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BORNEO BENGKEL INTRODUCTION

BOR(NEO): THE PROJECT



Borneo Bengkel is a creative platform that explores issues of Bornean identity and culture through the eyes of craft makers, filmmakers, artists, social activists, academicians and performers. Now in its fourth year, Borneo Bengkel is going beyond Bornean borders to create dialogues with fellow neighbours for cross-community exchange, skill-sharing and interdisciplinary dialogues.

Bor(neo): The Project was a series of virtual events that emphasized collaboration, connection, and conversations. Aimed at highlighting Bornean and international creatives exploring identity, culture and creative experimentation, The Project focused on producing content that reached beyond borders, cultures, languages and perspectives, refocusing Bornean narratives for a contemporary audience.

Hosting a series of online talks throughout May and June 2021, Bor(neo): The Project gathered over 20 panelists to share about their creative journey. This e-zine is the outcome of the conversations we had together.

CURATORS' NOTES

Well into the 21st century, Borneo still conjures up images of lush forests and exotic tribal warriors. The truth couldn't be more different: we've lost over 50% of our forest cover to deforestation, and struggle to maintain our voices and cultures in the face of so-called progress and systemic obstacles. Yet, this land is also teeming with resilient minds determined to address these pressing issues and more—in fact, Borneo's creative community plays a very active role in this respect.

With this first stage of Bor(neo): The Project, we wanted to highlight some of these creative minds and their stories through a series of sharing sessions spanning themes of creative reinterpretations, documentation of cultural practices and rural communities, and insights into lesser known segments of our creative community. Ultimately, we curated these conversations



with the aim to inspire Bornean creatives with approaches, methods, and tools on how to both conserve our cultural inheritance and tell our own stories as we navigate a rapidly evolving world.

Indeed, we were very privileged to be able to engage a diverse range of panelists both from within and beyond Borneo. Each session was a-buzzing with insights from both panelists and audience members (who tuned in from around the world!), a clear indicator that these were timely and important conversations. In this e-zine, we have compiled snippets from these sessions that we hope will inspire you as much as they have inspired us. This zine can be viewed separately or alongside our recorded discussions—beside each quote we include the timings so you can delve further into the conversational context. If you'd like to hear the full discussions do check out our Bor(neo): The Project series online at: www.borneobengkkel.com/ezone

Sonia Luhong Wan & Catriona Maddocks

BOR(NEO): THE PROJECT

SHARING SESSIONS

Organised by

**Borneo
Bengkell**

Supported by

penjana

Pelan Jana Semula Ekonomi Negara





CULTURAL FUTURISM
Reimagining heritage in the new era



**How can we
re-imagine and
adapt traditional
knowledge for the
context of today?**

In recent years, there have been increasing efforts to recognise indigenous knowledge and technologies as well as the cultural expressions of formerly colonised nations, to build towards a more inclusive and sustainable future.

For **Cultural Futurism**, we invited creative practitioners from around Malaysia to share how they are re-imagining and adapting traditional knowledge, honouring and highlighting the work of our cultural forebears, whilst making space for modern narratives, interpretations, and mediums. We heard from designer, craftmaker and tutor Evey Kwong of futurprimitiv, Tintoy Chuo, founder and primary concept creator of Fusion Wayang Kulit, and Timothy James, a.k.a T. Bagak, a graphic designer and lowbrow folk artist.

Our panelists shared how research and learning from rural artisans can be a catalyst for creative experimentation, while also building deeper appreciation for various ancient art forms. The importance of building strong, respectful relationships with communities, and how contemporary or external perspectives contribute to conversations around our cultural heritage were explored. Also discussed were authenticity and the intricacies of appropriation versus appreciation, and how these experiences can guide us to ensure our heritage can thrive long into the future.

Recorded discussion available [here](#).

||

... weaving is not just about learning and mastering techniques for creating a vessel but to encourage creative discourses and possibly even imagining alternatives for education.

17:57 - 18:14

EVEY KWONG
futurprimitiv



14:06-14:53

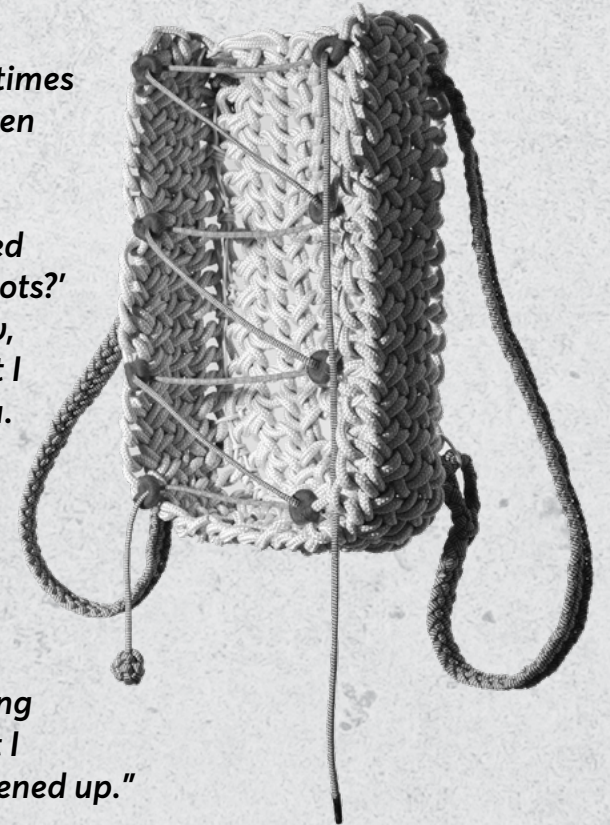
"I think it is important that such intangible knowledge be kept and known in order that future generations would grasp the way of living and possibly relate it to the present. And on the other hand, I think it is also important for us to move forward with craft-making... So my work has a lot to do with creating new perspectives and allowing a broader meaning other than creating a vessel for purpose, or as a commodity."

38:24-39:02

"I'm not sure if I know what the future brings for traditional basket making. But for the least, I would like to think that creative discourses and workshops need to be encouraged to make things happen... being that basketry is a rural craft, what does it mean if we apply it in an urban context? And so I think the mindset of being rural limits the growth, the interventions and dialogues needed to be carried out for the craft."

1:37:02-1:38:45

"If we touch upon especially endangered crafts... it can sometimes be a little intimidating... I was even put at a point where I was telling myself 'well, hey maybe I should explore my roots', but then I asked myself, 'What are actually my roots?' Because I'm a migrant. You know, my ancestors are from China but I have little to no relation to China. So what is being Malaysian? And what is being a person now, with the globalization happening and technology and how we communicate with each other. And I find this sort of archaic, this old way of thinking about identity, it's important but I think it could also be a little loosened up."





