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**إندماج - GABUNG**

Joint-Faculty Virtual Exhibition  
28 October - 21 November 2021

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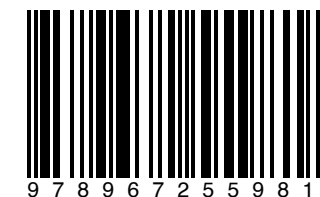
School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel: +604 653 3888 ext 3621 / 3415 Fax: +604 6576296  
Email: dean\_arts@usm.my Website: www.art.usm.my

College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah  
P.O Box 27272 Sharjah United Arab Emirates  
Tel: +97165587855 Fax: +971 6 5053444  
Email: info@sharjah.ac.ae Website: https://www.sharjah.ac.ae

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# GABUNG

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## Joint-Faculty Virtual Exhibition

School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia  
College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah UAE

28th October - 21st November 2021

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## Acknowledgments

### Deans

Dr. Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer  
Dr. Nadia M. Alhasani

### Exhibition Curator

Dr. Elham Shafaei

### Art Historians

Dr. Sarena Abdullah  
Dr. Jay Hetrick

### Coordinators

Dr. Tetriana Ahmed Fauzi  
Dr. Izmer Bin Ahmad  
Dr. Safrizal Shahir

### Editor

Julian Stone

### Graphic Designers

Farizzatul Syahnaz Mohd Mokhter  
Cheong Zhi Fong

### Administrative and Technical Support

Dr. Zuriawati Ahmad Zahari  
Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu A/L Sarjit Singh  
Mohammed Mazin Adnan Al-Samman  
Fariba Rahdar

### Documentations and Video

Nor Shahidan Mohamad  
Ezy Azhar Zamzuri  
Renji Mathews

### Operations

Nur Fadillah Ab. Ghani  
Nurfaizatul Hajar Ahmad Fadzil  
Rabiatul Ilya Jarimi

## School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Goh Chu Hiang  
Hasnul Jamal Saidon  
Kamal Sabran  
Mohammad Khizal Saat  
Safrizal Shahir  
Shahidan Mohamad  
Shahrul Anuar Shaari  
Shamsu Mohamad  
Siti Rohaya Yahaya  
Tetrianah Ahmed Fauzi

## College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah UAE

Andra Clitan  
Brian Gonzales  
Dana K. Amro  
Iman Ibrahim  
Izmer bin Ahmad  
Karima Al Shomely  
Mohamed Yousif Ali  
Muatasim Alkubaisy  
Nada Abdallah  
Tor Seidel

### Dr. Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer

*Dean, of School of the Arts (SOTA)  
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)*

"GABUNG- إندماج" translated to be connected to a fusion of thoughts, ideas and artistic inspiration. It gives me great pleasure to GABUNG the School of The Arts (SOTA), Universiti Sains Malaysia with The College of Fine Arts and Design (CFAD), University of Sharjah through this inspiring art exhibition.

This is a new initiative undertaken by SOTA through Dr. Elham Shafaei, our Industrial Fellow and the curator of GABUNG- إندماج.

Last year and the past few months had proved be very tough and trying times, especially for artists and art communities due to the Covid 19 pandemic. With the loss of artistic livelihood, performance spaces, exhibitions spaces, many artists lost their voice, inspiration and the creative need to make art. The world is continuing its struggle to battle against the pandemic and at the same time to learn to live in the new normal. Innovation and creativity became keywords, and these words are the mantra for artists as we continue to survive...

Today's GABUNG- إندماج is continuing the effort of artists to bring hope. This inaugural exhibition shows us that something better awaits...

I take this opportunity to thank CFAD of UOS, Dr. Elham Shafaei, the organizing team and the artists from CFAD and SOTA for the wonderful initiatives of making GABUNG- إندماج a reality of hope. Wishing all artists and art lovers all the best in marking their own creative journey.

Creativity takes courage - Henri Matisse

Thank you

## Dr. Nadia Al Hasani

Dean, College of Fine Arts and Design (CFAD)  
University of Sharjah (UOS)

Fusion, in its most basic definition, is the process of combining two or more elements into a single entity. In art and design practice, it is about absorbing various styles and theories, and incorporating mixed media and multiple ideas to convey a new concept and timely message. It is a rearrangement that allows questioning and exploration beyond the typical and promotes a wider and inclusive dialog among its audience. As such, fusion artists, especially musicians, have already obtained a wide acceptance of their music and garnered an appreciative following. One such fusion artist was internationally acclaimed musician Milles Davis whose fusion music synthesized and contemporized various genres that transformed today's global culture. More recent musical experiments include American trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and Iraqi oud player Naseer Shamma who appeared together on stage at the Marciac Jazz Festival, France (2017). The result was a memorable fusion of two very distinct instruments representing east and west conversing succinctly and intelligibly.

Another form of creative fusion is the synthesis of traditional and modern techniques of production, incorporating traditional motifs into contemporary designs that sustain cultural norms and formulate local identities. Work based on continuum and progression and emulating past techniques while experimenting

with contemporary iconography brings forth a newer perspective on notions of the making and made. Its contemporary lifestyle continues to advocate cultural heritage and traditions, thereby ensuring their sustained presence among future generations.

This has led to the rise of a new cohort of local artists and designers, who have accepted the challenge of 'contemporizing heritage.'

Our College embodies the exhibition's theme through its faculty's creative work and interdisciplinary instruction in our four disciplines, namely, fashion design and textiles, fine arts, interior design, and visual communication. The artists and designers whose work is highlighted in this virtual exhibit, bring together a breadth of cultural manifestations and depth of professional engagement. They represent: *Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Romania, United Arab Emirates, and United States*. Each within their own expertise, fuse personal convictions and memories of their mother country through the lens of experiences and observations made in the UAE.

The result is a visual symphony that pays homage to their past and acknowledges their

present. This mosaic of creative expression is at the heart of the College identity, representing of its diversity and spirit of collaboration.

Lastly, the fusion of artistic explorations among the faculty of colleges provides for a unique form of synthesis. It is an occasion to narrow the geographical distance between two academic institutions through a collective engagement in the creative process. More notably, it demonstrates the overreach of artistic scholarship in a world focused on the augmented and virtual.

## Dr. Elham Shafaei

*Exhibition Curator*

*Industrial Fellow at School of the Arts,*

*Universiti Sains Malaysia*

*Founder and Director at i.e. Art Projects Online Art Foundation*

*Co-Founder & Co-Editor at ContemporaryIdentities*

*International Online Art-Magazine-Gallery*

“GABUNG- إندماج” (Fusion) is an online art exhibition that explores the practice of twenty Artist-Educators from School of The Arts (SOTA), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and The College of Fine Arts and Design (CFAD), University of Sharjah (UOS).

The notion of “GABUNG- إندماج” is a merging of two words: “GABUNG” (Malay) and إندماج (Arabic), bearing the meaning of the state of being fused. “GABUNG- إندماج” is used for this exhibition as an indication of the range and diversity of creative practices studied and researched at SOTA and CFAD and reflects the fact that the participants are committed to maintaining professional careers as practitioners whilst working as educators.

The purpose of this exhibition is not limited to the assimilation of two art institutions from two different countries. The artworks in the exhibition indicate the experiences of artist-educators fusion of their artistic studio practice while providing education. The show invites the viewer to examine and engage with these multifaceted artworks to provide a new perspective to find the link between them. This virtual exhibition allows people from different cultures to gather and have a closer look at the “GABUNG- إندماج” of these

individuals who opted to embrace the identity of artist-educators, which is a multiplicity of perspectives held within sensual and textual modes of knowing because they preferred “both/and,” rather than “either/or.”

Foreseeing the idea addressed in this exhibition, it occurred to me to showcase the institutions which I know and have met their artists-educators. Knowing the identity of the artist-educators both from SOTA and CFAD and the fusion of their practices helped me with the selection of the works. It showed me how for some artist-educators the studio is a unique place for problem finding and problem-solving, media exploration, and giving form to ideas of personal and social relevance while for others, it is the educational consequences of the studio experiences that offer tangible outcomes.

In addition to the artworks, “GABUNG- إندماج” online exhibition also features texts by art historians from respective institutions, Dr. Sarena Abdullah (SOTA) and Dr. Jay Hetrick (CFAD).

Thus, this exhibition tries to bring forward the sense of Fusion to enhance the essence of the artworks.

