Heru Japra, Artist Statement

I often paint traditional Indigenous dress, depict important Indonesian stories, and typical scenes from village life. Due to colonization, Indonesian traditional culture and tradition is diminishing. I want my art to capture something which, unfortunately, may one day be lost.

My painting also reflects the values of my Muslim faith. About 90% of Indonesians are Muslim; this is interactive with our traditional Indonesian culture and the lingering effects of Dutch colonization.

I would like to exhibit both my traditional Indonesian paintings and the newer paintings of Canadian scenes from photographs. I am very much looking forward to painting plein air in Canada!

As an artist, I see the beauty in everything around me. I hope my art can help others recognize this beauty. Each culture has a particular aesthetic and I am interested in how Indonesian and Canadian artists see similarly, and also see differently.

I create all different types of art, but portraiture is special. A good portrait shows the inner beauty, the soul, the light in a human being.

Art is about ideas. Art makes people braver in self-expression and builds confidence. Children see the world in original ways; learning art technique allows them to capture their unique ways of seeing. When older people create art, they (re)discover who they are.

I am influenced by traditional Indonesian art, and by more contemporary artists such as Dullah and Abdul Azis. I have enjoyed learning about the “old masters” of Europe.

I look forward to learning more about Canadian contemporary art when I am able to come to Canada. I hope to access Canadian culture by painting it, and to capture my impressions of Canada while they are new to me. I hope to give Canadians the gift of seeing their culture with new eyes. In the future, I will look back on this documentation of my experience of Canadian culture.

My Indonesian culture is rich and vast. I hope to have a cultural exchange with artists and the public during my Canadian exhibitions. Art is a vital way to learn about one another.