

Celebrating **DIVERSITY**

CONSUMING CULTURE, CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY



16 - 30 AUGUST 2025
G13 GALLERY

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BY KENNY TENG

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ARTWORK

Celebrating Diversity:

Consuming Culture, Constructing Identity

A Contemporary Art Exhibition on Food and Social Imagination

In the vibrant and complex tapestry that is Malaysia, few symbols speak more clearly of unity and shared identity than food. It is through food that Malaysians find common ground, even amidst difference. As a curator who has spent over a decade exploring the intersections of contemporary art, culture, and society, I find food to be a compelling and deeply personal metaphor for the ways in which we coexist: sometimes harmoniously, sometimes tensely, but always with flavour.

Celebrating Diversity emerges in conjunction with Malaysia’s Merdeka celebrations, a period when national identity is both commemorated and questioned. The exhibition seeks to unpack the symbolic power of food as a reflection of cultural hybridity, memory, and collective experience. Here, food is more than a theme; it is a language, a vessel of memory, a site of exchange, and a metaphor for survival, resistance, and belonging.

Each artwork in this exhibition serves as an ingredient in a broader narrative of Malaysian identity. These works explore food not only in its visual or material form but as lived experience through rituals, gestures, scents, and stories. The participating artists draw from personal memories, community practices, historical references, and the intangible cultural heritage that food embodies.

In a time when nationalism is often deployed to exclude, this exhibition reclaims Merdeka as a moment of radical inclusivity. It insists that identity is not singular or absolute but layered, much like the flavours in a well-balanced dish. From the fragrant complexity of *Nasi Kerabu* to the humble yet beloved *Roti Canai*, these dishes carry within them the genealogies of migration, colonial histories, intercultural marriages, and generational exchange.

The works presented here span various media such as painting, installation, sculpture, and mixed media, each offering a unique sensory experience. Some evoke nostalgia through material choices; others invite the audience to engage through touch. A few even verge on performance, re-enacting the rituals of food preparation or communal dining.

Food, after all, is never neutral. It carries politics and histories within it. Who gets to cook what, where, and for whom? Who has access to certain ingredients or rituals? Whose recipes are preserved, and whose are forgotten? These questions are subtly but powerfully embedded within the works featured in this show. The exhibition therefore functions not only as a celebration but also as a site of critical inquiry.

Celebrating Diversity is also a timely response to global discourses around identity and migration. As countries grapple with issues of displacement and cultural erasure, Malaysia’s example of coexisting diversity, though imperfect, offers valuable insights. This exhibition does not pretend that diversity is always easy or peaceful, but it affirms its importance. Diversity, like cooking, requires care, negotiation, and imagination.

In curating this show, I am reminded of the countless meals shared across difference: the Chinese family enjoying *rendang* during Raya, the Indian stall selling *nasi lemak* with *sambal belacan*, the Malay auntie trying *Yong Tau Foo* and incorporating *kuah kacang*. These are not just anecdotes; they are acts of everyday diplomacy, cultural openness, and quiet resistance to division.

Contemporary life, however, is rapidly changing how we relate to one another around food. The ritual of gathering over a meal has been reshaped by digital culture and social media, where eating together is often filtered through the lens of documentation. Instagrammable dishes, food vlogs, and online reviews have, in many ways, replaced the intimacy of shared meals with curated performance. The dining table is now both physical and digital, both communal and performative. This exhibition acknowledges this shift, asking whether technology enhances or diminishes our shared human experience around food.

A compelling example of this cultural transformation is seen in the work of Aimman Hafizal, whose pop surreal sculptures transform familiar food forms into fantastical, dreamlike landscapes. In his practice, food becomes architecture: giant *nasi lemak*, suspended eggs, and reimagined snacks populate strange yet playful worlds. These works speak to the hyperreal, digitally mediated experience of contemporary food culture: nostalgic, excessive, uncanny, and always on display. Aimman's sculptures invite us to reflect not only on what we eat, but how we consume images of food in a world obsessed with visibility and performance.



