



Right By You



13th
UOB
Painting
of the Year



Message from the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of UOB Malaysia

At the intersection of art and history lies a profound truth – the ability to weave the past and the present into a single canvas. This truth is embodied in this year’s top winning artwork, “Malaya and British Borneo One Dollar 1953 (We look at the past, we look at the present).” This extraordinary artwork takes us on a journey through time, invoking a profound sense of nostalgia while encouraging viewers to contemplate history’s enduring influence on our present. At UOB, we share the similar sentiment by taking experience from our strong heritage as we continue to build the future of ASEAN.

UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia), now in its thirteenth year, continues to unearth hidden talents within the vibrant artistic community of Malaysia. We take immense pride in providing a platform for both emerging as well as established local artists to showcase their creativity and share their unique perspectives with the wider region. This competition has become a permanent fixture in the local art scene for nurturing artistic talents and fostering cross-cultural dialogue through the language of art.

Art has the incredible power to transcend boundaries and ignite meaningful conversations. The artworks in this catalogue serve as a testament to artists’ ability to articulate their thoughts, ideas, and emotions through various techniques on their canvases. Each artwork is a profound statement, a visual narrative that invites us to partake in the artist’s world, to question, and to be moved.


Congratulations to all the winners of this year’s competition. Your dedication, creativity, and passion have elevated the competition to new heights, and your contributions to art are invaluable. We are excited to see how your artistic journeys continue to evolve and inspire in the years to come. I would also like to thank our distinguished panel of judges for your expertise and time in evaluating and nominating the winning artworks for this year.

As we explore the pages of this catalogue and immerse ourselves in the world of art, let us remember that these artworks inspire us by challenging our perspectives and sharing with us stories from the artists’ lens. In a world filled with dynamic shifts, art reminds us of the enduring importance of introspection and reflection, encouraging us to see the present through a fresh lens and to embrace change with an open heart.

Ms Ng Wei Wei

Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer
UOB Malaysia





2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA

Established Artist Category

Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | ESTABLISHED ARTIST CATEGORY



UOB Painting of the Year

Established Artist Category

Artist: Chong Kim Chiew

Title: *Malaya and British Borneo One Dollar 1953 (We look at the past, we look at the present)*

Medium: Mixed media (acrylic, paper with paint, foil paper and lime plaster) on canvas

Size (cm): 180 x 180

Malaya and British Borneo One Dollar 1953 (We look at the past, we look at the present) features two identical banknotes from the British Malaya era. The artwork evokes a sense of nostalgia for the time when the currency was in circulation across Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, North Borneo, Brunei and the Riau archipelago from 1953 to 1967.

The upper banknote represents the past and its historical context. Its foil paper creating a mirror surface that reflects the viewers’ silhouette. The lower banknote, mirror-reversed, allow viewers the unique perspective of aligning themselves with the portrait and to reflect on the changes in history.

This juxtaposition symbolises the past and present, encouraging viewers to gaze into the present through the lens of history.

Through the artwork, the artist explores the relationship between money and art, as well as Malaysia’s modern and historical narrative. This exploration prompted questions about the fluctuating value of artists and their artworks over time. Just like an old bank note that appreciates in value over the years; who determines its value? It playfully challenges an artist’s pursuit of commercial value in the art world.

Chong Kim Chiew holds a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art (Oil Painting) degree from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art. He is an artist and curator who works with different mediums, methods and paradigms. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions and held six solo exhibitions from 2005 to 2021. He has exhibited internationally in Busan Biennale (2022), 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (2021) in Australia, ARTJOG 8 Indonesia (2015), Open Sea in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon (2015) and Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia in the Singapore Art Museum (2012). His work is collected by the Singapore Art Museum and the Queensland Art Gallery.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | ESTABLISHED ARTIST CATEGORY



Gold
Established Artist Category

Artist: Hasanul Isyraf Bin Idris
Title: *How to Disappear Under the Brightest Star*
Medium: Guoache and acrylic guoache on paper
Size (cm): 180 x 153

How To Disappear Under the Brightest Star draws inspiration from the artist’s evening strolls, where a profound detachment from the world takes hold.

