

Top-grossing Malaysian artists

How are Malaysian artists ranked? The Edge Galerie has compiled a list of their artworks that have exceeded the RM100,000 mark at auctions and private galleries. **by Sarah Abu Bakar**

The information was gathered from selected auction houses and private galleries. All auction prices include a buyer's premium. The conversion rates listed are based on the date of sale. Some gallery owners have declined to declare and publish their record prices.

Leading figures

At the top of the list is the late Datuk Ibrahim Hussein, whose *Red, Orange & Core*, 1984, (198.3cm by 271.4cm), was sold at Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers in 2012 for RM797,500, which included a buyer's premium of 10%.

Although sold below the "RM800,000 to RM1,200,000" estimate, the price realised remains the highest ever sold for a Malaysian artwork at an auction. This perhaps reflects the condition of the secondary art market, which has been affected by the deluge of auction houses entering the market in 2013, resulting in limited sources of "high quality" artworks; consignors preferring to sell privately instead of through auction; global economic instability; and the weakening ringgit.

However, Malaysians have continued to splurge on artworks, albeit prudently, at galleries, art fairs and auctions.

Latiff Mohidin, 75, comes second with a piece from his latest series, *Seascape*, 2013, (166cm by 110.5cm). It fetched RM572,000 at The Edge Auction in 2014.

In November 2015, Christie's auction, *Convergences: A Special Sale of Singapore Art*, featured Malaysian artists such as Tay Chee Toh and Chia Yu Chian (1936 - 1991). The late Chia's *By the River*, 1954 (65cm by 80cm) was sold for HK\$687,500 (RM378,751), a record price for the artist, whose paintings depicted the Nanyang style.

Although prices at auction do not necessarily reflect the importance of the artists or the true value of their artworks, it is an avenue for the public to obtain transparency in the art market, to a certain extent.

