, Kuala Lumpur

OPEN SHOW Malaysia 2014,  
Balai Seni Visual Negara, Kuala Lumpur

PULPA: At The Cutting Edge,  
Chandan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

2013 MEA Award Malaysia Emerging Artist  
White Box & Black Box, Kuala Lumpur

Piece of Me,  
Whitebox, Kuala Lumpur

The Street Art Project 2.0 Event,  
Shah Alam, Selangor.

Platform Art Exhibiton,  
Chandan Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

Degree Show,  
UiTM Shah Alam, Selangor.

2012 Art Expo Malaysia 2012  
Matrade Exhibition and Convention Center,  
Kuala Lumpur

Sehaluan Exhibition,  
Kedai Objek, Solaris, Kuala Lumpur.

Rubanization Art Show  
Galeri Seni Tuanku Zahirah (GESTURZ),  
UiTM Shah Alam.

2010 Rantai Art (GRAVITY)  
The Red Bungalow, Kuala Lumpur.

EN MASSE de ART SHOW  
Megamall, Kuantan, Pahang

2009 Rantai Art (IDEALIST)  
The Red Bungalow, Kuala Lumpur.

HOT ART: Art as Visual Expression of Society's  
Conscience  
Goethe- Institut Malaysia, Annex Gallery,  
Kuala Lumpur.

Art for Gaza event  
Laman Budaya, Shah Alam, Selangor.

2008 MRCB Art competition  
Balai Seni Visual Negara, Kuala Lumpur.

a joint project by

