

SERBA-
SERBI

Serba Serbi

PROJECT TEAM

Scarlette Lee
Hawa Basery
Ain Rahman
Falil Johari
Masturah Sha'ari
Jeffrey Wandly

CATALOGUE DESIGN

Hawa Basery
Ain Rahman

PHOTOGRAPHY

Puah Chin Kok

First published in Malaysia and Singapore in 2022

Core Design Gallery Sdn Bhd
87, Jalan SS15/2A Subang Jaya
47500 Selangor, Malaysia
<http://malaysiacontemporaryart.coredesigngallery.com>

Maya Gallery
57, Genting Lane #05-00
Singapore 349564
<https://www.mayagallery.com.sg/>

2022 © Core Design Gallery and Maya Gallery
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

A new year has just begun yet the pandemic has wrought upon us for a couple of years without a hint of abating anytime soon as the idea of living in an endemic era becomes a looming expectation. Despite this, artists are still vigilant in their artmaking, carrying ideas that have been weighing on their minds ceaselessly, brimming with excitement by the mere mention of getting back on the swing of things.

Beginning of the year 2022, Core Design Gallery is liaising for the third time with Singapore-based Maya Gallery, well known for their engrossment in local heritage and cultural arts by focusing on preserving cultural values that are richly entrenched in Singapore. As neighboring countries that share the same values in terms of heritage and arts, Core Design Gallery opts in presenting a show, *Serba Serbi*, as a way to commemorate the diverse culture that has assimilated into the lives of these artists which has consequently reflected into their works.

Serba-Serbi: Introduction

Serba Serbi is an assortment of dynamic works that exemplify these artists' efforts, conceived at a time of the pandemic. The name *Serba Serbi* is derived from a Malay reduplicated rhyming word that roughly translates to variety. Featured in the show are varying forms of works that are presented in a style not amiss to the local art scene and now, are presented for Singaporean audiences. Core Design Gallery is taking this opportunity to introduce seven Malaysian artists, ranging from young to mid-career who have been the highlights of the year 2021 for the gallery itself. To date, three of the artists have had the chance to exhibit at Maya Gallery before such as Husin Othman, Haafiz Shahimi and Syafiq Hariz.

Amongst the seven, four of them are Anniketyni Madian, Ain Rahman, Mohd Fairuz Paisan (Po Oi) and Nor Tijan Firdaus.

Anniketyni Madian

Anniketyni Madian is appraised as the leading female Malaysian sculptor with works focusing on her Sarawakian heritage. Despite the gender norm of the sculpture field dominated by all male sculptors, she has trudged through the arts industry resiliently, producing one of the most sought after monumental sculptural works. She is an acclaimed artist locally and acknowledged internationally with her wood carvings interpretation of the Pua Kumbu motif.

Pua Kumbu, a distinct motif usually seen on textiles woven by the Iban tribe's women, has been an integral part of Anniketyni's work. She often incorporates the motif as a way of remembering her roots, identifying her innate desire in trying to preserve the pattern by interpolating it into a contemporary art form.