Private sales

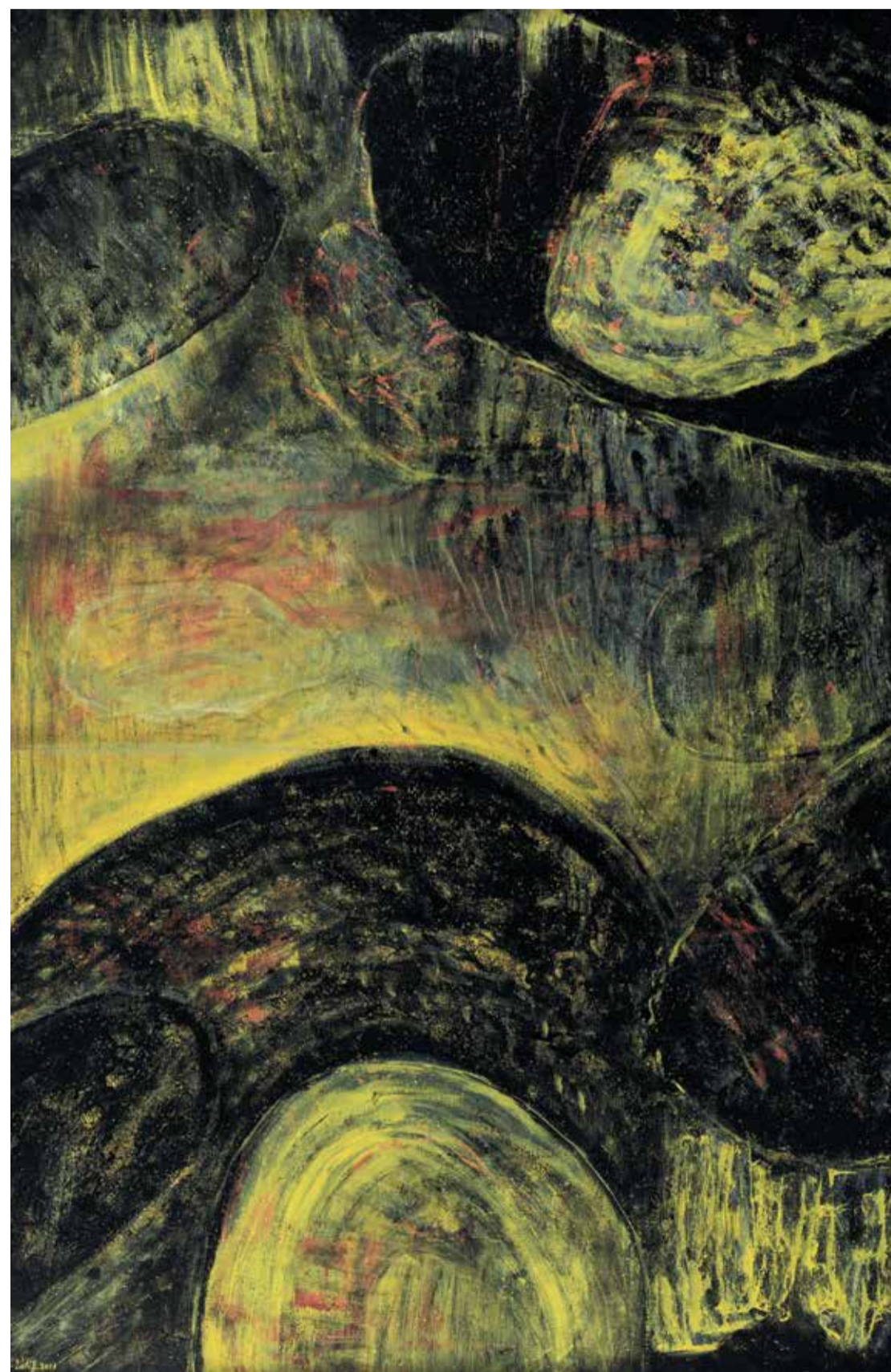
The Edge Galerie's exhibition, *Latiff Mohidin: Modern Sculptures 2007 - 2015*, in April this year showcased 31 sculptures made from stainless steel, resin and brass. The largest stainless steel work, *Shiraz 2* (127cm in height by 248cm in length by 46cm in width) was sold for RM640,000, including Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Contemporary artist Ivan Lam, 41, created a trilogy of paintings for an exhibition entitled *Day Zero, Night Hero* at Wei-Ling Gallery in 2013. The first two pieces — *Day - I have hated you too much to be grateful of the Day* and *Night - I have loved you too much to be fearful of the Night* — were first exhibited at Art Basel Hong Kong in May 2013. The final work, *Hero/Zero*, was completed in November 2013. In 2015, the series was sold for RM250,000.

In 2014, Wei-Ling Gallery sold a mixed-media installation artwork by Anurendra Jegadeva, 51, for RM330,000. The piece was from his solo exhibition entitled *MA-NA-VA-REH - Love and Loss in the Time of the Big Debate*.

In the same year, NN Gallery sold an abstract painting by Cheong Laitong, 84, entitled *No 29*, 1995 (135cm by 175cm) for RM100,000.

Without doubt, many other artworks may have been sold privately at higher prices. As money is a delicate subject for most high-net-worth individuals, discretion is key when it comes to buying and selling art. Most art dealers adopt the "client confidentiality" principle, therefore the prices are usually only known to the privileged few.



Latiff Mohidin's 2013 *Seascape* was sold at The Edge Auction in 2014 for RM572,000, including a buyer's premium

Contemporary artists

Favourite artists in the Malaysian contemporary segment at auctions include Chang Fee Ming, Awang Damit, Ahmad Zakii Anwar, Jalaini Abu Hassan, Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Rafiee Ghani and Kow Leong Kiang.

At an auction in Singapore in 2013, Larasati Auctioneers sold a watercolour on paper by Chang entitled *Mandalay* for SG\$103,700 (RM255,924), an auction record for the artist to date.

In June last year, Chang presented over 70 artworks at a Christie's Private Sales exhibition in Hong Kong entitled Chang Fee Ming: Weaving the World in Watercolour. His paintings sold for over RM200,000 each.