This experience led to the development of a hobby: caring for nocturnal animals, such as moths. Witnessing the moth’s metamorphosis ignited existential contemplation in the artist. The artwork encapsulates the transformative power of the night, interweaving themes of mortality, existentialism and humanity’s place in the universe.

Hasanul Isyraf Bin Idris studied at MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Perak, Malaysia. His practice spans various media, including painting, drawing, installation, video work and sculpture. His works typically manifest hybridity of fictional and surreal iconography drawn from personal invention and a melange of cultural and literature references, such as books, films, song and artworks. His artworks have been exhibited in Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, New York and Paris. Public collections featuring his work include the Singapore Art Museum, Galeri Z (Malaysia) and ILHAM Gallery (Malaysia).



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | ESTABLISHED ARTIST CATEGORY



Silver
Established Artist Category

Artist: Nik Ashri bin Nik Harun
Title: *In the Quiet Whiteness, The Darkened Silence Resonates*
Medium: Mixed media (charcoal and acrylic) on canvas
Size (cm): 163 x 160

In the Quiet Whiteness, The Darkened Silence Resonates is a triptych inspired by an encounter with a blind masseur, whose contentment despite his lack of sight sparked an exploration of perception beyond the physical realm.

The first panel features a veiled figure, blindfolded and draped, with hands clasping a walking stick and bell. The blindfold serves as a poignant reminder of our reliance on vision, while the stick and bell represent alternate ways to navigate the world.

The second panel showcases an excerpt from Ibn Al-Khatir’s Tafseer on Surah Al-Hajj:46, however, its meaning obscured by heavy redaction. The boldness of the obliterated text, contrasting with the preceding panel’s silent imagery, compels viewers to seek meaning beyond the visible.

The final panel is a pure white canvas, embossed with braille script that reads ‘God does not look at your forms and possessions but he looks at your hearts and your deeds’. It reiterates the motif of the blind masseur’s wisdom, reminding us to view the world not merely with our eyes, but also with our hearts.

Done with charcoal and acrylic, this artwork invites viewers on a journey of introspection and self-discovery, challenging conventional perspectives of perception and spiritual understanding.

Nik Ashri Bin Nik Harun is a self-taught artist that has been drawn to the arts since his childhood. His art journey is inspired by the depth of Romanticism – expressed through charcoal and creating pieces that reflects his personal experiences. He is also a multiple times winner of the UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia) - Gold Award, Emerging Artist Category in 2021; Silver Award, Established Artist Category in 2022, showing his evolution as an artist. His artworks were also showcased in the Malaysian Emerging Artist Award 2022 and HOM Art Open 2023. He aims to connect deeply with viewers through his art, making every piece a shared emotional journey.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | ESTABLISHED ARTIST CATEGORY



Bronze
Established Artist Category

Artist: Umibaizurah Binti Mahir Ismail
Title: *Uncharted Realm*
Medium: Mixed media (clay soil, sand, stone, and ceramic pigment) on canvas
Size (cm): 125 x 125

Uncharted Realm is a captivating artwork composed of locally sourced clay soil, sand, stone, and ceramic pigment, which depicts the Earth's surface and encapsulates intricate textures and colours. As time passes, the canvas transforms, mirroring the harsh impact of environmental temperature changes. This artwork serves as a poignant commentary on pressing environmental issues, particularly the alarming consequences of global warming. It highlights the destructive effects of globalisation, consumerism and materialism, which have accelerated ecological devastation and climate change. As we gaze upon this piece, it prompts us to reconsider the balance of our actions and values, igniting a deep sense of responsibility towards nature, sustainability and the protection of endangered habitats.

