

Batik Paintings, A Beautiful Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: In early 2020, Malaysia's creative industry was weakened by the country's constant lockdown due to pandemic Covid-19. Lim Anuar, a deaf artist, illustrator, and designer, was struggling financially and missed his family in Vietnam as many galleries and art workshops were closed during this pandemic. In this research, the authors discussed the impact of Covid-19 towards creative industries globally, issues with Malaysian creative industry and batik during Covid-19, batik paintings during modern Malaysian art in between 60s-70s, Kwan Chin's style of Modern Malaysian batik paintings, exploration of Lim Anuar's batik paintings in contemporary Malaysian art. Three significant batik paintings of the artist's interest namely Gotong-Royong II, Best Friends, and Family Togetherness, produced in 2021 were discussed in terms of subject, form, and content. The researchers found that there are some influences from the Western art namely Cubism and Kwan Chin's "crackle" effect in Lim Anuar's batik paintings. This study also clarifies that local artists especially those with special needs who contributed to the development of contemporary Malaysian art should be given more opportunities for career expansion and voice in the creative industry during the post-pandemic era of Covid-19.

Keywords: *Batik paintings, Cultural Heritage, Modern Malaysian Art, Contemporary Malaysian Art*

1. The Impact of Covid-19 Towards Creative Industries Globally: An Introduction

The value of creative industries more than doubled between 2002 and 2015, from US\$208 billion to US\$509 billion [1], with the fastest-growing segments being design, fashion, and cinema. More than twice as much as all services, the annual rise in trade of creative services in developed nations was 4.3% between 2011 and 2015, and their share of overall service trade climbed from 17.3% to 18.9% during that time [2]. According to UNESCO's 2018 forecast, the value of the creative and cultural sectors might account for up to 10% of global GDP in the years to come [3]. The pandemic's effects on the creative sectors have been inconsistent. The performing arts, theatre, and cinema, which depend on live audiences and international travel, were particularly hard-hit by social segregation policies and lockdowns. The performing arts industry in Europe lost 90% of its revenue, and the music industry had a fall of 76% [4]. Surveys show

the severe economic impact. In Slovenia, cultural workers predicted that turnover would fall by an average of 44% in 2020, and 63% of cultural entrepreneurs thought that state interventions weren't enough to make up for losses. Nearly 70% of Ukrainians employed in the cultural and creative industries reported a 50–75% decrease in income [5]. With an estimated 7.3 million jobs in the cultural and creative industry at risk due to the crisis, or 3.7% of all employment in the EU, 32% of cultural sector workers in Europe are self-employed and do not have job protection ([6]. In the UK's creative industries, nearly half (46%) of freelancers' report having had at least half of their contracts cancelled [7]. However, the pandemic COVID-19 has caused numerous short- and long-term issues for the creative industries, including job losses, bankruptcies, cancellation of events and others [8]. To maximize the long-term economic and social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, several nations implemented a variety of governmental and corporate

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assistance measures such as job retention programmes, one-time subsidies and funding [9,10, 11].

2. Issues with Malaysian Creative Industry and Batik During Covid-19

CENDANA (Cultural Economy Development Agency) reported on November 11th, 2020, that 93% of the creative industry players in the arts industry were impacted by COVID-19, and of that percentage, 70% -77% are on the verge of losing, 75% of the jobs have reduced in the market and 8% of arts venues have closed permanently [12, 13]. The COVID-19 completely disrupted the cultural and creative industries and one of them is batik. Samsuddin Abu Bakar, a batik maestro, claims, in Malaysia, the level of appreciation for batik in general is still low. Many people just look at it as a craft and not a work of art [14]. Also, there is a lack of skilled workers from the young generations because they are not keen on working in the batik industry [15] uniqueness of Malaysian batik is threatened due to the tendency of entrepreneurs from neighboring countries to plagiarize local designs and motifs on their products [16]. Upon discussing the issues of batik, therefore, batik need to be preserved to maintain the Malaysian identity.

3. Batik Paintings During Modern Malaysian Art (1960s-1970s)

The batik tradition in Malaysia had its origins mostly in traditional sarongs associated with the East Coast. Batik manufacturing in Kelantan has been documented since the 1920s, with indications of Javanese influence. When Malaysia created its own batik identity in the 1950s, it was welcomed by people of many cultural origins [17]. During the period after the Second World War, the art of batik painting, which combines the tradition of making local batik fabric with Western painting techniques, was lifted, and promoted as an important expression style.

