



pusat pengajian seni  
school of the arts USM

**1st Edition**  
**ARTS BULLETIN**  
**2023**  
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS



schooloftheartsusm



art\_usm



School of The Arts USM



art.usm.my



artuniversitissainsmalaysia

# Dean's forward

Dear Students, Alumni, and Readers,

We're thrilled to present the first issue of the ARTS Bulletin, formerly known as the SOTA Bulletin.

This edition highlights various activities undertaken by the School of the Arts throughout 2023.

We're proud to report on our staff's involvement in the Three Nations Chamber Concert, organized by the Malaysia Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), as well as the successful Vocal and Piano Concerts hosted by our Music Department. Additionally, in this edition, we showcase the well-received theatre production, Musafir, that captivated the Penang audience in October. Moreover, this issue celebrates the numerous awards our students have earned across our six departments this year.

Next year, School of The Arts USM will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. We warmly invite alumni and stakeholders to join us in May for a commemorative celebration on campus. As our school continues to grow, we aim to reconnect with alumni worldwide, engage with various stakeholders, and collaborate with industry players in arts and design. Please reach out via email to express your interest in contributing or reconnecting with the school and USM.

We encourage everyone to FOLLOW and LIKE our social media pages and tag @ArtsUSM in your memorable student life moments and post-student life experiences! Engaging student activities are regularly updated on our Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and even TikTok platforms! We also invite students interested in joining our social media initiatives to contact us and share their campus experiences.

For inquiries, updates, and opportunities to engage with our students, please email me at [dean\\_arts@usm.my](mailto:dean_arts@usm.my). I eagerly anticipate collaborating with you to elevate Malaysia's art and design scene!

Warm regards

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sarena Abdullah**  
Dean, Pusat Pengajian Seni, USM

# Chief Editor desk

Welcome to the latest edition of the Arts Bulletin, where we proudly showcase the remarkable achievements and vibrant activities of the students and dedicated lecturers from the School of the Arts at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

In the ever-evolving terrain of the arts, our institution has continued to be a beacon of creativity and innovation. Our students have consistently demonstrated their talent and dedication, consistently producing outstanding works that push the boundaries of artistic expression. From captivating visual arts exhibitions to breathtaking performances in theater, dance, and music, their contributions have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of our university.

Our esteemed faculty members, a diverse group of seasoned artists and scholars, have been at the forefront of artistic research and education. Their commitment to nurturing the next generation of artists and scholars is evident in the quality of work produced by our students.

We invite you to immerse yourself in the pages of this Arts Bulletin and join us in celebrating the vibrant and thriving arts community that is the heart of our university.

Warm regards,

**Dr. Pravina Manoharan**  
Chief Editor, Arts Bulletin

## ARTS BULLETIN 2023 SCHOOL OF THE ARTS USM

1<sup>st</sup> Edition  
ISSN: 2811-3950

### EDITORIAL BOARD

**Advisor:**  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sarena Abdullah

**Chief Editors:**  
Dr. Pravina Manoharan  
Dr. Johan Awang Othman

**Assistant Editors:**  
Ms. Nur Hilyati Ramli  
Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu A/L Sarjit Singh

**Article Contributors:**  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Safrizal Shahir  
Dr. Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer  
Dr. Yumi Yoshioka  
Mr. Norshahidan Mohamad  
Ms. Nur Hilyati Ramli  
Mr. Mohd Asyraf Mohd Bakri  
Ms. Jing Xiochen  
Ms. Tan Jin Yin  
Ms. Nuha Annisa Mohamed Nazmi  
Ms. Noor Azlina Mohamed Khalid

© Copyright Reserved 2023  
School of the Arts,  
Universiti Sains Malaysia

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, store in a retrieval system or transmitted in any forms or any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

**Typesetting and Design:**  
Ms. Nor Afzan Yahaya

**Printed by:**  
Red House USM

**Published by:**  
School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Penang.  
dean\_arts@usm.my  
604 – 653 3888 ext: 3621/3415

ARTS Bulletin is published yearly.

# Content

	pages
Trending	06-09
Research	10-15
RINTIS	16-21
Activities	22-37
Community Engagement	38-45
Alumni	46-61
Awards	62-75

# Trending

## School of The Arts USM takes the plunge: **ESCAPE** in Penang Ignites

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

School of the Arts, USM organised an exciting team-building program at the scenic ESCAPE adventure park in Penang. This event brought together academic and administrative staff for a day filled with fun, challenges, and team-building activities.

The ESCAPE adventure park, nestled in the heart of Penang's lush greenery, provided an ideal backdrop for this program. The staff members had the opportunity to step out of their daily routines, challenge themselves physically and mentally, and enjoy the beauty of nature.

The primary objective of this team-building program was to foster a cohesive team dynamic among the staff members, improve communication, and strengthen bonds. By engaging in a series of challenging tasks and activities, participants were able to enhance their teamwork skills and work towards achieving common objectives more effectively.

Team Building activities have gained recognition as essential tools for building a more productive and harmonious work environment. They encourage staff to collaborate, communicate, and problem-solve together, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction and productivity. For academic institutions like the School of the Arts USM, teamwork among both academic and administrative staff is crucial for achieving academic excellence and organisational success.



# Trending

## Exploring Southern Thailand's Arts and Culture: School of The Arts USM's Transformative Journey

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

In a bid to broaden their horizons and immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Southern Thailand's arts and culture, the School of The Arts USM embarked on an inspiring journey to Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus from 2nd to 5th July 2023. Led by the visionary duo of Dr. Siti Suhaily Surip and Dr. Jazmin Mohamad Jaafar, this delegation embarked on a mission to unravel the essence of the region's creative heritage.

Supported by the cultural expertise of Mr. Shamsul Bahri, the group's enthusiasm was palpable as they delved into the intricate nuances of Southern Thailand's artistic expressions. Their passionate exploration was made even more vibrant by the accompaniment of 31 talented students representing various departments within the school. This diverse blend of perspectives served as a breeding ground for creativity and intellectual exchange, fostering an environment of holistic learning.

Beyond the immediate pursuit of artistic enrichment, this transformative expedition held deeper significance. It was a bridge of cross-cultural understanding, aligning seamlessly with the principles of the United

Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Through this journey, the School of The Arts USM reinforced its dedication to nurturing not only skilled artists but also compassionate global citizens, poised to contribute to a harmonious and sustainable world. As the echoes of this enlightening odyssey reverberate through the corridors of the institution, they serve as a testament to the power of experiential learning in shaping well-rounded individuals who stand ready to embrace the world's diversity.



# Research

## DRAMA

### Mastering the Shen Yun Dance Technique: An Interdisciplinary Cultural Exchange

by: Ms. Jing Xiochen and Ms. Nur Hilyati Ramli

In the esteemed Sasaran Hall of USM's School of the Arts, a unique cultural exchange unfolded. Master's student Jing Xiochen embarked on a transformative research journey, sharing the captivating Shen Yun dance technique with a diverse group of undergraduate students. This exceptional endeavour not only underlines the importance of cultural knowledge transfer but also signifies the rich tradition of intergenerational artistic exchange.

Jing, an experienced dance instructor from China, embarked on a master's research project with a unique twist. Her ambition extended beyond personal academic achievement; she aimed to foster a deeper understanding of the Shen Yun dance technique and ignite a passion for Chinese culture amongst undergraduates at USM. This harmonious blend of cultural exploration and mentorship served as an inspiration for both Jing and the undergraduate participants.

Spanning twelve immersive sessions, each session delved deeper into the nuances of the Shen Yun dance technique and Chinese culture. These sessions provided a structured and in-depth platform for cross-cultural understanding, fostering an appreciation for the art form and the culture it represented. Moreover, the project brought together undergraduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds and various majors, including arts, management, and science. This cultural and interdisciplinary diversity enriched the project, transcending geographical and academic boundaries, and celebrating the universality of art.

In summation, Jing's research journey at USM's School of the Arts exemplifies the essence of cultural exchange and knowledge sharing. This initiative stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of cultural knowledge and the promotion of cultural understanding within the academic setting, ensuring such exchanges continue to flourish and inspire generations to come.



# Research FINE ARTS

## Pameran Pertama Program Pasca Sarjana Seni Halus: Eksplorasi Animasi *Loop* dalam Karya Haris Abadi

oleh: Profesor Madya Dr. Safrizal Shahir

Pameran seni pertama bagi pelajar pasca sarjana di bawah program PhD (Penyelidikan) Seni Halus (Praktis Studio) telah dirasmikan dengan gemilang pada 27 September 2023. Pameran ini berlangsung di Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, dan disempurnakan oleh Timbalan Dekan Akademik, Kerjaya, dan Antarabangsa, Pusat Pengajian Seni, Dr. Mohamed Khizal Mohammad Saat.

Dalam tesisnya bertajuk "PANGGUNG MEMORI: EKSPRESI KONTEMPORARI POHON BERINGIN MELALUI PENEROKAAN ANIMASI LOOP", Haris Abadi memfokuskan kajiannya kepada subjek Pohon Beringin, unsur utama dalam persembahan Wayang Kulit, dengan memasukkan elemen animasi dan ciri loop.

