



Guests in Brunei
Art exhibition

2nd - 15th November 2002 • The Art Gallery • Jalan Residency • Brunei Darussalam

FOREWORD

This exhibition is the result of a chance happening. Three artists met regularly to paint and exchange ideas. One evening the idea of holding an exhibition arose. The theme of being a guest in Brunei Darussalam evolved.

Could we do it?

The thinking then began in earnest. Being a guest in Brunei meant different things to each of us. We thought about involving other expatriate artists in Brunei. Their approaches, hesitant at first, were welcomed. Professional artists and those who had exhibited before supported the less experienced. Some had received international acclaim - others were inspired and encouraged by them. An exploratory meeting suggested that there was the depth of talent for a worthwhile exhibition. Nervously, we decided: "Let's do it!" Sponsors were sought and a world - class venue was identified. Suddenly, we were no longer just involved. We were committed.

What do we have in common - twenty expatriates from ten countries and of all ages? We have agreed to this statement of purpose:

"Working together in this country has enriched our visual vocabulary as well as inspired themes in our art."

Using the language of art, we try to express more powerfully the influences of the unique experience of living here. Some of us never dreamed that we would become artists in Brunei and it is particularly rewarding to see those who are not professional artists reflecting on their experiences through a variety of media.

This is not a competitive event - rather a coming together of those with an interest in the arts who wish to share their experiences with a wider public. Now that we have prepared for Guests in Brunei, we are all excited about the opportunity of seeing each other's works in this wonderful setting.

Time passes; people come and go. Our stay here is limited and we are conscious of the temporary status of being guests and the inspiration provided by the vivid experience of living in Brunei Darussalam.

We would like to thank our sponsors: the Australian High Commission, CfBT, the Canadian High Commission and Alley Framemakers for their generous support. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Brunei Museums Department for hosting our exhibition.

The Organising Committee, Guests in Brunei

Duane Nickerson
Canada



Since moving to Brunei in 1997, my work as a painter has been directly affected by the intense, ever-growing environment that surrounds me. The rather barren Canadian landscape that had shaped my perception of what an environment was, and my immersion in the lush, fetid oven of life that is the landscape of Borneo caused intense sensory confusion. At midday while walking in the jungle I could hear the plants growing with a high-pitched, electrical buzz, and see the heat melting into the leaves and the earth.

The environment here seems to grow incessantly with a kind of hunger fuelled by the intensity of the sun. I had dreams of being absorbed by strange plants with huge pores and cells that would dissolve my skin while I slept. These dreams were intensified with stories of brutal hand-to-hand killings that were taking place in Kalimantan. The passion of the blood lust unleashed by the massacres seemed somehow suited to this environment of perpetual, furious growth in which creeper vines overtake and kill other plants in a mad desire to grow, to be alive. The Iban warriors mark their skin with plant-like motifs in a strange ritual of camouflage. They paint themselves into the growth; they join in this strange dance of decay and growth, of death and life.

If my paintings required a theme, I would describe the theme as the inevitability of life. In the forests of Borneo it is life that seems eternal and inescapable.

Canada 



ALLEY
framemaker