When Malaya achieved independence in 1957, and Malaysia formed in 1963, local painters sought to talk about the concept of 'nation-building' from various perspectives, with each painter expressing their hopes for the future through batik painting. As a unique Malay traditional art, batik painting is seen to reveal the sides of unity and diversity, as well as the traditions and development of the country. Since the establishment of the National Cultural Congress in 1971, traditional Malay handicrafts like batik have attracted the attention of artists. The National Cultural Congress wants to inspire artists to reflect their sense of pride and identity in their work [18]. In the 1960s-1970s, painters began to express their ideas. The concept of the paintings is free and not tied to a theme or subject. The paintings carry their own identity and especially simplified figures are used identity. Batik paintings have been introduced by the pioneer, Chuah Thean Teng also known as 'Father of Batik Painting' during

the Modern Malaysian Art who left an important legacy in the development of a national identity in visual arts in Malaysia [19].

Batik painting in Malaysia has seen various advances and changes throughout the years in terms of techniques, concepts, and approaches to make batik painting works of art, following Teng's shift from batik as garments to batik as painting. Batik painting has become a new medium for several Malaysian artists. Batik painting is a painting created using the same techniques used to make traditional batik cloth [20]. Some artists have also used wax to coat the entire white cloth, then crumpled the cloth to crack the wax on the surface. With crackles as his signature effects, Teng's batik artwork blended *djanting* drawings and conventional dying techniques [21, 22]. The cracks are then painted with colours to create random cracks, which are particularly common on batik cloth [20]. Wax paper was used to remove the wax. The pattern is then coloured with Indian ink after a line is drawn on the fabric with a marker pen. This artwork's outcome does not have a specific name; however, it is also known as a 'batik painting'. Also, Khalil Ibrahim, Tay Mo Leong, and Patrick Ng Kah Onn are among the pioneers of modern Malaysian batik painting [18].

Teng's paintings focused on rural life (Fig.1) as a subject matter. Children playing, ladies toiling in the paddy fields, farm animals, gorgeous fishing villages, men at work, all sorts of domestic settings suddenly take on a new depth and emotion. His figures are often flat, one-dimensional, and flooded with mystical graduations; his lines are strong and sure. The painter's landscape paintings are straightforward, unpretentious, and show the subjects' daily activities [23]. Associate Professor Dr Sarena Abdullah mentions painting rural life in the early days is very common especially in the 1950s and 60s [24]. His linework took on sweep and rhythm, and the colours in his work burst forth. Teng's themes brought up fresh perspectives on Malaysian life, including the people and their daily activities as well as the scenes. He reflected affection, perception, and empathy in his paintings. Apart from the fact that Teng himself grew up as a peasant, Lim Ai Woei and Tan Sei Hon, two art curators wrote in an essay titled *Teng: Inspirasi Malaysia* influenced of French Post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin, particularly his Tahiti series, was one of Teng's major influences and a main motivator for him to portray rural life. His paintings have an undeniable vitality and equilibrium thanks to the fluidity of his figures, the brilliance of his dyes, and the geometric modernity of his compositions [24]. Chuah Thean Teng's tie-dye process using waxed cloth to produce the crackling in the background. The crackling effect is achieved by allowing the wax to split and the colour to seep through, which contrasts well with the figures. The painter creatively interplayed both emotional and visual expression in the paintings where the illusions created convey the statements across [23].



Figure 1. Chuah Thean Teng, Village Scene, date unknown, Batik, 45cm x 119cm, Note. From Mutualart [Painting], by Chuah Thean Teng, n.d., (<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Village-Scene/D6A9AAB078CB8670>)

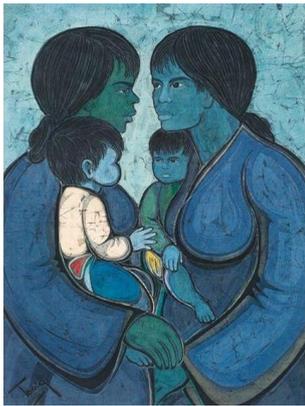


Figure 2. Chuah Thean Teng, Two of A Kind, c. 1965-1968, Batik, 59cm x 44cm, Note. From Mutualart [Painting], by Chuah Thean Teng, 1965-1968, (<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Two-Of-A-Kind/EB7BBFC887B838D5>)