Karya-karya seni hasil daripada praktis studionya berbentuk animasi loop, dikelompokkan di bawah tiga eksposisi. Eksposisi pertama meneroka animasi loop dalam kerangka bentuk Pohon Beringin. Manakala eksposisi kedua membuka ruang penerokaan animasi loop dalam bentuk yang lebih terbuka. Eksposisi ketiga menggabungkan aspek kenangan peribadi dalam pergerakan animasi loop dalam kerangka Pohon Beringin.

Pameran seni ini berlangsung dari 25 September hingga 27 Oktober 2023. Dihadiri oleh para pelajar, pensyarah, dan pengunjung awam, pameran ini merupakan suatu peristiwa seni yang tidak boleh dilewatkan bagi para pencinta seni dan penikmat budaya.



# Research **NEW MEDIA**

## The Angklung: Music and Modernity Blend for Wellbeing in Malaysia

by: Mr. Muhammad Asyraf Mohd Bakri

The Angklung, a cherished Indonesian musical instrument, is experiencing a revival in Malaysia thanks to the innovative efforts of Muhammad Asyraf Mohd Bakri, a doctoral student at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). An active performer, Muhammad Asyraf plays a key role in various music groups, breathing new life into the traditional instrument with a touch of modern creativity.

The growing recognition of art-based interventions for their therapeutic benefits highlights the Angklung's potential. Playing the instrument involves processing both visual and auditory cues, promoting calmness and relaxation. These interventions hold particular significance for Malaysia, which is projected to become an "old country" by 2030, necessitating creative approaches to address the well-being of its ageing population.

Muhammad Asyraf's research and initiatives extend beyond the elderly, also encompassing mental health. Through the Angklung Healing Art Project, he aims to support individuals struggling with substance addiction in their mental health and overall well-being. His work

underscores the profound potential of art, exemplified by the Angklung, to positively impact emotional and psychological health. In doing so, it offers a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity within Malaysia's healthcare landscape.



**ANGKLUNG HEALING ART PROJECT**

13 SEPT | 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM  
AWDK DAERAH TIMUR LAUT, PULAU PINANG

Logos: UN, APEX, GREAT PERAKUHAN SAINS KEMENTERIAN KESIHATAN, SACAD





# RINTIS DESIGN

## Blueprint for Success: RINTIS 2023 Unites Creativity and Innovation

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

RINTIS 2023, held under the inspiring banner of "Project Reunite," embarked on a remarkable journey guided by a potent blueprint. Just as every awe-inspiring structure throughout history was meticulously crafted from a plan, RINTIS 2023 aimed to achieve its goals with boundless joy and prosperity.

This year's event brought together Graphic Communication, Product Design, and New Media Design and Technology in a harmonious collaboration, showcasing a diverse array of projects encompassing branding, packaging, visual communication, creative coding, and innovative furniture design.

Steering this visionary endeavour was Syed Muhammad Adam, the director of RINTIS 2023. His leadership resonated with the university's dedication to nurturing well-rounded, entrepreneurial, balanced, articulate, and critical-thinking graduates, as embodied in the HEBAT principle. RINTIS served as a powerful catalyst in realising this vision, encouraging students to actively participate in this transformative program.

RINTIS 2023 transcended its role as a mere event; it became a blueprint for reuniting and rebuilding, both physically and mentally. It aimed to propel dreams and creativity to new heights, paving the way for a brighter future.



# RINTIS

FINE  
ARTS

## Journey: A Stunning Art Exhibition unveils personal narratives of Life's Odyssey

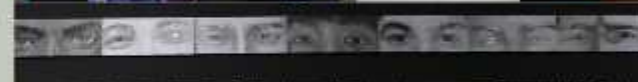
by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh



RINTIS 2023 embarked on a captivating voyage into the intricate tapestry of human existence through "Journey," an extraordinary art exhibition that delved into personal representations of life's eventful odyssey. This unique showcase unravelled the emotions we often keep buried, the memories we have lost and found, the difficult choices we've made, and the hopes that endure despite yesterday's trials.

Presented by the talented final-year students of the Fine Arts Department at the School of the Arts, USM, "Journey" was a remarkable artistic exploration. Each of the 35 participating students harnessed their creativity and individual artistic interpretation, drawing inspiration from the literary works "Tulang-tulang Berserakan" by Usman Awang and "Bait Senandung Malam" by Siti Zainon Ismail.

The exhibition was thoughtfully divided into two sections, 'the present' and 'the past,' each containing a multitude of sections reflecting different episodes from the remarkable journey of life. "Journey" promised to be a profound and thought-provoking experience, inviting all to contemplate the rich complexity of the human experience.



# RINTIS

## MUSIC

### Exploring Music's Evolution: A Musical Journey at RINTIS

by: Ms. Tan Jin Yin

The vibrant RINTIS event of 2023 saw final-year music students embark on a musical adventure, showcasing the fascinating evolution of music. From classical compositions to contemporary pop and anime tunes, their journey reflected the transformative nature of learning. The aptly named theme, 'Musical Journey', perfectly captured the narrative of the evening.

This musical adventure saw the students sharing their enthusiasm through diverse performances. On July 14th, they organised a concert dedicated to the music department, featuring a broad spectrum of genres. From classical pieces like Schumann's Arabesque Op. 18 and Mozart's Tapestry's "Concert of the Musicians from the Mountain", to contemporary hits like "Senbonzakura" by Miku Hatsune and Christina Perri's "A Thousand Years", the event displayed their versatility. Dynamic performances like Blackpink's "Pink Venom" on drums, JVKE's soulful "Golden Hour" on piano, and a moving choir rendition of "Obwisana" from Ghana, further captivated the audience with their range. This diverse and captivating concert took the audience on a memorable journey

through various eras and musical styles. RINTIS also featured an engaging busking session in the Galeri Adiwarna lobby. The final-year students' harmonious renditions seamlessly blended with the event's lively ambience, resonating with everyone present. They extended their musical expressions to the art market at Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah on August 5th and 6th, even inviting junior students to join them in the busking sessions, creating a space for shared enjoyment and new experiences.

Overall, the students' participation in RINTIS not only highlighted their profound passion for music but also underscored its power to foster unity. Each performance marked a step forward in their evolving musical journey, leaving a lasting impression on audiences and fellow students alike.



# Activities

## DRAMA

### ON!Stage

### Nurturing Artistic Talent at SOTA

by: Ms. Nur Hilyati Ramli

Launched in 2017, ON!Stage provides a unique platform for emerging artists in the Drama & Theatre department at SOTA. This program aims to capture the essence of classroom learning by offering students the opportunity to showcase their artistic skill in creating a full-length performance. Encompassing acting, directing, dance, and scenography, ON!Stage brings together students from diverse disciplines, including Fundamental and Intermediate Acting, Traditional and Contemporary Dance, Community Theatre, and Practicum of Makyung classes. This collaboration allows students to exhibit their practical abilities while developing individual discipline and artistic integrity.



The heart of the ON!Stage program is a spectacular three-night event, with each night presenting a distinct performance, offering a unique theatrical journey for the audience. As students master the art of integrating various elements of stagecraft, their performances gain in finesse, fully embodying the spirit of theatre. This immersive experience leaves a lasting impact, highlighting the power of practical experiences in shaping the artists of tomorrow.



A collage of theater performance scenes from the play 'Senjakala'. The scenes show various characters in different settings: a man and woman on a stage, a man in a green uniform, a man and woman sitting on a bench, a man and woman at a table, and a man in a green uniform walking. The word 'Activities' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the top left, and 'DRAMA' is written in a large, white, block font across the top center.

# Activities

## DRAMA

### **Teater Senjakala: Adaptasi membangkitkan emosi dari novel klasik Baharuddin Kahar**

*oleh: Encik Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh*

Teater Senjakala merupakan sebuah adaptasi menarik dari novel Senjakala yang ditulis oleh Baharuddin Kahar. Novel ini pertama kali diterbitkan oleh Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka pada tahun 1986. Novel ini telah menjadi teks sastra yang penting dalam peperiksaan SPM.

Pementasan Teater Senjakala adalah yang ke-5 dalam program Pesta Teater USM yang dianjurkan oleh Bahagian Drama dan Teater, Pusat Pengajian Seni USM. Program ini bertujuan untuk mengadaptasi novel ke dalam skrip teater dengan tujuan mempromosikan budaya membaca dan menghargai karya sastra terbitan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka melalui pementasan teater. Beberapa novel terkenal lain yang telah diadaptasi termasuk "Seorang Tua Di Kaki Gunung" oleh Azizi Haji Abdullah yang diadaptasi oleh Yusof Bakar, "Tivi" oleh Shahnnon Ahmad, dan "Musafir" oleh Hasan Ali yang diadaptasi oleh Fatimah Manaf.