## Dr. Sarena Abdullah

*School of the Arts (SOTA)*

*Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)*

### Learning from One Another: Strategic Creative Collaborations in the Arts

The pandemic outbreak had changed the way everyone in the world is working and living their daily lives. For us working in the art school, in which requires us to still be part of the creative industry and yet, be an educator, the past months were such a challenge in shifting our classes in virtual format, to preparing our students for the art industry. Whether we like it or not, we have to learn and adapt to the buzzword, the “new normal.” The move to teaching and learning online is currently inevitable, and for those teaching in a lab and studio-based program – shifting or adjusting to full online class, hybrid or blended learning requires a rethinking and strategizing of what we have been conveniently doing in the past decade.

As most of us have one foot in academia, and another industry, to demonstrate and negotiate both paths through a changing phenomenon is arduous.

In the first 6 months of the pandemic, art fairs, exhibitions and workshops that we usually ask our students to participate in are put on hold. We prayed that the pandemic will subdue and some vaccines can be produced. Now that we are 18 months in the pandemic,

the vaccinations are slowly coming but the Delta variant is looming. Countries like the United Kingdom, for example, have announced that Covid 19 is something that we have to live with, and for the rest of the world, the abrupt change in how we conventionally do things seems to stay or began to normalize.

One thing that is certain is that the COVID-19 crisis presents a leapfrog moment to transform teaching and learning today. New approaches and online learning promoted by universities by using education technology and other innovations are spreading across communities. For us teaching in an art program, online teaching and other activities require a better solution especially in regards to the changing industrial landscape. From the loss from sales, delayed workshops, and cancelled openings -- artists around the world had to plan ways to innovate and move their careers online. In the last 18 months, artists or those who are working directly in the creative industry have used this forced downtime to rethink and create new works, experiment with new series, and delve into longer-term projects.

Some of us used this time to engage more with social media by updating and cross-checking

information in regards to practice, create new content, or offer an online workshop on Zoom. Suddenly, online platforms are being used to teach or share our art-making process to engage a larger audience. Art was also used to create a message of gratitude from a distance and many artists have been creating artworks that thank essential workers through a series of murals that depict healthcare professionals and the frontliners.

The experience of a true bricks-and-mortar gallery is replaced by virtual installations where works by artists from various institutions can be “displayed” virtually. Established museums have also provided virtual platforms to “exhibit” their collections – we can discover the Great Court and discover the ancient Rosetta Stone and Egyptian mummies at <https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/> and use the Google Street View to tour the Guggenheim’s famous spiral staircase and discover incredible works of art from the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary eras using Google Street View and explore the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul from our room.

The pandemic requires us to learn, relearn and retool ourselves with technology and other innovations. We have to constantly adapt and demonstrate these changes not only in our teaching, but to be in touch with what is happening in industry as well. This is pertinent as we have to prepare our students for the current reality of industry as soon as they graduate. As such, we moved our RINTIS students’ exhibitions online for two years and then we embarked on

REKA Virtual Exhibition (<https://reka.usm.my>) and now the current collaboration with University of Sharjah in a virtual format as well.

Collaborations (and collisions) have become so important and central to one’s practice and even in the larger university network. In the arts, creative collaborations have always been actively promoted or campaigned for by the individuals involved – whether academics or artists. But the question is having we embark on meaningful activities that involve new thinking and solutions? Although collaboration in art projects, exhibitions, art visits and exchanges require new solutions and platforms, the new situation requires more meaningful engagement.

As academic institutions readjusted and aligned their position within the changing landscape, one question we needed to consider is: ‘How can we create meaningful creative collaborations in on-line contexts?’

Rather than something that we do for the sake of upholding our university’s name, ‘How would this collaboration bring an experiential and memorable impact to us personally and our professional practice in general?’ As institutionally supported collaborators, we need to think about how we can produce collaborations that are unique, academically inclined, and robust in terms of scholarship.

This rethinking and alignment through the collision between academia and industry is

pertinent. As some countries emerge from the shadows of COVID-19, many governments are focusing on reshaping the labor market. We need agile adoption of green and digital skills not only to help us, but more importantly, to give us experience charting the positive technological impacts the pandemic has brought to students.

Albeit the pandemic has taken many lives, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rethink and rebuild the labor of those working in the art industry. We should align ourselves to help produce more resilient, inclusive and productive graduates.



## Dr. Jay Hetrick

College of Fine Arts and Design (CFAD)  
University of Sharjah (UOS)

### Fusion, in practice

There is an enormous amount of energy released in a fusion reaction. Our sun generates its heat and light as a result of the fusion of hydrogen nuclei into helium, which in turn sustains life on earth. In fact, fusion is on the menu of potential sustainable energy sources for the future. But there are practical limitations - economic, political and, for the time being, even scientific - to which the pure laws of physics don't necessarily apply unproblematically. By what means and for whom can we hope to harness that almost uncontrollable amount of energy? Ultimately it's a matter of measured perspective and, indeed, taste. Furthermore, as a metaphor or cultural logic, fusion also has its potentials and limitations. Sushi pizza anyone?

The logic of fusion is, by definition, subtractive. That is, the produced whole is fundamentally less than its parts. In a highly-charged encounter, two atomic nuclei become one. The difference in mass, following Einstein's famous formula of mass-energy equivalence, is precisely the cause of the explosive energy return. But what kind of difference is this? And does it easily translate into a useful cultural metaphor? Arguably, "wholes that are less than their parts" could be the slogan for the various failures of multiculturalism. On the other hand, the history of culture - of which

art is one specific type of object (and, for us, a privileged one) - has always evolved by a logic of intercultural translation and differentiation across borders. Indeed, the entire history of art should be reframed as a dynamic history of this differentiation - which produces powerful encounters between ideas, techniques, and styles - rather than a history of stagnant things neatly arranged in a glass case. In our age of globalization, this dynamic logic has become increasingly - we might even say uncontrollably - salient. Hence the seemingly obsessive need to label it: hybridity, difference, creolization, pluralism, syncretism, melting-pot, etc.

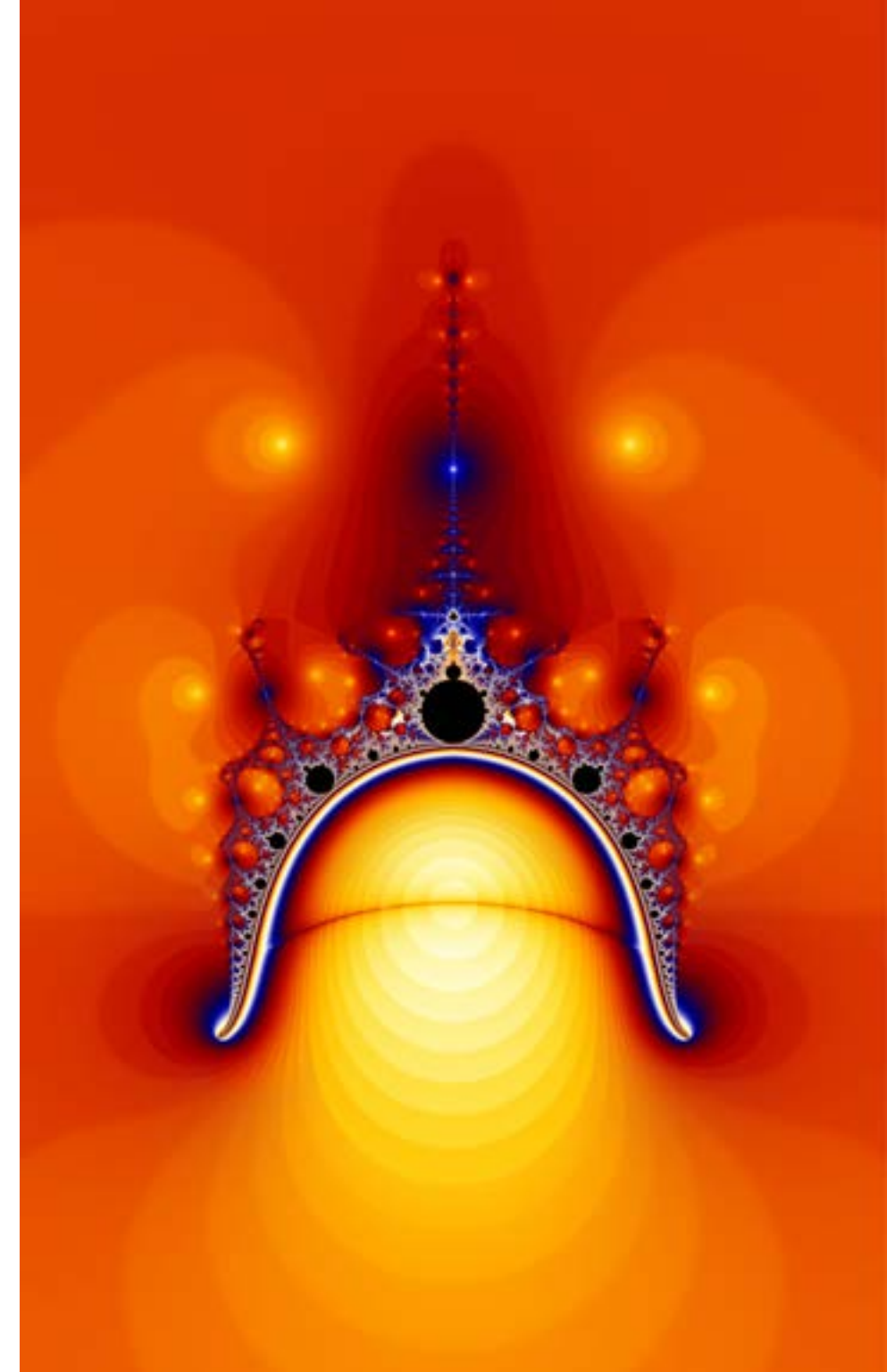
But it is debatable if any of these terms really capture the precise mechanism of this logic. In cross-cultural encounters, especially in the heightened arena of contemporary art, differences rarely melt away, absorbed back into some invisible ether, nor do they condense into a formless goo. That is, the result of a cross-cultural art encounter can never be less than its component parts. Furthermore, good art rarely remains unscathed after such encounters, which ensures that particular differences do not themselves become fossilized into something

