



JUHARI SAID obtained his formal education from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) from 1979 to 1983. He won the Permodalan Nasional Berhad Prize and the Main Prize in the printmaking category at Salon Malaysia in 1991. In 1993, he represented Malaysia at the ASEAN workshop in Manila, and was awarded a research grant in Paris by the French Government. In 1994, he received a research grant from Japan Foundation and studied traditional Japanese printmaking in Tokyo under national artist Yoshisuke Funasaka. In 2008, he was appointed as a Creative Fellow by Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. He has also been awarded the Anugerah Karyawan Seni 2009 by the Ministry of Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Malaysia. To date, Juhari has held ten solo exhibitions, and participated in over a hundred local and international exhibitions. Besides working as an artist, he also contributes his talent to the programmes organised by the Yayasan Raja Muda Selangor and other charitable organisations. Currently Juhari is a resident artist at the University of Malaya. He works from Akal di Ulu, an orchard located in Hulu Langat, about 40 minutes from Kuala Lumpur.

*This exhibition is dedicated to the late **Lia Grambihler** and my teacher **Yoshisuke Funasaka***



JUHARI SAID's - YES OR NO

by Prof Dr Krishna Gopal Rampal

It is a pleasure writing something on Juhari Said, who is turning fifty next month, and his journey to becoming Malaysia's leading printmaker. When I asked him why he wanted me to write for his exhibition catalogue he said that I was his friend, that I liked and collected his prints and that I liked what he was doing with respects to print making in the country. This is he knew from the fact that whenever I was asked who is the leading printmaker in the country I would state his name without any qualms.

The title of the exhibition "*Yes or No*" is according to Juhari based on his philosophy of life. In life he says one has to make choices and in his case his choice is "*Yes or No*" on matters concerning himself, his family (wife and 4 children 2 boys and 2 girls) and his art work. It is always "*Yes or No*" for him and nothing in between. Three examples of this method of decision making led him to choose being an artist as a career (in spite of parents saying no), choose making prints as an art form and committed to doing so (many artists while trained in printmaking have continued with other practices) and choose where he wanted to live. Choosing where to live was the most difficult choice as it involved others (family members). It was hard to live in their home in the orchard "*Akal di Ulu*" in the beginning. Sacrifices had to be made, more so for his wife, living where the nearest neighbour is at least a kilometre away. However with the decision taken and adjustments made with the help of wonderful neighbours, the choice has not been regretted. He does not give himself many choices in life and does not like to take the middle ground some take. He feels that immigrants are successful because they do not give themselves choices when moving away from their homeland.

Print making according to Juhari Said is a "*Misunderstood Religion in art*", hence sometimes side lined by painters and sculptors, and treated as a minor art form. Collectors in similar fashion also tend to treat it as so.? Juhari, an artist printmaker, does not agree. Juhari says it is possible to explore the possibilities in print making. While he has been making different technique of prints (etchings, collographs, silk screen etc.), his favourite is making woodcut print. In the "*Go-block*" exhibition he used moulds from plastic and reproduced them as though making prints of using earth as a medium. While other may not consider them as prints he considers them as an extension of his printmaking. Noting that he has a penchant for working with wood he used it to be carved as seen in "*Okir*" and "*Samudera*" series.



The works in this exhibition "Yes or No" are black and white works produced from the 1990s until 2008. The exhibition includes seminal works which have found acclaim among artists, art collectors and art institutions.

There are a total of 25 art works on display in "Yes or No" reflecting the theme. While this exhibition is happening when he is turning 50, he says turning 50 is not important. It is more important to become wiser as we age. When asked whether having this exhibition was a celebration of sorts he said it was not. In fact he has never celebrated his birthday all his life.

I have seen all his exhibitions held in Kuala Lumpur since the 1990s. This also led me to collect some of his wood cut prints including *Blue Mountain*, *Kilimanjaro in Nagasaki*, *Katak Nak Jadi Lembu*, *Lembu Nak Jadi Katak* and *Carabou* (the last three loaned to the university where I work). I have enjoyed viewing his exhibitions and am looking forward to this one too. Yes I am.



JUHARI SAID

by Dr. Tony Donaldson

For Juhari Said being an artist is a journey of discovery. After being Malaysia's foremost printmaker for over two decades Juhari abandoned printmaking to reconfigure his energy on to the process of carving woodblocks. His creative journey continues with recent explorations into ceramics and chainsaws. There is an emotion or an experience embedded into each and every artwork he produces. For Juhari Said making art is an intuitive process involving instinctive activities and it is here his art best remains; as visceral expressions.

Juhari also brings a strong sense of social responsibility to the role of being an artist by devoting part of his time to sharing his knowledge and to assist others to improve their lives. As Juhari says, "Creativity is not just about creating art, it is also about helping people around us". After the Asian tsunami in 2004, Juhari travelled to Aceh to work on a papermaking intervention study project with Abad Cekap Alliance Sdn. Bhd. In 2005, he was involved in a project with the Yayasan Raja Muda Selangor (YRMS) to help younger artists to develop their hidden talents. He initiated a project with the Liga Inong Aceh to bring four Acehnese to Penang to teach them papermaking and entrepreneurial skills.