II

*Our objective is to revive
Malaysian culture by
fusing it with pop culture
and sci-fi elements*

1:07:15 - 1:07:23

TINTOY CHUO

Fusion Wayang Kulit



51:20-52:23

"So how do I think differently? What if I can actually combine two totally different elements or things together ...and see how's the results...So from there I say, okay, I'm going to use Wayang Kulit; something very old maybe I can combine with something very new, very futuristic like Star Wars because I'm a big fan. So we made this, we called it Peperangan Bintang or translated into Bahasa Malaysia it means 'War of the Stars'."

48:08-48:43

"We actually started this in a very unique way... with my Master Puppeteer which is Pak Dain Othman (from Kelantan)...He is the most important person in our group because as a Master Puppeteer, he will tell us what to do and what is right and what we need to do."

1:26:53 - 1:28:05;

1:32:08 - 1:32:19

"I mean I'm definitely an outsider of Wayang Kulit...If you are an outsider (of the art), be respectful of the art, ask permission, do your own homework first, ask questions, I feel that's the right way to go...The more people interested and willing to do something about that particular traditional art, means there are more chances for that traditional art to be seen by more people."



II

(On appropriation and appreciation) You can't control people's perception of you, only you know your intent. We judge other people by their actions and we judge ourselves by our intent. So do whatever you think is right.

1:45:20 - 1:34:35

TIMOTHY JAMES

T. Bagak



1:13:53-1:15:13

"The world famous Borneo, everybody knows Borneo. They say Borneo is a jungle, nature's paradise... Borneo is tribal, it's home to indigenous people, exotic customs and ways of life. Borneo is... the land of headhunters, legendary Dayak warriors. This is basically the story of my home, Borneo... our traditional motifs are inspired by the jungle... We depict our tribal lifestyle through traditional handcrafts... and also mythical figures... This is where I'm from, this is where I am now, this is my place in the world."

1:15:21-1:16:11

"If this is my place in the world, why is it that I feel so out of place in these things... 'Cause I don't live in the jungle, surrounded by orangutans or crocodiles. I live in Kuching, a modern city surrounded by buildings and cars... I didn't grow up... in a longhouse, I grew up in a terrace house. And my tribe is, I don't want to talk about my tribe, not a good year for my tribe [Liverpool football club]."

1:16:41-1:17:44

"We're not the ones who are out of place; it's these stories that are out of time... they belong to different era, they belong to our ancestors, but this place belongs to us now...we live here now not our ancestors, and we need to tell the world our life experiences, our own stories... because if we don't... 50 years, even 100 years from now, they will still think of Borneo as still stuck... never evolving... But we do exist, I exist, and Borneo has evolved."



MY ANCESTORS WERE WARRIORS BATTLING OPRESSION
I'M JUST A WORRIER BATTLING DEPRESSION



BORNEO HEART
Weaving together stories,
communities & art





How can contemporary artists collaborate with communities and craft makers?

Contemporary artist, Yee I-Lann launched her seminal exhibition, **Borneo Heart**, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in May 2021. It was a homecoming of sorts for the artist, and was created through extensive collaborations between weavers, dancers and creative friends from Sabah, and with KL-based exhibition team RogueArt. The exhibition offered a shared platform and a site of exchange for peoples of the *tanah* (land) and *air* (water/sea) as well as for traditional and contemporary art practices, prompting us to reflect on home and distance, power and representation, love and community.



Our sharing session's namesake, the Borneo Heart exhibition, featured a special full-length screening of two works: *Tikar Reben* (video, 2021) and *PANGKIS* (2021), and engaged with Yee I-Lann and a number of her collaborators as they shared their creative journey in producing this ground-breaking exhibition.

Recorded discussion available [here](#).

PANGKIS collaborators were Murut and Dusun master weavers from Keningau, namely: Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin and Lili Naming, as well as the choreographer and co-founder of Tagaps Dance Theatre, Mohd Azizan Danial Abdullah.

PANGKIS is a 10-minute performance-based video work named after the triumphant warrior cry—an animistic guttural call—which punctuates land-based Kadazan, Dusun and Murut rituals and dances. The video was created by I-Lann in collaboration with Tagaps Dance Theatre; a group of young dancers whose practice merges traditional and contemporary styles.

Tagaps' seven dancers perform wearing the intricately woven artwork '7-Headed Lalandau Hat' (created in 2020), by master weavers Lili Naming, Shahrizan bin Juin, and Siat Yanau. Combining ceremonial costume with sound play and human movement, *PANGKIS* explores ideas of rootedness, connectedness and male behaviour, drawing from the old knowledge of Sabah's land cultures.



Tikar Reben collaborators included the master weavers from Pulau Omadal: Roziah Jalalid, Kak Sanah, and Kak Kinnuhong as well as videographer Andy Chia Chee Shiong from Dee Bee Studio/Schizo Stars.

Tikar Reben (created in 2020) is a narrow 62.9 metre tikar or woven mat woven by Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Koddil, Kak Sanah and Kak Roziah comprising an index of the different heritage weaving patterns from the Bajau Laut community. It was made to create a woven bridge across the water between Pulau Omadal and the water village in Semporna, where most of the Bajau-Sama Dilaut weavers working with I-Lann live. The 2021 Tikar Reben is a 12-minute video captured by Andy Chia documenting the unrolling of this tikar from the small jetty of Kak Roziah's village on the island across to Kak Budi's house in the water village, crossing the border between citizenship and statelessness; between paper rights and a life with no safety nets and no protections.

II

The reason I wanted to work with [the Dusun Murut and Bajau Sama DiLaut] for this exhibition is that I wanted to bring together two major demographics that make up Sabah, which is the land people and the sea people. Under this umbrella notion of the tanah dan air... because Sabah has a lot of animosity between these two demographics historically, for centuries. And also in recent politics. So, to me, in order for us to have a more wholesome voice as Sabahans, we need to work on our "dan", we need to work bringing together the two demographics of Sabah, the tanah dan the air.

11:42 - 12:28

YEE I-LANN

Borneo Heart



1:33:49 - 1:35:08

"Sebelum Tikar Reben, kita buat Tikar Meja. Now Tikar Meja to me is a very life-changing work for me. I think it's one of my most important works because... [di base] ada tikar... zaman dulu dari sejarah, di Nusantara kita tak ada meja... kaum-kaum Nusantara ada tikar. Tikar itu penuh dengan cerita... [ada] banyak tentang [suatu] komuniti di dalam tikar... dia macam bahasa juga yang boleh dibaca oleh orang, yang [diturunkan] dari nenek moyang... Ini semua dalam bahasa kaum wanita. Dan dia memang egalitarian, democratic, feminist, tikar itu. Kita dulu tak ada meja, itu meja masuk dengan penjajah. Itu perkataan meja datang dari perkataan 'mesa'... dalam bahasa Portugis dengan bahasa Spanish."