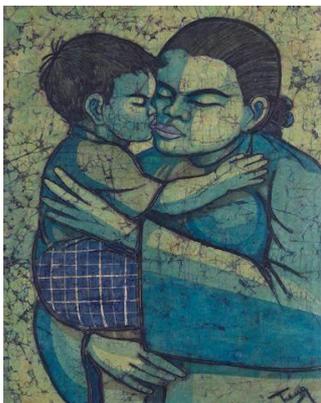


Figure 3: Chuah Thean Teng, Mother and Child, 1970, Batik, 55cm x 43.8cm, Note. From Bonhams [Painting], by Chuah Thean Teng, 1970 (<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/26404/lot/29/?category=list>)



Figure 4. Chuah Thean Teng, Mother and Daughters: The Fruit Season, 1970's, Batik, 57.5cm x 45cm, Note. From KLifestyle [Painting], by Chuah Thean Teng, 1970s (<https://www.kl-lifestyle.com.my/echoes-of-the-past/>)

Mother and child series (Fig.2-Fig.4) are timeless themes of Teng, which is a universal motif and one that he adopted and developed. Despite the expressions on the mother and child figures, the interpretations have a charming quality to them, each done in Teng's signature manner. To represent the transcendent essence of a mother's love, the artist uses a variety of soothing tones in the works. His work was chosen to be reproduced into postcards by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Teng's mother and child series highlighted his deep respect for the role of woman as he has a deep respect for his own mother. Therefore, this could have inspired Teng to paint mothers over the years [24]. Each painting depicts a different subject, yet they are all in a loving embrace and are filled with warmth. Chuah Thean Teng's tie-dye process using waxed cloth to produce the crackling in the background. The crackling effect is achieved by allowing the wax to split and the colour to seep through, which contrasts well with the figures. The painter creatively interplayed both emotional and visual expression in the paintings where the illusions created convey the statements across [23].

4. Kwan Chin's Style of Modern Malaysian Batik Paintings

Kwan Chin is among the few surviving Malaysian artists who uses traditional batik techniques to depict life in Malaysian villages (Fig.5-Fig.6) and immerses himself in the subject and its beauty on canvas. In some of the figures, he depicted a true Malaysian artist, using Picasso's cubism and geometric forms. In pacing broken lines on canvas to give the

idea of batik art, Kwan Chin introduced art towards a new dimension. The batik's lines and intricacies are quite distinct and visible, demonstrating to viewers how skilled he was at detailing when it came to batik. The artist reveals a rich trove of dying skills and techniques in his work, from the delicate strokes used to bring abstract forms to life to the arduous traditional procedures used to create batik paintings [17, 25].



Figure 5. Kwan Chin, *Village Scene*, 1970's, Batik, 65cm x 48cm, Note. From *KLifestyle* [Painting], by Kwan Chin, 1970s, (<https://www.kl-lifestyle.com.my/echoes-of-the-past/>)



Figure 6: Kwan Chin, *Market Scene*, 1979, Batik, 53.5cm x 152.5cm, Note. From *KLifestyle* [Painting], by Kwan Chin, 1979, (<https://www.kl-lifestyle.com.my/echoes-of-the-past/>)

Kwan Chin's paintings have a distinct cultural identity, with tjanting, wax, and dyes used to create dots, floral designs, and his distinctive crackling effect as the background. Wrinkling the waxed fabric created the 'crackled' effect in the artist's backgrounds, allowing the dye to penetrate intricate patterns along the cracks. While purist batik artisans plunged their wax paintings entirely in dye baths, he chose to use a brush to apply the dye, allowing for more technical control. The artist employs a batik-upon-batik technique, which entails waxing and dyeing many times [17, 25].

As a result, there's a see-through effect with a prominent background and overlapping colours. Kwan Chin paintings' colours are perfectly confined within the outline he draws, leaving no room for smudges. His specialty was vibrantly coloured batik paintings depicting scenes of Malaysian life. The magnificent display of colours that makes a batik work puts the viewer in a pleasant, charming, nostalgic, and serene atmosphere while also demonstrating the complexities of

batik-making. The artist's work featured a vibrant environment with great colour contrast. His ideas are straightforward and simple, with no complexities or hidden implications - beautifully executed and a visual pleasure [17, 25].