Produksi Teater Senjakala adalah hasil kerjasama antara Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Wilayah Utara, Kerajaan Negeri, JKKN Pulau Pinang, dan Persatuan Sekenet. Yang menarik, produksi ini melibatkan tenaga kerja dari kalangan kakitangan, pelajar, dan pensyarah Pusat Pengajian Seni, terutamanya dari Bahagian Drama dan Teater, bersama-sama dengan aktivis NGO kebudayaan di sekitar Pulau Pinang. Kerjasama ini membawa

pertukaran ilmu dan pengetahuan antara akademik dan praktisi seni pertunjukan, menciptakan sumbangan positif dan jaringan yang kuat di antara kedua-dua pihak.

Teater Senjakala mengisahkan kisah Kinto, seorang bekas pemburu handal, yang berusaha memenuhi keinginan anak gadisnya, Noor, dengan memburu rusa. Namun, setelah berbulan-bulan berusaha, Kinto mengalami kegagalan. Keputusan Kinto untuk terus berjuang tanpa meminta bantuan orang lain mencetuskan konflik dan pertanyaan di kalangan keluarga dan rakan-rakannya.

Pertunjukan ini menggambarkan perjuangan Kinto yang semakin teguh dalam mencapai matlamatnya, dan bagaimana obsesinya terhadap perburuan rusa telah mempengaruhi hubungannya dengan Noor. Di sisi lain, Noor juga mengalami konflik emosional, merasa bersalah dan bingung dengan tindakan ayahnya.

Kisah Teater Senjakala menyentuh hati dengan penggambaran hubungan antara Kinto dan Noor yang penuh emosi, sambil menyoroti nilai keberanian dan kehendak yang kuat dalam mencapai matlamat. Dengan adegan dramatik dan konflik yang kuat, pementasan ini menawarkan pengalaman teater yang mendalam dan berkesan bagi penonton.

# Activities FINE ARTS

## Exploring artistic horizons at Pulau Aman!

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh



Inspired by a thirst for creative exploration, final-year Fine Arts students embarked on a transformative fieldwork and experiential learning journey led by the visionary Dr. Tetriana. With the breathtaking backdrop of Pulau Aman as their canvas, vibrant brushstrokes met environmental immersion in a unique blend.

This artistic odyssey transcended traditional boundaries, encouraging students to draw inspiration from the natural wonders surrounding them. Dr. Tetriana's guidance provided a fresh perspective, fostering a connection between art and the island's rich tapestry of cultural heritage and biodiversity.

As gentle waves lapped the shore, canvases came alive with a fusion of colours, mirroring the vivid hues of Pulau Aman's landscapes. This unforgettable exploration expanded artistic horizons, nurturing not just artistic skills but also a profound appreciation for the interplay between nature and creativity.



# Activities GRAPHIC DESIGN

## Design Masters Series Launches in Style: Zul Luey's Electrifying Video-Making Insights inspire School of The Arts USM students

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh



The Graphic Communication Department at the School of The Arts, USM, ignited the flame of creative learning with the stylish launch of the Design Masters Series. This inaugural event delved into the captivating world of video-making, featuring the renowned Zul Luey, Founder of Luey Motion Lab and a Creative Director/Director of Photography. Held at Panggung Pelinggam Cahaya, Zul Luey, a luminary in the field, mesmerized attendees with his unparalleled expertise and infectious passion for the craft.

The Design Masters Series audience embarked on an inspiring journey, gaining valuable insights into the intricate process of transforming scripts into cinematic masterpieces. Zul Luey generously shared his invaluable knowledge, demonstrating not only how to capture captivating moments but also how to ignite the flames of imagination in viewers. This event served as a powerful testament to the department's dedication to providing students with an exceptional education. By bringing in industry luminaries like Zul Luey, they strive to enhance their understanding of graphic communication and design in its diverse forms.

This electrifying kickoff event marks just the beginning of an exciting series that promises to nurture creativity and propel aspiring designers to new heights.



# Activities ALL DEPARTMENTS

## ICAP Forum 2023 Explores Future of Creative Industries and Art Communities

by: Dr. Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer



The School of the Arts' Industrial and Community Advisory Panel (ICAP) forum, held on 20th June 2023, brought together a diverse panel of industry experts: Encik Zaidan Zainuddin (New Media), Encik Amri Mustafa (Product Design), Puan Yee I-Lann (Fine Arts), Encik Khairul Azhar Abd Jalil (Acting and Directing), and Mr Joseph Foo (Graphic Communication). Moderated by Dr Mumtaz Begum, the forum explored the evolving landscape of creative industries and art communities in Malaysia.

Leveraging the panel's collective expertise, the forum addressed the need for universities to move beyond traditional teaching methods and embrace diversified approaches. This includes holistic digitalisation and enhanced communication with the creative sectors. Important questions were raised regarding the challenges faced by these industries in the wake of the pandemic, encompassing financial, infrastructure, technological, and material limitations, as well as workforce support. The discussion emphasised the critical role of universities in preparing graduates to navigate these challenges and emerge as knowledgeable and skilled artists, researchers, and advocates.

Encouraged future graduates to actively network with the creative community to stay abreast of industry needs and developments. They stressed the importance of breaking down silos and fostering collaboration between academia, communities, and industries. This can be achieved through the creation of platforms for incubatory research, projects, idea banks, and startups, alongside the exchange of technology and resources.

Finally, the forum highlighted the value of preparing young graduates to engage with their communities, studying and understanding their creative economies. This equips them to collaborate on finding solutions to existing problems and take on leadership roles in driving innovation and sustainability within the creative arts sector.





# Activities

## DRAMA

### Malam Takdir: An Opera of Destiny, Gambles, and Tradition

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

Taking inspiration from the Mahabharata, Johan Othman's captivating opera "Malam Takdir" throws an operatic twist into the tale of a blind king facing a predestined war that threatens his 100 sons. With the advice of a prophetic friend, he must make a heart-wrenching choice: halt the war destined to claim his sons or defy fate itself.

Performed in Bahasa Malaysia, Othman's a cappella opera features rhythmic clapping and powerful arias sung by the talented Tan Jin Yin. The cast, including Hilyati Ramli, Desmond Ngooi Chi Xian, Kabilan, Teoh Chee Lin, and Wong Wei Hern, weave a compelling narrative of friendship and the unyielding hand of fate.

Director Chee Sek Tim brings this ancient story to life, exploring both the intimate ties between old friends and the clashing ideologies that tear them apart. Othman's innovative approach seamlessly blends tradition with contemporary sensibilities, resulting in a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition.

"Malam Takdir" was staged at Komtar (Level 5, Auditorium A) in Penang from July 21st to 23rd, reminding audiences of the enduring power of theatre to illuminate our shared humanity.



# Blurring of right and wrong

BY MIRIAM DEVAPRASANA

It starts with a song—the wail of the soprano echoes through wide halls, wood floors, strings of prayer, and the vastness of the auditorium behind her. They begin to breathe in unison, every inhalation is weighted, deep.

Fifty voices, intentionally choreographed to allude to a struggle, a grieving and the impending birth of war and grief. Malam Takdir wastes no time in quizzing what it means to live—tossing with the noisiness of fate, predestined circumstances and human law.

Written by Johan Othman, scored by Chee Sek Tim, Malam Takdir is the latest opera in Bahasa Malaysia which must start being created by the Malaysians. The show's project manager, Tan Jin Yin, says,

"It will play at Komtar, George Town, in Penang from July 21-23, before taking on HMC in Putrajaya on Aug 5 and 6. Malam Takdir is a sensitively written drama, weaving in a complex music, vigorous and energetic dance movements,

and the rhythmic clapping of the national language, weaving our references and expanding the sensibilities of how a classical text from ages past can be reworked through contemporary expression and intangible heritage.

The Mahabharata is one of the two epic poems in Sanskrit. The other is the Ramayana which was widely disseminated in South-East Asia. The Mahabharata is also regarded as an important source of minor traditions. In 1961, Phyllis Kates developed between 1962 and 2007, according to the director, based on the Hindu epic law of Dharma and the Mahabharata (historical narrative).

One of the important aspects of the Mahabharata is its use of mythological and historical incidents surrounding the central heroic narrative that tells the struggle for sovereignty between two groups of cousins, the Kurus and the Pandavas. Malam Takdir, supported by Yayasan Sime Darby and the Creative Foundation, began as a series of monodramas with the soundtrack of the show reaching to be tied back to source material.

"There is no one answer. I wanted to write an opera that quite some time and there were many ideas that I explored. The Mahabharata seemed to always draw me back on I thought why not pick a scene as an episode and go from there?" says Johan. The show's writer and composer,

"One of the things that struck me is the idea of fate—that everyone is flawed, there is no real perfection. That was one of the main themes that stuck with me. The Mahabharata is also an incredibly dramatic text that is Queen's English, and at the same time, is not foreign to the region's people.

The cast of Malam Takdir, featuring Hilyati Ramli, Tan Jin Yin, Kabilan, Desmond Ngooi Chi Xian, Teoh Chee Lin, and Wong Wei Hern, is a multicultural lineup of voices in the fields of theatre, dance, and education.

### Building the opera

"There was something about the message of the blind king and his 100 sons that was extremely relatable. I ran and ran, together, and we thought about a problem to structure the drama and tell the story," says Chee, a longstanding Ngee Ann Theatre artist.