1:35:57 - 1:37:31

"Di dunia ini kita ada macam dua kuasa, kuasa dari tikar dengan kuasa yang lebih... patriarchal, colonialistic, hard power. Dan bila komuniti [Pulau Omdal] begitu welcoming, terima saya, saya pun rasa apa yang boleh saya buat untuk tunjuk humanity atau empathy kaum-kaum Sabah... saya nak buat satu jambatan antara [orang] Malaysia dengan orang yang tak ada identiti... Itu topik lalanda macam jambatan juga antara orang. Tapi ini [Tikar Reben] pun macam jambatan. So idea yang kita connect dengan orang, connect dengan cerita orang."

PANGKIS & 7-Headed Lalandau Hat

COLLABORATORS

AZEEZAN DANIAL

42:33 - 45:00

"Actually this is my first time working with a visual artist... I-Lann gave me the lalandau hat and then asked me to just play with it for a few days...and do whatever I can with it...she wanted it to be like masculine at the same time nampak feminine dia, at the same time juga dia mahu nampak the hat can loop, keep on looping... we had berapa kali session just to make the music... it was quite hard to get what she wanted, tapi I really like the challenge...satu pengalaman yang cukup baik, cukup berharga for me and the rest of the dancers, because we can be free with the hats and then just do whatever we want."



SIAT YANAU

58:25 - 59:29

"Kami buat satu mesyuarat la, kami berbincanglah tiga, macam mana cara mau buat itu tanduk dia, itu dia punya ekor...Apabila kami dapat berbincang, idea dia kami cuba. Kami berbahagi satu orang satu...apabila kami sudah (menganyam), sudah panjang, baru kami kasi gabung...baru kami nampak yang kami boleh buat. Sampai siap lah, tapi syukurlah, kami dapat juga."

SHAHORIZAN JUIN

1:03:46 - 1:04:55

"Buat masa sekarang ini saya belum ada jumpa lagi orang muda macam saya yang minat dengan anyaman ini. Kebanyakan saya nampak orang-orang yang sudah berumur, dalam lingkungan 40-an, 30-an, kalau muda-muda belum pernah saya nampak...sebab ada yang cakap ini sangat susah...pening-pening, boleh muntah menganyam. "Macam mana kamu boleh minat ini anyaman sedangkan ini anyaman khas untuk perempuan?" dia bilang. Tapi saya bilang, itu saya punya semulajadi. Sebab ini saja yang saya minat bidang dalam seni."

LILI NAMING

1:06:18 - 1:06:27

"Bagi saya, mau ajar sama budak sekolah supaya itu anyaman tidak pupus. Di sekolah rendah atau di sekolah menengah."



Tikar Reben

COLLABORATORS

ROZIAH JALALID

1:40:44 - 1:41:13

"Itu dari idea kami [masukkan corak Bajau Sama DiLaut] sebab masa itu I-Lann call dia mau Tikar Reben and then dia mau juga apa idea yang kami boleh masukkan, itu terpulang dari kami. So, kami ada idea untuk masukkan semua corak dan pelbagai. So, semua corak...di tikar kami di Pulau Omadal. Semua masuk dia punya corak itu dalam Tikar Reben yang begitu panjang."

1:44:56 - 1:45:30

"Perasaan kami, pertama kami buat...ada susah hati sebab kami takut benda tidak terjadi... Kami beranikan diri semua dan bincang, kongsi pengalaman di antara satu sama lain and then, bila kami mencuba, belum habis lagi, kami sudah yakin bahawa kami boleh membuat sesuatu apa yang I-Lann mau."



ANDY CHIA

2:03:20 - 2:04:06

"I myself worked with the island for almost 10 years; I'm actually a dive instructor and I learnt how to film underwater. So, I'm quite familiar with the place. But I've never been so close with the Bajau Laut people. I was actually living in the head of the village's house...and even eating their food everyday...I was so amazed at the life there, it was so peaceful. And their stories inspire me to come back and want to know more about the Bajau Laut people, that's why me and I-Lann now try to work on a feature film to continue the journey of filming this project. corak...di tikar kami di Pulau Omadal. Semua masuk dia punya corak itu dalam Tikar Reben yang begitu panjang."





Artist
Statement
[Portrait of Artist]
[Text]

[Text]

WORK
HARD
so you can
SHOP
ARDE



REPRESENTATION MATTERS
A glimpse into Brunei through
its art scene



What is **happening
in Borneo's smallest
nation and how are
Bruneian **creatives**
responding to ideas of
**culture, identity, and
nationhood?****

When it comes to conversations about Borneo, it often feels like Brunei is left out of the loop, disconnected from its Bornean neighbours. How much do we know about Brunei, and how much is yet to be discovered? In collaboration with Minority Report, **Representation Matters** sought to learn more about the similarities and differences between Brunei and its island neighbours, and to reconnect and build connections with its creative spaces, places, and people.

The session was led by cultural practitioner Jang Elroy Anak Ramantan of Minority Report and brought together in conversation artists Susannah Anak Rogo Sitai Liew, Maziyah Yussof, and Nazurah Usop to discuss preconceived ideas about Brunei in the context of Borneo, marginalised voices and indigenous identities in Brunei, and how rigid national identities can inspire artists to find new ways to represent and express their own roots and heritage.

Recorded discussion available [here](#).

II

These are the basic things that we knew [growing] up in Brunei; the capital city is Bandar Seri Begawan, and our national flag. Our national language is Malay, our national faith and religion is Islam. These are the things that the general population and (those) outside of Brunei know. But there must be more than what we know through a Google search...

