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Artists rally to aid Kosovars

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THE paintings depicting the genocide in Kosovo in the Art For Kosovo exhibition are not exactly dripping with blood and gore, or all brimstone and fire.

In not reaching for the jugular, the four artists involved in the part-charity quest probably have an eye on the saleability, for who would want to put stark images of the brutality of war on their walls, home or offices?

Also, being far away from the heat of the action, the artists could only imagine what the Kosovars went through from newspaper reports and television news clips ... the mental and physical trauma, and the separation from loved ones and homeland.

Still, using the Kosovo theme as part of the focus in the exhibition makes it more meaningful. It empathises with them, and evokes a sense of outrage over the injustices of might, specifically that wielded by Slobodan Milosevic.

The exhibition features 28 works by four artists and caricaturists - Tazidi Yusuf, Mohd Nordin Yusuf (Ambo), Abdul Aziz Abdul Rashid (Akam) and Hanafiah Ibrahim (Kerengge).

The works are in various media, like oil and acrylic and also mixed, with price tags of between RM680 and RM10,000.

Twenty per cent of the proceeds from the sale will go towards the fund set up by the Barisan Bertindak Kosovo for the war victims.

All the artists save Kerengge, who studied graphic art at the Mara Institute of Technology in 1977-78, are self-taught.

In the two (51x38cm) acrylic and oil portraits of Kosovo refugees by Ambo, the accent is more on the psychological, in trying to capture the inner anguish. The close-up of the faces in a moment of private grief mirrors the fear and helplessness while saying something of their stoic character.

While the old woman clad in white shawl and headdress has a downcast look, that of the man with furrowed brows looks straight at the viewer as if half accusing (at their not doing anything to stop the mayhem) and half pleading (for a quick resolution).

Tazidi's Kosovo canvases are cauterised somewhat, with the use of the poster-like approach and abstract with streaks and splotches delivered with a certain method.

Tazidi's KIV, VIP, RIP, a large acrylic on canvas (152x152cm) combines text, images and colours as dominant elements in what is a disparate composition, with the thematic titular triad acting as a common link.

The 48-year-old illustrator/graphic designer again breaks up the canvas plane in Jatuh Sekali, Bangun 3 Kali by wedging another canvas on the lower left half.

Tazidi and Ambo share a common start with both working for the popular local magazine Gila-Gila before venturing out on their own.

Tazidi was with the magazine from 1980 until 1990 in which his mainstays were the columns entitled Kalau and Kancil, while Ambo, 17 years younger, worked with Gila-Gila from 1991 to 1996, with his main strip being Mega Movie.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi are a caricature's dream - Dr Mahathir with his outspoken persona and prominent nose, and Pak Lah with his high forehead.