we might call an "identity." Rather, differences (in ideas, techniques, and styles) are themselves differentiated even as they affect transformation elsewhere. This is how we should understand François Jullien's otherwise provocative claim that "there is no such thing as cultural identity." Culture and its objects are themselves continuously produced and reproduced as a result of this differential logic. In art encounters, such as the one we are witnessing here, differences are maintained and multiplied, held in a productive tension without an easy resolution. This productive tension is perhaps another name for the seemingly limitless potential of the powers of art.

## Goh Chu Hiang

Discovered by French mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot in 1975, fractal geometry is a mathematical representation of chaotic systems. It can be used to study the nonlinear and uncontrolled chaotic phenomena in nature such as turbulence, weather, stock markets, and even our brain state. Many natural objects, such as the growth pattern of fern leaves, cauliflower, tree branches, also exhibit the property of fractals in iterative patterns. Each iteration takes the state of the previous iteration as an input to produce the next state, and it becomes an endless loop of patterns. Graphic-wise, this process can generate unpredicted but interesting fractal graphic arts. It has become a deviant art form representing our world's complex and unpredicted nature and gives us new insight, power, and wisdom.

The Makuta series consists of four fractal artworks representing the four elements of matters in the ancient Greek philosophy of the universe, which are earth, water, air and fire. While the central figure in the image is a Fractal Nova Mandelbrot set that assimilates the Makuta or Mahkota, which is the heritage headgear worn by kings and royalties in ancient South-East Asian kingdoms. These hybrid art series show the endless possibilities of arts and science merges and the merges of ancient Greek philosophy with the cultural heritage element of Southeast Asia. It is a unity in diversity in the making with the wonder of digital technology.

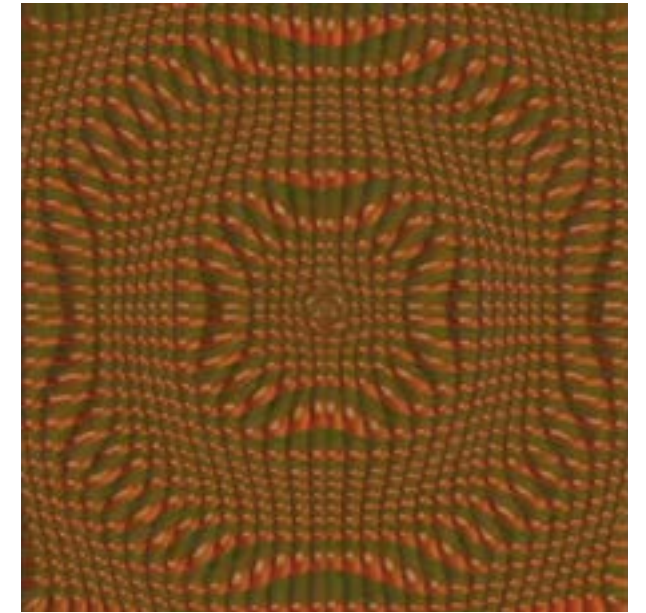
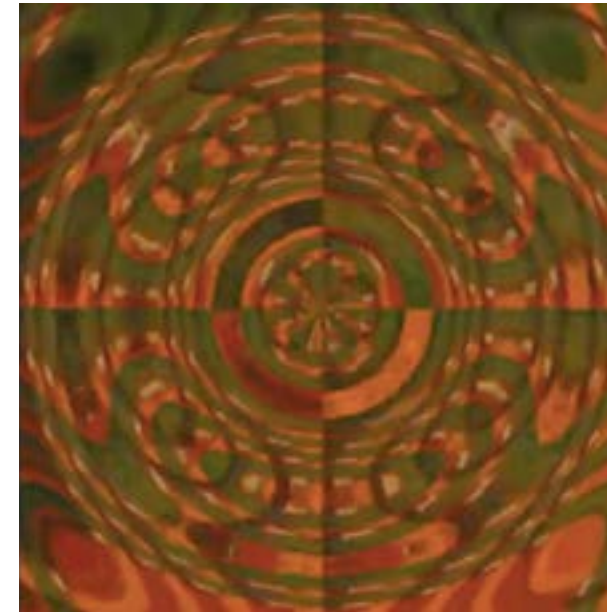


*Nova Mandelbrot  
-Makuta #4\_Fire,  
2021, Digital  
paper print on  
acrylic glass  
sandwich,  
Computer  
generated fractal  
graphic image,  
125x78 cm*

## Hasnul Jamal Saidon

This piece is based on syahadah or the proclamation and affirmation of faith in Islam. In such affirmation, one bears witness that “there is no god, but Allah.” The utterance of syahadah is fundamental in Islamic Tauhid. Tauhid essentially implies ‘making one’ as embodied by Surahatul Al-Ikhlās. It also signifies the ‘oneness’ of knowledge.

Through Tauhid, one becomes aware of one’s state of mind (quantum energy) and able to return to the abode of peace or spiritual well-being. Such energy is sustained through the principles of interdependency, synchronicity and connectivity instead of fragmentation and chaos. Through zikr (repeated invocation of selected Quranic verses) one can learn to stabilize and silence one’s mind to reach a purer and higher state of consciousness (energy). In such a state, the lower state of ego-centered consciousness and bodily-oriented illusion of separation is dissolved by repeated rhythmic zikr.



*Lam Alif (2), 2021, Still-image, Link to video: <https://youtu.be/DVcsaSwihAw>*

## Kamal Sabran

For the past 20 years, my work has focused on media arts, including audio and visual aspects, which have had a significant impact on our modern culture. In today's society, where art, science, and technology merge I find myself searching for the soul and spiritual qualities that are frequently concealed or distorted. The environment of the work has a therapeutic impact on the work's relationship with the audience in my numerous and diversified ways to making art; installations; sound, music, curatorial, and video projects.

"Mandi Bunyi," my latest project, is an experimental music performance with a Malay traditional master, Che Mat on rebab, and Mhd Sany on gamelan and gongs. I use analog tape and synthesizers to produce electronic instruments. "Mandi Bunyi" is based on the therapeutic Sound Bath concept. This blend of modern and traditional provides a new musical adventure as well as a new method to sound healing. This musical improvisation performance was recorded and edited as part of a series for web programs.