9:27 - 9:48

JANG ELROY
ANAK RAMANTAN

Minority Report



10:49 - 11:55

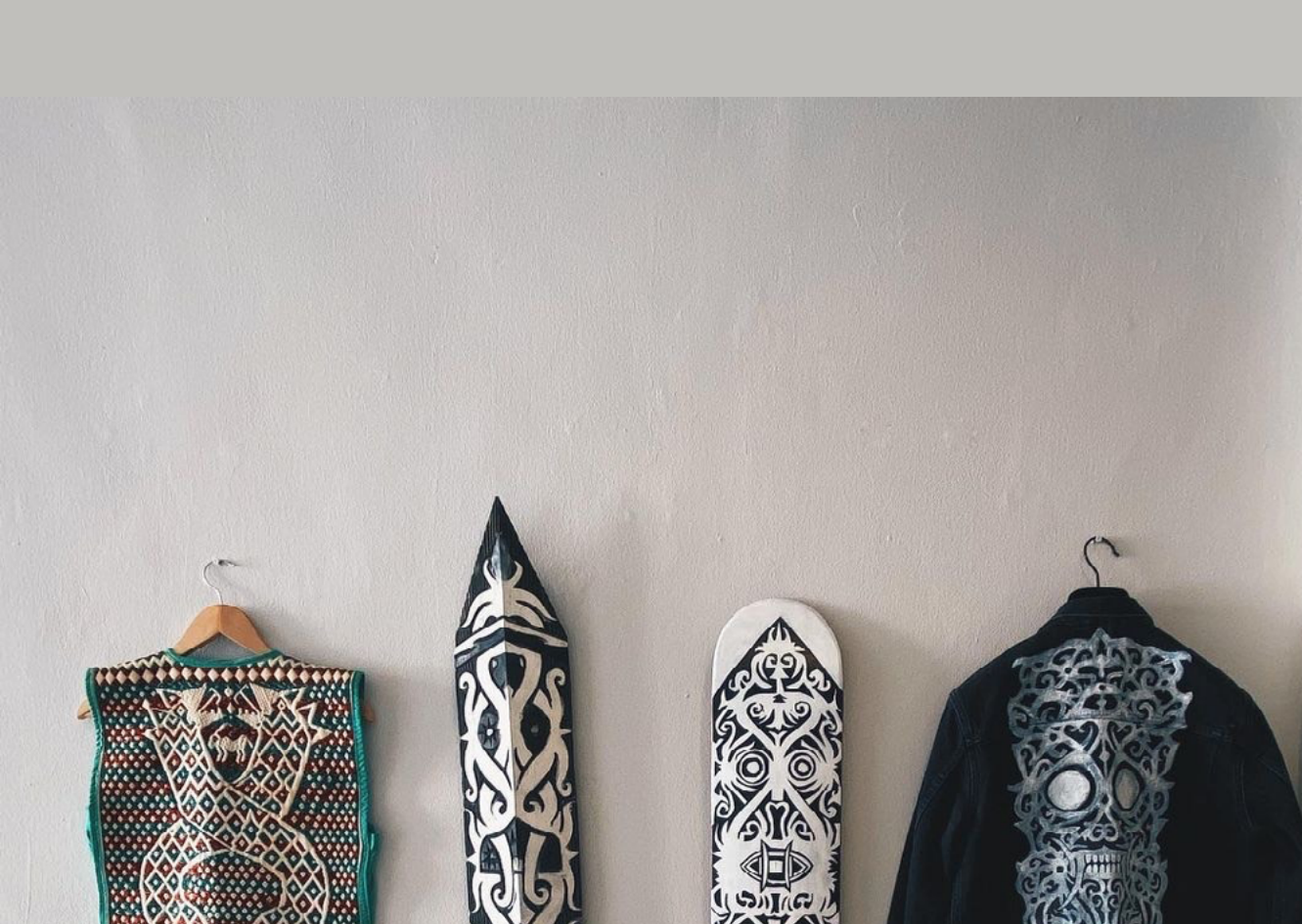
"So these three identities (religion, race, monarchy) are so prominent in Brunei. It is symbiotic to itself that it has become one identity, that is the Bruneian identity...But what happens if a Bruneian does not belong to the majority race and faith? What happens if you are a Bruneian but yet you are not represented?"

1:39:02 - 1:39:50

"For me, at first [there was no good reception for] the art scene when it started [to grow in Brunei]. [We had comments on Instagram saying] it won't fly because they don't see art as a thing that can be contributing to Brunei but as [time goes] on and there are a lot of organisations, and a lot of projects, thanks to some of the organisations I have mentioned...the art scene has become a force to be reckoned with and now that we're here like crossing borders, crossing beyond Brunei, it really [goes] to show that we are breaking boundaries even...outside of Brunei as well."

1:44:04 - 1:44:31

"Brunei is in a bubble, we've been in a bubble for so long. The bubble has become so thick that it becomes a wall. But not only am I bursting that bubble, I do hope that outside of Brunei you're also breaking that wall as well, to help us to meet halfway then we're able to be reconnected back again. So, that's my take: to those people outside of Brunei; do reach out to us because sometimes even we don't know who to reach out to... outside of Brunei."



||

In Brunei, we have at least seven constitutionally recognised ethnic groups known as 'puak jati'. So, you have the Brunei Malays, the Tutong, the Belait, Dusun, Bisaya, Murut and Kedayan. But...there isn't a lot of representation...within the Brunei communities, as well as within the [artist] community.

16:08 - 16:29

SUSANNAH ANAK
ROGO SITAI LIEW



17:01 - 19:32

"I was still figuring out as to what...can I do to represent myself. [Going back to the artists who inspired me, I realised that] most of the artworks are also based upon their own identities in their own cultures...So, I have to go back to my own origins looking back into my own...cultural roots. I thought at first, okay, I can do my own research, I'll find information about it...because they're part of the seven constitutionalised races here in Brunei. Ironically and sadly... There is quite a scarce amount of information, a little amount of research on representation, on indigenous crafts...and the artistry..."

