

SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY  
DATO SERI DATIN PADUKA  
DR. SITI HASMAH BTE HJ. MOHD. ALI  
AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION OF  
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND MALAYSIAN ART  
AT THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY,  
ON MONDAY, 22ND. SEPTEMBER, 1986  
AT 5.00 P.M

---

Mr. Chairman;

Yang Berbahagia Tun Ismail Ali,  
President of The Malaysian-British  
Society;

Lord Richardson of Duntisporne,  
President of The British-Malaysian  
Society;

Your Excellencies;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to be invited by The Malaysian-British Society to declare open the exhibition of Contemporary British and Malaysian Art 1986. May I congratulate The Malaysian-British Society for its initiative and effort in organising this exhibition, in collaboration with the British Council and the Malaysian National Art Gallery. Before I proceed further, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our British guests to Malaysia.

2. I understand that distinguished members of The British-Malaysian Society will be joining their counterpart here for their annual meeting. I wish members of both societies every success in their deliberations and hope they will think of ways and means to foster friendship and promote close cultural relations between the peoples of Great Britain and Malaysia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. As you are aware, Britain and Malaysia have enjoyed close relations which go back to more than two centuries. These ties have their ups and downs, but on the whole the relationship has been beneficial to both countries. Although we are divided by physical distance and cultural differences, we share many similarities -- the monarchy, parliamentary system of government, and education and legal systems. I believe these differences can be bridged through more cultural exchanges such as the holding of today's exhibition of Contemporary British and Malaysian Art.

4. We are gathered here today to see over two hundred paintings by British and Malaysian artists. This is the first time that works by Malaysian and foreign artists are presented together in one exhibition. We will be able to see the work of some well-known British artists such as Patrick Heron and Elizabeth Prink, and well-known Malaysian artists such as Ahmad Khalid Yusof, Ibrahim Hussein, Long Thien Shih, Syed Ahmad Jamal, Yeoh Jin Leng and others. These Malaysian artists were former students of British art schools who have benefited from the experience of British artists and art educators of Brighton Central, Chelsea, Hornsey, Slade, St. Martins and the prestigious Royal College of Art.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. As a young nation, Malaysia is new in the world of painting and sculpture. We were only active after World War II, especially after Independence. The British, however, have a continuous line of masters from Gainsborough and Reynolds, through Constable and Turner, to Henry Moore and Sutherland in the twentieth century. Despite this late start, we are proud that Malaysian artists have tried to develop Malaysian art into a form to reflect a Malaysian image. They seemed to have shed off the influence of their British tutors and developed Malaysian art with their own vision, style and identity.

6. This joint venture in art reflects the harmonious relationship of thought and feeling, capturing the aesthetic sensitivity of British and Malaysian artists. Let this exhibition be the beginning of further cultural exchanges between our two peoples. It is my hope that a similar exhibition could be held in Britain so that the British public can appreciate these lovely works of art done by our artists.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. While encouraging more cultural exchanges between our two countries, I feel that it should be a two-way affair. I hope we can send more cultural troupes, artistes, hold food fairs, and sell Malaysian handicrafts to Britain so as to make Malaysia more familiar to the British public. It is my hope too that The British-Malaysian Society would also do its part to inform the British public about Malaysia.

8. With these words, I wish once again to congratulate the organizers and the artists whose works are exhibited here today. I now have great pleasure in declaring this exhibition of Contemporary British and Malaysian Art open.

Thank you.