

TEXT OF SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE YANG DI-
PERTUAN NEGARA, TUN YUSOF BIN ISMAIL, AT THE
OPENING OF THE SINGAPORE ART SOCIETY'S 15TH
ANNUAL EXHIBITION AT THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL
HALL ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1964, AT 5.30 P.M.

I am always delighted to be invited to any exhibition in which the creative talent of our people expresses itself with imagination and vigour. For it used to be a common slander in the old days, that while the people of Malaysia, and in particular Singapore, were good at making money, they were indifferent to the finer graces of civilised life.

This exhibition appears to be remarkable not only for the quality of the works on show but also for the abundance of expression. I understand there were 445 entries of which 295 have been selected. The successful entrants total 114 out of 145 artists who sent in entries.

This 15th Annual Exhibition of the Singapore Art Society is also the first one to have been organised after the formation of Malaysia and therefore the first truly national exhibition.

I like to believe that the creative talents of a people are suddenly released into widespread expression when they go through a critical period. Historians call this challenge and response. Our challenge was the struggle for our independence. And our response was the achievement of independence, followed immediately by a burst of creativity of which this exhibition is an example.

However it appears the period of our challenge is not quite over. We are faced with a threat to our independence from another direction. We have therefore to draw our ranks closer together as a nation, and build up our faith in ourselves. We have to strengthen our will to be a nation and to survive as a nation.

I am sure our creative energy can play a big part in the national response to the national challenge. Therefore I note with great pleasure that although our artists are keeping abreast of international trends, their works are mainly Malaysian in style and flavour. They express the Malaysian way of life.

Many media and techniques - oils, water colours, charcoal, pencil, chinese painting and others are represented in this exhibition. But all of them have the common denominator of the Malaysian touch. I also understand that the works of youthful artists predominate in this exhibition.

I have no doubt that our artists, who idealise our way of life, will strike a chord in the hearts and minds of the ordinary people of Malaysia. For it is out of our sense of values, our fears, hopes and aspirations, our concept of our hearth, home and country that our patriotism and the will to defend our liberty are born.

I congratulate the Singapore Art Society for organising this 15th Annual Exhibition and I have great pleasure in declaring it open.