Details of *The Taste of Home* by Aimman Hafizal

Another work that powerfully expands the exhibition's conceptual reach is *Heroes' anti Heroes (2014–2022): A Menu of Ideology Promotion of Power* by Azizan Paiman. Spanning nearly a decade, this project treats politics as a form of cultural cuisine, interrogating how ideological loyalty is shaped not just by facts, but by emotional and symbolic consumption. Using primary school exercise books, those covering history, religion, geography, and life skills, as metaphorical serving plates, the artist critiques how early education sets the menu for ideological tastes that persist into adulthood. Through collage techniques, fragmented portraits of political figures from various parties and eras are assembled into visual recipes that question how narratives of power are constructed, consumed, and remembered. In doing so, the work challenges us to reconsider what we have been fed, politically and culturally, and what ingredients may have been left out. It aligns perfectly with the exhibition's central inquiry into how food, in all its symbolic weight, reveals deeper truths about our social fabric.



From the series *Heroes' anti Heroes (2014–2022): A Menu of Ideology Promotion of Power* by Azizan Paiman

Ultimately, *Celebrating Diversity* is an invitation to look, to listen, to taste, and to reflect. It asks us to consider how something as ordinary as a meal can become a map of who we are, how we live, and how we might move forward together. In this way, the exhibition is both a tribute and a provocation: a feast of stories, a table set for all.

As Malaysia continues to define and redefine itself, may we always return to the table, hungry not just for food, but for understanding, connection, and shared meaning.

Kenny Teng
Curator



ARTWORK



The Taste of Home

30(H) x 52(W) x 72(D) cm | Acrylic Paint on 3D Print & Wood | 2025



Toekang Koppie

138 x 138 cm | Cyanotype & Mixed Media on Canvas | 2025



Sneaky Snack (Senyap-senyap Ngap!)