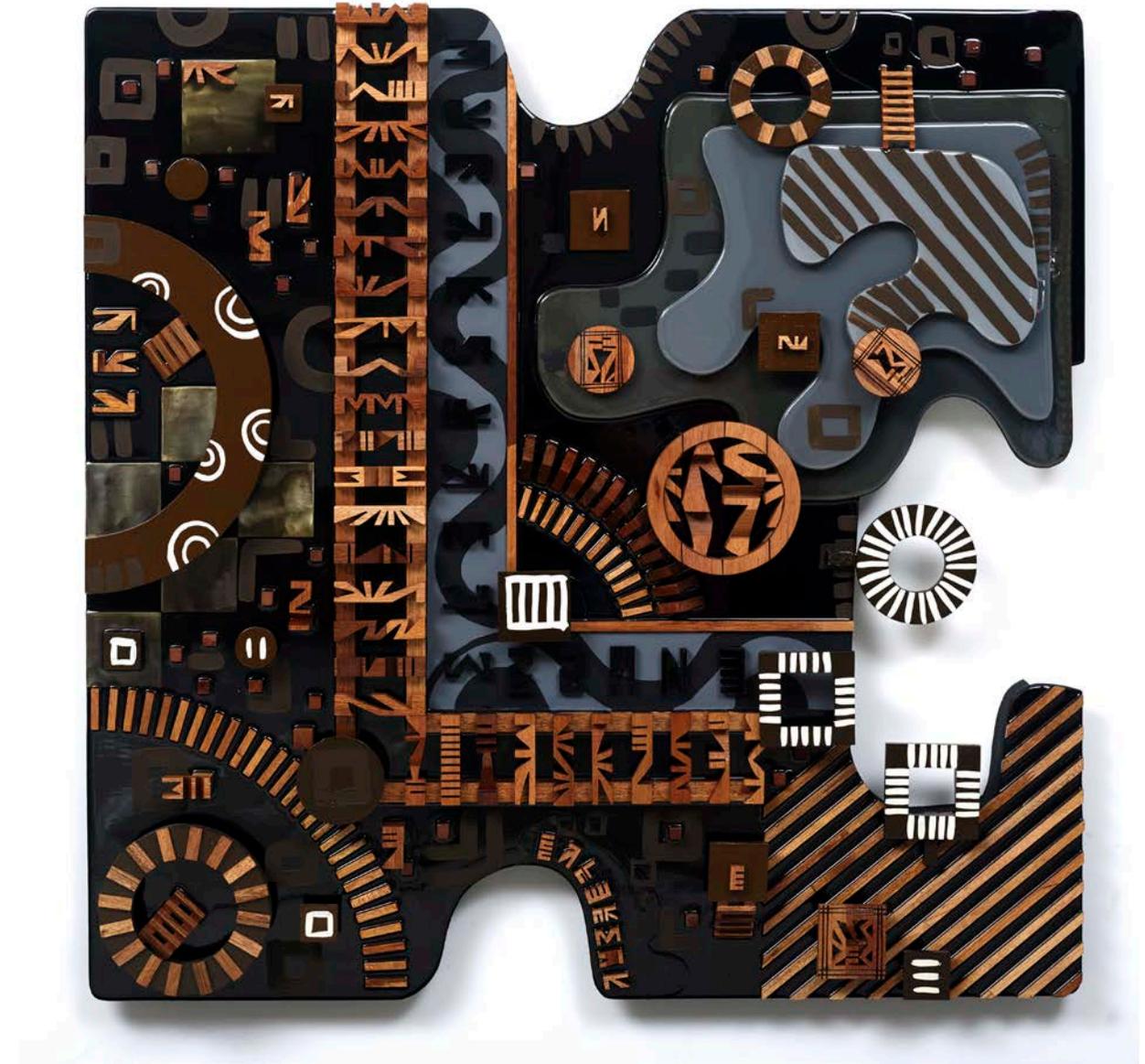
Anniketyni denotes that her usage of different types of wood also plays a role in her ease into molding it to her will. Her connection with wood is not without sentimental values accompanying it; to this day, she always referred back to her father, who has keen

eyes for detecting a good wood whenever she is on the fence about choosing said material.

Her assemblages of woodcarvings are then placed calculatingly on her part, indicative of a familiar topography plan setup found in the Ibanese longhouses. Her expert manipulations on arranging the stylized *Pua Kumbu* motifs into a well thought out composition is presented with a glaring awe, further heightened by the use of epoxy resin that cinched into a glacier-like finishing.

The work *NGENAWASKA #1 — Iban Activist Detained Over Anti Logging*, is an issue that has been on the forefront of her thoughts recently as she remarks on the ongoing adversities that Ibanese faced on the daily. Her immediate response to this hardship, despite being unable to truly solve the issue, is to enlighten the general public on it as it could bring greater awareness to the race that is valued for its rich cultural practices and traditions.