5. Lim Anuar's Contemporary Malaysian Batik Paintings

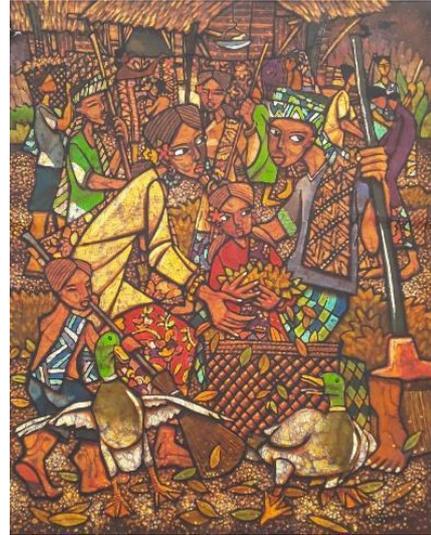


Figure 7. Lim Anuar, *Gotong-Royong II*, 2021, Batik on Canvas, 88cm x 110cm, Note. From artist himself.

The first artwork, Lim Anuar's *Gotong-Royong II* (2021) in Figure 7, a batik on cloth with dimensions of 89cm x 57cm demonstrated the Malay essence and style of batik influence of Kwan Chin. The subject consists of people, flora, and fauna. There are 15 people consisting of adults and children. In this painting, the artist used the title "Gotong – Royong". This painting used flat space on the picture plane. On the flat space Lim drew some flora and fauna subjects. There are two ducks and a traditional rattan basket full of collected dried leaves that gather from the gotong royong. These ducks were drawn slightly bigger in size, as it appears on the flat space of this painting.

There are two adults that could be the parent of these two young children, which is a little boy and a girl, which portrait a family working together. Both the parents are working hard, the mother is gathering more dried leaves into the basket. The father figure on the left, and the daughter on the right, they both held broom to sweep the floor of dried leaves on the picture plane. While the mother figure and daughter in the middle also tried to clear and gathered the dried leaves. The little boy besides the mother also busy in the cleaning process. He also holds a broom and to sweep away the dried leaves and try to make the surrounding clean. Also, in the painting there consists of eleven other people that lives in the traditional "kampung" known as village. They adults from men to women, that are busy with the gotong royong activities in cleaning, helping each other's in the chores and

later decorate the village. These people were drawn with smaller figure and the flat space shows it is far and further away from the main subject. Everyone was looking occupied by sharing the work and working hard to the “gotong -royong” activities.

The artist uses Batik drawing style to draw this painting. The art element used are lines such as vertical lines, horizontal lines, diagonal lines, and curve lines to complete the composition of this artwork. The artist used warm colour tones mostly are earthy tone such as brown, orange, and cool colours such as green and blue to paint the people, their clothes and surrounding. The similar warm earthy tone was again applied to the village house, on the roof and the background of this painting. Lim favors the warm colours in this painting and used chromatic value scale to show the lightness and middle tone and the darkness of brown colour used in this painting. The organic shapes are used to create the figures, motifs, and the atmosphere. The texture used in this painting is invented texture whereby the cracking technique were applied on the figures. Another cracking effect like spider web style were also showed in the two ducks. Therefore, all the subjects were drawn with strong dark brown to outline and gave the drawings the complete and finishing touch, as this style is exclusive, and expressions batik drawing to more significant visual appealing style.

Lim explored the triangular grid in this artwork. The triangular grid clearly shown the principle of dominance. Using this grid, it has defined the main subject matter here are the family members, at the same time, to grab to attention from the audiences. The art elements such as lines, colours, shapes and textures in this painting are arranged according to the principle of balance so that the visual weights appear to be evenly distributed known as balance in all direction because the evident shows the viewers are looking at almost all parts of the painting at the same time. In terms of proportion, the subject matter is distorted in abstract form. The repetition of similar lines, colours, shapes, and textures creates rhythm to achieve harmony. Therefore, harmony shows unity in this painting.