122 x 91.5 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2025



Cerita Rasa I

35.5(H) x 23.5(W) x 23.5(D) cm | Oil on Biscuit Can | 2025



Cerita Rasa II

35.5(H) x 23.5(W) x 23.5(D) cm | Oil on Biscuit Can | 2025



Cerita Rasa III

35.5(H) x 23.5(W) x 23.5(D) cm | Oil on Biscuit Can | 2025



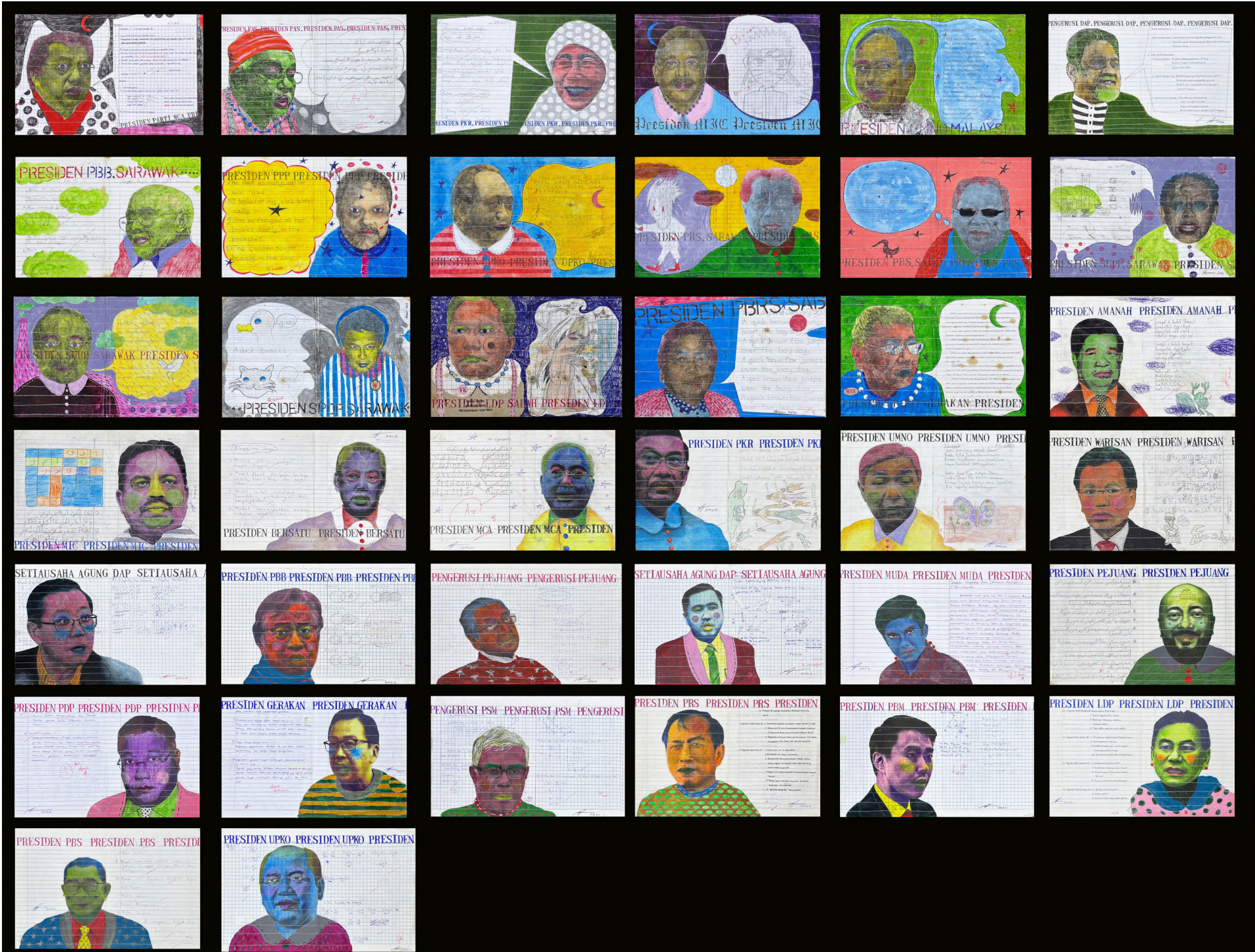
'Dari Sungai ke Segara' (From the River to the Sea)
91 x 91 cm | Paper Collage on Canvas | 2024



Cempaka Gila

122 x 79cm | Wood Cabinet & Porcelain | 2025

AZIZAN PAIMAN



Heroes' anti Heroes (2014 to 2022), A Menu of Ideology, Promotion of Power
20.5 x 31.5 cm each | Collage on Exercise Books | 2014, 2020 & 2022

Teh Time Story I

163 x 40.5 cm | Acrylic on Linen | 2025





Teh Time Story II

163 x 40.5 cm | Acrylic on Linen | 2025



Garlics & Beetle

120 x 120 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2015

Junjungan Kemerdekaan
122 x 92 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



Same Rice, Same Shit

Variable Size 135(H) x 56(W) x 56(D) cm | Ceramic Sculpture, Hand-lettering on Plinth, Installation with Hand-moulded Gold Feces | 2025





Makan-Makan 1 Malaysia
60cm in diameter (Upper) & 40cm in diameter (Lower) | Oil on Canvas | 2012
PRIVATE COLLECTION