Umibaizurah Binti Mahir Ismail earned her Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design (Ceramic) from MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam, Malaysia in 2000. She is a ceramic sculptor who gives new interpretation to the conventional perceptions of her medium by expanding it into the realms of sculpture and installation art. Since 1997, she has showcased her work in exhibitions spanning across Asia and Europe. Notably, she represented Malaysia at the Jakarta Contemporary Ceramic Biennale 1 & 2 in 2009 and 2012, as well as the Cheongju Craft Biennale in 2011 and Asia Ceramics Network 2008 in South Korea. Her innovative artworks have earned international acclaim and are cherished by institutional and private collectors both locally and abroad.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | ESTABLISHED ARTIST CATEGORY



Highly Commended
Established Artist Category


Artist: Yap Chee Keng
Title: 破碎的荧幕与自由搏斗
(Broken Screens and Freedom Struggles)
Medium: Acrylic on canvas
Size (cm): 100 x 180

破碎的荧幕与自由搏斗 (*Broken Screens and Freedom Struggles*) is a symbolic representation of technology-related challenges and issues in modern life. It aims to highlight the convenience brought by technology while inviting viewers to be mindful of its potential negative impacts. When people become reliant on technology, broken screens remind us of our vulnerability and confusion if we were to lose access to these digital tools. Technological progress has made life more convenient but can lead people to overlook face-to-face interactions and emotional connections in real-life. This artwork reminds us to cherish interpersonal communication and relationships.

In this piece, lines are repeatedly stacked and extended horizontally without edges, forming images of alternating density. The stacking of countless coloured lines brings colour combinations that symbolise culture and life.

Yap Chee Keng has a Master of Fine Arts from Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan in 2020. During his time in Taiwan, he devoted himself to many solo exhibitions. His works garnered recognition through the 2022 Malaysia Contemporary Young Artists Competition (Jury Awards), the 2021 Next Art Tainan Awards and the 2020 Nanyang Awards (Western Media Category: Best Work). He achieved a Silver Medal in the Oil Painting Category at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (National Art Exhibition) as well as the esteemed 2020 Creative Excellence Award from Taipei University of the Arts.





2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA

Emerging Artist Category

Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | EMERGING ARTIST CATEGORY



Most Promising Artist of the Year

Emerging Artist Category

Artist: Mairul Nisa Binti Malek

Title: *Malek and Mariana*

Medium: Mixed media (cement, washed cyanotype, film, wire mesh, acrylic container) on wooden box frame

Size (cm): 56 x 96

Malek and Mariana is a glimpse into the remote regions of Sarawak, Malaysia (Kapit, Betong and Kabong), where the artist’s father used to serve as an educator two decades ago.

She recalls a trip to one of those remote area – the journey took four hours by boat, two hours by bus and one hour by express boat. During this trip, she observed the devotion and unwavering sense of responsibility that both her parents possess.

Transitioning to Peninsular Malaysia, she notices the privilege, accessibility and exposure city life has to offer. It makes her feel grounded and brings her solace in her upbringing as a Sarawakian, of knowing who she is, where she comes from and what she has been through. These emotions and diaspora experience are reflected in her creative process for this visual series. The application of washed cyanotype on cement evokes the tastefully imperfect aspects of her past, while the addition of inverted film serves as an introspection of her memories.

Mairul Nisa Binti Malek graduated with Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art from MARA University of Technology (UiTM), Shah Alam in 2020 and is currently pursuing her masters in the same institution. She is a multidisciplinary artist and is currently experimenting with different art disciplines, ranging from sculpture to installation.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | EMERGING ARTIST CATEGORY



Gold
Emerging Artist Category

Artist: Ahmad Syakir Bin Hashim
Title: *For the Love of Sweet and Bitter Truth*
Medium: Plastic bag on canvas
Size (cm): 122 x 122

For the Love of Sweet and Bitter Truth serves as an indirect reflection of the essence of this semi-abstract artwork. This piece draws inspiration from contemplating the impermanence of life, caught in the tension between the pursuit of worldly happiness and the acceptance of life's bitter truth - its transience. It encapsulates the paradox of relentless pursuit of happiness, even with the awareness that happiness itself is fleeting. To symbolise the longing for permanence, plastic bags were employed as a metaphor for their durability and endurance over time. The artwork portrays a man wrapped in a blanket seemingly gazing out of a window, yearning to witness the beauty of the external world. This somber atmosphere is crafted through expressive brushstrokes applied to layers of plastic bags, both constructed and deconstructed.