The artist main idea for this painting is to express the spirit of gotong royong in the Malay villages inspire from his childhood memories. This gotong royong activity, is organised to share work and tasks together to work for the cleanliness for the surrounding and environment around the Kampung and other villages. Gotong royong is an ancient activity, which brings meaning to our local area as the idea of commonness, agreement and overall, likewise referred to in Javanese as gotong royong or shared help, that related with the conventional town life [26]. Also, Lim feels the importance of family values, hence, he has painted a family of four, which is the parents, and two children consist of a girl and a boy. These four figures have become the main and central field for this painting. They were all cooperating or working in tandem with one another. All the figures drawn

were busy with cleaning around their village and the surrounding of the Kampung. The children also participated in this cleaning process. They were having fun in this activity. The artist also drew two ducks here, this indicates that the daily scene of the simple, peaceful and harmony Kampung lifestyle where little animals are commonly seen around the Kampung.

The colours applied in this painting are mainly, earthy colour such as brown, warm colours such as orange, red and yellow. The brown symbolizes a feeling of solidity and dependability. Brown is a colour frequently linked to durability, reliability, and stability. The cool colour green is also frequently perceived as robust, refreshing, peaceful and a sense of connection to nature. These two colours, have strong association with the sense of security and the peaceful ambience. This depicts Gotong Royong activity, is ancient activities practice long time ago, and will have to continue perform, to preserve better and cleaning environment for everyone. Lim also painted the kampung house, or Malay village at the background of this painting. These, houses can be seen mainly at fishing villages that are found adjacent to the ocean, whereas inland communities are typically found close to rice fields, tiny rubber or oil palm plantations, or paddy fields [27]. In his painting, the kampung house, appears to be in smaller size and scale. It is draw slightly further from the main figures. The roof top was painted with implies texture, using his imaginary of batik style. The kampung house has been his fond memories of childhood's living and to remind viewer about the core value of traditional and our own society. Lastly, Lim painted the “sarong”, which can be view from some of the figures in the middle ground and background. The elements and motifs of the batik sarongs in this painting also describe the Malay culture, representing the aesthetic value of the Malay community and daily life in the village [28].

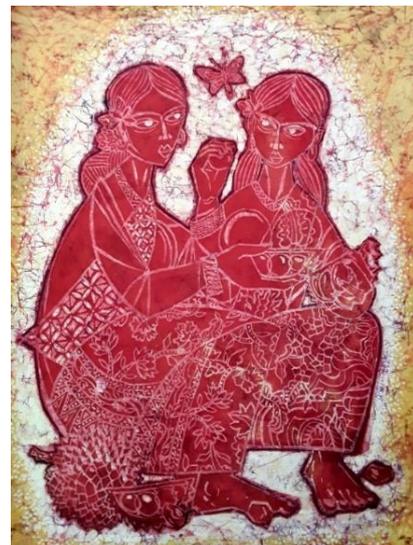


Figure 8. Lim Anuar, Best Friend, 2021, Batik on Canvas 65cm x 85cm, Note. From artist himself.

The second artwork, Lim Anuar's *Best Friend*, 2021 in Figure 8 is a batik on cloth with dimension of 65cm x85 cm demonstrated the Malay essence and style of batik influence of Kwan Chin. The subject consists of people and still life, based upon two ladies sharing durians together. In the painting, an insect is seen hovering above the ladies, there are three scattered durian seeds on the ground, an opened and an unopened durian located in the picture plane, with other durians held in the hands of each lady. The ladies are seen wearing accessories and floral motifs of batik. Utilization of geometric shapes in Lim's painting, is seen strikingly pronounced with the use of line. The artist generously applied red fill to the figures in an inverted visual effect, while white lines formed the illustration, giving rise to clarity of intricate detail.

Implied lines and shape play a role in leading the eyes to visual attention. Curve lines and diagonal lines are seen directing viewers from the durians to the top of the painting. Psychic line is also seen from both ladies' charismatic gaze which leads viewers to the curious insect. A hidden implied triangle is seen in the center of the painting, shaped by hands of the ladies in pyramidal form, which focuses on bracelets and durians held. Implied illusion of motion is seen through the line and motifs on the ladies' batik sarong, as it gave way to inquisitive visual clues. Motion can be viewed, as one can trace the directions of lines and motifs on the ladies' batik clothing, appearing as pathway, like a map, perhaps a navigated route of the flying insect.

