

family

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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showbiz

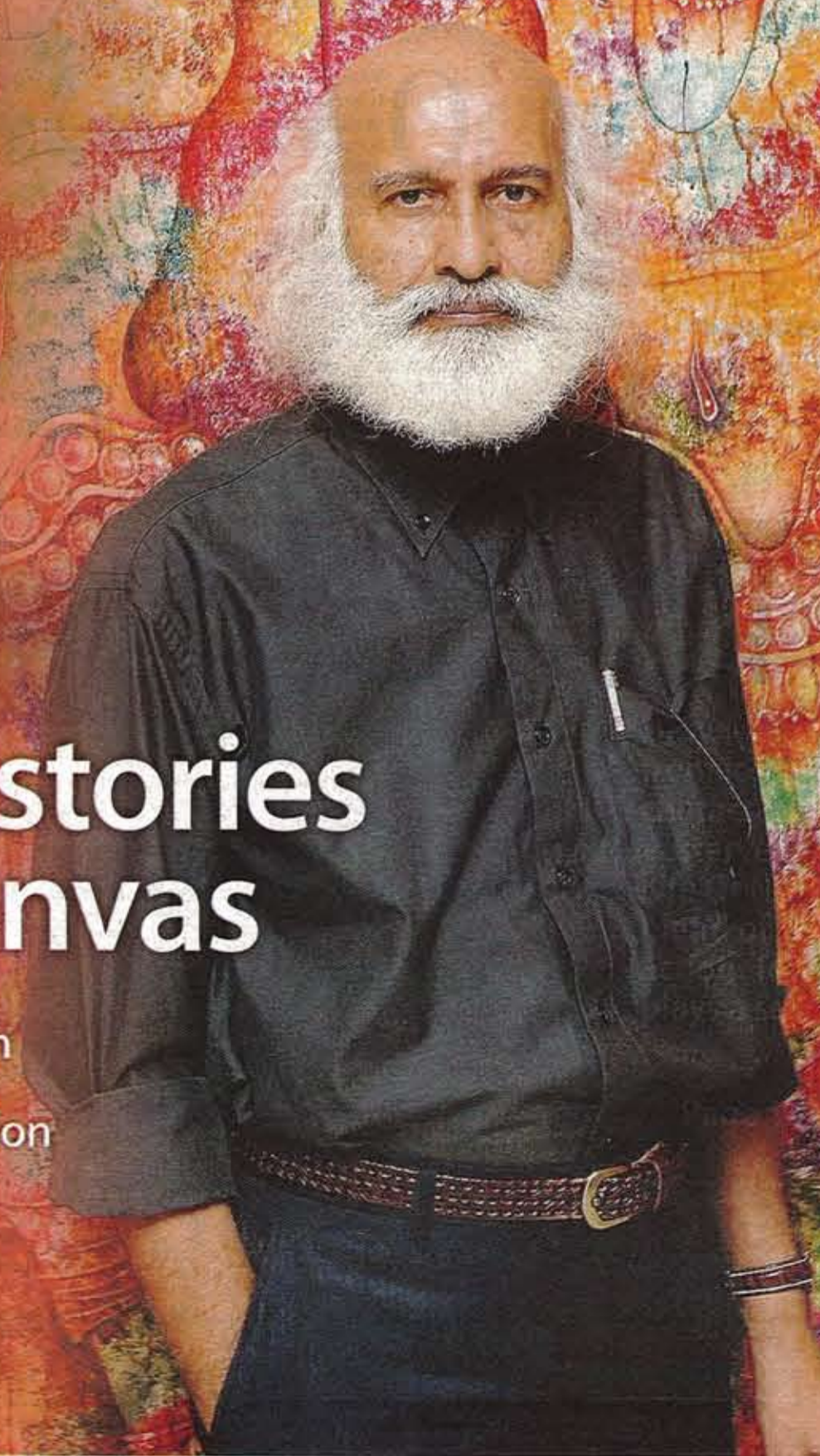
FINDING MORSE

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## Love stories on canvas

Syed Thajudeen draws you into a world of passion and romance

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## Bold strokes from the heart

Syed Thajudeen showcases the powerful emotion of love in his latest solo exhibition, writes MEERA MURUGESAN

**I**T'S an emotion that inspires, excites, empowers and nurtures. Love is indeed "a many splendoured thing" as the famed song says. For Syed Thajudeen Shaik Abu Talib, it's a subject matter that has fascinated him for decades and through his works, this all-consuming emotion takes a bold leap onto the canvas in a blaze of glorious colours.

For the highly-respected and widely exhibited figurative artist, who has been painting for over 30 years, love and women are themes close to his heart and this is beautifully reflected in his latest solo exhibition, *Paintings on Love* at KL Lifestyle Art Space.