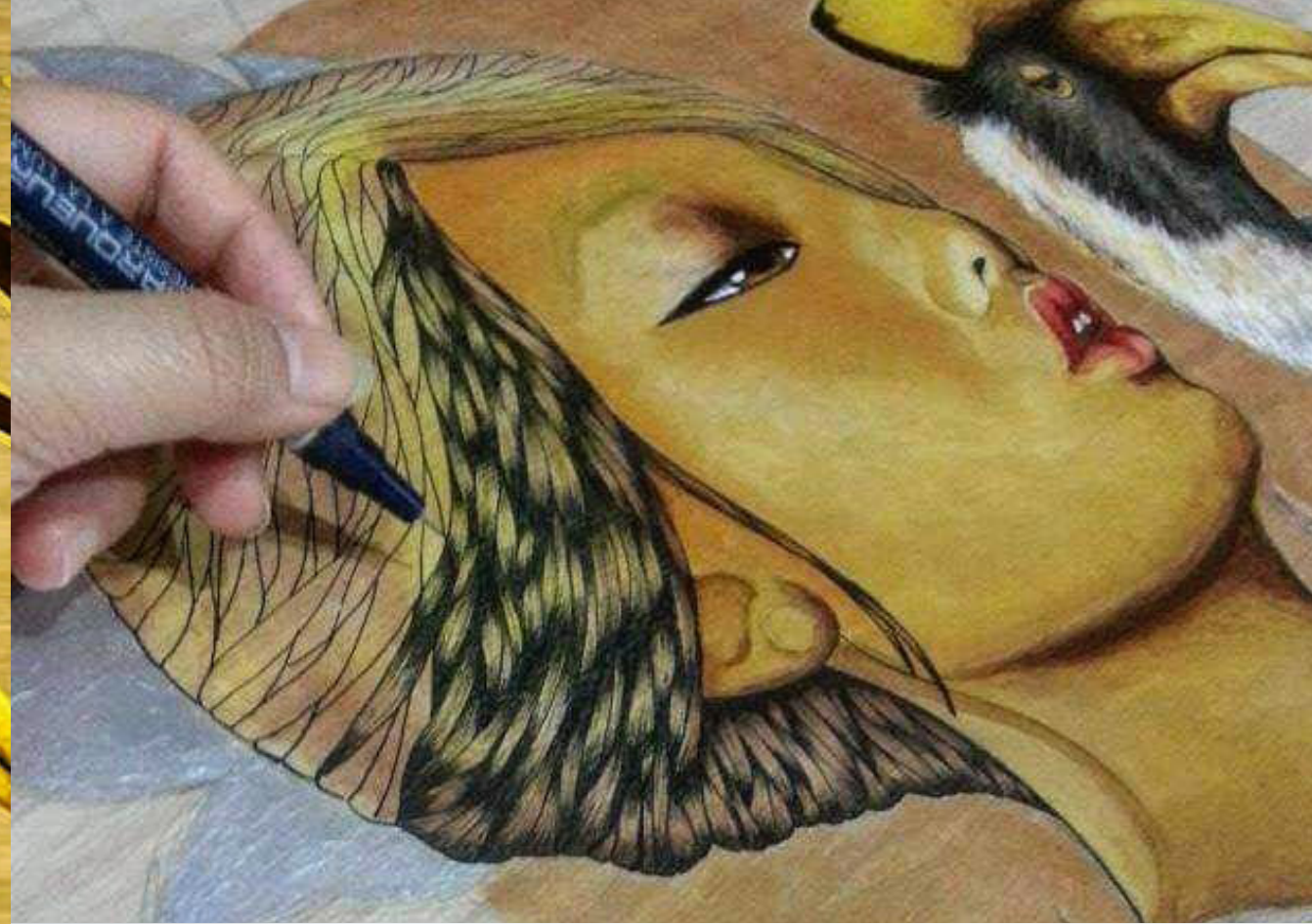


19:43 - 20:18

"I had to find first hand information...from my family...I had to go back into the village and... find my own information and mind you, this is just 6 months of just intense research before pursuing [my] final work. It was quite a lot of work, it was hard obviously. It was something that I was so determined to showcase...to share my identity, share the culture, you know, as part of my Bruneian, part of my Bornean (identity) as well."

24:18 - 25:21

"...especially for an artist it is very important [to equip myself] with new knowledge...I met wonderful [artists] from different backgrounds and fields [who] have a strong sense of advocacy and awareness...Another part, I would say is the importance of policies and management, which I realise is also quite lacking in here within the Brunei art community...policies are important because they are there to protect the artist, the artwork, as well as cultural institutions...majority of us artists are considered self-funded. We don't really have an art council [nor] do we have funding institutions."



||

I always feel that art has to have a purpose and a place in society, whether it is to tell a story, to educate, to highlight a cause, or even something as simple as to make someone happy

42:16 - 42:26

**MAZIYAH
YUSSOF**



45:37 - 46:54

"I feel that university in the UK was quite tough, because you have to make sense of a lot of things on your own... and because I was so far away from home, I really started to appreciate and learn about my own identity. In fact, our first topic was to explore the idea of identity. Suddenly, being in the UK, my cultural identity was put on the spotlight and I realised I knew nothing about where I came from...I really did feel it was quite difficult for me to draw any inspiration from my own cultural heritage. So, I left that aside and I focus my interest on a bigger part of my identity which is my Muslim faith. So, this is how I came to study Islamic Art."

1:47:19 - 1:47:45

"...our art scene is relatively very very new, very very small - like there's a big gap between the veteran artists and ourselves. And I think there's an oversaturation with scenes of Kampung Air, the portraits of our Sultan. And that is what basically dominates the art industry... maybe, from an outsider's point of view."

1:47:51 - 1:48:45

"So, I think what we emerging artists are trying to do is, I feel like we can't really have such a loud voice, we have a collective voice and what we work on...our crafts all have very similar themes, right? We're all very much into nature...I just feel like we are still a very, very new industry and it is very hard to compete with our neighboring countries at this point and especially because we are very apolitical...so I think that's what sets us aside."



||

...although my artworks are quite ambiguous, my focus is about having conversations on LGBT-related matters. It's a topic that isn't being discussed openly here, and I strongly believe that art should be a medium of awareness...and that it's not simply just a nice looking piece of decoration that people have for display. Art exists because it creates a narrative and provides a certain kind of solidarity.

