

Syed Thajudeen ends five-year hiatus with solo exhibition

SYED THAJUDEEN, an established figurative painter in Malaysia, will hold an exhibition of his oil paintings and ink drawings at the Sutra Gallery next month.

The exhibition, entitled "Seroja", opens to the public on Aug 8 and will end on Sept 9.

It will feature 40 of Syed Thajudeen's new works in oil and ink.

Syed Thajudeen Shaik Abu Talib was born in 1943 in Alagan Kulam, a village not far from the temple city of Madurai, south India, where his Malaysian-born parents lived during the Second World War.

He joined his family in Penang when he was 11 years old but later went back to India to pursue a course in art at the Madras College of Arts and Crafts (1967-74).

Syed Thajudeen's unique style and aesthetic sense draw their inspiration from his Indian background and classical Indian painting styles.

His works are greatly influenced by the rich colours of Indian medieval paintings of Rajasthan and of the Mughals.

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

Syed Thajudeen's impressionable days spent at the Madras College of Arts and Crafts had a profound influence on his search for artistic style and identity.

Baroda, Calcutta and Madras were at that time rife with new ideas and soul-searching discussions by the pioneering figures of India's post-independence visual artists. These protagonists of India's visual arts had a deep impact on Syed Thajudeen's early paintings.

On returning to Malaysia, however, Syed soon established his own individualistic



'Seroja' by Syed Thajudeen represents female energy

style. Now, his works are accepted by Malaysia's established art institutions and form part of the thriving Malaysian contemporary art scene. However, this had not always been the case.

During the initial stages of Syed Thajudeen's career, Malaysian art was rampant with pretentious 'manifestos' and dogmas which were critical of his work.

"Seroja" is his long-awaited solo exhibition after a hiatus of almost five years. His last solo exhibition was held in 1997.

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

The lotus (*seroja*) is the metaphor of universal primal creative energy and also that of womanhood.

In the course of almost two decades of prolific and creative output in Malaysia, Syed Thajudeen has managed to convince his detractors – who had initially criticised him for his 'Indian-ness' and over decorativeness – that his works are accepted by the mainstream Malaysian art circles and have become part of the rich Malaysian contemporary art scene.

● Sutra Gallery is at 12 Persiaran Titiwangsa 3, KL. For more information on the exhibition, call 4021 1092.