NGENAWASKA #1
Mixed Wood, Metal, Epoxy resin
and Linseed Boiled Oil
103cm x 103cm
2021



Mohd Fairuz Paisan (Po Oi)

Another exceptional sculptor is Mohd Fairuz Paisan, familiarly known as Po Oi in the local art scene who consistently extrapolate on treasuring remnants of the past. As an artist that is largely influenced by his growing environment, it is not surprising that salvaging wood retrieved from old, demolished Minangkabau houses has been a well-thought consideration that binds him to his own place of birth, Rembau, Negeri Sembilan. Having lived in a society that presses on the importance of community in a culture that is brimming with traditions, Po Oi imparts how by building his body of works helped him see the connection between his identity as an artist merging harmoniously with his intent to share about his own Negeri Sembilan cultures.

In retrospect, Po Oi seminal works have been a key factor to understand why woodcarving became his choice of medium. Intrigued with Malay woodcarving philosophy that is filled with purposeful Islamic beliefs, Po Oi artistic process eventually is centralized in understanding that art making is also one of the many ways of worshipping God. The Malays philosophical approach in the past encompassed the idea that the ability to create comes from the will and divine essence of the Creator himself; in that regard, Po Oi seems to immerse himself with continual observations alternating between the culture he grew up in and the Islamic belief that follows.

In accordance with the way of living as a Malay Muslim man, Po Oi brought in two styles of wood timber that reflect an exponential growth, be it from his past works or himself as an artist.



Sign of Stability and Unity - Yellow
Fiberglass and Yellow Resin
100cm (h) x 100cm (w) x 100cm (d)
2021



Po Oi's Sign of Stability and Unity - Yellow
View from behind

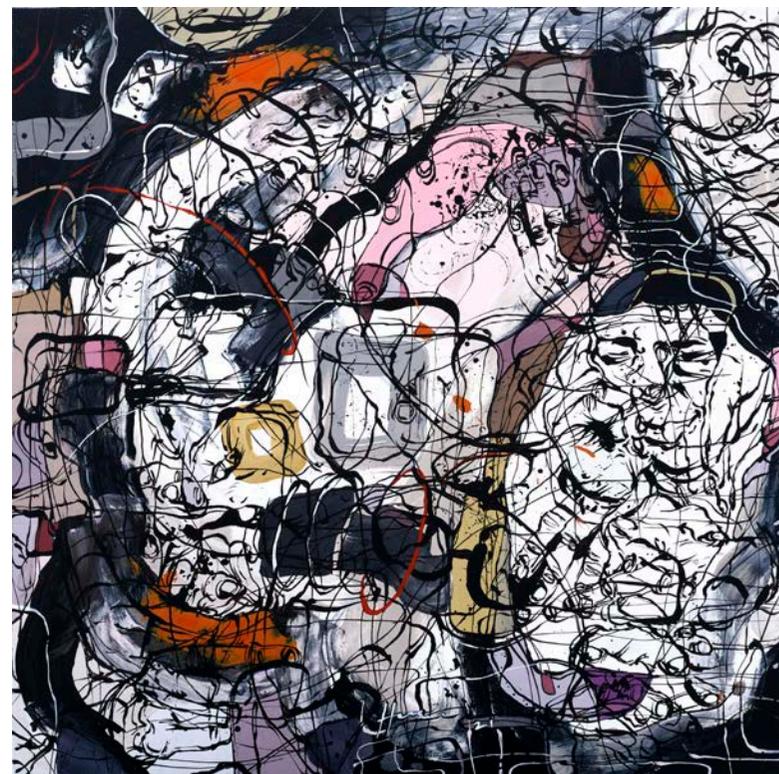
Sign of Unity and Stability is the artist's recent three-dimensional rendition of how he sees the people of Minangkabau as an extension of himself. One of the most obvious attributes that is visible is the shapely woodcuts that conform akin to a jawi alphabet, a knotted ha (ها) which was coated with irradiant resin yellow. Po Oi refers to the use of yellow as symbolic to Minangkabau cultures that represent unification. The colour is also uniquely found in their traditional clothes and customary in most traditional dishes; an existing practice that is common to this day.