Artworks of Malaysian artists sold for over RM100,000 at auctions

NO	ARTIST	PRICE	ARTWORK	YEAR	SIZE	MEDIUM	SOURCE	DATE
1	Ibrahim Hussein, Datuk	RM797,500	<i>Red, Orange & Core</i>	1984	198.3cm x 271.4cm	Acrylic on canvas	Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers	May 6, 2012
2	Latiff Mohidin	RM572,000	<i>Seascape</i>	2013	166cm x 110.5cm	Oil on canvas	The Edge Auction	May 10, 2014
3	Chia Yu Chian	HK\$687,500 (RM378,534)	<i>By The River</i>	1954	65cm x 80cm	Oil on canvas laid on board	Christie's Convergences: A Special Sale of Singapore Art, Hong Kong	Nov 29, 2015
4	Chang Fee Ming	RM255,924	<i>Mandalay</i>	1993	56cm x 76cm	Watercolour on paper	Larasati Modern & Contemporary Art Auction	Jan 26, 2013
5	Yong Mun Sen	HK\$562,500 (RM233,023)	<i>Looking at Kedah Point from Penang Beach</i>	1946	100cm x 138cm	Oil on canvas	Christie's Asian 20th Century Art	May 25, 2014
6	Awang Damit	HK\$437,500 (RM206,430)	<i>Apa Khabar Ledang (Essence of Culture series)</i>	1992	183.5cm x 81cm (each)	Oil on canvas	Christie's Asian 20th Century Art	May 31, 2015
7	Ahmad Zakii Anwar	HK\$427,500 (RM184,638)	<i>Angkor 2</i>	2006	66cm x 198cm	Acrylic on canvas	Christie's Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art	Nov 25, 2007
8	Jalaini Abu Hassan	HK\$391,500 (RM169,090)	<i>Halal</i>	2007	152cm x 152cm	Mixed media on canvas	Christie's Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art	Nov 25, 2007
9	Hoessein Enas, Datuk	RM198,000	<i>Morning Mist 5</i>	1992	121cm x 90cm	Oil on canvas	Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers	July 19, 2011
10	Syed Ahmad Jamal, Datuk	RM187,000	<i>Gunung Ledang Series (Cherryvale)</i>	1985	91cm x 91cm	Oil on canvas	Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers	June 19, 2011
11	Chuah Thean Teng, Datuk	HK\$325,000 (RM171,207)	<i>Gotong Royang</i>	c.1955	90cm x 76.5cm	Batik dye on cloth	Christie's Asian 20th Century Art	May 29, 2016
12	Jolly Koh	RM132,000	<i>The Plough</i>	2013	122cm x 214cm	Oil and acrylic on canvas	The Edge Auction	June 29, 2013
13	Bayu Utomo Radjikin	RM126,500	<i>Infinity IX</i>	2009	200cm x 200cm	Acrylic on canvas	The Edge Auction	June 29, 2013
14	Yee I-Lann	HK\$295,500 (RM121,430)	<i>Kinabalu Series: Huminadun</i>	2007	106.5cm x 204.5cm	Digital print on Kodak Endura paper	Christie's Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art	May 24, 2008
15	Rafiee Ghani	HK\$212,500 / RM113,031	<i>Blood Cherries by the Black River</i>	2016	208cm x 182cm	Oil on canvas	Sotheby's Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art	Oct 3, 2016
16	Khalil Ibrahim	RM107,084	<i>Fishermen Series</i>	1993	100cm x 123cm	Oil on canvas laid on board	Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers	Oct 4, 2015

Artworks of Malaysian artists sold for over RM100,000 through private sales

NO	ARTIST	PRICE	ARTWORK	YEAR	SIZE	MEDIUM	SOURCE	DATE
1	Latiff Mohidin	RM640,000	<i>Shiraz 2</i>	2016	127cm x 248cm x 46cm	Stainless steel	Latiff Mohidin Modern Sculptures 2007-2015. The Edge Galerie	April - May 2016
2	Anurendra Jegadeva	RM330,000	<i>MA-NA-VA-REH - Love and Loss in the Time of the Big Debate</i>	2013	Variable dimensions	Mixed media, installation work	Wei Ling Gallery	2014
3	Ivan Lam	RM250,000	<i>Day Zero, Night Hero</i>	2013	240cm x 180cm	Synthetic house paint on canvas with resin	Wei Ling Gallery	2015
4	Jolly Koh	RM160,000	<i>Dragon Nebula</i>	2013	87cm x 325cm (Diptych)	Oil and acrylic on canvas	Jolly Koh: Towards the Nebula. The Edge Galerie	Aug - Sept 2013
5	Chin Kong Yee	RM125,000	<i>Infinite Canvas</i>	2013-2014	130cm x 540cm	Oil on canvas	Wei Ling Gallery	2014
6	Cheong Laitong	RM100,000	<i>No. 29</i>	1995	135cm x 175cm	Acrylic on canvas	NN Gallery	2014
7	Chong Siew Ying	SG\$38,000 (RM92,720)	<i>Pulse</i>	2010	201cm x 137cm (triptych)	Charcoal and acrylic medium on paper-mounted canvas	Wei Ling Gallery	2011

