



GALLERY WEEKEND KUALA LUMPUR

Pioneering culture-building networks

Guest editor - Shalini Ganendra

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**ABOUT THE
e-JOURNAL**

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal promotes multi disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

Editorial

Shalini Amerasinghe Ganendra – Guest Editor

BA, MA Hons (Cambridge.), LL.M.

Cultural Leader, Scholar and Founder of
Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur

BIOGRAPHY



Shalini Ganendra's impact on cultural development has been defined by over two decades of informed cultural engagement. Through programming, research, publication and an overarching commitment to transnational connection, she has furthered recognition of, inter alia, the distinct and longstanding creative practises of Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Some notable projects include: Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur with its Luminary Programme featuring international and local creatives in dialogue and presentation, pioneering exhibitions of Sri Lankan modern and contemporary art in Kuala Lumpur, London and New York, and research with publication on cultural practices.

Shalini is Sri Lankan born. She was educated in the US and UK, graduating secondary from Phillips Exeter Academy where she is a Harkness Fellow, after which she read law at University of Cambridge, Trinity Hall. She obtained an LL.M. from Columbia University Law School and is a qualified Barrister and New York Attorney. She has been awarded Visiting Fellowships by Oxford and Cambridge Universities to further cultural research.

FOREWORD

Culture celebrating difference. Culture complimenting commerce. Pioneering culture – The Story of Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur

Developing appreciation for and bringing greater accessibility to culture as a whole and visual art in particular, has been the foundation on which Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur (GWKL) has developed, over a meteoric five years, reflecting evolution and invention. Culture complimenting commerce. Culture celebrating difference. Culture as the creative. Starting out as a prayer, a dream, GWKL has steadily and organically grown, embracing free participation and access, presenting a dynamic platform of multi-disciplinary content. GWKL has been a mechanism through which Malaysia can reconnect with its own cultural landscape (both traditional and contemporary). The cultural marquee has introduced valuable local culture to global audiences; facilitated global exchange; and bridged cultures and disciplines to deliver engagement and project development. As such, GWKL has critically become about the culture of encounter.

The term ‘gallery weekend’ is somewhat of an anomaly for this marquee because the duration now spans two weeks. This longer period offers the opportunity for guests to participate in all offerings and for cultural stakeholders to derive more value through programme build-up. GWKL remains an immersive and intense cultural experience.

Our goal has been for the long-term development of cultural appreciation (local and global), coupled with the creation of a sustainable and appreciative cultural ecosystem through which audiences develop a greater appreciation for the creative. Such appreciation fostered through talks and viewings inevitably sprouts economic support. As a platform, GWKL complements art fairs and biennials, taking the best features from all such events, and presenting them over a shorter period of time with mainly free programming. Since 2016, GWKL has been supported by a wide array of cultural

stakeholders and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture. We have partnered with major local museums including the National Art Gallery and Islamic Art Museum Malaysia, in addition to including more than 30 select project spaces, galleries, collection venues and cultural spaces annually.

The GWKL Luminary Programme, consisting of public talks (panel and individual) presented by a diverse range of creative talent, has been the anchor feature of GWKL and has defined the gravitas of the marquee. Over these five years, we have hosted more than 30 Luminaries from over 12 countries, including curators, museum directors, auction experts, artists, journalists and collectors. Twenty-two luminaries, a major foundation participant, one moderator and one observer are represented in this publication.

Their form of contribution, whether through essay, interview or presentation format, provides a vibrant glimpse of the diversity of topics, experience and outlooks presented over the past five years– covering art practise, craft, curation, museology, markets, architecture, design, collecting and more. I thank each of these amazing personalities for their valuable insights; editorial assistant, Yung Lo, for adeptly ordering and coordinating these submissions; and Lindy Joubert, Director of the UNESCO Observatory, for quality endorsement of GWKL.

When GWKL launched in 2016, the Art Newspaper wrote “The next Berlin? Kuala Lumpur launches gallery weekend. Dealers and museums join forces to put the Malaysian capital on the art map.” In fact, GWKL has gone beyond being just another “gallery weekend”. Rather, the connectivity that the marquee offers has enriched many thus far with the promise of growing returns through increased awareness and appreciation. In 2020, the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic propelled us to innovate and deliver what turned out to be one of the most successful Luminary Features virtually, where everyone had a front-row seat. The high attendance was a testament to a growing realisation that culture can be the pivot to recovery. “GWKL continues to pioneer culture-building bridges and networks. It applauds creativity and provides a platform for dynamic discussions that continue long after the event itself closes. Likewise, this UNESCO Observatory ‘Arts in Asia’ publication extends this culture of connectivity for greater reach and duration. GWKL continues to pioneer culture. We hope you enjoy the read.

