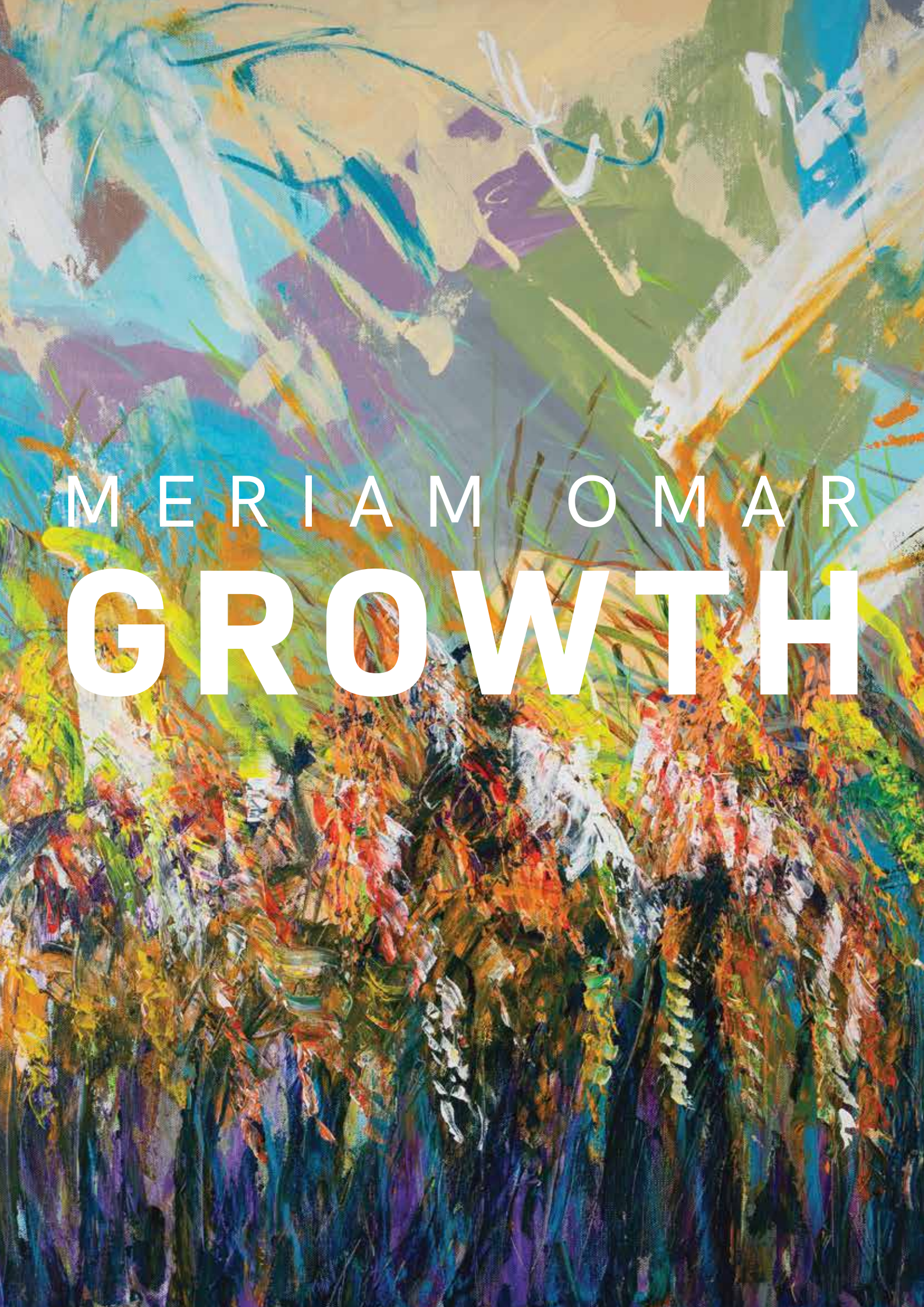




M E R I A M O M A R
GROWTH

GROWTH

A Solo Show by Meriam Bt Omar

You are viewing a long artistic journey of Meriam Omar, who was born in 1957 in Sungai Ara, Penang. Harmonious colours in each of the canvases painted by this lover of beauty tell us a story of a person's journey. Starting as a little girl with grand dreams, then a woman with many passions, a wife with a career, a mother filled with care and responsibilities. These elements indirectly contribute to the birth of 'GROWTH'. When I first looked at her paintings, I was so fascinated by the beauty were displayed and the dedication to the subject matter, paddy plants- which Meriam began to paint back in 2004.

