



2020  
**UOB**  
Painting  
of the Year



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*“One eye sees, the other feels.”*

- Paul Klee

## Message from the CEO



UOB's Painting of the Year has been uncovering the next generation of great artists since 1982. As the longest-running art competition in Singapore and one of the most recognised in Southeast Asia, UOB's flagship art programme continues to be the mainstay on the calendar of the art community across parts of the region. Over the years, UOB has expanded the competition to Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.

In Malaysia, we have reached a milestone of our own, as we celebrate 10 years of recognising Malaysian artists. Our commitment to promoting the arts is rooted in the belief that art unites, art inspires and art heals.


During these unprecedented times, art has also become therapy for many, helping society cope with the unknown.

This year's theme, solidarity, is an effort to highlight the importance of unity through adversity. Through the eyes of the artists and their work, we hope to bring people together, particularly during this trying period, for the common good.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all our winners and thank them for sharing their craft and talent with us through the UOB Painting of the Year competition. My special thanks also go to our distinguished panel of judges for making time in their schedules to evaluate and select the winning art pieces.

I hope you will enjoy the works of art featured in this catalogue and let the winning artists inspire you with their visual stories of solidarity.

**Mr Wong Kim Choong**  
Chief Executive Officer  
UOB Malaysia



2020 UOB Painting of the Year

**MALAYSIA**

Established Artist Category

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2020 UOB Painting of the Year (Top Winner)

Artist: Sabri Idrus  
Title: *Silent Fortress*  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas  
Size (cm): 180 x 180

Through this artwork, the artist hopes to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal. Whether we are confronting a pandemic, economic downturn, political differences or global warming, we are always standing together in solidarity in pursuit of peace.

*Silent Fortress* is a quiet space for each of us to reflect on being true to ourselves and work towards our responsibility to each other, thus, strengthening our bond as Malaysians.

Mr Sabri Idrus obtained his Master of Fine Arts in Creative Practice from Transart Institute, University of Plymouth, United Kingdom, in 2017. He has exhibited his work locally and internationally. His work ranges in different disciplines and mediums from painting, graphic design, multimedia, installation, video work and sculpture. He has won awards including the UOB Painting of the Year (Malaysia) Special Mention award in 2011, Young Contemporary Art Award (Painting Category) in 2004 and Juror's Award for the Malaysia Open Show in 2014, both organised by the National Art Gallery of Malaysia.





Gold

Artist: Wong Ming Hao

Title: *Let's Stay At Home To Save The World*

Medium: Acrylic and gloss gel on canvas

Size (cm): 120 x 150

In *Let's Stay At Home To Save The World*, the artist emphasises the need to be vigilant and united to protect each other from the indiscriminate COVID-19 virus. Using acrylic and gloss gel on canvas, the artist illustrates the multi-racial society which we live in through a palette of skin colours. The square shapes that form the artwork is a metaphor for staying safe within one's home, as well as how the world is viewed through the pixels of a computer screen.

Mr Wong graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts from Dasein Academy of Art in 2009. He won the Jury Award in Bakat Muda Sezaman (Young Art Contemporaries) in 2019. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions held by reputable private galleries in the country.





Silver

Artist: Zac Lee

Title: *Giving Up Is Difficult*

Medium: Oil on canvas

Size (cm): 122 x 122

In *Giving Up Is Difficult*, the artist illustrates how there will always be hard times and circumstances which we cannot change. Through this artwork, he invites viewers to embrace the challenges and difficulties in life with optimism and the heart of a carefree child. For deep within the darkness, the fragments of light are not too far away.

Mr Lee obtained a Diploma in Fine Art from the Kuala Lumpur College of Art and pursued an education in illustration from The One Academy in 1992. He participated in the Vermont Studio Center Residency in 2006 and was shortlisted as a finalist in the Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong in 2014. He is currently an illustration lecturer at Dasein Academy of Art and a painter.



**Bronze**

Artist: **Sliz**  
Title: *Bersatu dalam Bersendiri:  
Berbicara dengan Tuhan/Hantu  
(Solidarity in Solitary:  
Conversing with God/Devil)*  
Medium: Industrial paint, aerosol paint,  
collage on steel, plywood and canvas  
Size (cm): 96.52 x 156.21



In the midst of dealing with loss, confusion and shame during the pandemic, the artist gained self-reflection in solitude and solitary through technology. Virtual connection has allowed us to find healing and balance in life together during this period of hardship. Through our connection, we begin healing not only ourselves but also the world as a whole when we project what we internalise.

Sliz is a multidisciplinary artist with experience in graffiti, design and art direction. He studied Bachelor of Science in Architecture (Hons) in Universiti Teknologi MARA Seri Iskandar. He has exhibited his work both locally and internationally in Indonesia, South Korea and Australia.








Highly Commended

Artist: Shafiq Nordin  
Title: *The Quarantine Album*  
Medium: Acrylic on Jute  
Size (cm): 153 x 153

*The Quarantine Album* is an interpretation of modern issues that have gone viral on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The artist emphasises the assortment of difficulties Malaysians have faced during the movement control order, noting that the year 2020 was envisioned as a year of growth and technology, but was disrupted instead by an invisible enemy. The artist also highlights how the pandemic has made people think about others rather than themselves, while some do not see the severity of the situation and merely complained about trivial matters. He urges all Malaysians to come together and appreciate the frontliners who are heroes of the pandemic, a solidarity without judgement of race and religion.

Mr Shafiq has participated in international exhibitions across Southeast Asia and in Europe. He graduated from Universiti Teknologi MARA with a Bachelors in Fine Art in 2012.