1:18:45 - 1:19:19

NAZURAH USOP



1:20:23 - 1:21:04

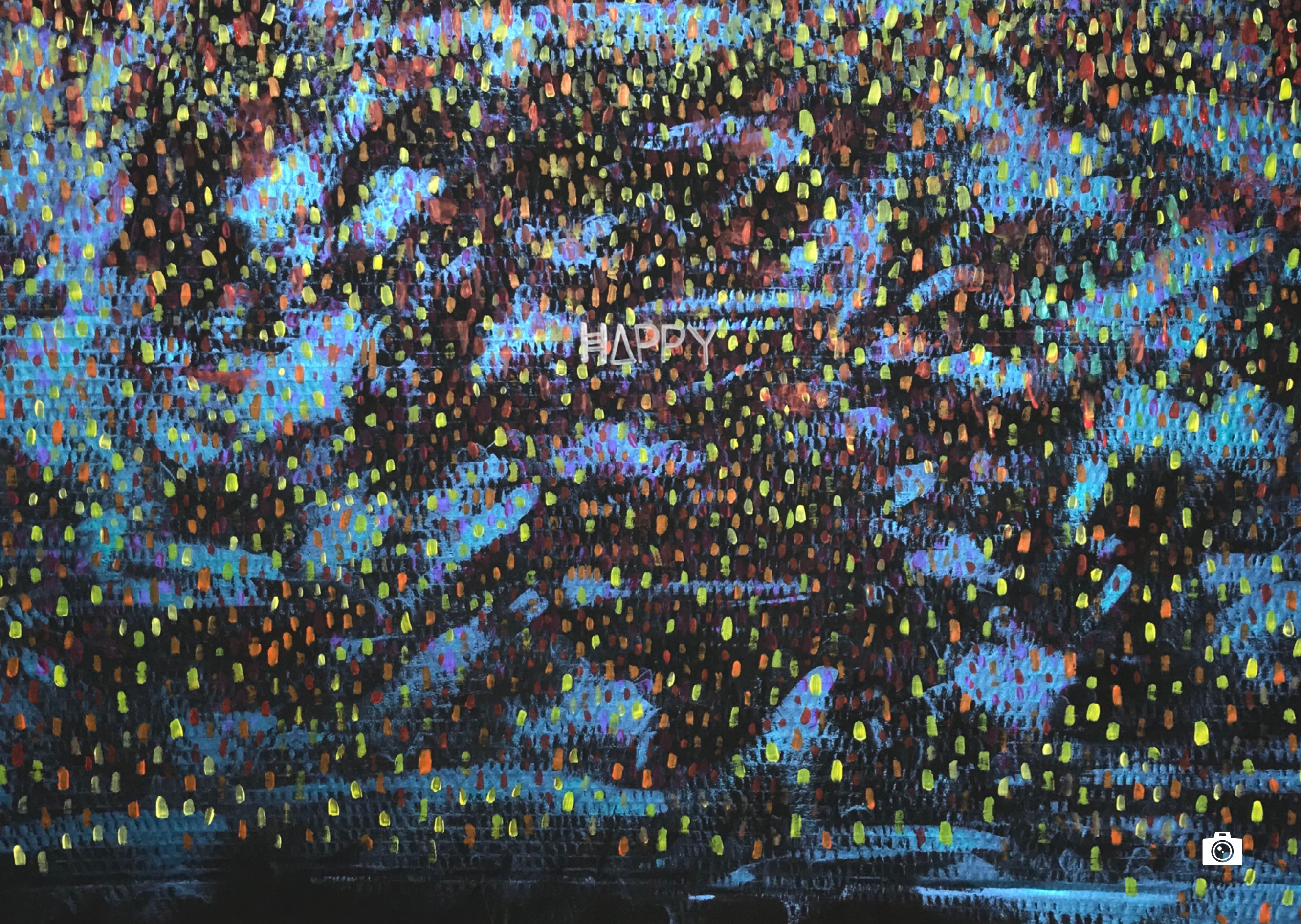
"Borneo natives and indigenous cultures at large share a common thread of recognising...a more diverse understanding of gender and sexuality. Despite what history may tell us, conversation into mainstream religions and the influence of European-centric worldviews as a result of colonialism have reduced that understanding to binary-attributed terms. Now, although this is known to be a fact, there are still a lot of gaps in terms of accepting this in the current social society we're in."

1:21:08 - 1:21:51

"[I create visual work] in relation to these matters. The organic shapes are inspired by different cultural patterns and it is also a metaphor for growth...colours [which] represent diversity, inclusivity, life, healing, sunlight, nature, harmony and spirit, [and empty] gaps as to reflect on reality that these are yet still needed to be filled in and in between those gaps, there is growth within the narrative that's taking place at the moment."

1:28:44 - 1:29:06

"I don't think [traditional Bruneian and LGBTQIA identities] can be merged but I do believe that Brunei can cater to a diverse crowd. So, to be equal is a bit difficult to say. I get [it that] we can't be equally...on the same page but I do believe it can be more diverse and inclusive."



HAPPY



COMMUNITY VOICES
Research and publication
as cultural activism



**How can research,
writing, and
publication be used as
a tool to highlight and
raise awareness on
pertinent issues?**

What roles can those from outside a community play in helping to ensure that cultural heritage is documented and shared accurately and respectfully? And how do we centre the voices of the often unheard and ensure active, informed and engaged consent?

Community Voices gathered three individuals who—by themselves or through their organisations—have been collecting and publishing community narratives to share, honour, and elevate indigenous knowledge. Hosted by Juvita Tatan Wan of Tuyang Initiative, the session gathered Jennifer Linggi, writer of “Kampung Legacy: A Journal of North Borneo’s Traditional Baskets”, Wendi Sia of Gerimis, an organisation co-creating cultural content with Orang Asli communities, and Dee May Tan of Plates, an international food culture magazine. These writers explained how they use craft and food as a starting point for conversation on bigger issues; land rights, indigenous experiences and preservation of endangered ways of life.

Recorded discussion available [here](#).

||

..it's time we value indigenous wisdom because we have cast aside their knowledge and their wisdom for many years and we have looked to the West... it's time we really sit down and listen to what indigenous people have to say and just really be their students now.

9:38 - 10:31

WENDI SIA

Gerimis Art Project



11:22 - 11:53

"... growing up I read books, and I know more about [British] or American culture more than the stories from my own backyard... And then [the indigenous communities] have so much folklore and so [many] stories that we still don't know and it's still not documented because it's all oral stories. That's why, for me, it's very important to me."

11:55 - 12:40

"... how we approach doing what we do, of course, before we begin, we always have to be aware of our position and be aware of our privilege and we always spend time reflecting, because to me, it's about finding a common ground. I'm always outdoors and I always see nature being destroyed and then there is the common ground with the Orang Asli, because to them it's about defending their homes, defending their rights, their land rights and all that. So, it's just growing that network of solidarity."

19:50 - 20:14

"... understanding begins with knowing. So, we really just need to start having these conversations, sitting down and learning from [the Orang Asli communities], and experiencing their way of life. That I think is truly the only way to really understand how the land is so important and close to them."





II

When you're doing researching for craft, the best thing to do is go and visit the people. You need to spend time with them and that's how you can really tell the story right. Don't tell a story second hand or third hand. Go and listen to them yourself, and spend time with them.

47:03 - 47:25
JENNIFER
P. LINGGI



29:11 - 30:05

"[It] started out [as just] pure interest. I went around to different kampungs just initially to draw the baskets, but as I met more people...I realised the urgency of documenting everything... So I knew that once [the old craftsmen] go then we will also lose what they are doing now, this skill and also the disappearance of our beautiful craft."



33:27 - 35:47

"...there are three skills that you need in order to be a good craftsman: one is...the skill of collecting raw materials and it's actually a really difficult task because you have to go into the jungle...The second skill that you need is the skill of design and construction; how to make the actual form and...they don't have a pattern book or anything, it's just in there in their heads...And the third skill you need is the skill to be able to actually make the patterns itself. That in itself, is an amazing feat...they're geniuses!"