In this collection of 41 pieces produced over 15 years, the many "faces" of love draw the audience into a world of passion, romance and beauty. Everything, from the bold, unbridled emotion of lovers to the purity of love for God and the nurturing maternal love of a mother, tells its story on canvas.

Syed Thajudeen's bold use of colour is legendary and meticulous details in rainbow hues are a hallmark in all his works. He's also a man who doesn't do anything in half measures and this is reflected in the huge, striking pieces he paints, some of which took seven months to complete and others, up to 11/2 years.

"I believe in everything that you do, you have to be totally committed and I put my heart and soul into my work," he says.

His education as an artist in India and his early inspiration from the ancient civilisations of that country are clearly reflected in his paintings. The daring use of crimsons, corals, blues, greens and yellows bring to mind the vibrant artwork of the Mughal era and ancient Rajasthan.

But Syed Thajudeen, who grew up in Penang, has also managed to create a bridge between the rich heritage of India and his identity and experience as a Malaysian through his works.

In many of his paintings, the scenes are undeniably Malaysian, from the

The beauty of Odissi dancers captured in *Springmood I*

graceful, kebaya-clad woman looking out the window of a traditional Malay house in "Longing for Love — I" to the enchanting image in "Girl with Umbrella" and the alluring, sarong-clad female in the joyous ritual of river bathing in "Lightness of Being".

Syed Thajudeen's female figures, central to his work, are also depicted in a strikingly abstract manner with an exaggerated emphasis on the eyes and lips and very rounded shoulders and elongated necks. "My works reflect an appreciation for women whom I view as a source of energy and they show the aesthetic value of the human body," he says.

This appreciation for the female form is particularly evident in a huge, three panel piece called "Springmood I" which

depicts a group of beautifully adorned Odissi dancers with their long slender arms interlocked in a striking, graceful pose. While the gloriously

captured images of dancing girls in many of his works may seem distinctly Indian to some, they can just as easily represent ancient Bali or Cambodia, two cultures

which also saw the influence of early Indian civilisations. "India is a powerhouse of creativity and we can't deny the influence of ancient India on this region. Southeast

Asian people drew their inspiration from India but interpreted it in their own unique style." Syed Thajudeen says growing up, he never

imagined that art would one day become the medium through which he would find true expression. He was born in Alagan Kulam, a village fairly close

to the ancient temple city of Madurai in South India, where his Malaysian-born parents decided to stay during the Second World War. He grew up there before

returning to Malaysia at 11 to join his family and start life as a schoolboy in Penang. As a child, he used to trace the images of kebaya clad women which he saw on

paper bags that came with sarong fabric. But his parents wanted him to be a doctor and he was sent back to India to prepare for medical studies after completing

secondary school. However, after visiting the numerous ancient temples in South India and becoming fascinated with their striking architecture and beautiful statues and sculptures, Syed Thajudeen's love for art developed. His parents tried to persuade him to focus on medicine and keep art as a hobby but he was persistent. They eventually relented and allowed him to enrol at the Government College of Arts and Crafts in Madras (now Chennai) in Tamil Nadu, South India.

His time as an art student from 1968-1974, saw Syed Thajudeen being exposed even more to the rich cultural heritage of India. During his college days, tours were organised to ancient temples, caves and monasteries and these included visits to the renowned temples of Khajuraho in Central India and the Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra with its

paintings and sculptures dating back to the second century B.C.

It was after these visits that Syed Thajudeen was inspired to paint a large, nine panel work inspired by the Ramayana which took 21/2 years to complete. The painting now hangs at the National Art Gallery.

Syed Thajudeen, who's an avid reader of religion and philosophy says although the Ramayana is an ancient epic, it contains life lessons that are still relevant today. He explains that like all holy books, it emphasises the need to live a righteous life and to be careful of our actions as we will reap what we sow.

"The central message is however powerful you are, if you do wrong, you will have a downfall and that's a lesson we should all be aware of."