The issue was the concept of fate. Malam Takdir weaves around the imagined conversation between the blind king and his attendant Vidura. The language weaving thread is the predestined war that will claim all 100 of the king's sons die in battle. As the blind king seeks advice with the voices of his advisor and voices of the conflict that unfolds is one that looks at human villainy, betrayal and lies.

The plot is grounded in the struggle of a father and a king, evocative and thoughtfully brought out by Hilyati Ramli. Her powerful, deeply textured vocals, and poignant emotions depict the inner turmoil and anguish. There is a resonance in her movement and acting that amplifies the resonance of the text to those in the audience.

It was an honour for Malam Takdir, having been a part of its early staging in 2015. The opera has since seen several changes, from its original Malay, and recently the Chinese. "I am" who carries the arts throughout the opera.

The actor was trained after the duo realised the need to contextualise the Mahabharata. Johan then composed a series of arias which will be performed by Tan Jin Yin, a classically trained singer who excellently brings out the emotional context of the text.

In relation to the actor, Chee explains, after the first version, Johan originally did not want to write the music. He said that the text was more of an energy, that he could already sense the universality of the per-



Archaeological scene from Malam Takdir in Penang. From left to right: Kabilan, Teoh Chee Lin, Hilyati and Ngooi Chi Xian. Photo: PRACHOW



One of the things that struck me is the idea of fate—that everyone is flawed, there is no real perfection. That was one of the main themes that stuck with me, says Johan.



I suppose the most significant aspect of the text would be the blurring of right and wrong," says Chee.

formance in the text as flawed. The text is also loyal to the use of old or classical Bahasa Malaysia which is rooted in Sanskrit. The ornately poetic and rhythmic of the language stare through the text and music, making different kinds of emotions with words that are no longer used in everyday conversation.

Johan adds, "There are a lot of emotions in the text that are very musical. Like when Hilyati sings a duet with Tan Jin Yin, and when Hilyati sings alone. The emphasis these repetitive lyrics, and the way the words are uttered, are very musical. I was reluctant to add music because I understood if it would end up removing or distracting the story, but that were already present in the text."

The result is the sensitive intertwining of text, music, singing and acting that captures the vulnerability, emotion and passion of a father and a king who challenges the notion of fate.

### Question of fate

Did this opera push the theatrical work into challenging times? "In a way, it challenged myself. I have spoken and thought about the notion of

pre-determined fate of the gods. It's such a huge part of our story, but how do we deal with it? There are also religious understandings in our culture," says Johan.

"If our life is forced by some thing, should we challenge it? Not change, but should we challenge it?" he adds.

"There is a curiosity about the future and we have superstitions when something bad happens. The text has a reason, or the use of folktales to present things from superstitions. These were all early points that we used to think of the text," says Chee.

"The script reveals a lot of subtle kinds of understandings

and meaning specific to the story. I suppose the most significant aspect of the text would be the blurring of right and wrong."

As the opera magnifies the premonitions of judgment, more viewers will be left in awe of its sensibility and the more nuanced perspective of what it means to live, blessed by millions of gods, deities, and destiny, and how much of that can we question or challenge. Is it a duty to do as the gods say or not to do so?

"In quiet times, 'Sometimes there is no resolution. There is a right or wrong, given the circumstances. In this case, as father and king?'"

"We are many things and every thing we make a decision, there are so many variables that we have to make in relation to what we are doing, and who we are to the people around us, the gods."

How do we sit with that?"

Malam Takdir will play at Auditorium A, Level 5, Komtar, George Town in Penang from July 21-23 (6:30pm, 8pm) before continuing its run at the Hero Event Space, PJAG in Putrajaya on Aug 5 and 6 (7pm, 8pm).



Hilyati (left) plays the blind king, while Ngooi Chi Xian plays the subtly named role of Vidura in Malam Takdir.

# Activities **NEW MEDIA**

## Empowering Tomorrow's Digital Visionaries: Bridging Arts and Technology for a Dynamic Future

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

School of the Arts USM, in partnership with Digital Penang, recently hosted an insightful session featuring Dr Mohd Asyiek Mat Desa, a distinguished Senior Lecturer from the New Media and Technology Department. Held during the Penang Digital Creative Week at Pese'ban Agung, the event offered a compelling exploration of the digital future and emphasized the critical need for adaptation in this rapidly evolving landscape.

In today's era of constant technological advancement, understanding the dynamics of the digital realm is essential for students everywhere. Dr Mohd Asyiek Mat Desa's thought-provoking talk illuminated the transformative potential of digital technology and its far-reaching impact on various aspects of our lives.

Attendees embarked on a profound journey through the digital frontier, exploring topics such as emerging technologies, the role of new media in everyday life, and the implications for

industries, societies, and individuals. Dr Mohd Asyiek Mat Desa's expertise provided valuable insights into how the digital future is rapidly reshaping our world, from communication and work methods to innovations in arts and creativity.

The collaboration between School of the Arts USM and Digital Penang fostered a vibrant space for learning, networking, and inspiration, bringing together students, professionals, and enthusiasts with a shared interest in digital technology and its transformative potential. Through initiatives like this, educational institutions like School of the Arts USM can empower the next generation of digital leaders to harness the full potential of the digital world and adapt to its ever-changing terrain. This talk marked a significant step towards nurturing digital literacy, creativity, and adaptability among students, preparing them for a promising and dynamic future.



# Activities **PRODUCT DESIGN**

## Tanggam Fest 2023 Showcases Design Brilliance in Furniture!

by: Ms. Nuha Annisa Mohamed Nazmi  
Ms. Noor Azlina Mohamed Khalid

Tanggam Fest 2023, a design program bringing together students and professionals in Malaysia, took place on January 30th and 31st at Tuanku Canselor Hall, UMK. This collaborative event, supported by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) and the Malaysian Industrial Designers Association (PEREKA), aimed to foster exchange of ideas, showcase student talent, and spark creativity in furniture design.

Over 300 students from universities across Malaysia, including UMK, UTHM, USM, UNISZA, UITM Kedah, and UITM Melaka, participated in the program. USM was ably represented by a team of nine students: Nuha Annisa Binti Mohamed Nazmi, Muhammad Syamim Bin Afandi, Muhammad Zulhusni Bin Azaherul, Yasmin Nadhirah Azhar, Jeffery Anak Adin, Khairani Qabsah Bin Haron, Chan Hou Yuan Lee Sung Yun, accompanied by lecturers Pn. Noor Azlina Mohamed Khalid and Pn. Siti Mariam Binti Mat Nor from the Product Design department, School of The Arts.

The program saw students divided into groups, tasked with designing and constructing a cardboard stool using traditional jointing techniques ("tanggam"). Each group's ideas and initial sketches were evaluated by panels of lecturers and industry professionals, providing valuable feedback and fostering inspiration among participants. This collaborative environment proved fertile ground for students to hone their design skills and learn from one another.

USM's achievements were noteworthy, with one of the two groups (Jeffery Anak Adin, Khairani Qabsah Binti Haron, Chan Hou Yuan Lee Sung Yun) proudly securing the award for best teamwork. Overall, Tanggam Fest 2023 provided an invaluable platform for students interested in pursuing careers in furniture design, offering exposure to industry professionals, collaborative learning experiences, and valuable feedback on their design thinking and creation process.



# bhumiMATA:

## Redefining the feminine in mother earth's embrace.

by: *Dr. Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer*  
*One of the dancers*  
*School of The Arts*

Premiered at the recent George Town Festival 2023 (GTF), **bhumiMATA**, meaning "Mother Earth", unearths the hidden, forgotten, and sometimes neglected narratives of women.

The audience embarks on an intimate journey of "bold yet heart-touching" narration, experiencing an evocative multidisciplinary production that weaves classical, ritualistic, and contemporary dance, movement, singing, and music. This tapestry embodies the voices of women across traditions, cultures, and generations.

This collaborative effort between Ombak-Ombak Arts Studio, School of the Arts (USM), Wind River Production, Euphoria Penang, and GTF is choreographed by Luvenia Kalia and Kausalyaa Sugumarin under the artistic and creative direction of renowned international dancer-choreographer Aida Redza. This unique dance brings women from all walks of life, both professional and from the community, together to perform at the Penang Institute on the 28th and 29th of July 2023.

### The Dance and Celebration of Birth...

As the night sky twinkles with stars, an ethereal soundscape of nature envelops the audience. Trickling water, chirping birds, and clicking crickets set the stage for the awakening cries of a mother embracing her newborn. This celebration of birth symbolizes the beginning of life, joy, pain, continuity, and hope. Dancers move together in an organic and fluid

flow, representing the interconnectedness of living beings and their enduring resilience. Transforming from one stage to another, the babies grow into young women, learning, loving, laughing, playing, crying, and defying. They embark on a process of self-discovery, experiencing the profound freedom and insatiable curiosity that life offers.