Thoughts and Drawing

AUTHOR

Ernesto Pujazon, Artist, Senior Lecturer at Taylor's University

BIOGRAPHY

Ernesto Pujazon was the former Head of School for Taylor's Design School, Taylor's University, from 2014 to 2019.

He is currently Senior Lecturer in the Foundation in Design programme while pursuing his PhD at University Technology MARA, titled '*Application of the Western Interpretation of Perspectives and Elementary Space, in Malaysian Visual Arts*'.



A graduate from The Autonomous National Fine Arts School of Lima, Pujazon is also an artist; he favours subtle colours with thin layering of washes, giving the impression that his enormous canvases are large watercolour works. His use of icons dominates the canvas, creating an instant impact on the viewer. The viewer is drawn in, subsequently realising that these paintings work in two distinct levels. He was the moderator for Gallery Weekend Kuala Lumpur (GWKL) 2020's *Luminary Forum III: Collecting & Curating – Ways of Seeing*.

GWKL has been a marvellous experience, a bit surreal facing this unforgettable time, but as it is still an 'amazing experience'.

- Ernesto Pujazon, Artist and Educator

Thoughts and Drawing

In the beginning, this journey to moderate a discussion among prominent curators, art lovers and the general public was very challenging. Having attended GWKL in 2019 as a participant gave me a sort of relief to be able to see and experience the manner a “Moderator” should lead while conducting the discussion among panellists. This year has shown us several different levels of challenges, and among them, at the global level was the pandemic or COVID-19 as everyone knows; it has played a major role in changing our present way of life and affecting our daily routine of activities, work, social life, friends, travel, and family. The lockdown has been severe in Malaysia, with all activities turned to online communication. Luminary III was also to be conducted following this mood. The main advantage was that everyone was able to attend it from the comfort and safety of their own home and as sort of disadvantage was... I guess we all miss the human social interaction among the participants and the panellist.

The GWKL Luminary Forums organised by Datin Shalini Ganendra is a major ground-breaking cultural activity that has been happening for the past few years. I was invited to lead and moderate the third session of this year’s Luminary Programme, with the theme of collecting and curating under the “new normal” with three distinguished panellists as follows:

a) Edward Gibbs, Chairman and Head of Department, Middle East and India, Sotheby’s London. Mr Gibbs’ joined Sotheby’s in 2003. He advises private, corporate, and institutional collectors across Europe, North America, North Africa, The Middle East, South Asia and throughout the Muslim world. He oversees three major auction categories: Arts of the Islamic World, Art of India, and Contemporary Arab, Iranian and Turkish Art. Mr Gibbs’ career exemplifies his passion for Islamic Art, which began in 1988 with a visit to Al-Andalus and the Great Mosque of Cordova. Prior to joining Sotheby’s, he served for seven years as a lecturer in Islamic Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, where he set up the innovative Foundation Course in Asian Art with Sotheby’s Institute of Art. In 1997, he was invited by the British Council to co-curate the exhibition *Traditions of Respect: Britain and Islamic Cultures to mark the 50th anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan*. The exhibition was opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Lahore and New Delhi.

My second invited panellist was:

b) Shabbir Hussain Mustafa, Senior Curator, National Gallery Singapore, and Singapore Art Museum. Mr Mustafa researches art from Singapore and Southeast Asia.

He was formerly Curator (Southeast Asia) at the National University of Singapore Museum (NUS Museum). Mustafa's curatorial approach has centred heavily on deploying archival texts as ploys in engaging different modes of thinking and writing, all in an attempt at opening up the archive to multivariate struggles of perception and reading. Selected Southeast Asian exhibitions that Mustafa has curated at NUS Museum include: *Archives and Desires: Selections from the Mohammad Din Mohammad Collection* (2008), *"I Polunin": Memories of Singapore Through Film and Photographs* (2009), *Writing Power by Zulkifli Yusoff* (2011), *Semblance / Presence: Renato Habulan and Alfredo Esquillo Jr* (2012), and most recently, *Come Cannibalise Us, Why Don't You? | Erika Tan* (2013). Some of his current publications include "Remembering the Intimate Past" in *Shifts: Wong Hoy Cheong, 2002-2007* (2008), "Something" in *Being: Ahmad Zakii Anwar* (2009), "Confessional Curation" in *The Sufi and The Bearded Man: Remembering a Keramat in Contemporary Singapore* (2011), and "Curatorial Notes" in *Camping and Tramping* (2011), an essay and exhibition that lays out some methodological considerations for the rethinking of curatorial practice in Singapore.