55:44 - 56:32

"{For craft buyers} if you ask for a discount for your own, so that you can make a higher profit, they will not be able to continue making the craft, because they don't [earn] enough money...the younger people who see their parents struggling making money, would also not be interested in making the craft. And guess what? You, who have decided to be a craft entrepreneur, you say I'm going to buy crafts because you know, a lot of people like it. But you have just killed the people who are supplying you that craft. So this is something people have to be made aware of, if you just treat them as orang kampung, minta murah, 10 ringgit... cannot!"

Medium
Baskets
#2

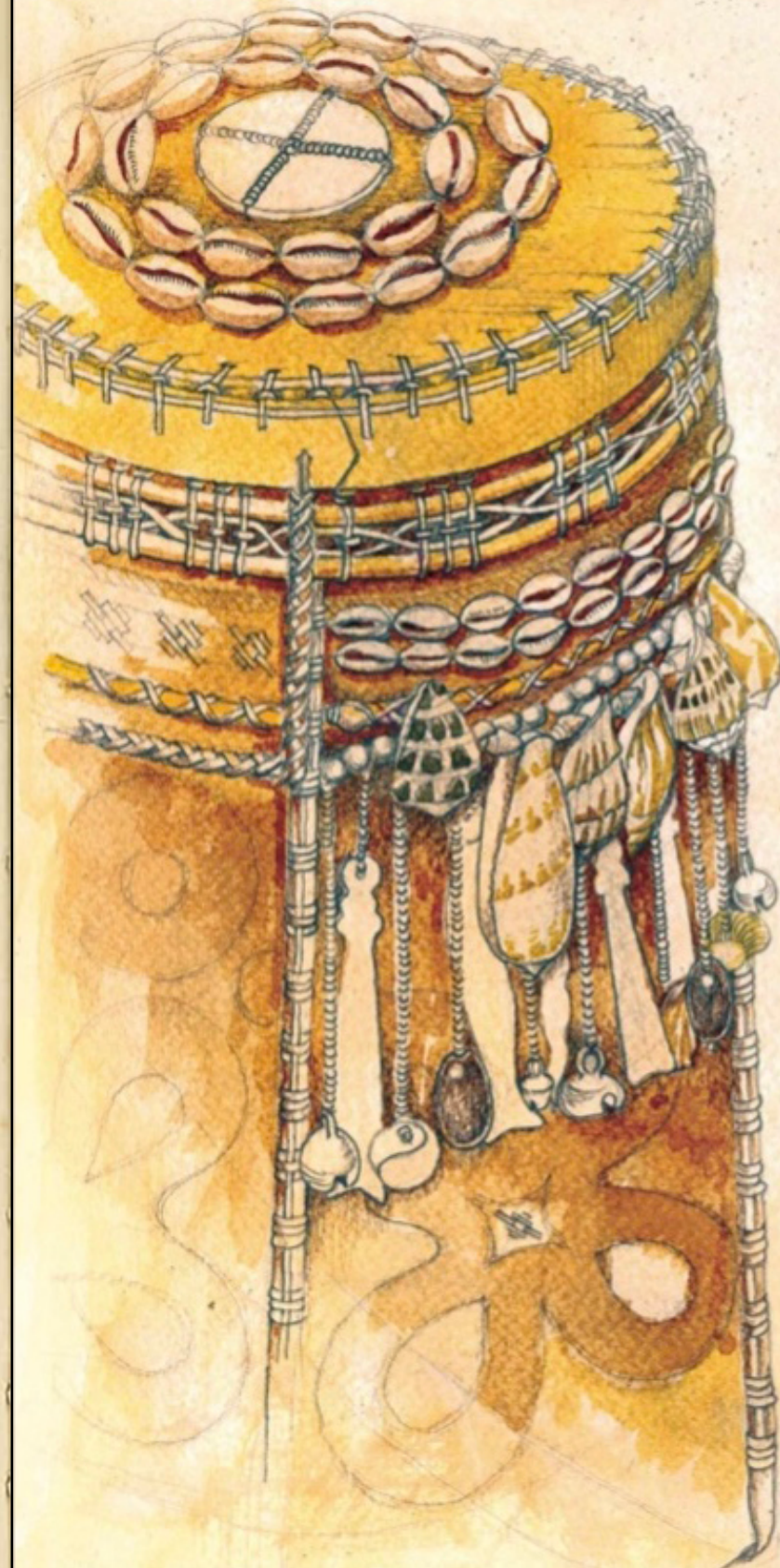
buyuung *Murut*

This basket was given to my father when he was the District Officer of Nabawan in the early 80s. The style and pattern of this "Buyuung" is common amongst the Muruts of Nabawan and Tomani area.

This "Buyuung" is typical of traditional baskets with its red and black natural dyes. These days natural black dyes are still used by mixing soot with the liquid obtained from the "Uvol" tree. Red dye seem to be more complicated to produce these days, hence many craftmakers choose commercial dyes or paints which is not as hard wearing as the natural dyes.



(Pg.41)
The motif on this particular Buyuung is called "Pinungohdo langsung" which is a popular motif. The name is derived from the local langsung fruit.



A Journal of
North Borneo's
traditional
baskets

Jennifer P. Linggi





the stories are right here in our backyard, and if you're not in Malaysia, there are stories in your own backyard, in your own community that you perhaps never heard about because maybe it was just there. So you don't look. But it's right under your noses.

1:12:18 - 1:12:34

DEE MAY TAN

Plates



1:07:59 - 1:08:33

"I know it's part of journalism culture, to run a news story for the next 24 hours but the issue that I found was the people at the top were just rushing to break a story and it was the same headline for the next 24 hours and the other persistent issues that are not considered newsworthy...if you're talking about land, environment, poverty, it's just not breaking news because we're so desensitized to it."

1:13:24 - 1:15:08

"My reason for doing this, for using food to begin conversations...I noticed, again as a frustrated Malaysian, as many people are, seeing how people get so worked up over defending our food...and I thought, hey, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could channel all this energy into talking about other things...bring it into discussions about the environment, about land, about social justice...If we can only channel just a little bit of that energy, and passion that we have for defending where food comes from, I think we would see a big shift in the culture."

1:26:16 - 1:27:07

"...my seed for you today is for you to just have a look around and realise, just ask the questions, who has put this on my plate? What's the story behind this? Who's the person who cooked this? Harvested this and traded this? Who else am I not hearing from and to explore beyond the pages of the magazine and to wonder who else are the unheard voices and the unheard narratives that you can seek out...to again realise that you don't need to change the entire world, you just need to be able to change someone's world in your lifetime."





CURATORS' FINAL NOTES

Thank you for joining us on this journey; Bor(neo): The Project is our first ever publication. We hope you found the discussions engaging and thought-provoking. The work of Borneo Bengkel is made possible by our network of collaborators, supporters and friends who inspire us and give us the *semangat* to keep pursuing our mission.