This article is based on extracts from two interviews I did with Juhari Said over a 9 month period in 2008 to 2009 as part of a research project to track his journey. Each interview begins with extracts of field notes I wrote at the time. The discussion focuses on materials, his involvement with the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang, his approach to composition, and the transition he made in 2009 from black and white to using more explosive colours and the intaglio technique.

TERAP ULANG STUDIO, USM PENANG, NOVEMBER 2008.

I first met Juhari Said in early 2008 in Kuala Lumpur at the home of Malaysian art collector Professor Rampal. We met often over the next few months and then on 15 November 2008 while in Penang, I spent a day with Juhari at USM. Several works of for his Okir series (2009) were seen in his studio. As wood is his primary material I began this interview by asking Juhari about the wood he used and why it was so special.

JUHARI: I use jambu laut - a rare wood that grows on the beaches along the east coast of Kelantan, particularly in Machang. It is a beautiful wood because I can carve it 360 degrees without breaking it. When I carve other types of wood on certain angles the wood often breaks.

TONY: Do you travel to Kelantan to collect jambu laut?

JUHARI: Yes. I travel to Kelantan in the school holidays with my children or whenever I have time.

TONY: How do you select wood for carving?

JUHARI: I cut the jambu laut with a knife from different angles and I also carve marks on to the wood to determine its flexibility and to identify the best wood for carving.

TONY: How did you discover jambu laut?

JUHARI: I was a printmaker until one day in 2005 I realised that repeating the same impressions was no longer exciting. After being a printmaker for 23 years, I had a crisis. I went into my studio and I could not produce any new artworks. I became unproductive and spent my time gardening or sleeping in the studio. I lived like this until early 2006 when I was invited to attend the Muhibah Seni Rupa Malaysia-Jordan workshop in Kelantan which was organised by UITM Kelantan and the Malaysian artist Sharifah Fatimah Zubir. At the workshop I was given a piece of jambu laut instead of plywood. The size of the jambu laut was large; about 9 to 10 feet [in length]. As I began to carve the wood it created an emotional impact. The wood was beautiful because of its size and thickness. The result was so impressive compared to the earlier blocks I had made from plywood. Plywood is thin whereas jambu laut is a heavy wood. From then on I was hooked and I stopped printmaking and started to focus on the process of making blocks.

Below are the last three black and white woodcut prints produced before the Okir Series.



JUHARI: This transition to colour took place over 9 months. I was surprised because in the past I have worked in black and white but after staying in Penang for 9 months the artworks I produced were colourful and very different to my earlier works. In my earlier works I used traditional print techniques in which black paint is applied directly to the surface of the wood by using rollers. But the artworks I made for the Samudra exhibition at USM became colourful after I introduced the Intaglio technique and I did not use a roller but applied the oil paint on to the wood with my fingers, rubbing it on with my hands or using old rags, newspapers, or the occasional brush stroke. I applied Intaglio techniques on to the surface.

TONY: What attracts you to oil paint?

JUHARI: I like oil paint because it is durable, flexible and lasts longer.

TONY: Has living in Penang influenced these works?

JUHARI: Yes. I try to absorb the environment I live in and to convey it through my art. The colours in my new works for the Samudra exhibition perhaps reflect the buildings and my surroundings in Penang. But I also used a chainsaw in Penang to carve the wood rather than my usual carving tools. So the texture on the wood actually comes from a chainsaw.

TONY: Which do you find more significant in your work; the form or the surface?

JUHARI: The most significant part is the treatment of the surface. An artist working with woodblock print will focus on the surface. With sculpture, the form of the work is primary. A sculptor carving stone will emphasise the form and shape of the work rather than the surface. My works are not sculptures because I emphasise the surface of the artwork. For me it is about the patterns, carvings, colours and whatever you see on the surface.

TONY: There is a departure in material in one work in which you use ceramics?

JUHARI: Yes. This first work is the start of my exploration into ceramics. I treated the ceramic like wood. I made a wood carving and did castings of the wood. I created a mould and used press mould techniques by applying the ceramic on to the mould. I then created a form and tried to repeat the forms based on the mould I created. I left it to dry and after the ceramic became leather hard I carved the ceramic just as if I were carving wood. Some of the textures on the ceramic were created by carving.



TONY: When did you start the ceramic piece?

JUHARI: *In June 2009. I produced 20 works but only one piece survived. The other 19 pieces cracked.*

TONY: So the material is fragile.

JUHARI: *Yes, very fragile. Actually, the 19 cracked ceramics were sketches. A sketch is traditionally produced on paper but my sketches are on three-dimensional objects.*

TONY: How did you get into ceramics?