*Halluci-Nation, 2020, Media installation, Variable dimensions*

**Mohammad Khizal Saat**

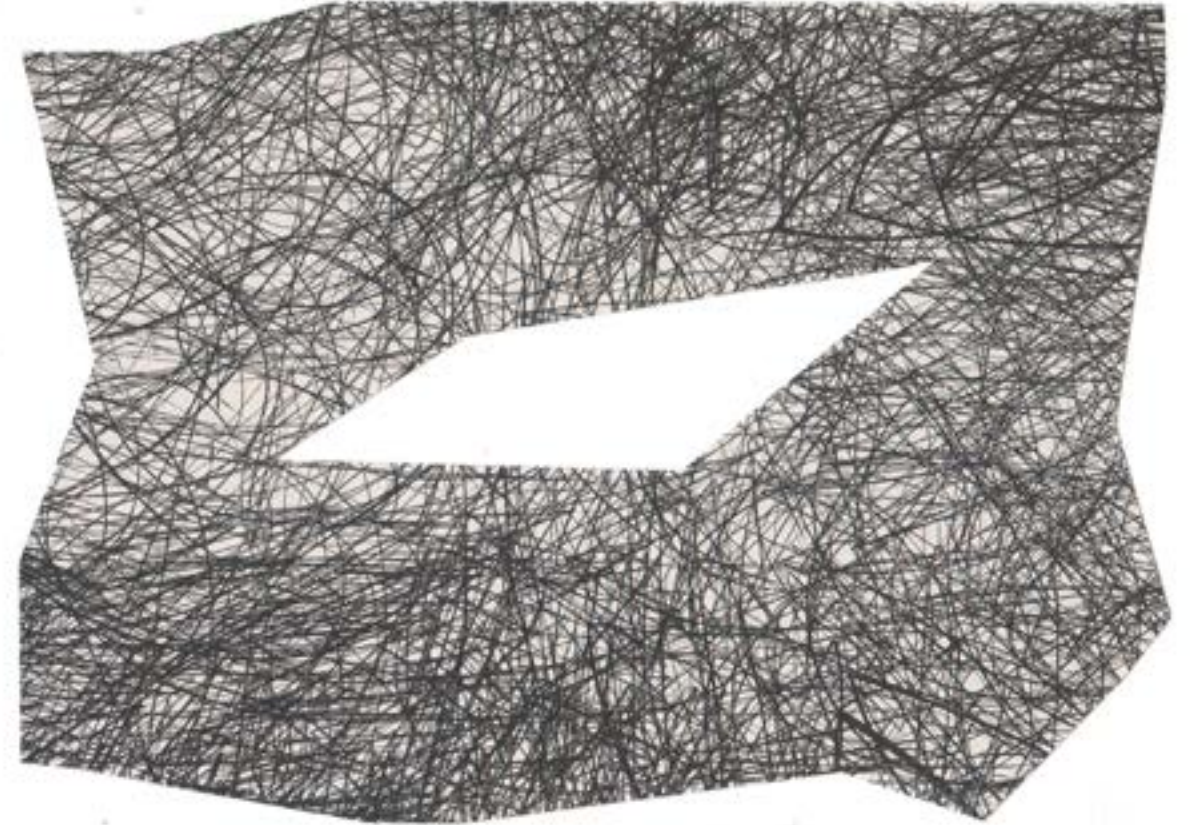
This artwork investigates the concept of 'Materialism' and its relationship towards 'Consumption'. Urban space become a territory where consumers engage in the fulfillment of their desires and obsessions.



*Urban-Personal Engagement III, 2020, Digital collage, 60x42 cm*

## Safrizal Shahir

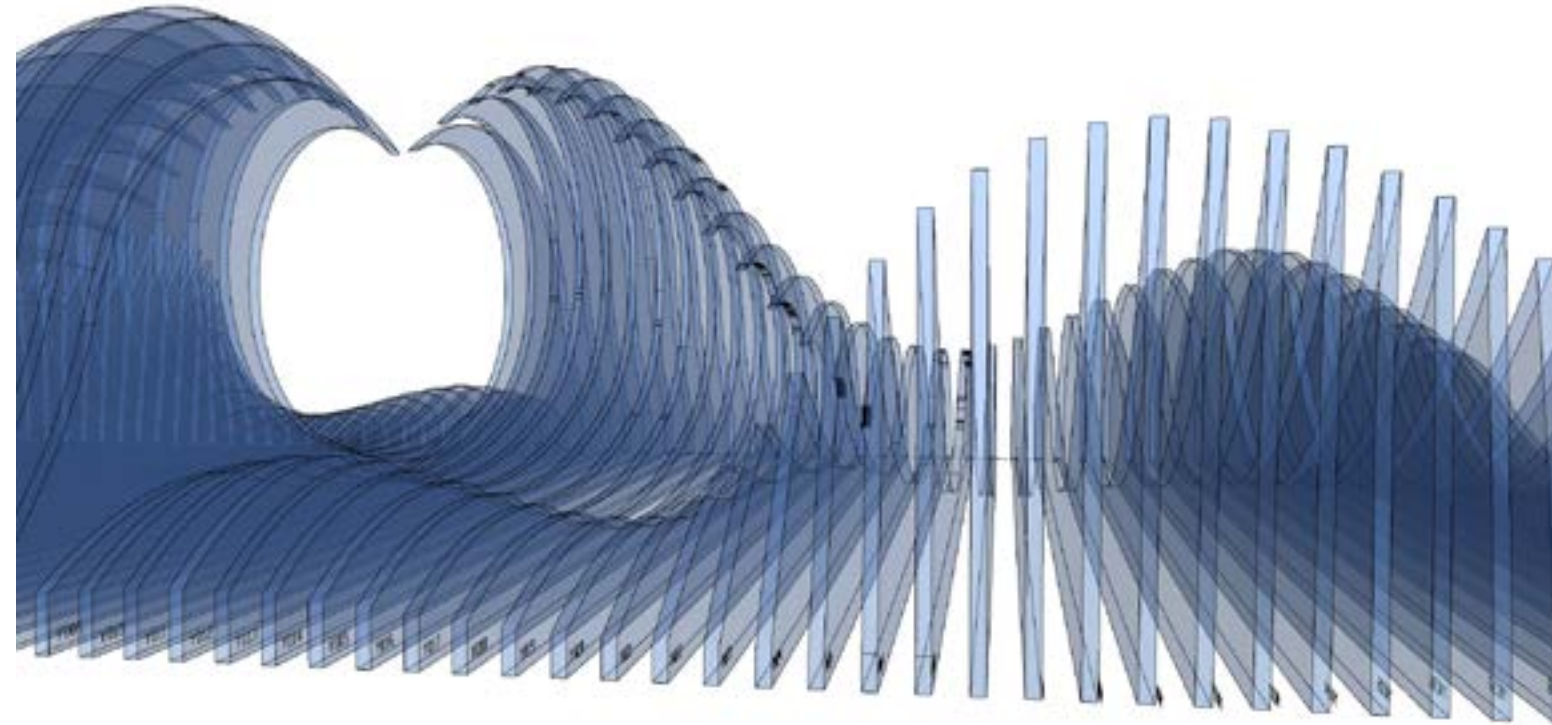
'Non-Linear Rendezvous' is an artwork related to exploring the possibilities of lines in flat space. My fascination with the value and quality of the lines that occurred was then challenged by certain creations of geometric shapes and cuts in the middle and sides of the work. Simply, the works are about line exploration and space exploitation.



*Non-Linear Rendezvous #3, 2019, Iris print on paper, 21x29 cm*

## Shahidan Mohamad

My studio practice is rooted in an exploration of the arts, science and technology. I have been involved in several aspects of research conducted through a fine art practice that uses drawing, mixed media art and sculpture in expanded forms. Most of my work inspired by nature and architecture in the form of geometric and minimalism. Today's world is evolving faster than ever. There is a need to rapidly adapt, which I strive to respond to, by using parametric design. Putting technologies in unconventional and absurd relationships with one another. I am aiming to create forms that operate as lines in space and patterns through the laws of algorithms and parametric design. The liminal area between complexity and order allows for exploration of the work. Working in Computer-Aided Design (CAD) impacts how I make and view art that editing is a fast process compared to the manual method. Working this way allows my artistic production to keep up with my creative ideas. Technology allows me to accelerate the entire process. By opening the doors and embracing this new technology, I am simply expanding my possibilities as a contemporary artist.