### Dancing for Durga...Dancing for Strength...

Young women, draped in beautiful red, saffron, and gold sarees – colours reminiscent of the earth – embark on their rites of passage, a journey their mothers and ancestors have taken before them. Leaving their safe havens, they proceed to the temple, offering their puja (worship) through dance for Durga, the goddess of strength, embodying the divine feminine energy. The dance juxtaposes strength with doubt, survival with creation, showcasing interconnecting scenes of women emulating Durga, while others continue to dream, survive, create, and recreate. They mould and shape clay into earthen pots, often battling societal voices instructing girls/women to "obey, sit properly, don't laugh, tie your hair" – the very notions used to control them. Confused and repressed, one young woman finds herself lost and in doubt, further detached. As her mother sadly watches her daughter in pain, she embraces and reassures her that she is not alone. She is the daughter of Durga, the daughter of bhumiMATA, and nothing will stop her from achieving her dreams.



Community  
 ENGAGEMENT



### **Takkitta, takkitta...takkadimi... Their Stories Redefined...**

The dancers move sensuously with the earthen pots, reminiscing in their shared stories of passion, struggle, love, and hope. Starting slowly, they build on speed and strength, capturing the essence of women coming together, working, supporting, and empowering each other. The chanting of "takkitta, takkitta, takkadimi, takka-takkitta takkadimi" further energises them. No longer afraid or in doubt, they submit themselves to nature – water, wind, fire, and earth – in a full celebration of womanhood.

### **In Her Embrace...**

bhumiMATA presents the multi-layered wonders of life – from non-existence to existence, unborn to alive, invisible to visible, unheard to being heard. This is a continuous cyclical journey; we come from one mother through her womb but find connection with others and finally submit to the mother of all beings – bhumiMATA.

# The Longest Urban Forest Themed Mural Art of 2023

by: Mr. Norshahidan Mohamad



The "Blank Canvas: Mural Art at Taman Rimba WoodHAVEN" program has given birth to a masterpiece that seamlessly blends cityscape and wilderness. This stunning mural, stretching an impressive 218.5 meters in length and standing 2.1 meters tall, has earned its place as the Longest Urban Forest Theme Mural in the Malaysia Book of Records. Inaugurated on June 26th, 2023, the event saw the esteemed presence of Tun Dato' Seri Utama Ahmad Fuzi Bin Haji Abdul Razak, the Governor of Penang, and YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow, the Chief Minister. Their attendance celebrated not only artistic achievement but also the vital integration of nature into urban environments.

The mural itself is a testament to collaboration and diverse talent. Led by dedicated lecturer Norshahidan Mohamad, a team of six talented students and alumni from Universiti Sains Malaysia's School of The Arts (USM) poured their skills into the project: Ady Najmi Mohamad Habib, Norhafizah Rosli, Nur Aida Wahida Mohd Fisol, Muhamad Akmal Shaharudin, Mohamad Fakrol Syakirim Rosdi, and Mustaqim Akmar Masri. This vibrant mix of experience and fresh perspectives resulted in a mural seamlessly blending creativity with unwavering commitment.

But the achievement extends beyond academia. This initiative thrives on the power of community involvement. A crucial element is the active participation of over 170

enthusiastic young volunteers from Penang. Notably, students from Jit Sin High School played a pivotal role in conceptualizing and realizing the project. Their dedication not only demonstrates their commitment to their city but also highlights the potential of collaborative efforts. The entire initiative received significant support from the Penang Youth Development Corporation (PYDC), further emphasizing the importance of community-driven endeavours.

This captivating mural celebrates the beauty of nature in a unique way. The artwork beautifully combines simplified shapes and forms to portray an urban forest. Using minimalistic depictions of plants and animals, it highlights the interconnectedness between nature and city life. This visually stunning representation reinforces the park's close connection to the environment, aligning with Penang's vision for sustainable development and community well-being.

In conclusion, the "Blank Canvas: Mural Art at Taman Rimba WoodHAVEN" program has accomplished more than just an artistic triumph. The Longest Urban Forest Theme Mural stands as a symbol of harmonious coexistence between urban development and nature. Collaborative initiatives like this serve as a powerful reminder that the beauty of art and nature can come together to create impactful experiences that resonate deeply within a community.

# Harmonise Your Heart: Piano Achievement Day 2023 Showcases Rising Stars!

by: Dr. Yumi Yoshioka

Launched in 2011 as a cornerstone of the School of the Arts USM's Community Music Programme, Piano Achievement Day offers a unique, non-competitive platform for budding pianists. This student-centred event provides an opportunity for young talents to perform before a discerning panel of experienced evaluators – university music lecturers serving as adjudicators who offer valuable written feedback to each performer.

This two-day event allows around 150 participants to showcase their skills by performing two solo classical pieces on stage. It provides an invaluable opportunity for young musicians to gain public solo performance experience and prepare for future piano examinations. In addition to receiving a certificate of recognition, participants benefit from expert feedback tailored to their individual skill set, helping them to improve and grow.

Piano Achievement Day is a cherished occasion that celebrates the unwavering dedication, remarkable achievements, and innate musical talent of its student participants. Whether they are preparing for music examinations, gearing up for studio or public recitals, or simply nurturing their passion for music and self-improvement, this event encapsulates the essence of their musical journey and promotes musical excellence within the university community.

Community  
ENGAGEMENT



# Alumni

## DRAMA

### **Pendidikan Seni Sebagai Asas Kejayaan: Alumni Drama dan Teater, Mengukir Nama dalam Kerjaya Koreografi**

*oleh: Encik Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh*

- 1. Bolehkah anda dengan ringkas memperkenalkan diri anda, termasuk program yang anda telah tamatkan di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM dan tahun anda tamat pengajian?**  
Nama diberi Muhammad Afrizal Iqri Azhar atau lebih mesra dikenali sebagai Iqri. Program yang saya telah tamatkan di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM adalah Ijazah Sarjana Muda Seni Halus Lakonan & Pengarahan dan saya telah tamatkan pengajian ini pada tahun 2022.
- 2. Bagaimana perjalanan anda sejak tamat pengajian dari Pusat Pengajian Seni USM? Apakah bidang kerjaya yang anda pilih?**  
Alhamdulillah, sejak saya tamat pengajian dari Pusat Pengajian Seni USM, saya telah bekerja di taman tema air iaitu Sunway Lost World of Tambun dan bekerja sebagai Koreografer dan sebagai Entertainer.
- 3. Bagaimana pendidikan anda di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM telah menyediakan anda untuk kerjaya sekarang atau perjalanan kerjaya anda?**  
Pendidikan yang telah saya pelajari ini sedikit sebanyak membantu saya dalam bidang kerjaya ini kerana jurusan Lakonan & Pengarahan mengajar saya pelbagai ilmu apabila berada di atas pentas mahupun di belakang pentas.
- 4. Bolehkah anda berkongsi beberapa sorotan atau pencapaian dari perjalanan profesional anda yang anda kaitkan dengan latar belakang seni atau kemahiran yang anda peroleh di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM?**  
Terdapat pelbagai persembahan yang saya lakukan di Lost World of Tambun terutama persembahan tarian seperti tarian tradisional melayu, cina dan India, tarian kontemporari dan juga tarian moden. Saya telah memperoleh kemahiran ini berdasarkan subjek-subjek yang telah saya pelajari daripada kelas Tarian Tradisional & Kontemporari serta gabungan kemahiran daripada kelas lakonan.

- 5. Adakah anda menghadapi sebarang cabaran dalam peralihan dari pendidikan yang berfokuskan seni ke dalam kerjaya, dan bagaimana anda mengatasinya?**  
Pada pendapat saya, saya tidak menghadapi sebarang masalah dalam peralihan dari pendidikan seni ke dalam kerjaya saya sekarang ini kerana pekerjaan saya ini memerlukan idea seni yang kreatif untuk menghasilkan persembahan yang terbaik.
- 6. Adakah anda dapati kemahiran seni dan pemikiran kreatif anda bernilai dalam bidang-bidang selain seni tradisional, seperti perniagaan, teknologi, atau sektor-sektor bukan seni?**  
Bagi saya, kemahiran seni dan pemikiran kreatif saya masih bernilai dalam bidang-bidang selain seni. Sebagai contoh, saya perlu membuat pembentangan projek bagi sambutan Hari Kemerdekaan. Untuk menyakinkan ketua jabatan saya, idea kreatif itu perlu digunakan dalam bidang pengurusan bagi menghasilkan projek tersebut terlihat menarik.
- 7. Bagaimana anda mengekalkan hubungan anda dengan seni dan terus mengekspresikan kreativiti anda dalam kerjaya atau kehidupan peribadi anda sekarang?**  
Dalam kerjaya saya sekarang ini, penggunaan ilmu seni & kreatif itu sangat penting kerana saya perlu menghasilkan persembahan yang baharu bagi setiap 3 bulan dan bukan itu sahaja, saya perlu mencari idea bagi projek-projek yang akan datang. Oleh hal demikian, saya dapat mengekalkan hubungan saya dengan seni dan terus mengekspresikan kreativiti saya dalam kerjaya ini.
- 8. Apakah nasihat yang ingin anda berikan kepada pelajar-pelajar semasa di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM yang berhasrat untuk memiliki kerjaya berjaya yang dipengaruhi oleh latar belakang seni mereka?**  
Nasihat saya kepada pelajar-pelajar Pusat Pengajian Seni USM adalah selalu mengejar apa yang kita mahukan, tidak berputus asa dalam apa yang kita mahu capai dan yang paling penting adalah sentiasa mencari pengalaman baru kerana itu akan membuatkan kita menjadi seorang yang lebih berseni.
- 9. Bolehkah anda kongsi projek atau pengalaman tertentu dalam kerjaya anda di mana latar belakang seni anda memberikan perspektif atau kelebihan yang unik?**  
Pada bulan Oktober 2023, Sunway Lost World of Tambun telah mengadakan pesta rumah hantu besar-besaran dan lebih dikenali sebagai 'Screamfest'. Saya ditugaskan untuk menghasilkan satu persembahan tarian yang unik. Alhamdulillah, koreografi saya telah menarik perhatian penonton yang hadir kerana saya telah mengabungkan tarian kontemporari bersama dengan elemen api di dalam persembahan.
- 10. Menurut pendapat anda, bagaimana latar belakang seni dapat meningkatkan keupayaan seseorang untuk berfikir secara kreatif dan menyelesaikan masalah, dan bagaimana ia memberi faedah kepada anda dalam kerjaya anda?**  
Pada pendapat saya, latar belakang seni dapat meningkatkan keupayaan seseorang untuk berfikir secara kreatif dan menyelesaikan masalah dengan memperolehi pelbagai pengalaman baru dalam kehidupan. Semakin banyak pengalaman baru yang dicari, semakin tinggi keupayaan seseorang itu untuk berfikir secara kreatif dan menyelesaikan masalah. Perkara ini sangat memberi faedah kepada saya dalam kerjaya ini kerana saya telah didedahkan dengan pelbagai pengalaman baru dari segi persembahan teater mahupun persembahan tarian.