2020 UOB Painting of the Year

**MALAYSIA**

Emerging Artist Category

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### 2020 Most Promising Artist of the Year

Artist: Khabir Ali Bin Roslan  
Title: *Solidariti Tanah Air (Homeland Solidarity)*  
Medium: Soil and bandage  
Size (cm): 180 x 106

*Solidariti Tanah Air (Homeland Solidarity)* is inspired by the concept of physics and Nusantara (Malay Archipelago) cosmology. The artist metaphorically portrays solidarity through his art making process and technique, while using soil and bandage materials. In physics, the molecular structure of water is in the shape of a hexagon. In the context of Nusantara cosmology, the repeated geometrical pattern is taken from the concept of Zikr (remembrance of God). The correlation between water and soil is central for this work on a conceptual and metaphorical level. Water is the source of all life and the key element in holding together the soil with the threads of the bandage. This process and technique collectively functions as a metaphorical act of binding together. The artist uses a repetitive pattern that signifies the Malay singgora (clay) roof to relate the notion of a nation living together on the soil of our homeland. Solidarity is depicted in our bond as a nation and forms a strong social fabric that knits us together.

Mr Khabir is currently pursuing his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. The intention of the work he creates is to foster harmonic value in society.





Gold

Artist: Wong Sze Yoong  
Title: *Behind The Grille*  
Medium: Acrylic on canvas  
Size (cm): 180 x 150

Growing up in a low-cost flat, the view of the old window grille is both nostalgic and familiar to the artist. *Behind The Grille* is a painting that tells the stories of people from different demographics, ethnicities, faith and origins. Their stories may not be told in full but the viewer is given a glimpse through the scattered ornamental hints. Here, the artist sees his home, a community staying home in solidarity to flatten the curve and regain a world free of COVID-19. It reminds him that though he may every so often feels trapped, unable to move as freely as before, this is a conscious and necessary act of precaution. The greater comfort comes from knowing that he is not a lone ranger, but is part of an army fighting in solidarity.

Mr Wong graduated from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts). He has interned at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei and is presently working as a volunteer teacher while pursuing his dream in the arts.





Silver

Artist: Muhamad Amir Bin Mansor

Title: *Toge-Together's Theory*

Medium: Acrylic and ink on canvas

Size (cm): 140 x 140

*Toge-Together's Theory* was produced by the artist at home during the movement control order in Malaysia. This painting is about reimagining our human nature and questioning the meaning of freedom. The title Toge-Together's Theory are catchwords using both Bahasa Malaysia and English which was inspired by the local use of 'toge' (mung bean sprout) in a social media meme to narrate 'together' or 'solidarity.' The pink dots symbolise infected patients, the blue dots represent COVID-19 frontliners and the white dots represent the rest of the population. The artist illustrates how we are all working together to break the chain of the virus spreading and the spirit of self-responsibility to overcome this uphill battle together.

Mr Muhamad Amir graduated with BA (Hons) Fine Arts from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2016 and obtained a Master of Fine Art and Technology from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam in 2020. He is currently pursuing his career as an artist.





**Bronze**

Artist: **Abdullah Ehlid Al Walid Bin Luli**

Title: ***PANDEMIC: A Quiet City-2020***

Medium: **Acrylic on canvas**

Size (cm): **128 x 153**

***PANDEMIC: A Quiet City-2020*** is inspired by the community isolation measures implemented by the Malaysian government to flatten the COVID-19 curve. The hustle and bustle of life was put on complete pause as the once busy cities and streets quiet down. This is a collective experience that has not been encountered before. The situation inspired the artist to manifest the forms stored in his everyday sensory view during the movement control order and invoke a sense of responsibility to show concern, care and sensitivity towards one another. The artist believes that this new norm and practice is what we'll remember 2020 by.

Mr Abdullah Ehlid obtained his art education from Universiti Teknologi MARA. He is an active member of the Kelantan Artist and Heritage Association and Sabah Visual Arts Association. Besides that, he won the first prize in the Citra Terengganu (Spontan category) in 2018 and 2019 and first prize Kota Kinabalu Bin Art Trail organised by Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu and Tourism Sabah in 2018. He is also a finalist for the Malaysian Emerging Artist Award in 2019.





### Highly Commended

Artist: Nur Zulifah Hamzah  
Title: *Kembali ke Biru Klasik*  
(Back to Classic Blue)  
Medium: Mixed media on canvas  
(Embroidery, bitumen, Chinese ink and acrylic)  
Size (cm): 91.45 x 122

*Kembali ke Biru Klasik (Back to Classic Blue)* depicts the artist's social connections that were restored during these trying times. The rectangular shapes in the artwork represent her and the people around her in little homes, confined and isolated during the quarantine period where social connections were at stake. In the centre sits the colour Classic Blue, the 2020 Pantone Colour of the Year, a symbol of unity and solidarity for the year of the pandemic outbreak. The main focus of the artwork is the stitched blue lines connecting one rectangle to another, a representation of social connections restored after a long, trying period. The artwork conveys a message of hope, a silver lining behind the struggles faced by the people during the pandemic. Bond between family and friends that were once neglected are now rekindled and appreciated.

Ms Nur Zulifah is an art enthusiast and is currently working as a freelance fabric designer. She graduated from Universiti Teknologi MARA with a Diploma in Fashion Design and a Bachelors in Graphic Design in 2013.



## 2020 UOB Painting of the Year

### Panel of Judges

**Ms Bibi Chew**

Multi-Disciplinary Artist  
Programme Leader, Malaysian Institute of Art  
Industry Advisory Panel, Visual Arts,  
Cultural Economy Development Agency  
(CENDANA)

**Mr Choy Chun Wei**

Leading Malaysian Contemporary Artist

**Ms Tan Hui Koon**

Curator  
National Art Gallery of Malaysia



