

## **Krishen Jit Astro Fund (KJAF) 2017 Press Conference**

**9 November 2017**

KJAF Awardees for 2017, past awardees, members of the selection panel, members of the press, Ladies and Gentlemen

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your presence. It's the 12 cycle of the KJAF and it's been a good journey to date. Each year we have tried to make our mark – no matter how insignificant it may have been or seen to be at the time. Each year we have persisted in our objective of making a contribution towards creating new works in all areas of art in Malaysia. To promote experimentation, expand the potential and horizons of our Malaysian art minds.

What are the some of the numbers in our journey to date:

54 grantees.

Just under RM400k in award monies.

About 480 proposals received and reviewed by the selection panel.

The figures speak for themselves, but what is more important to us is the work that has been produced, the contributions we have been able to make to the minds and creative works of the awardees. Most of all the support and nurturing of the small guys- those who would not generally not receive financial support for their intended work from more conventional funders of the arts. And that's where we come in- as that unconventional funder. KJAF is unconventional, indeed unconventional is too mild. We are quirky and proud to wear that hat. Funnily enough the quirkiness of KJAF has been enabled and embraced and indeed encouraged by an institution which comprises the A in KJAF, a company whom most people would not out rightly label as unconventional - Therein lies the magic of their outlook . Their longstanding funding and active participation in the KJAF has been the cornerstone of our outreach capability and they are indeed special. Thank you ASTRO. That we are unconventional, some may say quirky is an offspring of the man who was a principal mover of Five Arts Centre- Krishen Jit was ahead of his time in many things- including being quirky. This resonated in his acting, his directing and in his overall outlook of the Arts.

To the awardees and to the many who have applied to the KJAF. Thank you for your ideas and your reaching out to us. Our strength has been in providing a funding platform for the upcomers the newbies and we have been blessed with worthy recipients. Our return on investment has been the new productions that would otherwise not have been put out to the public, eg a theatre show, a book published, a dance performance etc. More so the smiles of the awardees when informed or receiving their grants and the feedback of how the the KJAF grants have been the tipping enabler for their art work.

To our selection panel- a big thank you. You each contribute your time and energy because of your passion. Asking nothing in return and being enticed to return each year presumably because of the varied foods being served during the selection panel meetings.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
The Arts in Malaysia is in my view treated with a confused duality.

Face one is that as recognising it as a key element of our society. An element which is to be nurtured and protected. Cultivated, preserved and to forge ahead as a nation whose strength lies in its diversity.

The second face is that of the need to enable its outreach only under a controlled and supervised ecosystem, and in its most recent manifestation of control – to create tension where none existed – when to the extent where even balloons can be seen to be threats to the nation.

Duality of this nature is a sign of the flippancy by which the arts is viewed and dishonours the essence in my humble view, of what arts is.

Art in its many and varied forms is the outpouring of an individual or groups ideas, thoughts and vision. Recollections of our past journies which have made us what we are as a community and nation. A peek into our future and our hopes for the generations to come. It is a reflection of our spirit, our souls

While the wider dualities continue in Malaysia arts or otherwise, the KJAF will continue to make its steady mark in trying to nurture the soul of artists in Malaysia.

Ravi Navaratnam  
Member of the Krishen Jit Astro Fund Selection Panel  
Member of Five Arts Centre