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**1M'sia Contemporary Art Tourism Festival exhibition groups local artists together**

KUCHING: Local artists are showing some of their latest works in an exhibition held as part of the ongoing 1Malaysia Contemporary Art Tourism Festival (1MCAT).

Themed "Exotic Borneo", the exhibition at Galleria here features 107 pieces by 10 artists, including well-known names like Raphael Scott Ahbeng, Sylvester Jussem and Matthew Ngau.

Others include self-taught artist Tan Wei Kheng, Malaysian-American artist Lucy Liew and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) lecturers Awangko Hamdan Awang Arshad, Faizuan Mat and Dr Yakup Mohd Rafee.

Exhibition coordinator and organiser Melton Kais, who is also a participating artist, said this was the first time Galleria had been invited to take part in 1MCAT, an annual event inaugurated in 2010 by Tourism and Culture Ministry, and National Visual Arts Gallery.

"We are proud to be included as a partner in this effort to promote art tourism. For this exhibition, we collected some of the top artists from the state to display their work here," he said at the opening of the show yesterday.

Running from July to September, 1MCAT aims to showcase Malaysia's contemporary art as a tourism attraction. It comprises exhibitions, talks and art-related activities in cooperation with art galleries, public institutions and shopping centres.

Melton said he chose the theme "Exotic Borneo" to portray the state's rich culture and heritage.

"The artworks on display are very focused on the theme of the show. For example, there are paintings of the benak (tidal bore) in Sri Aman and folk artists doing their crafts. Sylvester has some pieces showing the culture of the people while my own works portray tribal artefacts and local landscapes.

"There are also some wood bark paintings by Matthew, a traditional art form which is very Sarawakian. Overall the artworks portray Borneo very well," he said.

Assistant Public Health Minister Dr Jerip Susil, who opened the exhibition, said it was an important milestone for Sarawak to be included in 1MCAT.

"It shows that National Visual Arts Gallery recognises that Sarawak has many promising artists. We are fortunate to have local artists portraying the heart, mind and soul of Sarawak culture.

"This needs to be preserved in the form of pictures and motifs, and who better to do it than artists," he said.

Source: The Star Online