

# Pastoral plein airs and plays

With art stages and expos out of the way, Malaysia's arts calendar moves into full swing

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## we are theatrethreesixty 2015

**Artist:** Various

**Venue:** The Jewel, opposite DPAC

H-01, Empire Damansara

Jalan PJU 8/8, Damansara Perdana

47820 Petaling Jaya

A collective of playwrights passionate in telling stories that matter by nurturing work from all walks of life, theatrethreesixty specialises in giving writers and actors an avenue to experiment and grow in their explorations of emerging Malaysian theatre.

Celebrating their devotion to the discipline, the group recently organised the five-day we are theatrethreesixty 2015 mini-arts festival at The Jewel, Damansara Perdana, incorporating performance art, theatre and music into an extravaganza revolving around its theme for the year, *More Life*.

"This year, we are theatrethreesixty becomes an annual affair for us as with this second installment of our signature mini-arts festival opening our 2015 season.

More importantly, an annual festival like this gives you a window into the artistic development of the company from year to year," says theatrethreesixty artistic director Christopher Ling.

Focusing on bringing life into the unlikeliest places, the festival's attractions include *Love and Information*, a non-linear play by British playwright Caryl Churchill, and *Emporium: The Galleries of Life & Death*, a duo of live performance arts galleries, as well as spoken word routines by Poetry Café KL and complementary writing and acting workshops.

"Our focus this year is on work that is immersive and site-specific – which were the clearest, emerging hallmarks from our inaugural season. We are in search of an empowered audience experience that is interactive and active in nature," adds Ling.

A labour of love, theatrethreesixty is supported by the Damansara Performance Arts Centre (DPac), with *Love and Information* additionally supported by the Arte Axis Design Group. Promotional entry to we are theatrethreesixty includes RM60 for an all-inclusive pass to every show, while aspiring thespians and lookers-on are invited to keep up to date with the collective through their Facebook page.



We are theatrethreesixty features *Love and Information*, a non-linear play by British playwright Caryl Churchill





## The Grass is Greener on This Side

**Artist:** Various

**Venue:** Core Design Gallery

87, Jalan SS 15/2A, SS15

47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor

LIKE a jewel in the rough, Core Design Gallery is tucked away in a quiet corner of Subang Jaya, opposite Subang Avenue. Despite its unassuming locale, the space has a healthy tradition of putting together exhibits that offer novel perspectives on the medium while remaining accessible to newcomers to Malaysia's arts scene.

In its recently concluded showcase, *The Grass is Greener on This Side*, Core Design invited Mantova-born artist Benedetta Segala Ghani to curate an exploration of natural landscapes and themes which have been underexposed in current works, through a variety of techniques and forms.

"The energy of untouched nature has always been the first source of creativity since the existence of humankind. In every culture and throughout the various eras from Lascaux's caves to the current contemporary installations, this energy has always accompanied us in our artistic journey," says Ghani.

Comprising pieces by a group of talents which includes Core Design regulars such as Annabelle Ng, Husin Hourmain, Husin Othman, Husni Osman and Raja Lope Rasydi Raja Rozlan, the exhibit utilised a healthy mix of acrylics, oils, photography, mixed media and installation essays, adding spice for aficionados and newcomers alike.

Ghani, a veteran of more than 10 solo shows both in France and her native Italy, brings with her a fresh perspective to the local scene, which she expressed in *The Grass is Greener* through a return to the simple elements of water, air and earth, shunning the virtual realities which modern lifestyles have all too readily embraced.

"The landscape has always been an extremely power-



**TOP FROM LEFT:** Ong Hup Hoe's 7th *Heaven Series 9* plays with colour to evoke the natural flows often found in nature

Azrin Mohd's *When Humanity is Extinct* explores a possible future with refreshing humour

**BELOW LEFT:** Suhaidi Razi's *Into the Secret* brought together found objects, recycled wood, scrap metal and more, into a visually compelling sequence



ful key to human emotions, and perhaps it is our way to feel free and to appreciate who we really are. In reality we are not so different from our ancestors, we who live in modern times, contrary to what the present-day world may lead us to think," she says.