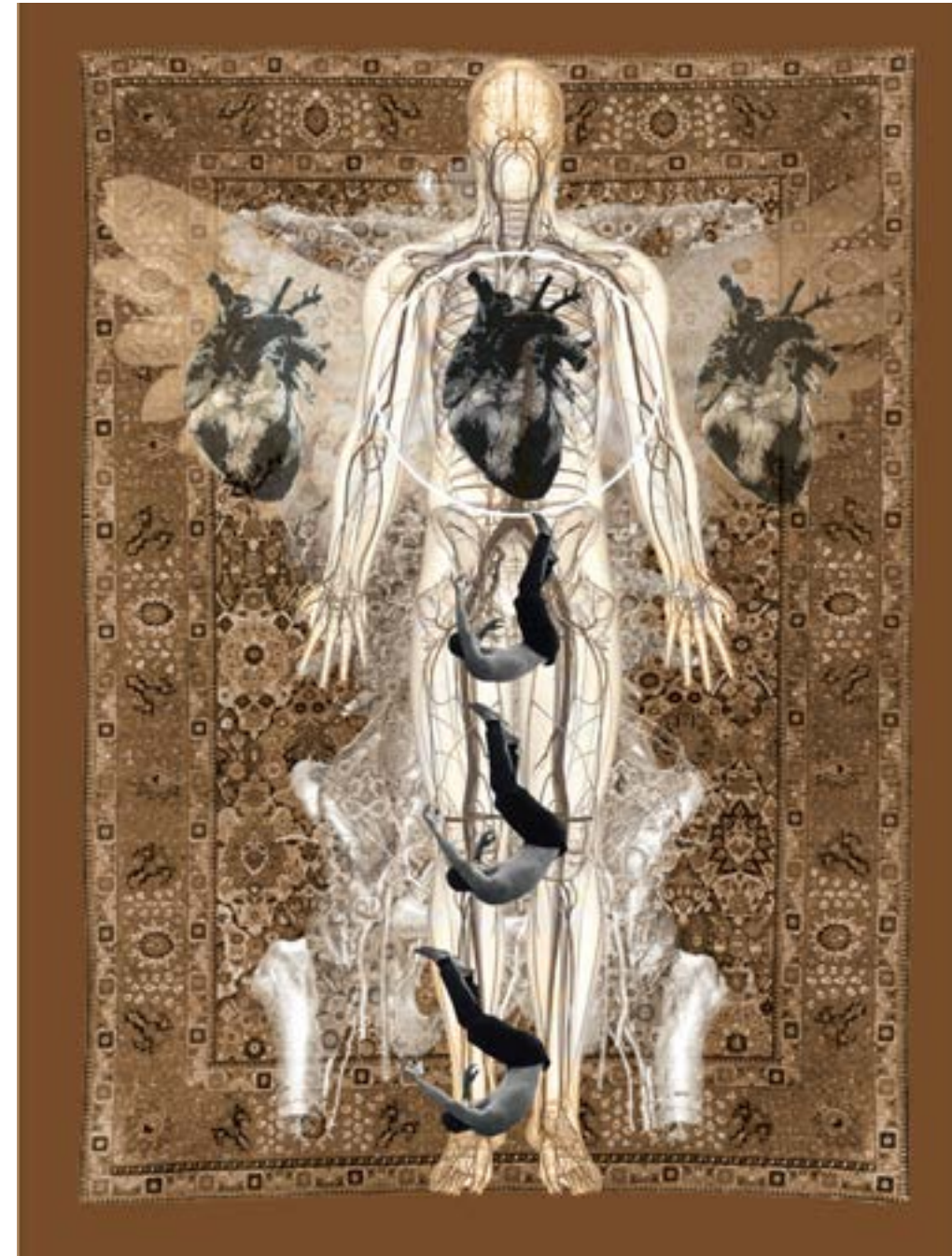


*Wave 2.4, 2021, Digital drawing, Variable dimension*

## Shahrul Anuar Shaari

This series of artworks is a semiotic visual interpretation of personal spiritual experiences at the north of Peninsular Malaysia related to the phenomenon of the practice of caring for the heart through the Tariqah. The heart component is the most important medium of strength in every human being, making the human being good or otherwise. By referring to Surah Al Insiyiqaaq (Ayat 23), it has been explained that Allah SWT always knows whatever is within the human heart.

Thus, outward appearance and form are not an assessment of human success. Al-Ghazzali in Minhaj Al-Abidin states that the heart is the center of Rabbul alamin's evaluation. Therefore, the process of educating the heart towards the right path needs to be done throughout the human breath. A pure heart will be the "blackboard" of the words of wisdom from the real revelation, as before the event of Isra Mikraj, Prophet Muhammad saw to Sidratul Muntaha, the heart is washed by the angels to be free from any worldly impurities. The heart is the king to be obeyed and every member of the body is its people. Therefore, the heart often becomes a nest or archery battle place for the devil so that human beings are always in a state between two situations, namely khatir khair (positive) or khatir syar (negative) in the area of lust. Therefore, most of the practices of suluk meditation in the path of tariqah become a thing that should be passed by those who want to learn the method of educating the confusion of the heart.



*In Between a Piece of Heart, 2021, Digital collage, 50.8x38.1 cm*



## Shamsu Mohamad

Metamorphosis is a story about nature..... below the surface of the earth; roots, soil, stone, water, caterpillars, worms, micro-organisms are interconnected and accompanied. Natural familiarity appears to be unified, amicable, and firmly bound for the future's sustainability. Porcelain and Egg Tray Pulp (ETP) are the two primary components of the work material. The use of ETP from recycled material makes it more economical and somewhat sustainable.



*Metamorphic Series,  
2019, Stoneware,  
30x10 cm*

## Siti Rohaya Yahaya

My life is all about weaving and dyeing. Weaving with emotion, surrounding and dyeing with nature. The rhythm of repetition and pattern, colourful contrast and mistakes of yarn that sometimes appear in warp and weft, always made me realize life is all about connection between one and another.

Inspired by travel, observation, and personal experiences, I developed my 'Ikat Series' after a trip to India. In my designs, pattern, colours, and texture are always moving. Spending a year in India fascinating and led me to combine Indian and Malay patterns through different weaving and embellishing techniques. Weaving doesn't need to be perfect; it can be aesthetically pleasing because of its very imperfection.



*Ikat 4 (Paisley of Life), 2016, Cotton yarn, dyes, beads and sequins, 240x40 cm*

## Tetriana Ahmed Fauzi

Amidst the melted fluid of warm and cool hues ranging from terracotta to mint blue, are local and imported flora-inspired shapes, colors and textures such as Passiflora, orchid, Bougainvillea, Anastasia lily and other floral species. The individual shapes mimic the melted hues cropped and detached from layers of pigment drip. The color, form and shapes are nuances of floral and fabric in festive events such as weddings, birthdays and other local celebrations. Portrayed in patches, blotches and drips, the pieces can be in a sense, bleak but aesthetically irresistible. They represent taste and preference to trends relating to femininity that can be petty and inauspicious but also captivating and purposeful.



*Passiflora Proximity in Muted Terracota and Mint, 2019, Mixed Media on canvas, Variable dimension*



## Andra Clitan

Navigating through very uncertain times, having a purpose, as well as showing a durable, sustainable and carefully crafted approach, has become more than ever the norm in the creative industry and beyond. I was therefore strongly driven into creating a capsule collection having at the base of the design direction hand-knitted, hand-woven, hand-built objects, grounded in ancestral crafts, that celebrates the unique irregularity of natural materials and shapes. Tradition and belonging “to a community” become the new path to take. Designers are slowing down the making process in order to make fewer and better pieces that are intended to be loved and treasured for generations. Embracing the imperfect aesthetics of wear and aging, these carefully crafted products welcome mending and repair, darning and patching, a faded luxury direction, where value is found in the skill, craft and story of the product rather than branding or material cost and popularity.



*Quiet Luxury, 2020, Mixed media*

## Brian Gonzales

I use my own family history, American history, and American pop culture as the foundation for a body of work that looks at the experiences of Latin American people and the role they play in the American cultural and political landscape. This direction in my work comes at a time when a significant portion of the American population feels entitled to dictate the terms on which Latin identity gets to exist and what spaces Latin people get to inhabit.

My creative energy could be spent on other projects but is instead consumed by the demands of having to justify my own existence in the country I was born in. And as much as I resent being forced to address America's long history of discrimination toward Indigenous and Latin American people, I see the importance of setting the record straight. If Latin people don't tell their stories others will gladly tell the story for us, and it will be a story that serves their own political agendas at our expense.



