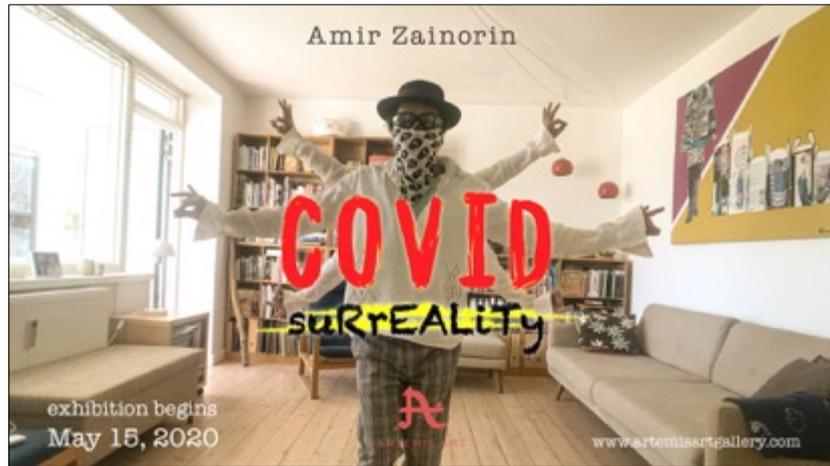# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibition Dates: beginning **May 15, 2020**
Venue: **Online**, at **www.artemisartgallery.com**
Opening Hours: 24/7

Artemis Art is pleased to announce our next exhibition, featuring Copenhagen-based Malaysian artist Amir Zainorin with a series of photography-based visual art entitled *COVID Surreality*. Similar to our previous exhibition, *COVID Surreality* will take place **entirely online** on our website.

COVID Surreality will initially feature **36 images** from the series of photographed "performances" by the artist, providing a lighter side to life in lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the series is currently still being produced, new images will be added from time to time, making this an expanding exhibition. At present there is no specific end-date for the exhibition.

The exhibition webpage (at https://www.artemisartgallery.com/covid-surreality/) will be going live on Friday, May 15 2020. Artemis Art will be making **limited edition prints of each work available for sale**, each photo-work having **seven (7) editions**. The prints may be purchased via our online store that we are launching in conjunction with this exhibition.
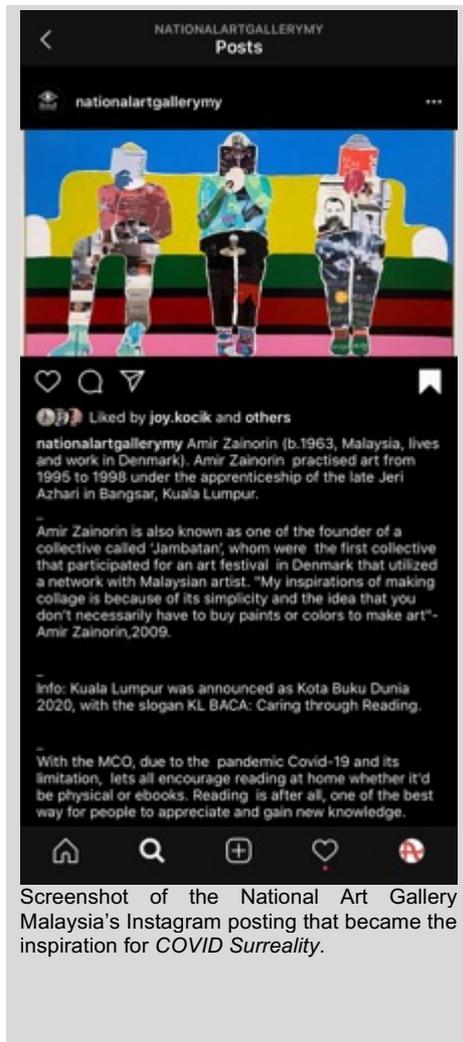
Screenshot of the National Art Gallery Malaysia's Instagram posting that became the inspiration for *COVID Surreality*.

Amir Zainorin was inspired to create the *COVID Surreality* series of works when he chanced upon an Instagram post on April 3, 2020 by Balai Seni Negara (National Art Gallery Malaysia) of his artwork **Read**, an acrylic and collage on canvas piece from 2006, now in the collection of Balai Seni Negara.

At the time, the COVID-19 lockdown in Denmark was still in force. Amir began experimenting with photographing himself, and the result was a recreation of *Read*.

The *COVID Surreality* series of works, documenting costumed static performances by the multidisciplinary artist, is absurdist at times, and is intended to put a smile on the face of anyone viewing the works, to bring some joy in these dire times.

Humor, according to the artist, has been an important element in his art, a catharsis of sorts. Amir felt that anything he could do to uplift the human spirit, currently mired in darkness because of this ongoing pandemic, would be something worthwhile and welcome.

We have included Amir Zainorin's full artist statement for this series, as well as low-resolution sample images that will be part of the *COVID Surreality* exhibition.

For high-resolution images of the artworks, arrangements for email interviews with the artist, or any other additional information, kindly contact Artemis Art via the correspondence details included at the bottom of this press release.