Highlights included Othman's *Sepi*, a quiet composition featuring a wooden walkway over water. A recreation of the bridge between his childhood kampung house and the outside world, a scene he often returns to when seeking a haven for contemplation, the piece encapsulated the themes of the exhibit in a single unified whole.

Taking a more unconventional tack, Suhaidi Razi brought together found objects, recycled wood, scrap metal and many more into the mixed media series *Into the Secret*. Presented as a series of assembled frames, his works juxtapose natural and artificial elements in a visually compelling sequence that emphasises the artist's versatility.

"Curiosity led me to probe into the mind of each individual artist, who is indirectly the spokesperson for society; to investigate how they are connected to these natural elements and their relative importance to their creativity. I was not surprised at all to realise that they still opt to isolate themselves in nature, in pursuit of their new creations," says Ghani.

Other works included *Kampung Lembah Bena No 1*, by Osman, Raja Lope's *Realm of the Vertical Horizon*, and Yim Yen Sum's *Let Me Tell You a Story Slowly*. She rivals Ng's conceptual grasp in her production of thought-provoking installation pieces. Using transferred images on fabric, cloth and rebar, *Let Me Tell You ...* presented nature as an abstract, fluid spiral, challenging viewers to examine the interplay of memory, perception and change in the world before us.

Helmed by Scarlett Lee, Core Design's focus on contemporary Malaysian arts paired with strong management and complementary publications has paid off in dividends, building an enviable name for itself in the industry while cultivating a solid group of contributors. Collectors and appreciators of avant-garde aesthetics alike are both advised to keep an eye on this space.

## Bricolage

**Artist:** Various

**Venue:** Rimbun Dahan

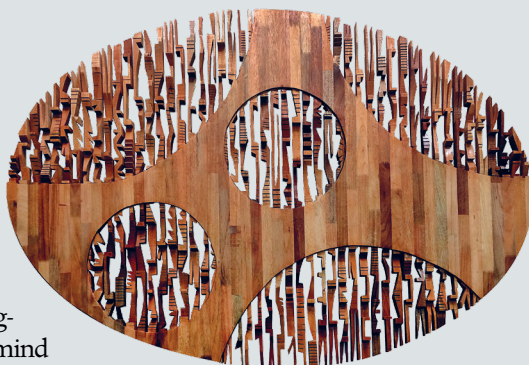
Km 27 Jalan Kuang

Kuang, 48050 Selangor

TAKING its name from a word denoting artistic construction using a diverse range of available materials, Bricolage is a selection of works from the resident artists of Rimbun Dahan, a Kuang-based centre whose evocative sobriquet brings to mind images of shaded, leafy boughs, as befitting its earlier existence as an orchard.

Hailing from nations throughout Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, the talents displayed the fruit of their labour in a one-week exhibit drawing from their time with Rimbun Dahan. The international line-up includes Malaysian sculptor Anniketyni Madian, Australian artist Jennifer Tyers, Thai painter Yuwatee Jehko, Indonesian poet Khairani Barokka, and Vietnamese painter and sculptor Tran Dan.

Perhaps the most intriguing talent, Khairani — popularly known as Okka — is a veteran in the industry, having presented her works across India, the US, the UK, Austria, Singapore and her own native Indonesia. Drawing from her own experiences, she is an active disability



rights advocate, which was reflected in her Bricolage presentation.

Titled *Oil and enamel on linen: poems*, the full-length poetry collection blurs the lines between art and literature, and was also presented in audio, in line with her commitment to accessibility in the arts. Exploring the inner worlds we all glimpse in the act of creation, the opus takes a close look at what it really means to publish or exhibit in contemporary society.

Other works in Bricolage were no less remarkable, showcasing both a deep respect for native elements while pushing the boundaries of their respective méti-



Australian artist Jennifer Tyers utilises *plein air landscapes* to capture the flora and fauna indigenous to Rimbun Dahan

ers. Anniketyni's sculptures trace their conceptual roots to the *Pua Kumbu* textiles of Sarawak, while Tyers *plein air landscapes* capture the flora and fauna indigenous to Rimbun Dahan. Admirers of the imagination would do well to visit this green getaway, which includes a 19th century traditional Malay house in its environs. ■