*MAGA (Perpetual Foreigner), 2019,  
Screen print, 68x57 cm*

## Dana K. Amro

Inspired by Wegner's lounge chair, the Burqa Chair is made of wood and upholstered velvet. The reinterpreted chair is inspired by the Emirati cultural element "Burqa" [البرقع] shape. In the United Arab Emirates, the Burqa is a traditional form of modesty for women. Handcrafted of delicate fabric and worn over the face, this accessory is traditionally worn by married women to distinguish married from unmarried women. The unique shape of the Burqa, which surrounds and affectionately cuddles the face, resembles the shape of the seat in hugging people in a comfortable way. The Burqa chair represents the Emirati cultural identity in a contemporary manner distinguishing it from the classic design. A side table and curtain fabric are further designed to complete the set with the Burqa inspired traditional design.



*Burqa Chair, 2020, Wood and upholstered velvet*

## Iman Ibrahim

Public life in the world has been severely restricted due to the coronavirus pandemic. Measuring the effectiveness of large-scale public health interventions is crucial for the design and implementation of efficient responses against current epidemic, changing the relationship with public space and human interaction behavior.

The World Health Organization has put in place a range of public health and social measures, to stop spreading COVID-19. That includes personal physical distancing to be 160 cm as a minimum distance for safe public interactions that was adopted to generate the installation design grid creating the design modules 160 cm.

The design represents several paths, each one sizes fits only one person, made out of chip wood panels covered by reflected mirror sheets from inside. These paths overlap to create several exits avoiding crowd and simultaneously construct open spaces encouraging social functions like meetings and talks. The design concept adopts the positive side of physical distancing with focus on encouraging social interaction with safe distancing.

The design reflects the people's lives where they can see themselves in the others, through the reflected sheets (inner side of the installation) at the same time the design limits passing number to one person. Where all people have different characters and different challenges but when facing the pandemic, we all go through the same path to overcome the crises. The overhead reflecting lights falling from the wooden panels within equal intervals reflects the success of passing the challenges we faced during the pandemic, ending up with green plants symbolizing the life continuity by nature.



*Deterministic path, 2020-2021, Wood, metal, Led lights, 6x12 m, Dubai Design Week 2020, Dubai Design District*

## Izmer Bin Ahmad

It has been quite some time now that I became interested in the 'life' of images and their reach to animate us. Images in this sense are not passive, neither simply signs nor symbols that await interpretation. They are materiality that is felt and experienced. In some way, images are organisms that sustains the world, collaborators of daily existence without which contemporary life is none. Here I tried to elaborate on images as such, by constructing a painting of a rabbit suspended in space, its eyes opened indefinitely towards the marks and strokes of paint.



*Rabbit, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 50x50 cm*



## Karima Al Shomely

Miss Mariam was forced to wear the Burqa on her wedding night despite her refusal and crying. Aisha, tore and destroyed many of Burqas, refusing to wear them, until she was convinced that her husband will give her an amount of money in return for him removing the Burqa. That would be the first time he had seen her. Then there was the story of Miss Tarifa when she tried to mimic her mother by wearing a Burqa when she was young. Then, at the age of 15, she wore it without knowing how to tie it properly.

I tried to communicate these women's emotions, feelings and stories through my touch and formative sculpting. The burqa is made of cotton fabric saturated with indigo dye. This indigo is believed to contain Prophet Yousif's light; thus, when the indigo stains the face of the lady wearing the burqa, her face is glowing with Prophet Yousif's light.

The metaphoric representation here is in the transition from cotton to clay, from the softness and plasticity phase to the hardness and toughness phase. This transition reflects stories of these girls with their parents that oscillate from ductility to the cruelty and intensity associated with the rituals of wearing the burqa.

Both the clay and fabric are sensitive to heat and humidity. Clay increases in weight whenever the moisture evaporates and becomes easy to color. While the sheen of the burqa cloth is affected by heat and humidity, it changes color from bright red and gold to dusty black. As such, the more the burqa is exposed to heat and humidity, the duller and lighter in weight it becomes, unlike the clay.

The heavy clay burqa carries in its folds many values and meanings that translate the life, rituals, and intimacy of the bond between a burqa and the woman wearing it. This representation is about the presence of the burqa's memory in contemporary art, as it begins to disappear as a cultural icon.



*Some of Their Stories, 2020, Clay, 28x30x36 cm*

## Mohamed Yousif Ali

In our everyday lives, we come across scenes in nature that are fascinating to us. These scenes contain more than just random shapes and figures. To someone who possesses artistic perception and views nature accordingly, many possibilities unfold before the very eye.

Throughout my many years of education all over the world, I have developed the aptitude of discerning nature's inner signs of artistic representation. I have noted some of these observations along with interpretations from my own thoughts. This sort of insight has played an important role in my artwork over the years.

Themes such as dynamic unity, movement from place to place, function to function, structure, volume, rhythm, and space, have all considerably brought a greater appreciation and understanding of art to me. These coupled with contemporary influences and my Islamic beliefs have all helped to influence my works.

With the perception of nature's potential for artistic portrayal, which I incline myself to, I believe that I will greatly affect the domain of artwork across the world. The deep understanding of the concepts mentioned above and their effect on me and my work will be thoroughly illustrated and discussed throughout my artwork. I work with my art pieces in a simple and direct way.



*Palm tree trunks and date clumps, 100x31x31 cm*

## Muatasim Alkubaisy

Art, as I believe, is one of the most sensitive issues, yet sculpture makes any of these issues more influential in the eyes of the recipient. As long as our lives are filled with defeats and grievances, there is no spot of light on which our future will be. However, I will persistently continue my artistic and aesthetic project, i.e. to be preoccupied with a man who was born under the war and who suffered the destruction of his home and the demolition of his country's past, to give precedence to history and geography over the mastering of the work image, for sculptures alone will not suffice without enticing and making the recipient aware of what is happening.

Art is an issue that embarrasses us, while attentively recalling the bloodshed throughout the wars, that the Region has been witnessing for years. I still remember the horrors and agonies of wars since the eighties of the last century until the moment when occupation forces invaded my country. Are not these events sufficient enough to make me aware of my direction in sculpture as long as the events preoccupy my memory? Whatever the diversity of art, the multiplicity of techniques of modernity, and the restoration of the ability of the experimentalist attempts in the arts, are not enough without a striking reference. Now, you are my reference when you feel about and stand next to these works and stand next to them; they talk about the industry of death and pain and they reveal the ugly face of the dark rooms where the scenarios of killing for identity and fueling sectarianism and human displacement are manufactured.



*Waiting, 2021, Bronze,  
25x40x45 cm*

## Nada Abdallah

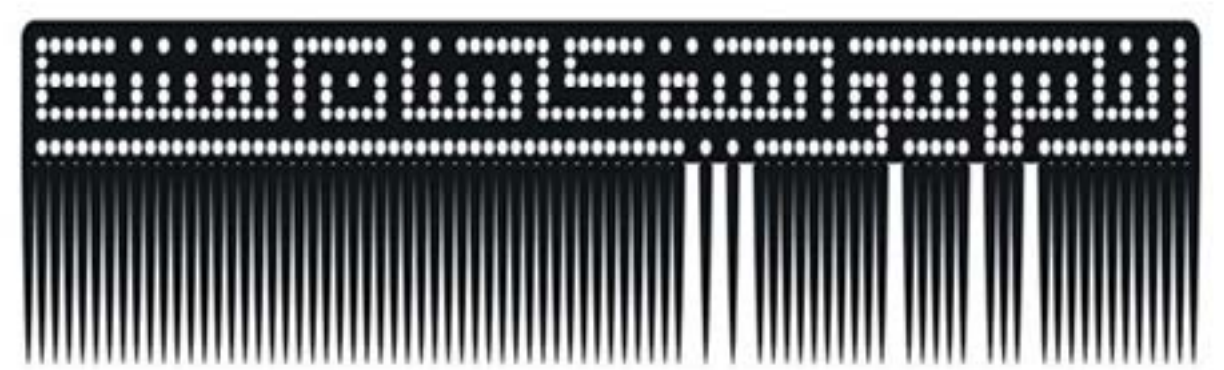
Sawasiya is Arabic for equal.

More than 13 centuries ago, Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) said: "People are equal like the teeth of a comb". The Prophet's saying stresses the importance of equality and tolerance between humans regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, belief, gender, language, health, or status.