The artist depicted cultural identity in the painting, as batik is seen worn on both ladies. Floral motifs of the batik interlinked through lines to form shapes. The left image highlighted a different floral pattern that stood out among other motifs in the sarong of the lady on the right. Durians filled the picture plane, with seeds thrown alongside both ladies' foot. The foot of the lady on the right is seen pointed to the foot of the lady on the left, possibly gesturing fondness to her friend. The figure also shows a leaf motif on the lady's shawl pointed to her direction.

In *Best Friend*, organic shapes are used to create organic shapes of human figures, insect, and fruits. Lim softened the edge of the shapes to achieve a natural flow within the painting. He abstracted natural subjects toward geometrical simplicity to strengthen visual impact and symbolic content, serving balance to the subtle batik textile. Simultaneously, both ladies in neutral expression were shown through geometrical facial shape. Lady on the right is seen with most circular shapes, flower hairpin and straighter geometrical hair line, as compared to lady on the left with slightly curvaceous cross-hatching hair line with extra flower to her hair, as if connotes different status between them.

Lim's distinct crackle batik background created texture that ignited contrast and depth, allowing the figures to radiate through colour value which provoke emotion. Red dye, white

wax, and orange-yellow crackle backdrop appears to complete. Red fills the picture plane of lively characters, while orange-yellow colour is blended with crackle batik texture in the background, creating robust contrast and warmth. Time is also depicted in Lim's painting, it is obvious that one can tell from the fashion and body gesture habits (barefooted, squatting position) of the ladies, that the scene may have occurred in the past. His colour scheme also inferred that the setting may have taken place during the day, where the sun rises, people interact, have their meals, insects come to life, fruits ripen, with beautiful warm climate during a time in the day. Likewise, colour and texture may resemble a nostalgic sight from an old, crinkled photograph.

Lim often has his painting in a single dimension, to exhibit basic elements of the subject in its clearest and most identifiable manner. The vertical placement of the subject is achieved with the effect of overlap, which strengthens the surface element by diminishing scale of under layered figures, giving sense to space known as flat space. The flat space is two-dimensional which can be identified on the flat surface of this painting. This is because all the images in this painting appear flat with no depth, only length and width. Moreover, all the objects and forms lie on the same plane. Durians in the picture plane are set in front of the lady on the left, as her predominant figure occupied most of the space. Ultimately, the lady on the right and the flying insect were sequenced furthest to the plane.

Lim Anuar concentrated on the interaction among elements of art and principles of organization to develop form. Whereby elements of art are employed according to principles of balance, dominance, movement, proportion, variety, and unity through the artist's sensitivity to the painting. The artist creates asymmetrical balance in his painting whereby the left and the right side is seen positioned unevenly. Though both ladies in the painting shared dissimilarities, yet the composition is seen to achieve a sense of balance that creates visual interest and variety.

Despite the single dimension batik illustration, proportion plays an essential role towards size relationship within the artwork to express symbolic meaning. The primary focus of attention goes to the lady on the left, though not centralized, however her scale seems to divert the eyes to her as a focal point. She is visually seen positioned as the most detailed figure, as compared to other features in the painting. Her shawl and batik sarong seems highly emphasized, along with the scale of her offering hand. The purpose of implied line has created movement in the artwork, connecting viewers to elements and providing visual flow throughout as a whole.

Dominance is seen in the insect as it stood out demanding more attention through the emphasis of its character, direction, isolation, and scale. The entire painting has unity to maintain consistency through colour and line, as red colour is seen blended equally, with durian illustrations connecting

parts of the painting, creating an appearance of oneness. Variety is seen on the insect, variation of the ladies' hair embellishment, bracelet, batik motifs pattern, durian fruit and seeds that creates a sense of unity within the painting.

Lim Anuar incorporates profusion of local colours which culminate his belief that one must harmonize with the environment and respect it [29]. In closer view of the crackle batik background, fine blue, red and yellow texture seems to reflect the Malaysian flag colour. Red is dominantly used in the painting. The meaning of red in batik is associated with the female principle, and fertility [30]. Red on the subjects are blended equally to share the same colour mood and value. Lim understood the importance of colour and used it to attribute femininity and culture richness. Just as artists in the early 20th century of expressionism used colour to heighten the emotional content of an art to convey messages [31].