My third panellist was:

c) Mr Aaron Seeto, Director of Museum MACAN, Jakarta, Indonesia. Mr Seeto's has a vast experience working to advance the goals of contemporary arts organisations and curating significant exhibitions of artists from the Asia and Pacific regions. Mr Seeto's was formerly Curatorial Manager of Asian and Pacific Art, at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia where he led the curatorial team at the eighth Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT8) in 2015. For eight years prior, he was the Director of Sydney's ground-breaking 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art.

Finally, myself, Ernesto Pujazon, artist and educator.

I am a Peruvian fine artist who graduated from The Autonomous National Fine Arts School of Lima, Peru. My use of colours is extremely subtle with a thin layering of washes that give the impression that these enormous canvases are very large watercolours works.

The use of icons dominates the canvas or paper, having an instant impact on the viewer which draws them in, then one will realise that these paintings work in two distinct levels: The soft transparent build-ups of coloured grid-like patterns drip like landscapes on the one hand, and on the other, the sheer size of these canvas's symbolic icons gives a direct message according to its cultural significances. For the past few years, my work has taken a different path of development. Currently, I focus on "Drawing" as a means of communicating my most inner thoughts, as well as how it has evolved over the years. Here is an extract on my drawing, "Drawing evolution form Black & White to Colours", written on March 25th, 2020.

I would begin by defining a few terms used in this narrative before explaining the mechanism which took me some time to develop from the black and white original drawing below until its current colour final look.

Any dictionary in general would define the basic term of "evolution" as the process of growth and development or the theory that stated that an organism has grown and developed from a past organism. [1]

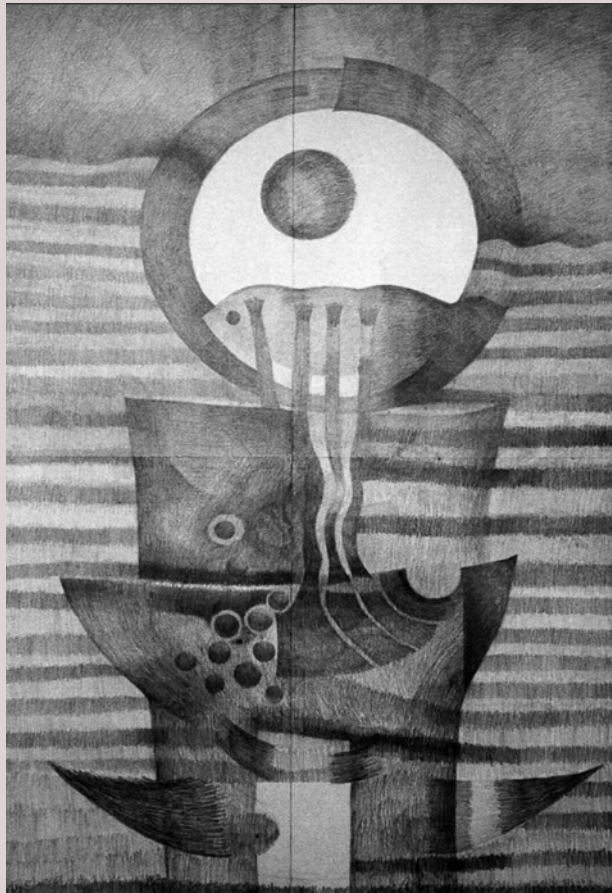
Historically, a type of human activity called mark-making (Drawing, sketching), has served to describe or represent things, a sort of language with the desire to communicate, helping us to understand and make sense of the world around us, leaving our mark for the future generation, recording our lifetime, culture, and development of the human mind. Drawing as a written language has been used through-out the millennia: prehistorical men, upon using a burnt piece of wood or possibly red powder from the surrounding stones, had drawn lines and made marks on the roof of their dwellings to record their existence and lives. This desire resides in the deepest part of our human DNA. This human activity portrays our sense of human mortality; this mark-making serves to visualise our ability to perceive or think visually. The Greeks' technical contribution were the forms, shadows, general foreshortening, a rough idea of linear perspective and the depth of field suggested by colour. They might not be as evolved as the Renaissance masters; however, their attempt is well recorded in floor mosaics, pottery and relief sculpture, to mention a few. Moving forward, greats artist, designer, men of science and religion used drawing to the advance human knowledge. Drawing has been applied to arts, science, and technology.

From the beginning of 1999 to 2011, while working as an academic in a private local university, I have produced a series of drawings in monochrome tones of black and white.

These set of drawings were produced using different dry materials such as graphite pencil of qualities and degrees like 2B, 4B, 6B, and 9B, natural charcoals made from willow trees or rouse stick, hard compress charcoal, and semi-oily charcoal stick known as Lomo-graph pencils used to draw on smooth surfaces such a glass. The water-colour papers used for this series of drawings varied in type, such as being either hot or cold-pressed, and/or differing in size as well as thickness. Others were drawn on cartridge paper, known as hot-pressed smooth surface, with almost no tooth where water medium will dry much faster.