Within this context, the comb best connotes unity and non-discrimination. The artwork's typography is based on the Ancient Kufic calligraphy, well-positioned amongst the Islamic arts, to connect with the devotional aspect of the content. The text is represented in a dotted Kufic style developed specifically for this project. While a single dot is too small an element to draw attention, connecting several dots builds visual lines and solid figures worthy of a greater focus; thus, the importance of unity, collaboration, and connectivity.

Ironically, this exhibit is launched while humanity faces one of its most tragic calamities, the COVID-19 pandemic, a virus that does not discriminate between humans. While it forced humanity to engage in social distancing, it encouraged connectivity in many ways never thought possible.

So, let's unite!



*Sawasiya, 2020, Plexi glass, 25x110 cm*

## Tor Seidel

In three large-format photographs, the flight movements over Dubai and Sharjah in 2019 were photographed from different perspectives and positions and digitally layered one on top of the other. Although the appearance is mainly black, exhibition visitors will notice multicolored lines moving vividly across the black night sky, indicating movement and progress. In the pre-Covid period, around fifty to eighty departures per hour could be expected from all airports in Dubai and Sharjah. A fourth photo displays an almost black image from March 2020, showing just three flight tracks. At the time of writing, there are only three cargo flights per day from Dubai Airport.

The impression of disorientation when looking at planes – especially at night – with traces of light, corresponds to the experience that observers have when looking at the starry sky; they must use a special navigation system for orientation. In the panels, the cutout and portrait formats reinforce the feeling of losing your grip on this abstract landscape.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the space above the viewers and, with it, their perception has changed.

The viewer observes a seemingly different sky landscape—since there are almost no more flights and therefore hardly any traces of movement.



*Flights I, 2019, Digital photographs, C-print, mounted on Alu-Dibond, 220x110 cm*

## Index

### Andra Clitan

Proud of her roots, committed to promoting authentic design and her cultural heritage, Andra has firmly established herself as a cultural ambassador for Romania. Over the years, she has been involved in various influential cultural projects continuing her mission to support local artisans and craftsmen and create pieces that reflect the traditions and values of the community. She founded in 2016 the brand MA RA MI in her desire to merge Romanian traditional art and costumes with different cultures from around the world. MA RA MI is a platform where multicultural crafts become limited edition designs rendered through modern techniques and sustainable fabrics whilst preserving craftsmanship.

### Brian Gonzales

Brian Gonzales was born in Santa Monica, California to parents of Mexican and Honduran heritage.

He received his BFA from East Carolina University, and his MFA from the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis. Brian currently teaches drawing and printmaking at the College of Fine Arts & Design, at the University of Sharjah. In addition to being an artist and printmaker, he is also an avid collector of fine art prints and printed ephemera.

### Dana K. Amro

Dr. Dana is a creative interior designer, researcher, and educator from Jordan. She received her PhD in interior Design in 2015 from Universiti Sains Malaysia. She was an assistant professor at the College of Fine Arts & Design, University of Sharjah. Her research focuses on interior design and cultural identity, which influences her academic research and applied designs. Her design focus is on multidisciplinary designs as furniture design, textile and jewelry that are inspired by the local heritage and culture. Her interest is to link culture with sustainability.

### Elham Shafaei

Elham Shafaei was born in 1983, Rasht - Iran. She received her B.A Bachelor of Painting (Arts) in Elm o Farhang (Science and Culture) University, Tehran, Iran. In 2010 she moved to Malaysia where she obtained M.A (Fine Arts) in Papermaking and PhD (Fine Arts) in Painting that examined the role of melancholia in creative life. In 2017 she relocated to United Arab Emirates, where she currently resides and pursues her studio practice. She is an international exhibiting artists, curator and art management. Through her curatorial projects she tries to connect artists'

internationally. Elham is the Co-Founder and Co-Editor at ContemporaryIdentities International Online Art Magazine-Gallery. Lately, she Founded i.e. Art Projects which is an Online Art Foundation to combines the tools of management, marketing and planning with the tools of audience and community to build bridges between art, artists and audiences. Recently, she has been appointed as Industrial Fellow for the School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

### Goh Chu Hiang

Goh Chu Hiang is a senior lecturer in the Graphic Communication Department, School of The Arts, USM. He is an experienced lecturer with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry and design research. He is a trained art and design educator, graphic designer, interactive designer and digital artist with a MSc in Information Technology from the School of Computer Science, USM. Based on his cross-disciplinaries background in graphic design, fine art, and computer science, his art interest is exploring the relationship between arts and science through the medium of graphical visualization process. He is particularly interested in fractal art, a hybrid art form that comprehends the merges of arts and science technologies that has always been the endeavor of his artistic inspiration.

### Hasnul Jamal Saidon

Hasnul is an Assoc. Professor of media arts at USM. Since 1989, Hasnul has participated in 60 local group exhibitions and 22 international group exhibitions. His video art has been screened at 16 international video art festivals. Throughout his creative career, he has won 8 international and 13 local art awards. His current research is on tradition through the language of quantum physics & new media.

### Iman Ibrahim

Dr. Iman Ibrahim is an award-winning designer and Assistant Professor of Interior Design. Prior to joining the University of Sharjah, she held teaching positions at UAE University (2008), and Abu Dhabi University (2011). Her research and publications focus on Sustainable Design, Smart Cities, Eco-friendly materials, and Biophilic Design. Received numerous awards and recognitions including the Sharjah Award for Excellence (2018), University of Sharjah Distinguished Faculty in University and Service (2017) and Teaching (2020), ZERO-Waste Competition organized by Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (2016) and Sharjah Islamic Art Festival (2016-2019). Her design projects were exhibited at Dubai Design Week (2020), Maraya Art Center-Sharjah (2020), and shortly at Dubai EXPO 2020. Her teaching and practice advocate for a sustainable and regenerative approach to design.

### **Izmer Ahmad**

Izmer Bin Ahmad teaches studio art at the College of Fine Arts & Design, University of Sharjah. Trained as a practicing artist as well as an academic researcher his professional experience moves between studio practice and scholarly writing. As an artist, Izmer's work focuses mainly on drawing and painting, which have been shown in various exhibitions, particularly in Malaysia and Canada where he previously lived and taught. His academic research and publication have been converging primarily about the body and modern Malaysian art, especially in examining the manifestation of somatic nationalism in Malaysian artistic and cultural production. His current research endeavors revolve around the materiality of studio practice and aesthetics.

### **Jay Hetrick**

Jay Hetrick is an Assistant Professor at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah, where he teaches the history and theory of art and design. He has a PhD in the Philosophy of Art and Culture from the University of Amsterdam and has experience – both as a student and as a teacher – at art schools in Europe, America, the United Kingdom, as well as the United Arab Emirates. He specializes in contemporary art theory but has also published on the history of Western, non-Western, and comparative aesthetics. He is a member of the European Society for Aesthetics and is on the Editorial Board of the journal *Evental Aesthetics*.

### **Kamal Sabran**

Kamal Sabran is an artist-academic-researcher based in Malaysia. He has a PhD in Art and Design (New Media) from the Universiti of Teknologi MARA. His practice is inter-disciplinary and exists at the intersection of art, science, and technology. His artwork includes experimental music, sound art, short-film, performance art, and electronic installations. He has won the 'Best New Media Artist Award' Young and Contemporary from the Malaysian National Art Gallery in 2004, Best NOKIA Music Video Director in 2006 as well as the 'ASEAN New Media Artist Award' from the Indonesian National Art Gallery in 2007. He was Artist-In-Residence at the National Space Agency, Malaysia in 2005 and Musician-in-Residence for 18th Street Art Center in Santa Monica California in 2015. He is also the founder of an experimental music/sound art collective known as "Space Gambus Experiment" and Ipoh Experimental Art School, a creative space focusing on producing experimental art projects. He has been scoring several award-winning films with a director such as Mamat Khalid, Shanjhey Kumar, Tan Chui Mui, Ho Yuhang, Pete Teo and many more. He is currently working as a lecturer at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

### **Karima Al Shomely**

Karima Al Shomely was born in Sharjah, UAE. She earned a BA in economics and accounting at United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain; a BFA at the University of Sharjah; and a MFA at University of the Arts London, Chelsea College of Arts and Design. She completed her PhD in Fine Arts at Kingston University, London. Karima is currently working as an assistant professor at the College of Fine Arts & Design, University of Sharjah.