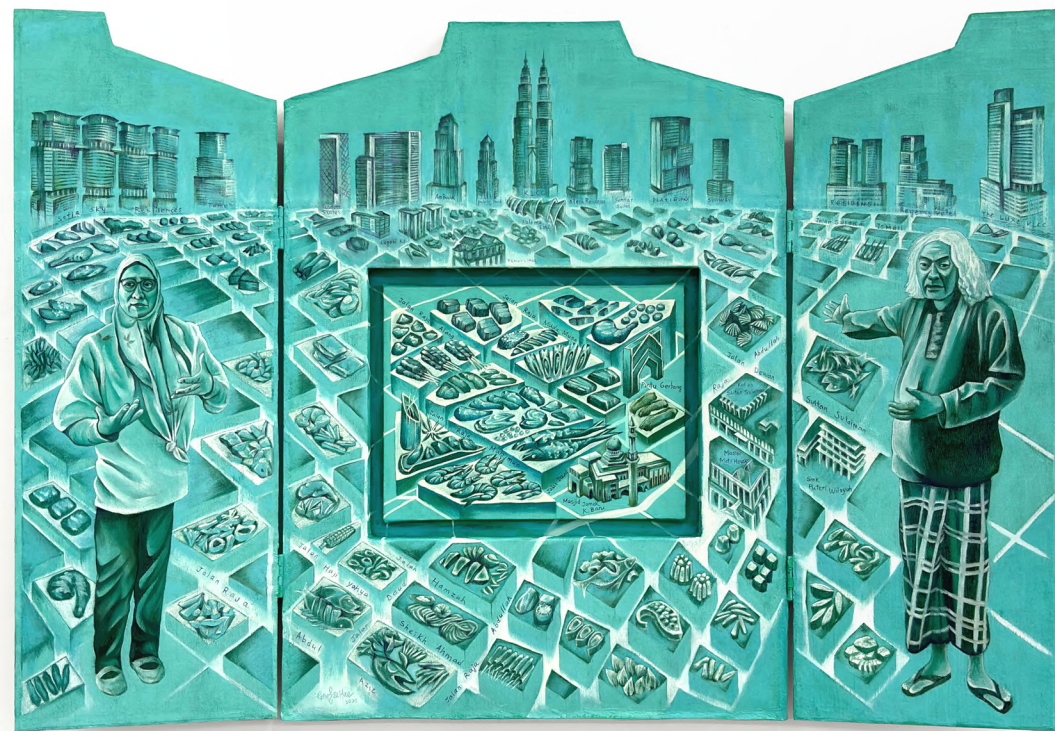
Silent Majority X

52.5x42.5cm & 50x40cm | Oil on Canvas | 2012

PRIVATE COLLECTION



Sek Yuen Culinary Shaping
88 x 132cm (Open) & 88 x 65cm (Close) | Oil on Canvas & Pine Wood Frame | 2025



Kampung Baru Culinary Shaping

89 x 132cm (Open) & 89 x 66cm (Close) | Oil on Canvas & Pine Wood Frame | 2025



Digestion

121 x 91 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2025

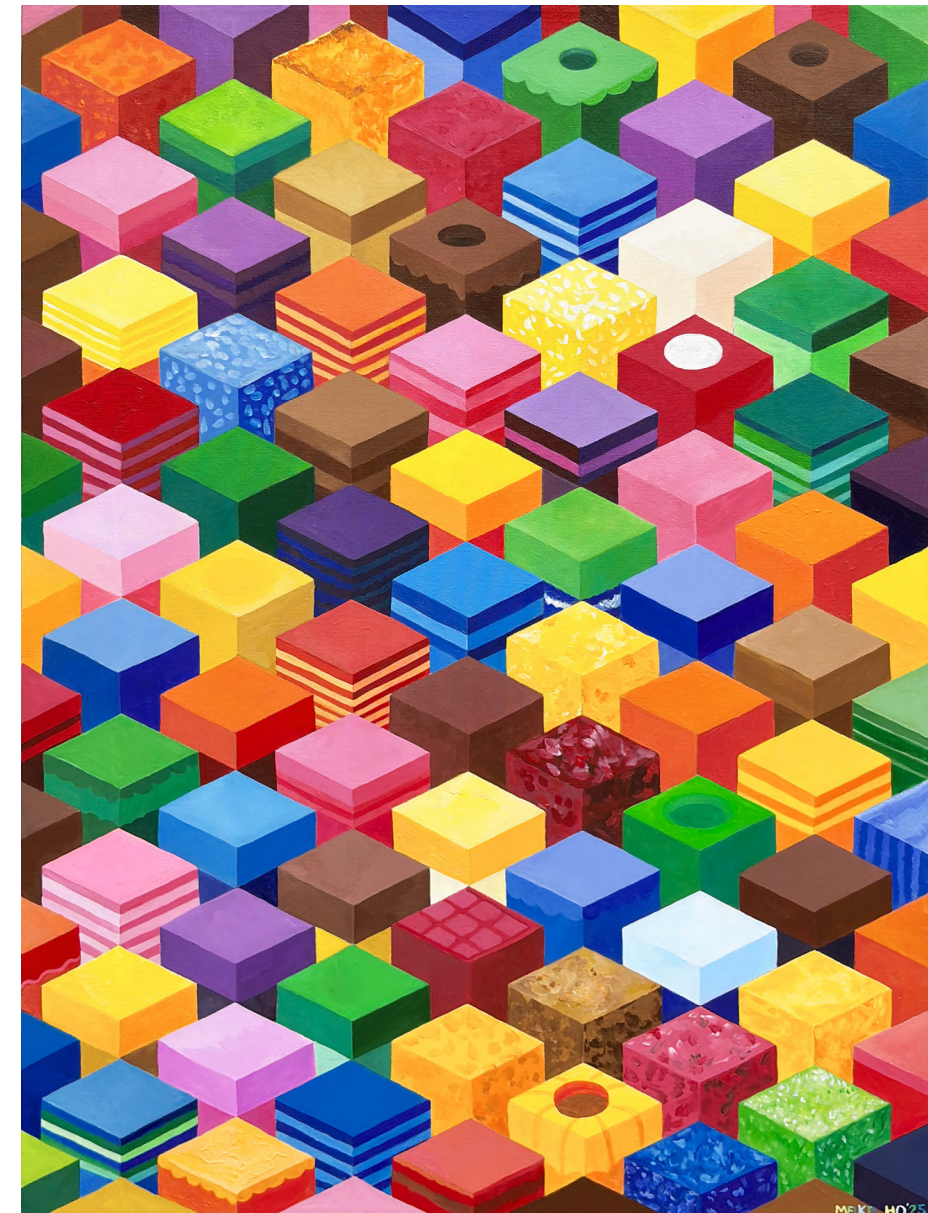
I Got This from My Neighbour
140 x 110 cm | Acrylic & Oil on Canvas | 2025