## Crafting Careers: How Sinthu Thiruvarul's School of The Arts Education Fuels Creative Success.

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

**1. Could you briefly introduce yourself, including the programme you graduated from at the School of The Arts at USM and the year you graduated?**

I'm Sinthu Thiruvarul, a proud graduate of the Graphic Communication programme at the School of Arts at USM, class of 2019.

**2. How has your journey been since graduating from the School of The Arts at USM? What career path have you pursued?**

I have always missed studying at SOTA and plan to further my studies there again in the future. Currently, I work as a content developer, specifically developing, editing, and maintaining technical materials for a multinational corporation. A strong reason I was hired for this role was due to my background in Graphic Communication as the team required people with a creative visual background.

**3. In what ways did your education at the School of The Arts prepare you for your current career or career trajectory?**

I learned problem-solving skills and multitasking while juggling multiple assignments and projects at a time. Being around so many creatives while studying at SOTA has taught me that there is always more than one way to analyse and solve an issue. At SOTA, having assignments that are mostly hands-on, has enhanced my skills which have come in handy numerous times.

**4. Can you share some highlights or achievements from your professional journey that you attribute to your artistic background or skills acquired at the School of The Arts?**

I still turn to art at every chance I get. For instance, when I had the opportunity to lead the team-building activities in my department, one of the activities that I organised was making batik art. This allowed me to bring the members of my department together while making art and this was highly appreciated by everyone in the team, including the managers.

**5. Did you face any challenges in transitioning from an arts-focused education to your career, and how did you overcome them?**

I did not face too many challenges when transitioning from an arts-focused education to my career. Having a creative background always allowed me to find means to work despite being unemployed, especially during the pandemic. I could freelance and pick up projects as the need for creative services is always required. The challenge is probably to establish my credibility when it comes to my creative work.

**6. Have you found that your artistic skills and creative thinking have been valuable in fields other than traditional arts, such as business, technology, or other non-arts sectors?**

Having an artistic background has always been useful. I was involved in a dance project recently, which was part of the George Town Festival, where I did more than just dance. I could offer my photography skills for the project's promotional materials and there were many instances where it was easy for me to come up with creative materials to share information. This ranges from wedding montages, convocation invitations, business cards, pre-wedding photoshoots and more!

**7. How have you maintained your connection to the arts and continued to express your creativity in your current career or personal life?**

I believe my connection to the arts is what defines me and who I am in most of what I choose to do in life. I find every little opportunity to showcase and share art in my current career and plan to do more in the future. As for my personal life, I have countless plans and ideas to further enhance my creative background and find the means to practice it at every opportunity. I take up freelance design projects and do photography as a side gig whenever I can. I plan to organise mini-art workshops in the future as well.

**8. What advice would you give to current students at the School of The Arts who are aspiring to have successful careers that are influenced by their artistic backgrounds?**

Enjoy your time at SOTA. Be open and absorb every idea, feedback and vision that comes your way when working on projects; even from your classmates. Be passionate about every little thing you create. Believe in your ideas and learn how to deliver them to the best of your abilities. This is exactly what I feel SOTA taught me. And I find that the delivery part is vital. You could have great ideas and visions but execution is key.

**9. Can you share any specific projects or experiences in your career where your background in the arts provided a unique perspective or advantage?**

Although there were no particular projects in my career where my background in arts has been an added advantage, it has always helped in the way I present my work and materials. I have most certainly made a name for myself in terms of being one of the creative ones among my work colleagues.



## Mengintegrasikan Seni dan Teknologi: Saiful Ammar Mendedikasikan Bakat Seni dan Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu dalam Dunia Animasi Malaysia.

oleh: Encik Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

- 1. Bolehkah anda dengan ringkas memperkenalkan diri anda, termasuk program yang anda telah tamatkan di Pusat Pengajian Seni USM dan tahun anda tamat pengajian?**  
Saya Saiful Ammar Bin Zainal Apani, 37. Saya berasal dari Selama, Perak. Kini sedang bekerja sebagai 3D Lighting/Visual Artist di Les' Copaque Animation Studio. Saya juga merupakan seorang Komposer Muzik. Saya merupakan seorang alumni Universiti Sains Malaysia, dalam bidang Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu, dan tamat pengajian pada tahun 2015.
- 2. Bagaimana program Reka Bentuk dan Teknologi Media Baru di USM telah menyediakan anda untuk kerjaya dalam bidang ini?**  
Program Reka Bentuk dan Teknologi Media Baru di USM telah memberi platform untuk saya mendapat pendedahan & lebih memahami bidang animasi. Subjek 3D dan 2D Animation dalam New Media mencetuskan minat saya untuk menceburi dalam industri animasi di Malaysia.
- 3. Adakah terdapat projek atau pencapaian tertentu dalam kerjaya anda yang membuat anda bangga?**  
Saya sangat bersyukur kerana diberi peluang untuk terlibat dalam pelbagai projek animasi tempatan yang bertaraf antarabangsa selama 9 tahun. Penglibatan awal saya dalam bidang animasi lokal adalah apabila saya terlibat dalam projek animasi Ejen Ali siri TV sebagai Lighting Artist dan Compositor di Wau Animation Sdn Bhd. Selepas beberapa tahun, saya mendapat kesempatan untuk terlibat dalam produksi Ejen Ali the Movie. Pengalaman terlibat dalam produksi filem animasi tempatan bersama dengan rakan sekerja yang sangat berbakat sangat bernilai dan tidak akan saya lupakan. Melihat nama saya terpampang di dalam kredit filem animasi Ejen Ali the Movie semasa ditayang di panggung wayang adalah satu pencapaian yang paling saya banggakan. Selepas itu, saya mengembangkan karier saya bekerja di Les' Copaque Animation Studio dan terlibat dalam projek Upin dan Ipin musim 17 sehingga kini.

Di samping itu, minat saya pada muzik telah membuka lembaran baru untuk saya menceburi bidang penghasilan latar muzik. Saya juga telah berkolaborasi dengan pelajar-pelajar dari Toronto Film School, Canada untuk menghasilkan muzik latar untuk filem pendek mereka.

