

# Art to promote peace

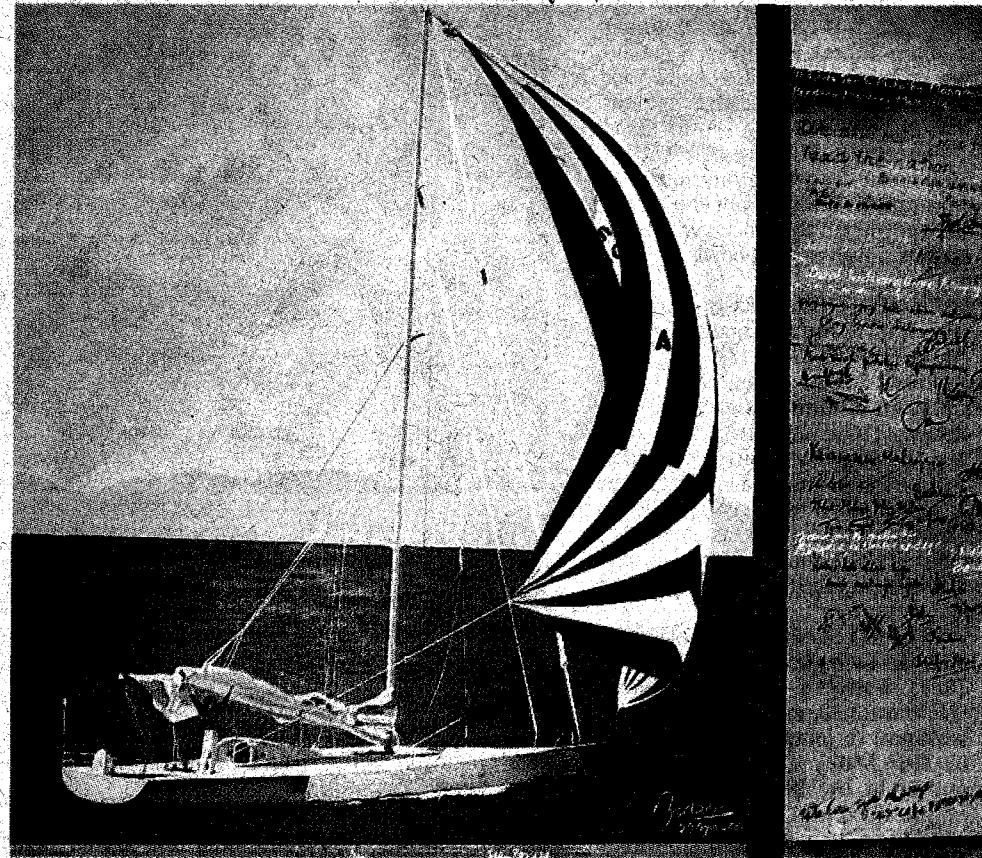
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Borhann with the painting 'Stair to the Stars', symbolising the late Yasser Arafat's peace monument overlooking Bethlehem. The monument remains a dream.



Borhann's painting of his eight-year-old son Ashraff as a toddler.



'Jalur Gemilang' captures Datuk Azhar Mansor's voyage around the world in his yacht.

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**P**ROMOTING peace through art has been freelance artist Borhann Mohamed's lifelong quest. This passion was further fanned when the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat spoke to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when the charismatic leaders met in the 90s, about constructing a 55-metre stairway seemingly leading up to heaven while overlooking Bethlehem.

"To me, peace in Palestine means peace to the world and I wanted to convey this message during the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Putrajaya back in 2003. Arafat's dream project was ideal for my peace ideology," revealed Borhann, who is a businessman.

Guided by a computer illustration of the stairway designed by Arafat's architect, Borhann burned the midnight oil at his home in Putrajaya to convey his peace message on canvas.

The end result after four gruelling days was the

symbolic *Stair to the Stars*, a 1.7m by 1.7m semi-abstract acrylic painting of Arafat's project. Borhann gladly accepted his friend's offer to display the painting at his rented booth at the OIC.

As fate would have it, the booth was among the 14 visited by Dr Mahathir, out of the 400 booths put up during the conference at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Intent on making his peace effort known, Borhann approached the former prime minister.

"As nervous as I was, I mustered the courage to tell Tun about the painting and what it stood for. I also told him that I wanted to send the painting to Arafat who couldn't make it to the OIC because he was under house arrest," said Borhann.

Dr Mahathir, who was touched by his effort, signed the painting with the message "May Your Dream Become a Reality" on Oct 14, 2003. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was then the Deputy Prime Minister, signed his message, "May Allah Always Protect You", a day later.

On the upper left of the painting is another

important signature, that of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail.

According to Borhann, a few corporate leaders pledged to help him raise funds to send the painting to Arafat but several turns of events, like Dr Mahathir stepping down and Arafat's death, dictated otherwise.

The founder of the World Art Peace Movement is now channelling his efforts into getting the painting across to Palestine, stopping en route in Washington DC, where peace talks are scheduled to be held between Israeli and Palestine leaders later in the year.

"I am currently attempting to make arrangements through Tun's office at the Perdana

Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya and am also awaiting response from Wisma Putra. However, if nothing materialises, I might consider selling the painting to a private collector," he said.

Borhann, who has a Masters in E-Commerce, also offers art classes for children and students of various ages. His home in Precinct 9 is like a mini art gallery, decorated with numerous paintings including a striking portrait of his only child, eight-year-old Ashraff when he was a toddler.

Events proposed by Borhann and his team in the World Art Peace Movement annual calendar include the World Art Peace Movement Exhibition and the WorldArtPeace award dinner.

For more information on the movement and *Stair to the Stars*, call Borhann at 012-613 7122.