In contrast, *Rounded Mind - Bulat Berpinau* speaks more on his determination for the betterment of self. The double layered circular form signifies two sides of things according to Po Oi's perspective; one of his inner perseverance and another to reflect his outer appearance. Measured at four by four feet, Po Oi use of wood is arranged in neat, consecutive irregular lines. The oblique form brought out the visual weight of a balance, astute coordination; a composition that involves both the positive and negative depthness to it.

He construed that in order to live a peaceful yet successful life, one must have a set of beliefs and disciplines that could help in the long run. To Po Oi, the orderly way of living does not only dependent on mad chase towards worldly possessions, but also in the hereafter.



Rounded Mind – Bulat Berpinau
Discarded Wood Relief
Assemblages
122cm x 122cm
2021



Husin's work on the other hand feels like a natural progression after his first successful solo exhibition at Maya Gallery. Tracking his development in his past works, Husin notably favored painting figurative images that were ambiguous yet expressive with intense, gesticulative strokes, blending into the disarray composition. Husin's work is perceptively tuned towards the everyday lives of the multifaceted Malaysians as subjects are visibly seen in their own proverbial spheres.

Husin antagonises in how disorderly the world has turned into because of the pandemic, resulting in endless trials and tribulations across the country that

has affected the people. This bout of uncertainty is apparent in his new body of works, *Waiting for The New Rays*. Husin seems to eradicate clear images of the people and objects, although he retains the ambiguous and gestural quality of it. Glimpses of people are noticeable only upon a closer look but it is concealed in such a way that it feels devoid of an intimate connection like before.

These four pieces of work remark a point in Husin's life that serves as his own ongoing documentation, cataloguing his observations as anecdotes of adapting to a new norm.

Left to Right:

Waiting for New Rays I, II, III, IV
Acrylic on Canvas
75cm x 75cm each (4 Panels)
2021

Syafiq Hariz

A similar concern can be understood in Syafiq Hariz's works. Parenting in the midst of a pandemic is a task no one fully expected to experience. Parents are grappling with constant anxiety over the health of their children, acclimating to the pressure of keeping them safe inside while simultaneously trying to entertain their urge to play outside.

Having children of his own, Syafiq's sense of worry increased tenfold when he watched a popular Korean movie, *Squid Game*, a deathly match game that requires the participants to compete in children's games in order to win a tempting prize. To Syafiq, the deadly game mirrors his own situation when it comes to protecting his children in the era of a pandemic. The idea of cocooning children into a forced 'safe haven' permanently revolved in Syafiq's mind when he realized having a family to protect and children to care for has rearranged his worldview into a dreadful prospect.