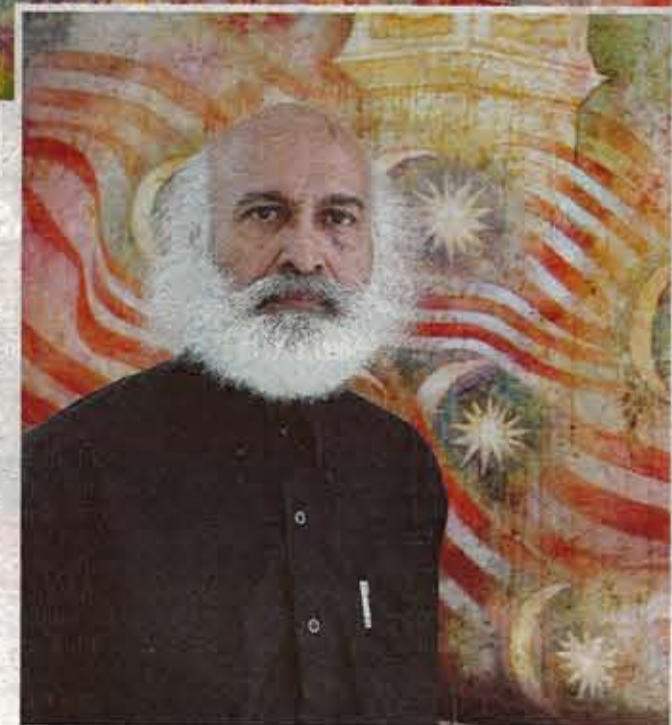
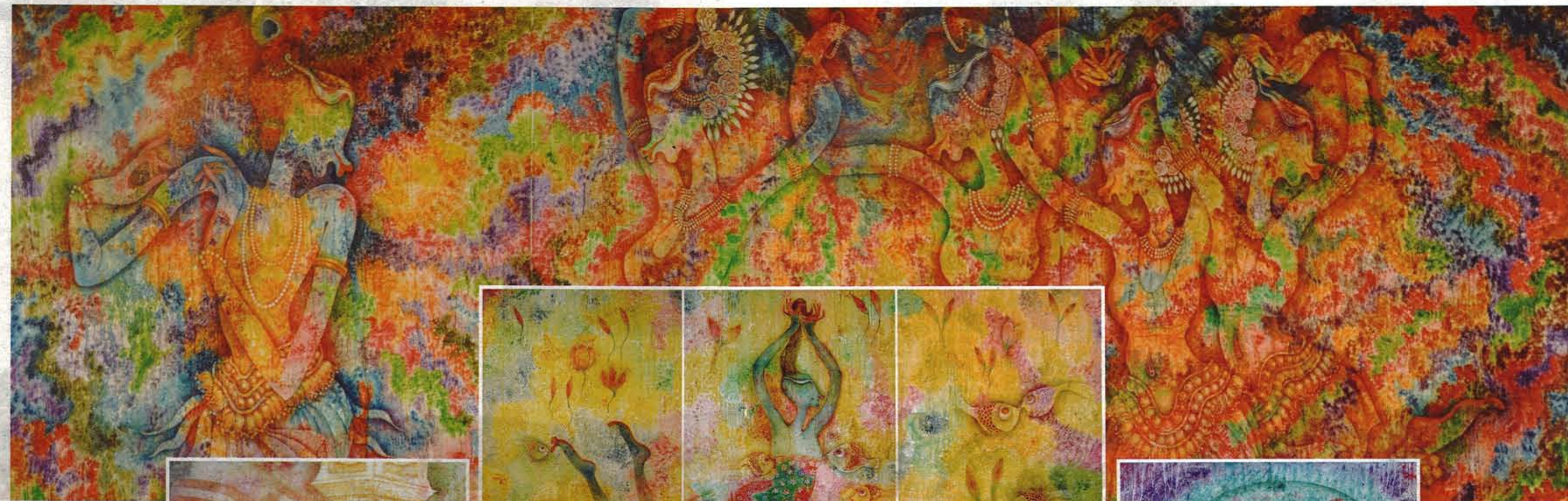
Paintings on Love runs till the end of this month at KL Lifestyle Art Space in Jalan Maarof, Bangsar. The gallery showcases the works of both senior and emerging artists and aims to play a role in developing an interest in modern and contemporary art among Malaysians.

"We need to break the assumption that art is only for the elite. There is growing interest in art among Malaysians and galleries should play a role in developing it," says Datuk Gary Thanasan, CEO of KL Lifestyle Art Space. KL Lifestyle Art Space is also located at Tropicana City Mall in Petaling Jaya and it also has an art corner at Menara Kuala Lumpur.

Gary says these locations make the gallery very accessible to the average Malaysian. People walk in, are captivated by the images on display and even if they don't know the artist, they are excited enough by what they see to bring a friend or family member along the next time. This helps build an interest in art.

As a commercial gallery, KL Lifestyle Art Space also hopes to encourage a secondary market for Malaysian art, particularly for modern or pioneer works. For details, go to [www.kl-lifestyle.com.my/artspace](http://www.kl-lifestyle.com.my/artspace)

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Syed Thajudeen's figurative works draw the eye with their unique style



Lightness of Being captures the joyful ritual of bathing in the river



The Embrace captures passion and romance

Scenes like this in Longing for Love — I are distinctly Malaysian

The Embrace captures passion and romance



Vibrant colours and meticulous details in Girl with Umbrella