In May 2015, Awang Damit's diptych entitled *Apa Khabar Ledang (Essence of Culture series)* dated 1992 was featured at Christie's Hong Kong. It was sold for HK\$437,500 (RM206,430), breaking the artist's previous auction record of RM100,800 for a 1993 artwork from the same series achieved at Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers in November 2014. At the Hong Kong sale, those present revelled in the bidding spectacle as the final price was 672% above the lower estimate of RM15,000.

Since the Southeast Asian Modern and Contemporary Art sale by Christie's in Hong Kong in 2007, Ahmad Zakii Anwar's artworks have been steadily fetching higher prices. *Angkor 2*, 2006, (66cm by 198cm) was sold for HK\$427,500 (RM184,638), an auction record for the artist.

His previous record price of RM115,500 was achieved for an acrylic on jute painting entitled *Oleg*, 2013, (120cm by 180cm) at The Edge Auction in 2013.

At the same Christie's auction in 2007 in Hong Kong, Jalaini Abu Hassan's *Halal*, 2007, was sold for HK\$391,500 (RM169,090), also an auction record for the artist. Locally, his highest auction price of RM121,000 was achieved at The Edge Auction in 2013 for a diptych mixed media on canvas entitled *The Hallucination of Facts in Ungrounded History*, 2012 (244cm by 305cm).

Established names

Another sought-after name at auction is Khalil Ibrahim, 82, whose 1993 multi-coloured abstract painting from his *Fishermen Series* was sold for RM107,084 at the Henry Butcher Art Auctioneers' sale in October 2015.

Other artists whose works have performed well at auctions include Khoo Sui Hoe, 77, whose dreamy painting, *Around the Moon*, 1972 (88cm by 88cm) was sold for RM93,500 in 2013; Chong Siew Ying, whose oil on canvas work, *L'ete*, 2006 (150cm by 150cm) was sold for RM89,600 in 2014; and Lee Cheng Yong, whose oil on board painting, *Rubber Collection*, created in the 1960s and measuring 60cm by 50cm, was sold in 2015 for RM80,640.

Across the causeway, works of modern artists such as Chen Wen Hsi, Georgette Chen and Cheong Soo Pieng have surpassed the RM1 million mark at auctions. For instance, at Sotheby's Hong Kong 40th Anniversary Evening Sale in 2013, Wen Hsi's oil on board painting entitled *Pasar (Market)*, circa 1950s, was sold for HK\$13,240,000 (RM5,429,167). At the same auction, Georgette's oil on canvas painting, *Lotus Symphony*, 1962, (58cm by 144cm) achieved HK\$9,160,000 (RM3,756,131).

More recently, at last year's Christie's Conver-

gences: A Special Sale of Singapore Art in Hong Kong, Cheong's oil on canvas painting, *Balinese Dance*, 1953 (134cm by 87.5cm) was sold for HK\$7,720,000 (RM4,250,601).

In Malaysia, artworks that could possibly exceed RM500,000 and reach RM1 million are those sold privately as well as commissioned pieces such as public sculptures. Latiff Mohidin, Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal, Yusof Ghani, Abdul Multhalib Musa and Eng Tay have created public sculptures for conglomerates.

Contemporary artists who may have also sold artworks for more than RM100,000 include Ahmad Fuad Osman, Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Hamir Soib and Nadiyah Bamadhaj.

"Value" in the art market is as complex and mysterious as an abstract painting. To understand it, one has to experience the entire journey of looking at art beyond the price tags. ■

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