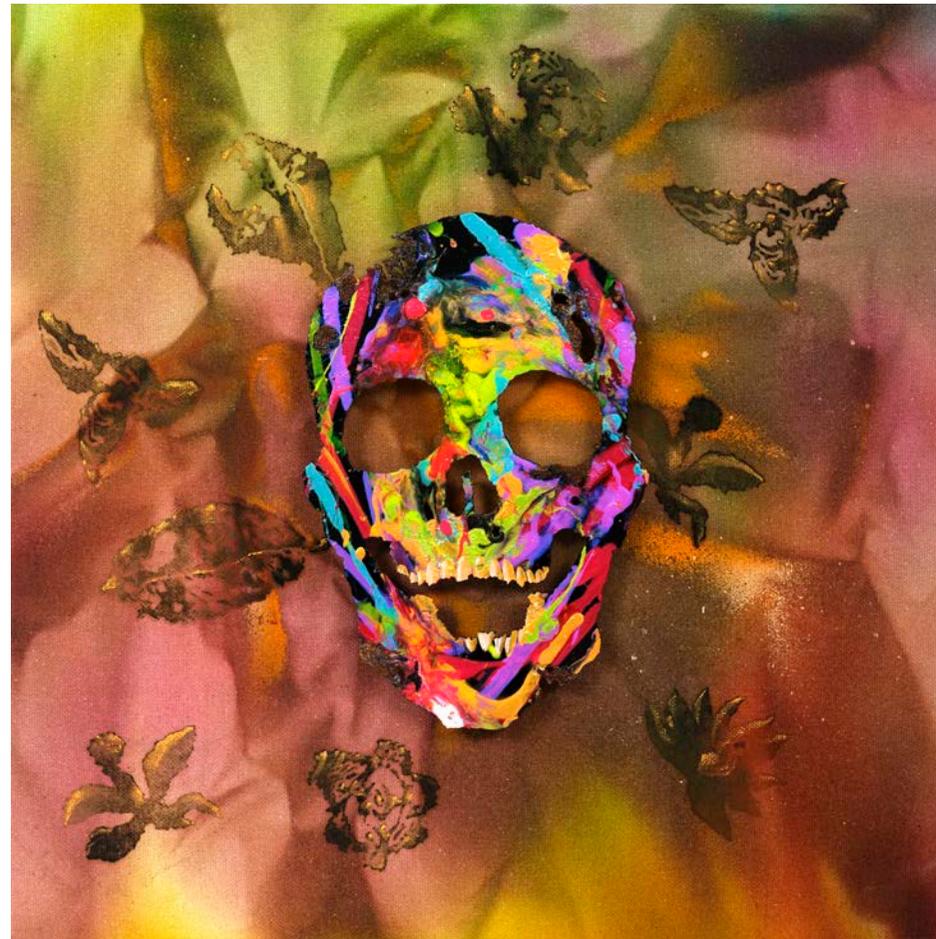
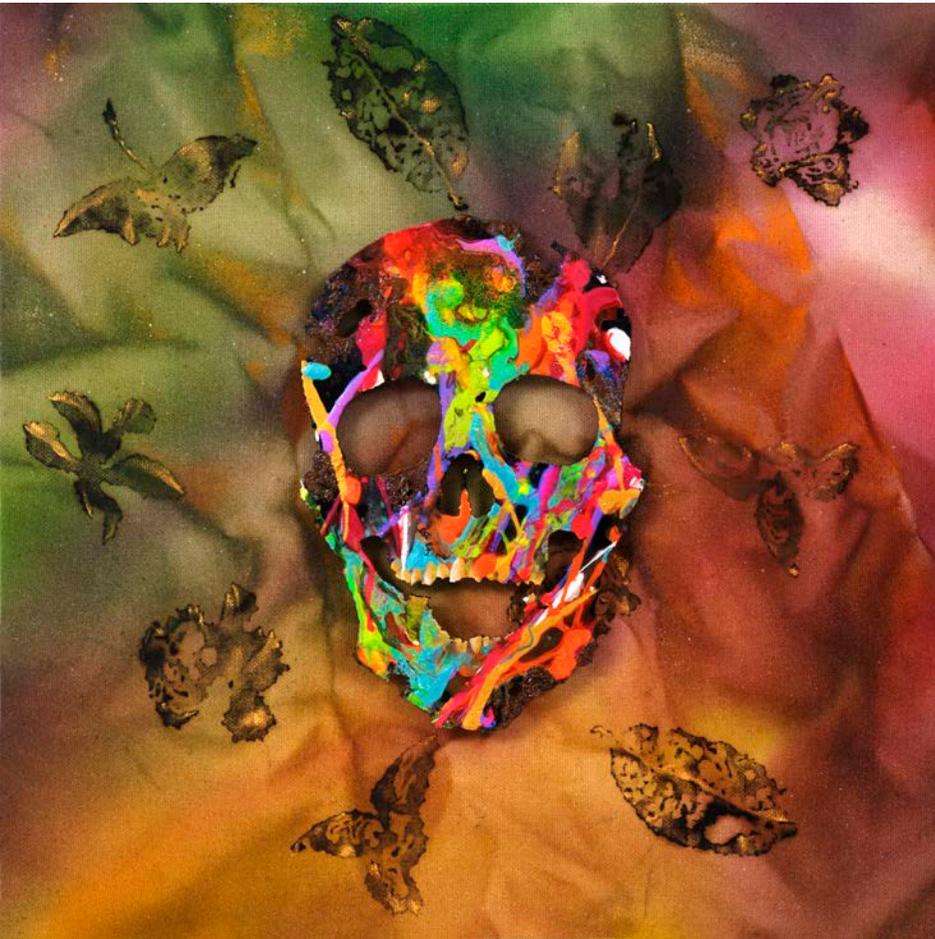
The three children depicted in his works, *Mugunghwa Kkoci Pieotseumnida I, II and III*, are his own children. From the initial impression, the kids seem to be happy and at ease. White, bubble-like protection however can be seen delineated onto the portraits, resembling protection suits. Coming from a graphic background, it is no surprise that flat, pop colours influenced his style in paintings.

