

ART

Charity with all their art

It is an ambitious project – to raise money for mentally-handicapped children through the sale of artworks. And so far, response has been nothing short of spectacular...



By OOI KOK CHUEN
(project co-ordinator)

FOR three weeks, the room of an editor of New Straits Times Sdn Bhd was turned into a mini art gallery as one artwork after another trickled in for the Art Aid for Mentally-Handicapped Children.

It was a temporary safekeeping vault until the former office of the managing director in the old Balai Berita building became the new home, with 24-hour air-conditioned comfort no less.

There were startled glances from the staff as the artworks were brought in, photographed (for publicity and recording) and duly stored. For many, it was a welcome respite from blinking in front of the vdt (video-display terminal), especially when hit by the mental-block syndrome.

The works are of various styles and media – paintings including Chinese art, printmaking, sculpture, calligraphy, photography and ceramics.

Art Aid, a project of the New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad and supported by Perwira Habib Bank, is to raise funds through the sale of works of 68 artists, at the new Balai Berita lobby which began last Monday and will be on till Thursday. (Viewing hours are from 10am to 6pm).

It will also create a greater awareness of the plight of the mentally handicapped, and to show the artists' commitment towards helping their fellow Malaysians.

The money will benefit 900 children of the Taman Sinar Harapan (Rumah Kanak-Kanak Cacat Akal) Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor, and Wisma Harapan (Selangor/FT Association for Retarded Children).



NORMA ABBAS... Steffen's Bunch of Flowers (RM3,800)

Taman Sinar Harapan houses about 200 of the most severe cases, while Wisma Harapan has eight schools and a vocational centre for about 700 children.

The project was mooted in December with the greenlight given in January and a four-member committee was duly formed to look into the nitty-gritty of organising an exhibition-cum-sale within two months!

None of us had any experience organising an exhibition before, to say the least one of such magnitude. P.C. Shivadas helped get things done at his level, Norlin Noor looked none the worse despite juggling an unwieldy clutch of projects, while Anselm de Rozario impressed everyone with the speed he got things done despite the constraints.

The first big task was to per-

suade graphic-art whizz kid William Harald-Wong, who specialises in typography, to design the important symbolic logo for Art Aid. Harald-Wong proved true to his reputation, and more than that, he also came up with a design for the poster.

The artists, some of whom had been sounded earlier, were quickly informed to find out if their hearts were still with the cause, for this is the first time so many artists of calibre are donating their works totally for charity.

Such was the trust and the meeting of hearts and minds that the artists handed over their works without a receipt, without any letter of invitation, though they must have been apprehensive. The formal letters were sent out only later.

Sharifah Fatimah Zubir was with



SYED THAJUDEEN ... Waiting for Flowers (RM3,800)



ENG TAY... Young Love I (RM950)



TAN CHIN KUAN... Love Is Always Like A Monster (RM1,800)



CHOH KOK KHEONG... Three Old Friends (RM2,500)



JAMES PHUA SWEE CHUAN... Catnap (RM500)