JUHARI: *As a Creative Fellow at USM I often talk with academics and I met a researcher specialising in ceramics. We talked about the possibilities of how to apply wood carving techniques on to ceramics. So it started as an exploration and I love to explore new directions and to search for new ideas. Normally, when I make Intaglio prints on zinc or copper plates I use a similar technique to apply the paint on to the ceramics as I do with wood, that is, by etchings. I have made etchings for many years but with the ceramics I had to experiment to find the best way to apply the technique of etching on to the ceramics. This is the most fascinating part.*

TONY: What key attributes does an artist need to carve wood?

JUHARI: *Passion and patience. I give workshops and lectures at universities and I find few students have the patience to sit and make a woodcarving. Sometimes it takes more than a week to produce a carving but few students have the resilience to spend time carving.*

TONY: You have spent time in Jordan and Tunisia. What attracts you to these countries?

JUHARI: *I went to Tunisia in 2008 to participate in the Festival International Des Arts Plastiques in Monastir. I like Jordan too because of its ancient history. In Jordan, I spent time in Petra. I am attracted to Petra because in ancient times it was a great centre of trade and a meeting place of all peoples of the world. Even today, one can find Roman, Greek and Byzantine elements in Petra. It was a centre of cultural and intellectual thought just like New York is today. I like this idea of a centre of intellectual cultural and artistic thought bringing together peoples the world over. I think this is what attracts me to study Sufism because Sufism is universal. There is no hidden agenda in Sufism. Whatever a Sufi says is for knowledge. Even a non-Muslim can appreciate books on Sufism - the poetry, literature and art. It is about universality. We should examine all things in this world from a universal perspective.*

These artworks were exhibited at Juhari's Samudra exhibition held in July - August 2009 at the Muzium and Galeri Tuanku Fauziah in Penang



Arus, wood & oil paint, 186 x 26 x 10 cm., 2009

Anthropological reflections

There is a tendency to want to know our artists and to expect them to reveal everything before attempting to evaluate their work. But Juhari prefers not to reveal too much. His art is experiential. It exists to be viewed but it also involves processes in which the patterns, colours and carvings of each artwork are interwoven into a single unity. As I stepped closer to the works in the Samudra exhibition I was drawn in to see other dimensions. In *Arus* (2009), for instance, from a distance the work appeared almost as a slice of the earth but in moving closer to it, the work changed and it reminded me of Penang. In making his art, he combined certainty with a feeling of being out on the edge; venturing into uncharted territory. The art is about his journey. It is about experiences and energy distribution.



artworks



Portrait No.2, Woodblock print, 28 cm x 42.5cm, 2007

Portrait No.1, Woodblock print, 28 cm x 42.5cm, 2007





Menarik Kerbau, Woodblock print, 141 cm x 82 cm, 2007



Carabou, Woodblock print, 141 cm x 82 cm, 2005



1920 - Jonathan - Johnson & Son - 2005

Jantan, Woodblock print, 141 cm x 82 cm, 2005



Portrait of the art critic, Woodblock print, 94 cm x 130 cm, 1998

A.P. *Portrait of the art critic* Andres Bello 1998



Katak Hendak Jadi Lembu, Woodblock on paper, 73cm x 54 cm, 1997



Katak nak jadi Lembu , Woodblock on paper, 78cm x 90cm, 2000

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List of exhibits

Title: Rio
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 39 cm x 53 cm
Year: 1994

Title: Supper in Sado
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 60 cm x 79.5 cm
Year: 1994

Title: Fashion
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 40 cm x 43 cm
Year: 1995

Title: My journey
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 40 cm x 43 cm
Year: 1995

Title: Bird
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 10 cm x 11 cm
Year: 1995

Title: Faces
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 9 cm x 9 cm
Year: 1995

Title: Mask
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 10 cm x 11 cm
Year: 1996

Title: Sunbath
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 10 cm x 11 cm
Year: 1996

Title: Untitled No. 2
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 50 cm x 73 cm
Year: 1996

Title: Untitled No. 3
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 50 cm x 73 cm
Year: 1996

Title: Portrait of the art critic
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 94 cm x 130 cm
Year: 1998

Title: Dhaka I
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 29 cm x 32 cm
Year: 1998

Title: Dhaka III
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 29 cm x 32 cm
Year: 1998

Title: Portrait with corsage
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 80 cm x 115 cm
Year: 1999

Title: Ketua saya tak kan salah
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 76 cm x 109 cm
Year: 1999

Title: Katak hendak jadi lembu
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 73 cm x 54 cm
Year: 1997

Title: Valencia II
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 13.5 cm x 14 cm
Year: 2000

Title: Valencia III
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 13.5 cm x 14 cm
Year: 2000

Title: Beijing
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 13.5 cm x 14 cm
Year: 2000

Title: Menarik kerbau
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 141 cm x 82 cm
Year: 2005

Title: Carabou
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 141 cm x 82 cm
Year: 2005

Title: Jantan
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 141 cm x 82 cm
Year: 2005

Title: Portrait No. 1
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 28 cm x 42.5 cm
Year: 2007

Title: Lembu nak jadi katak
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 78 cm x 90 cm
Year: 2000

Title: Portrait No.2
Medium: Woodblock print
Size: 28cm x 42.5cm
Year: 2007