BOR(NEO): The Project talk series was supported by CENDANA's Visual Arts Showcase Funding Programme.

With thanks and much gratitude to the rest of the Borneo Bengkel team—Syed Rusydie, Aniq Durar and Ghali Foster, who worked so diligently behind the scenes to bring this project to life, as well as to Jasmine Dadi and Bethany Balan whose ingenuity and tech savviness has brought our work to a wider audience.

Thank you to Timothy James a.k.a T. Bagak for the front cover artwork entitled 'Bor(neo)' which was specially commissioned for this zine, and Sonia Luhong for the cloud embellishments behind his artwork. If you want to find out more about Borneo Bengkel and how you can get involved, visit www.borneobengkel.com.

Note: some of the featured quotes have been lightly edited for the sake of brevity.

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PANELIST BIOS



EVEY KWONG

Designer, crafts maker and tutor Evey Kwong was born in Malaysia. Her works connect with artisans, ethnographers, and makers around the themes of craft-based technologies and intuitive making. Combining her research of traditional basketry weaving and design thinking, she develops experimental teaching formats to invite the public or a community to participate and take action. Learn-Practice-Teach.



TINTOY CHUO

A multimedia design graduate from Malaysia who uncovered his true passion in character creation, Tintoy Chuo is the founder and primary concept creator for Fusion Wayang Kulit, Tintoy continues to oversee the project's main creative direction for overall design, working hard to promote the fusion movement to a wider audience.



TIMOTHY JAMES

This Borneo lowbrow artist was born & bred in the city of Kuching in Sarawak. 39-year-old Timothy is a relative newcomer to the art scene. He started drawing cartoons in kindergarten but only really started to be serious with his art during last year's pandemic lockdown via Instagram. Since then, he has already collaborated with other Borneo artists & was also commissioned to illustrate a comic for an international online publication.



YEE I-LANN

Kota Kinabalu-born and based artist Yee I-Lann (b.1971) practice has consistently spoken to urgencies in our changing world, from the vantage point of where she lives and comes from, mining personal story, Southeast Asian cultures and histories, local knowledge, critical theory, and mass aesthetics and experience.



JANG ELROY ANAK RAMANTAN

Stepping out of his comfort zone, Elroy Ramantan steps in and brings his own Dayak culture to Brunei's creative scene. Always wanting to dive into the scene and show his works to the Brunei masses, the lack of representation—especially in the creative scene—has made it difficult for him to do so. Currently organising Minority Report, a cultural initiative project about rekindling Bornean cultural identity in Brunei, Elroy aims to bridge Brunei with the rest of the Borneo, one step at a time.

SUSANNAH ANAK ROGO SITAI LIEW

Going by her artist name "Suzi.S.L", she comes from a mixed lineage of Lunbawang, Dayak, and Hakka. Susannah undertook her Bachelor of Arts & Creative Technology at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (2011 - 2015) and recently completed her postgraduate studies at University College of Dublin, Ireland with a Masters in Cultural Policy & Arts Management (2019 - 2020).



MAZIYAH YUSSOF

A full-time teacher and mother of two, and a visual artist whenever Maziyah Yussof gets the chance. Her children inspire the artworks she creates, that revolve around the themes of fertility, nature and Islam, and draws heavy inspiration from our world and its natural order.



NAZURAH USOP

Nazurah Usop is a visual artist and activist who explores expressions through shapes and colourful interpretations. She is also best described as an experimental, process-based abstract artist who enjoys adding a unique perspective to her work in the hope of making each piece memorable. Not only is she passionate in the arts, she also has a high interest in human rights issues and the psychological aspects of the human mind.



WENDI SIA

A writer and independent researcher with an interest in indigenous arts and culture, particularly in topics such as indigenous knowledge, cosmologies, and eco-critical thoughts. She was trained as a journalist at BERNAMA TV and has spent almost 5 years in the advertising industry. Presently, she is a freelance copywriter as her bread and butter.



JENNIFER P. LINGGI

As an artist, Jennifer continued participating in several exhibitions in Sabah, Sarawak, Penang and Tokyo. Jennifer is passionate about traditional material culture which has led to several publications. Two of the four publications she was involved in are on traditional crafts of Sabah namely 'Sabah Crafts' (published by Sabah Cultural Board and Sabah Foundation, 2016) and 'The Kampung Legacy - A Journal of North Borneo's Traditional Baskets' (published in 2017)



DEE MAY TAN

An independent writer, journalist, and bootstrapping creative. She is the founder of Plates, an international food culture magazine, which she oversees cover-to-cover; from field research to reporting, commissioning to photography, cover design to distribution.



HOST BIOS

SONIA LUHONG WAN

Sonia Luhong Wan is a self-taught visual artist and emerging curator from Kuching, Sarawak. A graphic designer by training currently working in the space of renewable energy, Sonia's diverse portfolio reflects the constant exploration of intersectionality in both her own life and her art. Through her work with Borneo Bengkel, HAUS KCH, and 9Lives, Sonia is an active member of the local arts community advocating for greater collaboration and reduced barriers to entry in the art world.

CATRIONA MADDOCKS

Catriona Maddocks is a curator, artist and researcher, originally from the North East of England and based in Sarawak, East Malaysia for over a decade. Her cross-disciplinary work focuses on collaborative platform-building and developing spaces in which to explore identity, community narratives and cultural heritage within a contemporary context. Catriona is also the co-founder of Borneo Bengkel, craft development social enterprise Catama, and cultural revival initiative Borneo Boat Lute Revival.

JUVITA TATAN WAN

With close to 15 years of creative regional experience in a major record label, advertising agency, and telecommunications, Juvita Tatan Wan chose to move home to Sarawak and focus on creating meaningful encounters between people and cultures. She is the co-founder of The Tuiyang Initiative, an award-winning arts management company focused on Borneo indigenous cultural heritage. She is also the producer and lead for MYY Living Arts, a multidiscipline arts platform and movement in Miri, Sarawak (Borneo).

Recorded discussions also available on www.borneobengkel.com/ezine

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Conversations on culture and creative experimentation

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4 PM MYT / 10 AM CEST / 9 AM BST

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*** **TIMOTHY JAMES**
TUROI BAGAK

*** **TINTOY CHUO**
FUSION WAYANG KULIT

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BORNEO BENGKEL

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TIKAR REBEN (2021) & PANGKIS (2021)

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Host:
JANG ELROY ANAK RAMANTAN
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SUZIS.L

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COMMUNITY VOICES

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THE TUYANG INITIATIVE
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*** **JENNIFER P. LINGGI**
THE KAMPUNG LEGACY SERIES

*** **WENDI SIA**
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