

Paying homage to rich ethnic heritage

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AFTER a hiatus of five years, local artist Syed Thajudeen Shaik Abu Talib is holding a solo art exhibition entitled *Seroja* at Sutra Gallery, 12 Persiaran Titiwangsa 3, off Jalan Tun Razak in Kuala Lumpur.

This time, Syed Thajudeen, who is among Malaysia's most distinguished figurative painters with a unique poetic style, has come out with a series of oil paintings (23 paintings) and 19 ink drawings.

Prices range from RM2,000 to RM35,000.

The exhibition, which ends on Sept 16, was officiated by Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri at the gallery recently.

Seroja is Syed Thajudeen's homage to a larger tapestry of archetypal symbols and metaphors that are part of his spiritual and ethnic heritage.

It is a metaphor of universal primal creative energy and also that of womanhood, both in the macro and micro-cosmic sense.

This metaphor, in the deft hands of Syed Thajudeen becomes pure, visual and poetic.

The artist's distinctive profiled and elongated figures with their stylised eyes and lips, are swathed in bright colours of red, green, orange and azure blue, blended with a myriad of hues and tonality.

Perched and centrally choreographed in loving poses and arabesques, the colours reflect the joyous, sometime expectant but subtly erotic mood of Syed Thajudeen's stylised figures.

Born in Alagan Kulam, a village not too far from Madurai, South India, in 1943, where his Malaysian-born parents lived during the Second World War, Syed Thajudeen joined his parents in Penang when he was 11.

He went back to India to pursue a course in art at the Madras College of Arts and Craft from 1967-74.

Without doubt, his unique style and aesthetic sense has its roots in his personal background and Indian traditional painting style. Baroda, Calcutta and Madras were at that time rife with new ideas, experimentation and soul-searching discussions by the pioneering figures of



India's post-independence visual artists.

On returning to Malaysia, however, he established his own individualistic expression that transformed the early Indian influences into what is now his style.

A distinctive romantic treatment of subject matter and the rich colours as in the Indian medieval paintings of Rajasthan and of the Moghul period (enriched from the wealth of Indian mythology) are apparent in his works.

This, with the traditional visual arts' integral connection with literature, music, dance, sculpture and philosophy, helped shape his early works.

Syed Thajudeen's Indian lecturer Alfonso A. Doss flew in from Chennai to witness his protegee's exhibition.

For details, call Sutra Gallery 03-40211092 or Syed Thajudeen at 03-77847810 or 019-2887415.

Above: **POETIC EXPRESSIONS:** Some of Syed Thajudeen's works which are on show at Sutra Gallery till Sept 16; Below: **OFFICIAL OPENING:** (from left) Indian classical dance maestro Ramli Ibrahim, Veena Sikri, Indian High Commission first secretary (cultural) P.S. Sajwan and Syed Thajudeen.