Ahmad Syakir Bin Hashim is a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art graduate from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) Shah Alam in 2008 and later pursued a master's degree in 2018. He currently works as a lecturer at INTI College. Ahmad Syakir has exhibited in many local art exhibitions. He also won the consolation prize for the "Waste to Art" competition in 2019.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | EMERGING ARTIST CATEGORY



Silver
Emerging Artist Category

Artist: Ooi Yong Hui
Title: *Scars of Love, Stain of Time II*
Medium: Burned incense stick
on rice paper
Size (cm): 180 x 96

Scars of Love, Stain of Time II conveys a powerful message about the complicated and timeless connections between personal experiences and cultural heritage. It illustrates the tenacity of cultural identity and the wisdom that transcends generations. The artwork embodies the everlasting imprints of love and the indelible marks left by time, achieved by burning holes on rice paper using incense. The damaged and stained surfaces and depiction of the Chinese cultural figures invites viewers to reflect on the significant relationship between their own life stories and the broader tapestry of shared heritage.

Ooi Yong Hui is pursuing an education in Fine Art at the University of Science Malaysia (USM). She exhibited at the Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF), USM. She is a visionary artist whose creative journey has been marked by an unyielding curiosity to explore the vast possibilities of artistic expression through various materials. Born and raised in a culturally diverse city, her early exposure to different art forms ignited a profound interest in the interplay of textures, colours and shapes.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | EMERGING ARTIST CATEGORY



Bronze

Emerging Artist Category

Artist: Izhar Yusrin Bin Zainuddin
Title: *Escape from the Plot*
Medium: Mixed media (acrylic and spray paint) on water colour paper and acrylic sheet
Size (cm): 132 x 77

Escape from the Plot explores the concept of a predetermined fate or impeding sense of predestined suffering that consistently haunts the artist, leaving him feeling vulnerable in the face of an uncertain future beyond his control. This internal conflict manifests as a divided focus, symbolised by the contrasting colours of red and blue. The red represents an insatiable curiosity for the illogical, while the blue signifies the need to find meaning in the irrational. This dissonance of red and blue conveys the nebulous nature of fate.

Izhar Yusrin Bin Zainuddin is a Bachelor of Art in Fine Arts graduate from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) Shah Alam. He participated in an art installation at the Kapallorok Art Space for Antara 2.0 exhibition and won the Jury's Choice Award for the Spotlight 2021 art competition by Penang Art District.



Best of 2023 UOB Painting of the Year

MALAYSIA | EMERGING ARTIST CATEGORY



Highly Commended
Emerging Artist Category

Artist: Noor Zahran Bin Khizan
Title: *Not for Sale*
Medium: Ink on paper
Size (cm): 82 x 132

Not for Sale is a captivating artwork that challenges our obsession with social media validation. It portrays a fallen shopping cart strewn with blue hearts, symbolising the fleeting nature of online approval.

The abandoned cart represents the discarded pursuit of validation through superficial measures, leaving the viewer to question the underlying meaning behind seeking likes on social media. As the hearts lay scattered, the message becomes apparent: the value of likes is ultimately hollow and purposeless. This artwork urges the viewers to contemplate the authenticity of their digital interactions.

Noor Zahran Bin Khizan has a Diploma in Creative Media from Kolej Professional MARA (KPM) Indera Mahkota. He won the Malaysia Emerging Artist Award (MEAA) in 2022. His artistic style blends realism and surrealism, focusing on figurative and still life subjects. He primarily works with ink as his medium of choice, utilising its versatility to create intricate and compelling artwork.



2023 UOB Painting of the Year
PANEL OF JUDGES

Ms Bibi Chew

*Art Advisor, Academician and
Malaysian Contemporary Artist*

Mr Choy Chun Wei

Leading Malaysian Contemporary Artist

Mr Ahmad Fuad Osman

Leading Malaysian Contemporary Artist