- 4. Bagaimana latar belakang anda dalam seni dan Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu mempengaruhi pilihan dan peluang kerjaya anda?**  
Saya mula berminat pada bidang seni sejak dari kecil lagi. Hobi saya seperti membaca komik, menonton kartun dan melukis telah menarik minat saya untuk bercita-cita untuk mendapat karier dalam bidang seni. Oleh itu, saya memilih untuk melanjutkan pelajaran saya di Universiti Sains Malaysia, dalam bidang Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu. Sepanjang pembelajaran saya di USM, saya telah mendapat pendedahan tentang kewujudan peluang kerjaya dalam industri animasi di Malaysia.
- 5. Bagaimana anda melihat persimpangan teknologi dan seni membentuk masa depan industri atau bidang anda?**  
Pendapat saya, perkembangan teknologi animasi 3D seperti aplikasi Maya dan Blender serta terkini, AI (Artificial Intelligence) akan mengubah landskap pembangunan dan penghasilan dalam bidang animasi dalam masa terdekat. Walaupun penggunaan AI banyak memberi impak negatif pada masa sekarang, tetapi jika dimanfaatkan dengan betul dan mengikut undang-undang, ia akan memberikan hasil yang positif.
- 6. Adakah anda dapati bahawa memiliki asas yang kukuh dalam seni memberikan anda pandangan atau kelebihan unik dalam kerjaya anda?**  
Pemahaman dalam asas seni sangat penting untuk setiap kerjaya dalam bidang seni atau hiburan serta ia membuka peluang lebih besar kepada kejayaan masa depan anda sebagai seorang artis.
- 7. Bagi pelajar semasa yang bercita-cita untuk memasuki bidang serupa, kemahiran atau pengetahuan apa yang anda rasa sangat penting untuk kejayaan?**  
Bagi saya, minat dalam bidang seni perlu ditanam dahulu kemudian digandingkan dengan kesungguhan untuk belajar benda baru serta praktikkan asas seni sehingga mahir perlu disematkan dalam diri dahulu sebelum memilih kerjaya dalam bidang seni. Pengetahuan luas dalam aplikasi 3D seperti Maya dan juga Blender dapat memberi pengetahuan dan ilmu yang penting untuk bekerja dalam industri animasi tempatan dan antarabangsa.
- 8. Bolehkah anda kongsi projek atau pengalaman tertentu dalam kerjaya anda di mana latar belakang seni anda memberikan perspektif atau kelebihan yang unik?**  
Berdasarkan pengalaman saya, semasa saya terlibat dalam projek Ejen Ali the Movie, Wau Animation Sdn Bhd mempunyai visi untuk menghasilkan filem animasi lokal yang bukan sahaja mempunyai jalan cerita yang menarik malah mempunyai visual yang sangat cantik dan berkualiti seperti hasil dari luar negara seperti Disney Pixar. Jadi, saya bersama satu pasukan ditugaskan untuk mengkaji dan mengaplikasikan (R&D) pelbagai teknik untuk menghasilkan visual yang realistik. Eksplorasi itu membawa kepada penghasilan simulasi rambut watak 3D yang sangat teliti, halus dan boleh beralun secara realistik. Selain itu, kami juga berjaya menggunakan teknik pencahayaan yang dapat menyampaikan mood yang bersesuaian dengan jalan cerita sekaligus memberi impak pada penonton.

**9. Bagaimana anda kekal terkini dengan trend dan kemajuan terkini dalam Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu?**

Reka Bentuk & Teknologi Media Baharu akan sentiasa berubah mengikut peredaran masa. Oleh itu, saya sentiasa terbuka untuk mengenali dan tidak ketinggalan untuk mencuba apa-apa trend baru yang ada walaupun tiada dalam bidang skop kerja saya. Kebanyakannya, sosial media menjadi platform pertama untuk saya mengetahui serta mempelajari skil baru yang boleh saya gunakan akan datang.



# Alumni PRODUCT DESIGN

## Building Dreams Brick by Brick: The Artistic Journey of Zahid, School of The Arts Alumnus Turned Lego Maestro

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

**1. Could you briefly introduce yourself, including the programme you graduated from at the School of The Arts at USM and the year you graduated?**

Hello, I'm Zahid, a proud graduate of the Product Design programme at the School of The Arts at USM, completing my degree in 2013.

**2. How has your journey been since graduating from the School of The Arts at USM? What career path have you pursued?**

Since graduating, I've embarked on a fascinating journey that led me to my current role as a Lego Builder, specialising in model making and maintenance at Legoland Dubai. The path to where I am today has been nothing short of eye-opening.

**3. In what ways did your education at the School of The Arts prepare you for your current career or career trajectory?**

The education I received at the School of The Arts has been instrumental in shaping my career. The Product Design programme, particularly courses like Fundamentals of 3D, CAD, and Research Methodology, provided a solid foundation that aligns seamlessly with the demands of the model-making industry.

**4. Can you share some highlights or achievements from your professional journey that you attribute to your artistic background or skills acquired at the School of The Arts?**

A standout achievement in my professional journey is the design of LEGO Miniland Kampung at LEGOLAND Malaysia. This project showcases the practical application of my artistic background in a tangible and widely recognised form.

**5. Did you face any challenges in transitioning from an arts-focused education to your career, and how did you overcome them?**

Transitioning from an arts-focused education to a career that involves not only model making but also engineering and maintenance presented challenges. I overcame these hurdles by dedicating time to learn basics in electronics and health and safety, bridging the gap between my artistic skills and the multifaceted requirements of my role.

**6. Have you found that your artistic skills and creative thinking have been valuable in fields other than traditional arts, such as business, technology, or other non-arts sectors?**

My artistic skills and creative thinking have proven valuable beyond the realm of traditional arts. They have allowed me to approach maintenance and engineering challenges in innovative ways, demonstrating the versatility of an arts education.

**7. How have you maintained your connection to the arts and continued to express your creativity in your current career or personal life?**

To stay connected to the arts, I occasionally engage in building Lego models for fun. This not only serves as a creative outlet but also keeps my artistic skills sharp and provides a refreshing break from the routine.

**8. What advice would you give to current students at the School of The Arts who are aspiring to have successful careers that are influenced by their artistic backgrounds?**

My advice to current School of The Arts students is to fully immerse themselves in their education. The skills acquired at the school will undoubtedly shape their careers. Additionally, mastering the art of properly documenting their work is crucial, especially when collaborating with international companies.

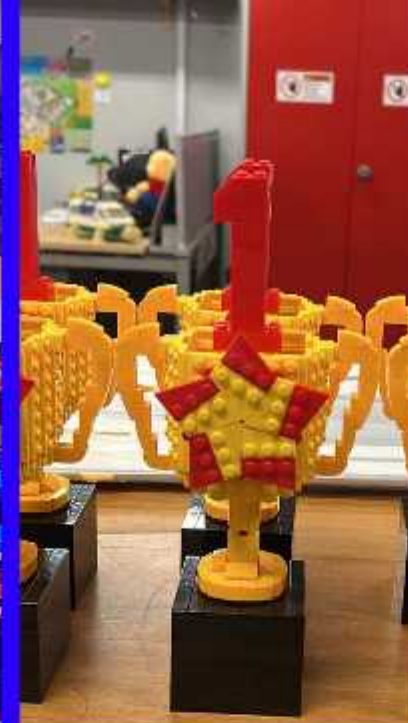
**9. Can you share any specific projects or experiences in your career where your background in the arts provided a unique perspective or advantage?**

Specific projects like the LEGO Kampung for LEGOLAND Malaysia and the annual installation of a 10m LEGO Christmas tree at LEGOLAND Dubai showcase how my arts background contributed to unique perspectives and efficient solutions in my career.

**10. In your opinion, how does a background in the arts enhance one's ability to think creatively and problem-solve, and how has it benefited you in your career?**

An arts background enhances creative thinking and problem-solving by offering diverse perspectives. Thinking outside the box has significantly benefited my career, enabling me to design innovative installation methods that have practical implications, such as reducing the LEGO Christmas tree installation time from 36 to 12 hours.





# Awards DRAMA

## Innovative Education: ACT Project Claims Gold at IUCEL 2023

by: Ms.Nur Hilyati Ramli

The Advancing Creativity Together (ACT) project, brainchild of Professor Kamarul Kabilan (TESOL), Ms Nur Hilyati (Drama & Theatre), and Dr Safia Najwa Suhaimi (Graphic Design), continues to garner deserved recognition, solidifying its position as a leader in innovative education. Its recent triumph – a Gold Medal at the 2023 International University Carnival on E-Learning (IUCEL) – serves as a testament to its pioneering approach to teaching and learning. This prestigious award underlines the project's excellence in harnessing technology to enhance the educational experience and promote e-learning practices. ACT's innovative strides at IUCEL signal a new dawn in education, where technology and pedagogy converge harmoniously.

A collaborative initiative between the School of the Arts (SOTA) and the School of Educational Studies (SES) at Universiti Sains Malaysia, ACT has emerged as a trailblazer in transdisciplinary learning. This approach brings together students from diverse academic programmes, spanning Acting & Directing, Graphic Design, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

(TESOL). Through project-based learning, authentic collaborative endeavours, and real-world assessments, students embark on a transformative educational journey that equips them for the challenges of their future careers. ACT serves as a crucible for creativity, fostering active engagement and problem-solving. Its unique blend of online and face-to-face learning environments has redefined traditional academic boundaries, giving rise to a dynamic and innovative platform where students collaboratively share knowledge and tackle authentic, real-world challenges.

The project's significant impact reverberates across the realms of quality education and pedagogical excellence. ACT has garnered acclaim in national and university-level competitions and made its mark in the academic world through publications and international conference presentations. It's not merely a project; it's a catalyst for innovation, equipping students with the skills and mindset required for an ever-evolving professional landscape.

ACT's accolades extend to prestigious awards and recognitions. In 2022, it secured third

place in the Anugerah Khas YB Menteri Pendidikan Tinggi (AKRI). Then in 2023, the project added to its laurels with a Silver Medal and a Bronze Medal in the Innovations in Teaching & Learning Competition (INTELEC), further showcasing its innovative pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, ACT's research findings have found a place in Scopus Q1 journals and have been accepted as a book chapter by Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, broadening its academic reach. The project has graced international conferences as well, making keynote and invited presentations to disseminate its valuable research and innovations.