Bowls of Malaysia

122 x 122 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



Blocks of Kuih (Kuih Muih Series)
80 x 60 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



The Silhouette That Holds Us
56 x 75 cm | Graphite on Acid Free Paper | 2025



Rempah Ratus, Aroma Malaysia
122 x 153 cm | Mixed Media on Canvas | 2025

100 Years of Good Health is Everyone's Dream
100 x 70 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



BAHAGIA DI USIA **100** TAHUN

RAHSIANYA...?

“JANGAN MAKAN MALAM!”

PETUA TUN & ISTERI



Bahagia 100 Tahun

100 x 70 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



Honey Lemon

120 x 120 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2025



Hot Day

140 x 120 cm | Oil on Horizontally-cut Canvas Mounted on Canvas | 2025



Fragile Assets

82 x 132 cm | Coloured Pencil on Paper | 2025



Nakaakan Ko Noh? A Sabahan Eats his way from Kota Kinabalu to Kangar
122 x 122 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2025



Breakfast

122 x 122 cm | Acrylic on Canvas | 2025



No Photo, No Makan

120 x 90 cm | Acrylic, Watercolour & Colour Pencil | 2025



The Taste Within I

38(H) x 30(W) x 14.5(D) cm | Stone Powder Clay & Mixed Media | 2025



The Taste Within II

35(H) x 30(W) x 14.5(D) cm | Stone Powder Clay & Mixed Media | 2025



More Than Just Snacks
150 x 150 cm | Oil on Canvas | 2025

ABOUT G13 GALLERY:

Established in 2010, G13 Gallery is a leading contemporary art gallery based in Malaysia, dedicated to showcasing innovative and thought-provoking works by artists from Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

Through curated exhibitions, artist residencies and international collaborations, G13 Gallery actively shapes contemporary art discourse while fostering cross-border partnerships. As a hub for artistic dialogue, the gallery strengthens the visibility of regional art by participating in international and regional art fairs, providing artists with opportunities to expand their reach and engage with diverse audiences.

Beyond exhibitions, G13 Gallery supports scholarly research and publications that contribute to the evolving discourse of contemporary art in Asia. With a commitment to artistic excellence and meaningful engagement, the gallery continues to play a vital role in shaping and advancing the contemporary art scene in Malaysia and the region.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition :

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