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AMTA

PANIC BUYING

by Shafiq Nordin



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Malaysia mengumumkan Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan (PKP) pada 18 Mac 2020 akibat penularan wabak Covid-19 yang melanda di seluruh dunia. Dengan pemakluman oleh pihak kerajaan, ini menimbulkan situasi luar jangka dan kejutan di kalangan masyarakat. Adakah PKP bermakna mereka tidak dapat keluar dari rumah untuk mendapatkan bekalan makanan? Adakah situasi ini sama seperti darurat? Adakah rakyat dipaksa berkurung bagi mengawal penularan wabak Covid-19 dan bekalan makanan akan terputus? Cemas, panik, risau dan pelbagai andaian telah timbul pada ketika itu dan mengakibatkan bekalan makanan kehabisan di rak-rak di pasar raya di seluruh negara.

Salah satu makanan yang kehabisan stok adalah roti. Roti bukanlah makanan ruji rakyat Malaysia, namun ianya menjadi kegemaran di semua peringkat usia. Salah satu jenama yang sentiasa kehabisan stok bekalan di pasar raya ketika PKP adalah roti jenama Gardenia. Gardenia merupakan sebuah jenama roti yang telah berada di pasaran sejak 1986 dengan penubuhan kilangnya di Seksyen 16, Shah Alam. Pengeluaran roti pada masa itu dengan kapasiti 1,200 buku roti sejam. Namun kini telah berkembang dengan pengeluaran lebih dari dua juta buku roti dihasilkan setiap hari malah menjadi peneraju pasaran serta tidak terhad kepada pengeluaran roti lof sahaja tetapi juga roti berkrim, mufin, wafel serta sapan kaya dan coklat di antaranya.

Apakah yang menyebabkan roti Gardenia menjadi rebutan ketika PKP? Resepi asli Uncle Sloccum dari Amerika ini berbeza dengan roti jenama lain. Antaranya adalah dari segi kualiti, saiz, warna, bentuk dan juga berat roti yang konsisten. Ini menjadikan jenama roti Gardenia diingati termasuk dengan slogan popularnya "sungguh enak boleh dimakan begitu sahaja". Dan tentu sekali kelembutan dan kegebuhan roti Gardenia tidak dapat ditandingi. Lantas roti Gardenia menjadi rebutan sehingga Gardenia Bakeries (KL) Sdn. Bhd. mengeluarkan kenyataan pada 24 Mac 2020 menyatakan bahawa pengeluaran roti di kilang-kilang Gardenia telah sampai ke tahap maksima dan mereka tidak dapat lagi menambah bekalan produk-produk di pasaran. Kekurangan bekalan disebabkan oleh permintaan yang tinggi kerana pengguna membeli melebihi keperluan harian akibat kerisauan tentang PKP.

Justeru, selepas tular mengenai situasi tersebut, 'meme' bersifat lucu, jenaka, santai dan lawak mengenai roti Gardenia muncul di media sosial serta portal berita dan mula menghi-asi status hantaran dan muat naik oleh netizen. Kerancakan perkongsian ini menarik perhatian Shafiq Nordin untuk menghasilkan karya yang berinspirasi roti Gardenia dengan menggunakan pendekatan Seni Pop atau 'Pop Art'. Penghasilan karya ini menjadi sebahagian dari catatan sejarah seni ketika negara dilanda pandemik dan pemilihan roti Gardenia sebagai 'subject matter' amat bertepatan dengan mengambil kira ianya mendapat permintaan tinggi. Lalu karakter-karakter dalam karya ini menggambarkan emosi dan situasi 'panic buying'.

Penghasilan karya berdasarkan 'subject matter' produk makanan atau konsumerisme juga bukan sesuatu yang asing. Ramai artis aliran 'Pop Art' di Amerika seperti Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Edward Ruscha, James Rosenquist dan Wayne Thiebaud menggunakan pendekatan ini dalam menyampaikan maksud. Malah Shafiq Nordin sendiri juga mengambil inspirasi dari Andy Warhol dalam menghasilkan karya ini.

"Saya tertarik untuk mengangkat idea roti Gardenia sebagai imej ikonik dengan campuran warna-warna pop dan imej surreal dalam karya saya. Jika Warhol terkenal dengan Soup Campbell dalam karyanya, mengapa tidak saya menjadikan roti Gardenia sebagai ikon dalam lokal art scene".

Malaysia announced the Movement Control Order (MCO) on 18th March 2020 due to the spread of the Covid-19 global pandemic. This notification by the government caused an unexpected and surprising situation in the community. Does MCO mean they can't get out of the house to get food supplies? Is this situation the same as an emergency? Will the people be forced to be confined to control the spread and the food supply be cut off? Anxiety, panic, worry and various assumptions arose at the time and resulted in food supplies running out on the shelves in supermarkets across the country.

One of the foods that ran out of stock was bread. Bread is not a staple food of Malaysians, but it is a favourite among all ages. One of the brands that always ran out of supply stock in the supermarkets during the MCO was Gardenia bread. Gardenia is a bread brand that has been in the market since 1986 with the establishment of its factory in Section 16, Shah Alam. Bread production at that time was at a capacity of 1,200 loaves per hour but has since risen to more than two million loaves produced daily. Gardenia even became the market leader with productions not limited to just bread loaves but also cream buns, muffins, waffles as well as kaya and chocolate spreads among them.

What made Gardenia breads a hit during the MCO? Uncle Sloccum's original recipe from America differs from other bread in terms of consistent quality, size, color, shape and weight. This makes the Gardenia brand of bread memorable, including its popular slogan "so good, you can even eat it on its own". And of course, the softness and fluffiness of the bread are unmatched. So, Gardenia bread became a hit until Gardenia Bakeries (KL) Sdn. Bhd. issued a statement on 24th March 2020 stating that the production of bread in Gardenia factories has reached its maximum level and they can no longer increase the supply of products in the market. The lack of supply was due to high demand as consumers bought more than their daily needs caused by concerns due to the MCO.

Thus, after the situation became viral, 'memes' of humour, jokes, and puns about Gardenia bread appeared on social media and news portals began to decorate the status posts and uploads by netizens. The vibrancy of these shared posts grabbed the attention of Shafiq Nordin to produce a Gardenia bread-inspired art piece using the Pop Art approach. The creation of this art piece became part of the art history record when the country was hit by the pandemic. And the selection of Gardenia bread as the subject matter was very timely considering that it was in high demand. The characters created each personified the emotions and vibes of the panic-buying situation.

Artistic work based on the subject matter of food products or consumerism is not uncommon. Many artists from the Pop Art movement in America such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Edward Ruscha, James Rosenquist and Wayne Thiebaud used this approach in their work. Even Shafiq Nordin himself was inspired by Andy Warhol in producing this work.

"I was intrigued to elevate the idea of Gardenia bread as an iconic image with a mix of pop colors and surreal images in my work. If Warhol is famous for Campbell's Soup in his work, why don't I make Gardenia bread as iconic in the local art scene".