# Awards FINE ARTS

## Whispers of Cultural Embers: A Timeless Journey Through Art

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

Step into the world of Ooi Yong Hui, a visionary Fine Arts student from Penang whose artistic exploration delves into the profound connection between heritage and time. Her final year project, showcased at the Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF) at USM, invites you on a voyage of cultural discovery.

"Scars of Love, Stain of Time II" is a series of breathtaking artworks that explore the rich tapestry of Chinese heritage and the relentless march of time. Using incense sticks to burn intricate patterns onto rice paper, Hui's creations symbolise the passage of generations, carrying the weight of cultural memory. From these embers, the Gods of Chinese culture emerge, embodying the enduring spirit of tradition.

Hui's work reflects her personal quest to connect with her roots and heritage. Each scorched mark tells a story of healing and growth, and the interplay of light and shadow portrays the balance of yin and yang, the hidden and the revealed.



HEARTIEST  
Congratulations

13TH UOB Painting of The Year  
SILVER AWARD WINNER

Emerging Artist Category  
Scars of Love, Stain of Time II

by  
Ooi Yong Hui

Immerse yourself in the beauty of tradition and contemporary living through Ooi Yong Hui's evocative artistry. "Whispers of Cultural Embers" stands as a testament to the enduring presence of heritage in our lives.



## Amar Ikhwan Ahmad Secures Second Place in MyTIGER Values Art Competition 2023

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

Amar Ikhwan Ahmad, a talented artist from the New Media Design & Technology Department, has clinched second place in the Sequential Art category of the MyTIGER Values Art Competition 2023. This prestigious event, held in celebration of Global Tiger Day 2023, is organised by Maybank.

Amar's winning artwork is a captivating portrayal of a diverse landscape that beautifully encapsulates the wonders of nature. The vibrant display of natural elements immediately captures the viewer's attention, highlighting the Earth's inherent beauty and richness. The inclusion of human figures and their caring hands serves as a powerful symbol of responsibility towards the environment, underlining the need for sustainable actions to safeguard our shared planet.

At the heart of the artwork stands a majestic tiger, embodying the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This noble creature represents strength and resilience, reflecting the collective efforts aimed at achieving the SDGs. Its prominent position emphasises the vital role of these goals and their profound impact on the natural world.

The surrounding flora and fauna further enhance the narrative, coming together in a thriving ecosystem. This imagery acts as a poignant reminder of the interconnectedness of all living beings, highlighting the critical need to conserve biodiversity. It underscores our duty to protect and preserve the delicate balance of life, echoing a resounding call to action to safeguard the Earth's natural resources and ecosystems.

Through visual storytelling, the artwork eloquently conveys the essence and significance of SDG 15, which focuses on life on land. It evokes powerful emotions and ignites a sense of responsibility and urgency in the viewer. By highlighting the paramount importance of this goal, the artwork encourages individuals and society at large to take determined action in preserving and nurturing the land. It emphasises that the well-being and sustainability of life on Earth hinge on our collective commitment to safeguarding and cherishing the environment. Amar's artwork, with its portrayal of a vast, diverse landscape and its embodiment of care through sustainable actions, speaks to the timeless imperative of safeguarding life on land. It prompts viewers to introspect on their role in advancing environmental stewardship and inspires them to contribute towards a more sustainable and resilient planet.



# Awards

## MUSIC



### USM SOTA Choir Chamber Strikes Gold at 2023 MCE International Choir Festival

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh



The USM SOTA Choir Chamber has achieved a remarkable feat, securing the prestigious Gold C Award in the Mixed Youth (SATB/SAB) category at the fiercely competitive 2023 Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod (MCE) International Choir Festival. Held at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) from November 2nd to 5th, the festival showcased a dazzling array of talent, with 118 choirs participating from Malaysia, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, and India.

This year's event boasted a truly international flavour, further enriched by a distinguished panel of judges hailing from Malaysia, Belgium, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Austria, and Indonesia. Their presence ensured a rigorous and fair evaluation process.

The USM SOTA Choir Chamber's captivating performance not only enthralled the audience but also deeply impressed the esteemed judges, ultimately earning them the coveted Gold C Award. Their dedication, skill, and artistic excellence shone through, a testament to the tireless efforts of both the choir members and their conductor.

# Awards NEW MEDIA

## Su Jia Yi Shines Bright: A Penang Triumph for Creative Minds!

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

In a thrilling demonstration of innovation and talent, Su Jia Yi, a phenomenal new media student from Universiti Sains Malaysia's School of the Arts, has emerged as the triumphant 1st prize winner of the prestigious Minimum Viable Product (MVP) competition. This exciting competition was a joint venture between Digital Penang and Penang Digital Creative Week, with enthusiastic participation from SEGi College Penang, The One Academy Penang, and DISTED College.

Digital Penang, a beacon of innovation and creativity, spearheads the effort to bridge the gap between industry and academia. It acts as a catalyst, nurturing the brightest minds of tomorrow. The MVP competition, serving not only as a platform for budding tech startups but also as a testament to the vital role of cultivating creative talent, has become the driving force propelling Penang's rapidly expanding digital startup industry.

Su Jia Yi's groundbreaking victory exemplifies the boundless potential of Penang's youth and the transformative power of collaboration. We eagerly await the impact this rising star will make in the digital world!



# Awards PRODUCT DESIGN

## Lim Zi Suen Triumphs as National Winner of the James Dyson Award 2023 with Innovative Educational Soap Toy

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

In a groundbreaking achievement, Lim Zi Suen, a visionary talent from the Product Design Department at the School of The Arts USM, has been declared the National Winner of the prestigious James Dyson Award 2023. Her creation, "Soapy," a revolutionary educational soap toy, has the potential to transform hand hygiene practices among children.

Soapy addresses a critical issue – the transmission of diseases through contaminated hands, particularly among young children. In a post-pandemic world, the importance of hand cleanliness has become more evident than ever, especially for our little ones. Children often lack knowledge of proper handwashing techniques and the consequences of neglecting this vital habit.

Designed with playful ingenuity, Soapy is shaped like a sphere, ergonomically designed for easy handling. It incorporates elements of fun and education, featuring a 40-second timer to guide children through the recommended handwashing duration, a UFO-like blinking indicator light, and a built-in speaker that notifies them when to start and finish.

Soapy's scrubber, made of silicone rubber, effectively removes dirt with a gentle rotating motion, while a press system dispenses foam soap effortlessly. A vibration motor aids in thorough cleaning. To ensure portability and convenience, Soapy comes with a protective case that doubles as a keychain, allowing children to carry it wherever they go.

Zi Suen's research, conducted at Didik Gemilang Pre-School in Kedah, Malaysia, revealed that children tend to rush through handwashing and lack proper guidance. Soapy's innovative design, inspired by a spaceship, not only ensures functionality but also sustainability, as it dispenses foam soap to minimise wastage.

What sets Soapy apart is its captivating toy-like appeal, making hand hygiene an interactive and enjoyable experience for children. While countless hand soaps flood the market, none actively engage and educate children as effectively as Soapy does. Its well-thought-out features guarantee user-friendly operation, with a keen focus on promoting good handwashing habits. With Lim Zi Suen's groundbreaking invention, Soapy, a brighter and cleaner future for our children's health is within reach.

**MALAYSIA NATIONAL WINNER**  
**JAMES DYSON AWARDS 2023**  
**RM26,500**

Soapy - An Educational Soap Toy

**GUNGGRATULATIONS**

**Lim Zi Suen**  
Product Design Department,  
School Of The Arts, USM

Supervisor Mentor:  
Tn. Dr. Siti Suhally Surip

1st Edition 2023 | Arts Bulletin 73

# Awards PRODUCT DESIGN

## Embark on a Creative Voyage with the Vinstella x USM Jewellery Design Competition: 'My Ocean, My Home!'

by: Mr. Gurvinderjit Singh Sidhu Sarjit Singh

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is witnessing a pioneering foray into the world of jewellery design, initiated by Dr. Siti Suhaily Surip of the VPT211 Materials and Processes class. This course, designed to instil knowledge about materials commonly used in industrial design, goes beyond conventional elements like wood, iron, plastic, ceramics, and composites. Students delve into the glittering realms of gemstones and white gold, infusing a touch of luxury into their creations.

Precision, aesthetics, material harmonies, quantities, purity, and pricing are crucial aspects that students are honing in their craft of jewellery making.

The primary aim of this collaboration between the Product Design Department and Vinstella Jewellery Malaysia Sdn. Bhd. is to provide students with hands-on experience in design and material selection aligned with market demands. Students enjoy the unique privilege of participating in tutorial sessions with Vinstella's team, including jewellery design directors, marketing directors, creative directors, and the esteemed founders, Mr. Vins and Puan Stella, who frequently grace the product studio.

The competition's theme, "My Ocean, My Home," urges students to draw inspiration from the profound azure depths as they fashion their resplendent jewellery pieces.





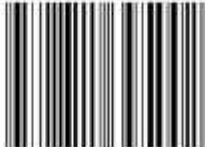
pusat pengajian ●●●●

**seni**

school of the arts usm

1999-2024

ISSN 2611-3950



9 772611 395002