### **Mohamed Yousif Ali**

Mohamed Yousif is a multi-disciplinary artist working mostly in sculpture and theater. He received his BA in Egypt, Masters in the USA in 2000, and his PhD in India in 2005. He was honored by Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad, as a pioneer and founder of the Fine Arts Movement in 1995 and Honored by Sheikh Dr. Sultan Al Qasimi as a pioneer of theater in the UAE in 2012. He is currently working as an assistant professor at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah.

### **Mohammad Khizal Saat**

Mohammad Khizal Mohamed Saat received his BA in Fine Arts at the Universiti Teknologi Mara (Uitm) in 1999, majoring in Printmaking. In 2003 Khizal received another degree in MFAD from the University of Tasmania, Australia in the same area of study. He has been teaching as a lecturer in the Fine Arts Department, School of The Art, Universiti Sains Malaysia Penang Since 2004. In 2016 he received his PhD (Studio Practice) In Fine Art.

### **Muatasim Alkubaisy**

Muatasim Alkubaisy was born in Iraq, where he graduated in 1992 from the Fine Art Academy of the University of Baghdad. His equestrian works have appeared in private collections across UAE and have been exhibited widely in Baghdad, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Paris. As a member of the Iraqi Fine Artists Association, he gained the first Young Artists Award in Baghdad in 2005. He is currently a professor at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah.

### **Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer**

Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer is the Dean of School of The Arts (SOTA), Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang. She is an educationist, actor, dancer and arts advocate. Trained in Bharatanatyam, Malay traditional dances, contemporary dance techniques and Drama & Theatre, Mumtaz uses

movement exploration, drama, role-play and story-telling to engage and reach out to children, students and the communities around her. She has collaborated with leading choreographers, directors, dancers, composers and NGO's in Malaysia for various artistic activities, workshops and performances. Her research interest focuses on children with special needs, marginalized communities, traditional and modern theatre, dance and gender studies in the arts.

### **Nada Abdallah**

Nada is an Artist, Designer, Educator and Founder of Bilarabic Design Festival, and Director of Meta.motif masterclasses. She holds a Bachelor Degree in Visual Communication from the American University of Sharjah and an MFA from the Lebanese University. Her work has been exhibited in Lebanon, UAE, Greece, Korea, Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, KSA and the USA. Her work and research focus on Arabic Calligraphy and Typography, and prehistoric motif design.

### **Nadia M. Al Hasani**

Nadia M. Al Hasani is a designer and career academician with 30 years of teaching and administrative experience both in the US and the Middle East. Currently, she is a professor and Dean of the College of Fine Arts & Design at the University of Sharjah. She is passionate about cultural practices and their representations in the creative fields. Keen advocate of STEAM in higher education and a strong believer in innovation through the integration of art and design in all fields. Serving as a member of the Governing Board of the Sharjah Performing Arts Academy, Advisory Council of the Sharjah International Foundation for History of Arab and Muslim Sciences (SIFHAMS), and Art Programs Reform Taskforce (MoE, UAE).

### **Safrizal Shahir**

Safrizal Shahir is an art practitioner who produces artworks in various media such as painting, drawing, print and photography. He received his fine arts education from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Australian National University (ANU). His artworks generally revolve around the ideas of formalism, Islam and humanitarian issues. He has held solo exhibitions in Malaysia and Australia as well as participated in several group exhibitions in Serbia, Australia and Indonesia. He has won art awards such as the Jury Award at the 2002 Young Contemporary Art Award and the third-place prize at the 10th International Drawing Biennale, Australia in 2019.

### **Sarena Abdullah**

Sarena Abdullah, Ph.D is an Associate Professor of Art History at the School of the Arts, Universiti

Sains Malaysia (USM). She was awarded the inaugural London, Asia Research Award, by Paul-Mellon Centre, London and Asian Art Archive, Hong Kong in 2017. She was also the recipient of 2016, and 2017 & 2019 CAA-Getty Travel Grant as part of the CAA-Getty International and Reunion Program. She is the author of *Malaysian Art since the 1990s: Postmodern Situation* (2018) and co-editor of a publication of *Southeast Asian Art* entitled *Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art 1945-1990* (2018). She had written extensively on Malaysian art in various academic journals and platforms.

### **Shahidan Mohamad**

Shahidan studies his Masters in Visual Art & Design at Universiti Sains Malaysia and he holds a Bachelor degree at UiTM Shah Alam in Fine Arts. Since then, he has been participating in group exhibitions such as the 'Young and New' exhibition and PELITA HATI's annual 'Urban Art' exhibition.

The other achievements include major award Penang Art Open Exhibition 2017 and Grand Prize Winner of the Nokia Creative Art Award in 2005. He has emerged a finalist in a number of competitions, including The Young Contemporaries Art Awards at National Art Gallery, Malaysia, and aside from his fine art practice, Shahidan is currently a lecturer at The School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

### **Shahrul Anuar Shaari**

Shahrul Anuar Shaari is a lecturer in Department of Fine Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His field of expertise is in Drawing, Painting and Illustration in the Malay Manuscript. Acquiring formal art education from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris and the Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya (PhD).

### **Shamsu Mohamad**

Shamsu Mohamad is Senior Lecturer of Design at the School of Arts, University Science of Malaysia. He holds a Bachelor of Ceramics degree in UiTM, Malaysia and graduated with a Master of Industrial Design from Central St. Martins in the United Kingdom. Shamsu also had the chance to do an in-depth study about the process of kiln firing in Mino, Kamezaki, Japan in 1999. Shamsu Momamad is a PhD holder from School of Housing, Building and Planning, at the Universiti Sains Malaysia. His current research interest is in design and clay materials, deals with variants experimentation process using organic materials and industrial wastes such as fruit branches of palm trees, freshwater weeds, banana trunk, sponges and newspapers. His research on glaze innovation won Bronze Medal, INPEX, USA, 2003, Silver Medal, IEANA, Nuremberg, Germany,



2005 and Chairman Prize of Korean Local Industrial Culture, February 2011.

### **Siti Rohaya Yahaya**

Siti Rohaya Yahaya, holds a Bachelor's (Textile Design) and Master's degree (Design & Technology) from the University of Technology Mara, Shah Alam, Malaysia. Before she obtained her Doctorate degree (Ph.D) in University of Malaya, she received a scholarship under the Colombo Scholarship Plan by the Government of India in 2014. She holds a certificate in Textile Technology and Quality Control from The South India Textile Research Association, Coimbatore, India. Currently, she is holding a position as a Fine Art Lecturer at School of The Arts, University Science Malaysia. She is actively involved in various research papers at the seminar and academic conference on natural fibers, textile materials, batik design, textile surface embellishment, textile weaving and craft weaving. For her, the interrelation of art and science is believed could give a new perception and direction in the art and design field.

### **Tetrianah Ahmed Fauzi**

Tetrianah Ahmed Fauzi was born in 1979. She graduated with Bachelor of Honors in Fine Art from UiTM (2002), followed by an MA in Drawing at Camberwell College of Art (2008) and a Professional Doctorate in Fine Art from University of East London (2012). She teaches drawing and painting at School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia and has been active in producing artwork and exhibiting them. Tetrianah's artwork has been exhibited in Malaysia, UK, Thailand, Korea, Australia, USA and Japan. She is currently living in Penang with her husband, 12-year-old son and a cat.

### **Tor Seidel**

Tor Seidel is a German artist, photographer, lecturer, author, translator and curator who studied Art + Philosophy and pursued an MA in Philosophy and Archeology at the Free University Berlin, Germany. He has formerly worked as a commercial photographer for clients ranging from Zaha Hadid to Vanity Fair, and as art director for European art, architecture and fashion magazines. Since 2017 Tor is a lecturer in the Fine Arts program at the University of Sharjah and is represented by The Empty Quarter Gallery in Dubai. He has published three books on the Emirate, 'The Dubai', (Hatje - Cantz 2015), 'Mannequins', (Kerber 2018), and 'In Uncharted Territories' (Kerber 2021) and has exhibited in London, Miami, Berlin, and Venice. Tor received several prizes, like the Syngenta Photo Award in 2017. In 2019 Tor was fellow at the UAE Unlimited 2019 program hosted by HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan which was exhibited at the Maraya Art Center. In 2020 he was presented in his first institutional solo show in the UAE at the Maraya Art Center in Sharjah.