There are symbolic meanings in the painting, the ladies exist as an expression of culture, because female figures in art symbolises life. The *Selendang* (shawl) worn on left-side lady possibly resembled batik motif of *Bunga Lawang* (Star Anise), while motif on her *Sarong* seems akin to *Bunga Kantan* (Torch Ginger Flower), which are herbs used in *Nyonya* cuisine [32]. Whereas motifs of right-side lady's sarong likely depict *Tampuk/Bungga Manggis* (Mangosteen top/flower) [33]. In Malaysia, Mangosteen is known as "Queen of fruit", and Durian, "King of fruit", which harmonizes the idea of togetherness.

The two ladies in the painting are believed to be of *Peranakan* heritage. Bracelets worn by the ladies appear to resemble the jewellery style of *Nyonya Peranakan* and *Chetti Peranakan*. It is known that Penangite Chinese Peranakan women are adorned with *Kebaya Nyonya* [34]. While *Kebaya Chetti* is worn by Malacca Indian Peranakan women [35]. Both peranakans share similarities in traditional dressing, where tops are decorated with embroidered collar laces, and *batik is worn as sarong*. Implied elements through motifs appear to direct pathways where the insect derived – a tainted durian seed on the ground. The flying insect, believed to be a type of moth termed *Mudaria Luteileprosa*, a durian seed borer [36]. Symbolically moth is thought to epitomise the idea of abundance, fertility, and good luck [37]. Batik designs habitually show relationships between flowers and flying insects, as flowers require insects for pollination [38]. Similar metaphor expressed in Lim's painting the moth is seen pollinating friendship of the ladies in floral batik.

Lim idealized visual content based upon his aptitude in sign-language. Whereby the intricate hand gesture of the right-side lady, held a durian pulp, seems to signify the sign-language of "eat", a Malaysian social etiquette of being courteous when eating with a friend. Hand gestures of both ladies symbolizes the Malaysian ethic of using the right hand to pass food to the mouth and offer food for others. This symbolic gesture of mutual respect and understanding for

other cultures in Malaysian society, is practiced till today.

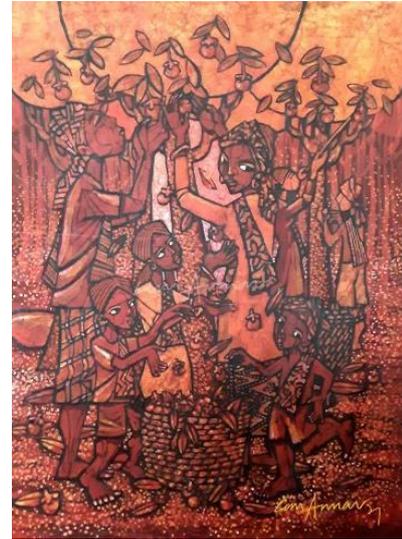


Figure 9. Lim Anuar, Family Togetherness, 2021, Batik on Canvas, 65cm x 85cm, Note. From artist himself.

The third artwork, Lim Anuar's *Family Togetherness*, 2021 in Figure 9 is a batik on cloth with dimension of 65cm x85 cm demonstrating the Malay essence and style of batik influence of Kwan Chin. The subject consists of people and still life. Looking at Lim Anuar's painting of Family Togetherness literally presented in front of us a family member of father, mother and their three children happily plucking the mangosteens in an orchard. It could be noticed there are another two people plucking mangosteens on the back of the picture plane. All the family members are wearing turbans with batik motifs. The father on the left is wearing a checker pattern batik 'sarong' which is a traditional Malay man's attire equivalent to the kilt. Whereas the mother is wearing her 'baju kurung', a traditional costume worn by Malay ladies. A floral motif batik scarf also can be seen hanging around her shoulders. Three children in front were seen happily helping their parents gathering and collecting mangosteens into the basket.

Lim Anuar applied asymmetrical balance in this painting by placing the subject matter which is the family members slightly off centre to the left of the canvas. Overall, impression of the painting looks rather flat in terms of monochromatic tones applied with no depth where Lim Anuar trying to emphasise clearer outlines for most of his figures on the picture plane, leaving it without outlines. The painting has creatively balance up the whole composition by creating contrast between the top part leaving less than one third of the space in white which somehow balance up the over two third of the painting with brown tones. The overall figures have given its two-dimensional feel which very much close to the Egyptian style of twisted perspective. Another reason of the painting looks rather flat is where Lim Anuar has purposely used darker value in the front and slightly lighter value in the background to reduce the flatness of the

space in the whole painting. The use of implied reverse triangle shape has also interestingly created tension or focus point to the entire painting.

