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**22 different ways of looking at what it means to be a woman in Malaysia today**

Kuala Lumpur, 25 April 2014 – 22 artists present their artworks in response to the idea of what it means to be a ‘good’ woman in society, addressing issues of identity and self, community and nationality.

The exhibition, ‘**The Good Malaysian Woman: *Ethnicity, Religion, Politics***’, organised by the All Women’s Action Society (AWAM) and Interpr8 Art Space, will be held from 18 to 25 May, 2014, Black Box, MAP Publika, in Solaris Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur.

Featuring 22 artists and over 30 artworks in a variety of mediums, the exhibition raises questions such as ‘whose view’, ‘what is right or wrong’, ‘who judges’, ‘should they judge’. This group show of women artists presents different views of what a ‘good Malaysian woman’ is, while simultaneously celebrating the diversity and complexity of women in Malaysian society.

The exhibition features both emerging and established artists, such as Bibi Chew, Izan Tahir, Shia Yih Ying, Yee I-Lann, Aisyah Baharuddin, Intan Rafiza, Sharon Chin, Anisa Abdullah and more. The works presented include paintings, mixed media works, installation, photography, sculpture and video art. Mostly new works created specially in response to the exhibition theme, the works will be for sale, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting AWAM.

The collaboration between AWAM and the gallery came about to address shared concerns about issues that affect women today, and an interest in art and its power to raise social consciousness.

The work of AWAM focuses on women’s rights and tackles issues of discrimination, and with this exhibition AWAM seeks new ways to broaden the discourse on matters that affect women.

According to Lee Wei San, Assistant Programme Manager of AWAM, “Intolerance around ethnic and religious issues has particular effects on women. Women, more so than men, are pressured to speak, behave, or dress in specific ways. Women are also stigmatised or

persecuted when they do not conform to accepted gender roles, or fit within what society imagines as the ‘the good Malaysian woman’.”

Through their work, AWAM hopes to create alternative understandings and narratives on ethnicity and religion in Malaysia. “We want to build a Malaysia that will embrace and celebrate diversity, and adhere to the principles of equality, justice and compassion as promoted by all major religions.”

For curators Sharmin Parameswaran and Sunitha Janamohanan, the exhibition theme, which they developed in collaboration with AWAM, presented an opportunity to work with female artists who were interested in the process of reflection that the exhibition concept required, and who were addressing current issues in their practice. The result is an exhibition of thought-provoking artworks which offer the viewer multiple entry points to consider the role of women within the context of themselves, their families and their larger society.

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Notes to editor

Event details

The exhibition opens on 17 May, and runs from 18 to 25 May 2014 at Black Box at Publika, Solaris Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur. Gallery hours are 11:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday to Sunday.

The majority of the works have been created specially for the exhibition, and are all for sale with a portion of the proceeds to be donated to AWAM. Enquiries regarding the works and artists should be directed to Sharmin Parameswaran at interpr8@gmail.com.

Entry to the exhibition is free of charge.

A workshop and panel talk will be held in conjunction with the exhibition. Further details can be found on the AWAM website, www.awam.org.my or on Facebook at [thegoodmalaysianwoman](https://www.facebook.com/thegoodmalaysianwoman).

Full list of artists - attached

Curatorial concept

To be a woman anywhere carries with it a range of challenges bound to notions of gender, sexuality, and a woman’s place in the world. From a young age, girls are often told how to behave, how to dress, what to say or not say, to whom their loyalties lie, to whom they accord respect. What is deemed permissible, acceptable, respectable, admirable. In a society where the lines may sometimes be blurred between the state and the family, between one’s immediate community of kin or peers, to one’s larger community of country and god... How does this shape who we are, who we become, who we aspire to be? We ask

the question of what it means to be a 'good' woman in Malaysia. Who defines what is 'good'? Who prescribes how a woman should act? How they should be in relation to others? We put these questions to our artists. We ask them to tell us what it means to them to be a 'Good Malaysian Woman'. How do they view their place in the world and how do they, in turn, shape the world around them. The Good Malaysian Woman presents choices made by women as active agents of their own construction.

About All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

The All Women's Action Society (AWAM) is an independent feminist organisation based in Petaling Jaya. AWAM envisions a just, democratic, and equitable society where all persons, in particular women, are treated with respect and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination. To meet this vision, AWAM conducts lobbying and networking activities to bring about positive changes in the law for women, public education and training activities to raise awareness about women's rights, provide services such as counselling and legal information clinic for women in crisis, and issues publications and press statements in relation to issues surrounding gender based violence and the politicisation of ethnicity and religion and its impact on women.

About Interpr8 Art Space

Interpr8 Art Space was established in 2012 by prominent art collector Dato' N. Parameswaran to house the extensive collection of Malaysian and Southeast Asian art that he has built up in the last 27 years. The space will host exhibitions by local and foreign artists and also art-related programmes that encourage thought and discourse. It is the hope of Interpr8 Art Space that its presence will help Malaysians immerse themselves in and develop a greater appreciation for art.