Visually parallel quite ironically to how Andy Warhol's *The Marilyn Diptych* (1962) centered on a pop icon's death, Syafiq regards the common people as the one that bears the brunt of the indeterminate pandemic the most as he subtly indicates of the public death toll that has felt apathetic, resorting to numbers and codes, as compared to any celebrity's deaths.



Left to Right:

Mugunghwakkochi Pieotseumnida I, II, and III
Acrylic and Oil on Canvas
85cm x 85cm each (3 Panels)
2021



Perpetually transfixed with experimentation on materiality, Haafiz's new body of works spark into a new curiosity by combining cut-outs metal plates onto pyrography surfaces. Working with a range of vexing industrious methods proves to be a challenge that he always looks forward to, further expanding his skillset into forming a salient series of works.

In *the Martyr I and II*, Haafiz was absorbed with the hidden beauty possessed unknowingly by patients who have had their brains scanned into x-ray images because of terminal brain diseases. To most, having your brain prods around seems to be a daunting prospect. Haafiz reflects that in pain, unforeseen sacrifices are made – time, health, even mental state afterward. He reveals his interest when looking at how these x-ray images demonstrate a point in life that he found important to these people as it could potentially change them in the long run.

With this newfound inspiration, he investigates the myriad of possibilities with the play of psychedelic colors on the surface of the skull to encapsulate how life should and is perceived according to most people. In implementing the element of decaying rusts, it essentially conceptualizes that beauty can always be seen even in the deadliest of forms.

Left to Right:

The Martyr I, II
Rusted Chemical Wash, Acrylic,
Automotive Paint, Metal Plate (Plasma
Cutting), Pyrography Print, Remazol on
Jute and Finished with 2k Gloss Paint
61cm x 61cm each (2 Panels)
2021

Ain's work is an immense emotional response to her well-received solo show at Core Design Gallery recently in September 2021, *Deep the Sea, Above the Galaxy*. Hailing from Kota Bharu, Kelantan, this young multi-disciplinary artist expresses her jumble of thoughts while experiencing the newness of having had a solo show. Despite being 27 years of age, Ain's prolific interest in various mediums often is interpreted and manifested into a sense of her inner worth. Crucially, Ain is an avid believer in immortalizing microscopic details in her works; this is evident in her past installation pieces and drawings that evoke quiet and resolute contemplation. Always atmospheric in visual, Ain's stifling inhibitions in her drawing *Blueming, I'm Blueming* resonates beautifully, revealing her convoluted thoughts as written by the artist herself, below:

A half smiling microscopic image from my self portrait photography can be seen in the work as in expressing the mixed emotions that I feel right after my solo exhibition.