What are the differences between the black and white drawing and the coloured drawing? This is a question that followed me for quite some-time. The difference resides in the way it was composed and examined. Black and white forms are much easier to identify than coloured drawings; the fact is that the human mind focuses on the contrast between the foreground and the background, separating the images simultaneously. There is a difference between how we see and what we see. How we see is psychological. It is our capacity to sum-up all our knowledge, including that which sits deep in the subconscious. Memory and knowledge add to the visual and help the creative artist reveal the inner truth of the subject. [2]

Figure 1: Black and white drawing; Graphite Pencils, compress and natural charcoals on watercolour paper, 2007–2008, 189 x 120 cm, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



I started this drawing (Fig.1) in black and white tones back in the beginning of 2007, while working in a private university. I wanted to create a worshipping totem similar to a Peruvian Kero (A cup-shaped object for drinking Chicha, local corn juice) in the lower part and with a circle at the upper part of the paper, off centre and waving lines crossing in horizontal motions, with a heavy top section in black tones behind the circle. I chose four pieces of paper with the desire to create one large scale drawing sub-divided into 4 sections that will make an impression on the audience, keeping in mind that black and white tones will highlight the drawing composition. These four pieces of paper put together as one would make this arrangement more energetic, bigger, and exciting.

It took several months working out the final composition drawn on a large piece of paper, generating challenges and fears. The challenges in the development stage were the compositional setting, scaling the forms, creating tones contrast, highlighting the focus areas, dividing the space into upper and lower, left and right areas, creating an inner sense of tensions between the parts, and the separation of figure and ground, to name a few. The subsequent stage was working out the tones and shades that will add meaning to these forms previously established during the development stage. To create a high contrast, I separated the figure (circle and other elements in the upper and lower part of the paper) from the background (the white surrounding area). I used personal symbolism to create this drawing which is divided into four sections, the upper, lower, left and right areas.

In the upper section, the large circle represents the “Sun” in white colour, the inner small-scale circle represents the moon in black colour, both drawn together as one against a large upper structure in black, representing the sky. At the lower section is the ground, a block-like structure representing a cup, with weaving lines across representing water. It took me a couple of years to work out this drawing. My drawings do not follow any pre-conceived ideas of composition. These drawings appear in the mind one by one, and all this happens while working on it. I do work out the composition or set up the forms and shapes in the correcting stage, drawing and redrawing, correcting, and realigning the different elements that are created. The paper format is important; the rectangle either vertical or horizontal along with other elements of composition will determine the outcome.

Figure 2: Graphite pencils, red Indian crayon, red powder, black oil and dry charcoals, Lomography pencils, white titanium acrylic on cartridge watercolour paper, 2018–2019, 189 x 12 cm, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Image featured on front cover of this publication.



Following years of working on and off and judging that this drawing in black and white has reached its final stage, I proceed to fix with clear spray fixative liquid for drawings; this procedure among artist is common as it allowed the drawing or any other medium and materials to remain permanent on the surface. Unfortunately, after several years of being kept in the store, the drawing was damage due to rain, humidity, and natural moisture. I managed to transfer it to a new and more resilient paper surface. Each piece of the original paper is thick, hot-pressed (semi-acid-free) which I transferred with glue onto a new acid-free water-colour paper. Then I proceeded to hang it at the studio wall and let it dry for a couple of months while studying and observing it for several months, thinking and re-thinking the best possible colour schemes that will enhance the already drawn product. Looking back at this black and white drawing, I decided that red, brown, violets, white and black colours should be suitable to re-address the made composition. Why? And where to set the new colours?

Based on the original black and white drawing I decided to follow my intuition and years of experience, letting it to obtain the best colour arrangement naturally until its final stage.

After eleven years has passed, I made the final decision which did not follow any pre-determinate solution or set of rules. It falls back on years of skills, experience, visual knowledge, and innumerable try-outs of right and wrong exercises with either positive or negative outcomes. All cognitive analyses allow the artist to make the best possible imaginary studies before implementing it. The colour arrangement aims to create a stronger, energetic, and more vigorous visual outcome. The depiction and different elements in this drawing were used as a visual language with hidden meanings, difficult to justify, leaving the final understanding of this visual language to the audience to reach their own conclusions.

References:

1. *Your Dictionary*, accessed on 26 March 2020, <https://www.yourdictionary.com/evolution>.
2. Lois Barrlett Tracy, *Adventuring in Art* (Sarasota, Florida: Pineapple Press Inc., 1900), 11.