We may have seen a lot of paddy field paintings but none like the ones painted by Meriam. They take a different perspective in illustrating this famous local plant. Instead of depicting a paddy field filled with coconut trees, buffalos, and a single traditional wooden house, she focuses only on the paddy plant itself. She painted them through her memory as she grew up in the northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. Her paintings are made intuitively rather than mimetic approaches with various colours and compositions. The repetitive and variable brush strokes lead to the paddy flourishing, wandering around the canvas picture plane, suggesting a breezy panoramic view, funnelling the audience's attention closer to the paddy plants, such as in 'The Humble Bow.' 'Growth' series finds its change in 'The Resilient Stalk 1' and 'The Resilient Stalk 2'. They look motionless in the foreground of a flat and somewhat fragmented geometrical plane of colours. The paddy plants look like they have been cut and paste, similar to a collage on a flat surface. It challenges Meriam's understanding of form and colour composition that obstruct the paddy plants from flourishing freely. She has to obey the rules created by the geometrical shape of colours on the background. It is a battle of spontaneous activity and proper planning. It seems that 'Growth' is not meant to be concluded, at least not yet. Meriam always opens herself to possibilities to avoid being dull and passive practice, even though the subject matter remains the same.

Before painting paddy plants, Meriam loved to paint various English flowers such as roses, tulips, daisies, and many more. She painted these beautiful flowers on canvases, porcelains, woods, and even ready-made objects. Some would regard painting on porcelain or functional objects as a craft or hobby. Still, I would say that they are no different from painting on a canvas. They share the same values,



including meaning and tacit knowledge. Back then, she looked for something local, relatable, and closer to her before finally deciding to choose the paddy plant as a subject matter. This consciousness of belonging led her to question her self-identity in the context of ethnicity and religion. Being a Malay-Muslim and living in Malaysia for most of her lifetime, she realizes the close connection between nature, culture, socioeconomic and philosophy in a Malay-Muslim's daily life.

Since rice has been the main food for the Malay people for centuries, the Malay people elevate the paddy plants to create proverbs, pantun, poems, and folklores related to many aspects of their lives. These indirect and metaphorical elements become a powerful instrument in advising and educating akhlak (moral values), adab (good manners), and even intellectual values that connect God, humans, and nature among the people. "Be like the rice stalk, it bends lower as it becomes laden with ripening grains", a translation from a Malay proverb, "Ikutlah resmi padi, semakin berisi semakin tunduk" – is among the proverbs that best suit the akhlak and adab in the Malay traditional belief and culture. It teaches us the importance of being humble as a person and a servant of God, to be more content and submissive. In the context of politics, we might relate it to the famous phrase- "the greater the power, the greater the responsibility." To this very day, the paddy plant still serves the Malaysian community in its nourishment, trade value, or spiritual well-being.

- Syakir Hashim



Tolerant Grass
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Flooding Nourishment
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Golden Linage
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



A Tale of Hector and Tonnes
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



To Grow and Soar
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Hazy Dawn
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Field Dancing to The Wind
Acrylic on canvas
152cm (w) x 182cm (h)



Symphonies of the Wind
Acrylic on canvas
182cm (w) x 152cm (h)



Glad to The Paddy, The Rice is Nice
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



From a Handful to Bountiful
Acrylic on canvas
101cm (w) x 76cm (h)



Element and Sustenance
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Roadside View
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Gentle Breeze
Acrylic on canvas
152cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Serenity in This Land
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Energy of The Sunset
Acrylic on canvas
127cm (w) x 127cm (h)



Gates of Hope
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Humble Grass 1
Acrylic on canvas
61cm (w) x 122cm (h)



Song of The Breeze
Acrylic on canvas
89cm (w) x 89cm (h)



Blissful Motion 1
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Blissful Motion 2
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Resilient Stalk 1
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Resilient Stalk 2
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Humble Bow
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



The Humble Bow 2
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 91cm (h)



Seasonal Shadows
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 122cm (h)



The Tranquility
Acrylic on canvas
91cm (w) x 122cm (h)

This catalogue is published in conjunction with the exhibition 'Growth' by Meriam Omar held at KL City Art Gallery, Wisma YPR, 1 Lorong Kapar, Off Jalan Syed Putra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from the 14th of February 2022 until 28th February 2022.

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