The data-digesting moment, the endless self-post-mortem, the celebration, the anxious, the spirits that grow, the brightest hopes that I hold.

It is all about my lowest and highest feeling that I've been dealing,

The deepest black in the work rendering my dimmed emotions while the glittering yet brightest white speaks up my pleasing and cheering moments.

After all, from the process of smoothing the endless smear of the black charcoal on white canvas, meditating and teaching me of how important both dark and bright, positive and negative elements are, the same goes to the feelings in our life. Now that I learnt.

I'm keeping it all here to 'Blueming, I'm Blueming.'. I might be shining to me, but I feel dimming. Half-smiling.

Serba-Serbi emotions.



'Blueming, I'm Blueming'
Charcoal on Canvas
60cm x 122cm
2021

Nor Tijan Firdaus

One of the most admirable emerging sculptors in Malaysia, Nor Tijan Firdaus' tenaciousness in exercising scrap electronic materials into an illustrious series of works has become pivotal in an age where consumerism is at its most crucial period. As the idle observer and a consumer herself, Tijan considers the wasteful habit of buying that has accumulated into a substantial amount, resulting in the irresponsibility of throwing said items nonchalantly afterward.

Graduated with Masters of Fine Art and Technology from UiTM in 2015, Tijan found her niche in optimizing the use of discarded e-waste, collecting them vigorously to be reconstructed as her primary source of art making. At the height of the pandemic in January 2021, Tijan addressed the aforementioned issue as comprehensively as her expressive past masters recreations in her first solo show in Core Design Gallery, titled *New Formal*.

Tijan's process making is always detailed and elaborated, proven by her previous works that drove spectators to startling amazement; the same could be said in these two pieces. The removal of the conventional style of framed paintings brought out the wood panel cut-outs that measure up to almost five centimeters in thickness. The original subjects of the women are stylized into a minimalistic, hard-edged form; a drastic move in style compared to her more realistic approach before. Her innate understanding of forms shows even when it is streamlined into a diminutive visual.



After The Samsui Worker by
Lai Foong Moi
E-Waste on Wood Panel
coated with 2k Matte Resin
110cm x 88cm
2021



*Seated Malay Girl After
Redza Piyadasa*
E-Waste on Wood Panel
coated with 2k Matte Resin
110cm x 88cm
2021

Her works were considered pedagogical in nature as the images of famous western and Asian arts highlight the educational influence she received in art schools, such as Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) and Latiff Mohidin's *Pago-Pago Series*. Consequently, Tijan's firm inquisitiveness of past masters' works remains anchored as it is presented in *Serba-Serbi*. Reembodying yet other popular works by Redza Piyadaza, *Seated Malay Girl* and Lai Foong Moi, *The Samsui Worker* proves to be a stepping stone for Tijan to explore further into her two-dimensional wall sculpture.

Tijan purposefully chose the two artists because of their mutual background in pursuing education at the same institute, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts who later became one of the pioneering artists. Correlatively, both of the original subjects were women in a relaxed, sitting position. The stark differences however can be seen by the gap in statuses of these two women. *Seated Malay Girl* perceptibly is a wealthy woman; she is seen wearing a stylish long kebaya with gold adornments as the hairpiece and elaborate necklaces that covered her chest, posing on a chair disinterestedly. On the other hand, *The Samsui Worker* is an old woman, still in her working clothes as she sat in a field on a bamboo low bench. The body and soul weariness can be scrutinized by her distant, melancholy expression.

Put side by side, Tijan's body of works seems to erase all of the outer appearances of the two women — at the same time, removing whatever notions of wealth and statuses that can be seen in it.

a joint project by