Lim Anuar's painting of Family Togetherness has successfully reflected the Asian family value of portraying 'muhibbah' among family members uniquely by portraying plucking mangosteens as his subject matter in the painting. As a Malaysian, we knew that mangosteens are labelled as the Queen of Fruit after Durian - The King of Tropical Fruit. Here, we can see that the female character which represent mother who play an important role in the family happily supporting her husband together with their children harvesting at their 'dusun' (orchard). In this painting, Anuar Lim trying to paint white colour surrounded the eyes as an attention in the whole painting which strikingly stands out from the brown earthly hue tone. The brown hue tone also suggested down to earth colour that is naturally humble which very much reflected on the painting itself signify the feelings of being nature, honest and reliable matching perfectly with the painting titled – Family Togetherness. The darker brown colour on the figures skin tones also suggested that they have been always exposed to sun light due to long hours exposed under sun light. The brown hue earth colour that occupied almost the entire canvas plain could be well signify as the symbol of a painting which made to express the hardship and toughness of the workers from 'kampung' (village) who lived in the simplest yet unmaterialistic environment. It also showed the important of family value that is very much embedded within our Asian culture where 'muhibbah' which translate as living in harmony or caring for each other deeply planted in our norms since we were young.

6. Conclusion

During the outbreak, Covid-19 undoubtedly had an impact on both the international and Malaysian artistic industries. With its recent reopening, there will definitely be a sense of hope and anticipation for the arts and cultural sector to recover. The most recent budget announcement for 2022 also states that a total budget of 258 million has been set aside to revive and prepare for the creative industry's future goals. Even during Covid-19, Lim Anuar's deafness did not stop him from pursuing his passion for batik. Because of its sensitive cultural elements amid the difficult time, he has successfully captured the moment in history. His works portrayed the idea of scenes from Modern Malaysian Art that were incorporated into Contemporary Malaysian Art.

By utilizing geometric shapes, Lim Anuar also incorporated Picasso's cubism in a manner like Kwan Chin's batik paintings. Additionally, he studied the batik process in each of his works while incorporating Kwan Chin's aesthetic. It has been established that the batik technique is a labor-intensive and difficult process that necessitates a continuous cycle of hot wax drying while meticulously applying colour

pigments. Anuar's paintings are heavily influenced by his fond memories of his early years spent in a remote kampung in Tanjung Bungoh, Penang. Property development has taken the place of the lovely native vegetation and fauna that once flourished there.

Large, vividly coloured vegetation, wildlife, and human subjects predominate in Lim Anuar's Malaysian batik paintings. Artists have traditionally drawn inspiration from Malaysia's breathtaking natural settings, the peaceful coexistence of people of all nationalities, and still life paintings. All of this is depicted in batik paintings from the Modern Malaysian Art period up to the present day, whether they show the tranquilly of the countryside or the commotion of the city, or men and women working, having fun, or celebrating. The attempt to invent a new visual art genre by depicting the subjects in the manner of an antiquated traditional craft is even more intriguing. Along with emphasizing the value of cultural history, the artist also highlighted the role of women and regional ethics. Lim's paintings emphasized audiences the value of embracing diversity, making his work uplifting and educational. Each component of the paintings contributes to the definition of the essence of Malaysian cultural heritage.

Generations of artists have adopted and reinterpreted the batik medium throughout our post-war period to adapt it to various national imaginaries and conditions. In view of the greater links in the search of a distinctively localized aesthetic and creative vision, the goal for national self-hood, as well as the adaptation of traditional art forms to fit modern uses, batik may be understood as a particularly Malaysian story. Batik art can contribute to the development of a young generation that is educated, respectful of cultural heritage, competent, creative, and competitive because of the acceptance and knowledge on the part of all parties concerned regarding the importance of craft to society's traditions and norms. The cultural symbols and elements that contribute the identity of Modern Malaysian Art also support the efforts made by local artists to create distinctive contemporary artistic identities. This endeavor gave rise to an unique perspective on art that is more empathetic toward diverse cultural traditions. This functioned as the National Cultural Congress's successor as the defining aspect of Malaysian art history. Given that this transformation must be considered as a creation in artworks due to the altering positions of the arts, the presence of many cultural symbols may emerge as one of the major themes in contemporary Malaysian art.

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