- **End** -

Sample images, Amir Zainorin's artist statement, and a brief bio have been included in this press release, beginning on the following page.

For a press release in Bahasa Malaysia, high-resolution images, or any other information kindly contact us via the details provided below.

COVID Surreality – Sample images from the exhibition

Read (Digital Photography), one of the works included in the COVID Surreality exhibition, is Amir Zainorin's re-creation of his 2006 artwork of the same name, and the first work created by the artist for this series.

I Inhale (Digital Photography)

For more information on the exhibition, kindly contact the gallery at +60 3-6211 1891, or one of the following:

U.C. Loh (ucloh@artemisartgallery.com) at +60 12-373 2188, or
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Website: www.artemisartgallery.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/ArtemisArt.KL
Twitter: @ArtemisArtKL
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Ketuk Ketampi (Digital Photography). The subject matter is a popularly known form of physical punishment in Malaysia.

Treehuggers (Digital Photography). While the majority of the scenes photographed were staged indoors, a handful were done outdoors.

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Self-Portrait with Ananas (Digital Photography). This is Amir Zainorin's tribute to Belgian surrealist René Magritte's 1964 painting *The Son of Man*.

Dance with Me (Digital Photography)

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COVID Surreality *notes from the artist*

I was inspired to do this series of photo works when the Malaysian National Art Gallery uploaded my artwork '*Read*' onto their social media to show some of their collection to the public.

'*Read*' is an artwork that I did in 2006 and was exhibited in a two-person exhibition at Alstrup Gallery in Denmark and then at Pelita Hati Gallery in KL for my first solo exhibition in my home country Malaysia.

It is a collage work done from posters given to me by friends and some that I had collected from my trips to the libraries in Copenhagen. I used an image from a magazine to make the artwork which shows a picture of three men reading books. Using readymade images is something I adopted when I met the late Jeri Azhari in 1995. He inspired me to paint and later on became my mentor and close friend.

When I chanced upon the National Art Gallery's Instagram post on 3rd April 2020, the world was in a chaotic state with the unexpected Corona virus pandemic that has infected over three million people and killed hundreds of thousands.

Right after I saw the post, there was this sudden impulse and idea to make something similar to that, and I thought the best medium to do it was photography. With my iPhone and half broken tripod, I started to experiment taking pictures of myself at home. It was pretty natural, as we are all advised to stay home during the lockdown.

The first work I did was a recreation of '*Read*'. Being a 'model' of myself is an expression of irony. The second work, which I called '*Uno Anyone?*', gave a big smile on my face.

Humor has been an important element in my artworks simply because it works as a therapy for my soul. At a time when we are veiled in darkness and faced with an uncertain future, anything that we can do to uplift the human spirit is certainly needed and welcome.

I have been posting works from this series on my Facebook and Instagram pages, and it is such joy to make them when I receive such positive responses and a few laughing emojis on my posts, especially at times like this. Living as a Malaysian in diaspora in Copenhagen, this series of work somehow helped keep me connected with my friends and family and revived old friendships – and ex-girlfriends ☺.

But then, when you think about it, it does not matter where you are in the world because with the lockdown, distance is irrelevant, and we had better get used to it. Perhaps the best way to stay in touch with someone in this changing world is through social media, but it only works for those who have access to it.

Who knows what's going to happen in the future? But what's certain is we have to learn to quickly adapt to our new surroundings and circumstances.

Amir Zainorin
Copenhagen, April 2020

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Artist Bio (complete artist CV is available upon request)

Amir Zainorin is a Johor-born visual artist who is currently based in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he's been since 2002. He studied Business Studies at Polytechnic Ungku Omar Ipoh in 1980, and after graduating worked as a bank officer at Agro Bank in Kuala Lumpur. After a couple of years he went on to further his studies at University of Conway, Arkansas in 1986, and later moved to University of Missouri, Kansas City, USA in 1988.

Upon returning to Malaysia in 1991, Amir worked in the advertising industry as an account executive. He quit his job in 1995, and in the same year he met the late pop artist Jeri Azhari in Kuala Lumpur, who inspired Amir to start painting, and who would go on to become a close friend and mentor.

Amir left KL in 1998 and went to live on Perhentian Island, off the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. He returned in 2000 and became a resident artist at Jaguar Motors Studio in Kuala Lumpur.

In 2002 he met his future wife Pia Poulsen from Denmark who was, at the time, studying Indonesian language at University of Gajah Mada, Yogyakarta. Shortly after, they moved to Copenhagen, where Amir has been residing since.

Amir Zainorin is a multi-disciplinary artist and his art projects are often interactive and participative, working with performance, installation, video and painting. His art engages themes of memory, migration, and identity, often in collaborations with other artists.

He has exhibited, among others, at KL Biennale, National Art Gallery Malaysia; Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde, Denmark; Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen; Immigrant Museum, Farum, Denmark; National Art Gallery Singapore; and Museu Historico Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Amir is the founder of interdisciplinary artist collective *Jambatan*, a Malay word that translates to 'Bridge'. *Jambatan* is based in Copenhagen, comprising artists, curators and academics in response to an urgent need of a community for art and of Southeast Asians in the Nordic region.

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