

YEE I-LANN & COLLABORATORS

BORN HEART





YEE I-LANN & COLLABORATORS: BORNEO HEART

Jesselton Square, Open Plaza,
Sabah International Convention Centre, Kota Kinabalu
2 to 31 May 2021



EXHIBITION GUIDE
borneoheart.yeielann.com

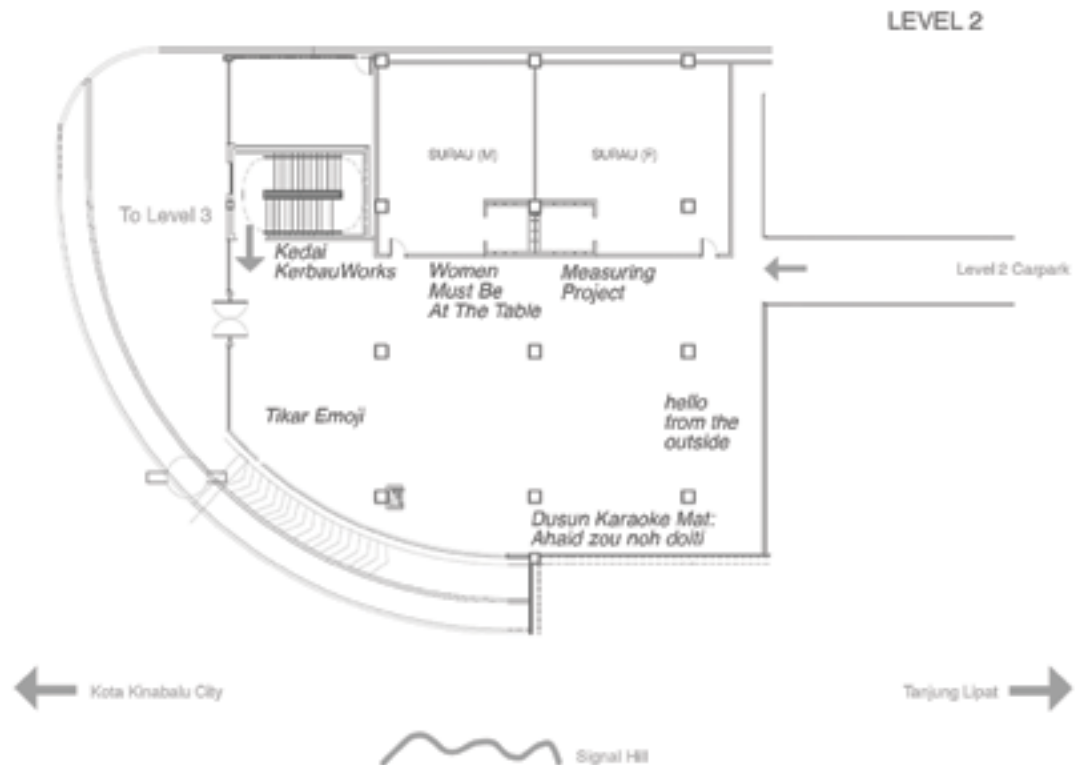
Collaboration Community

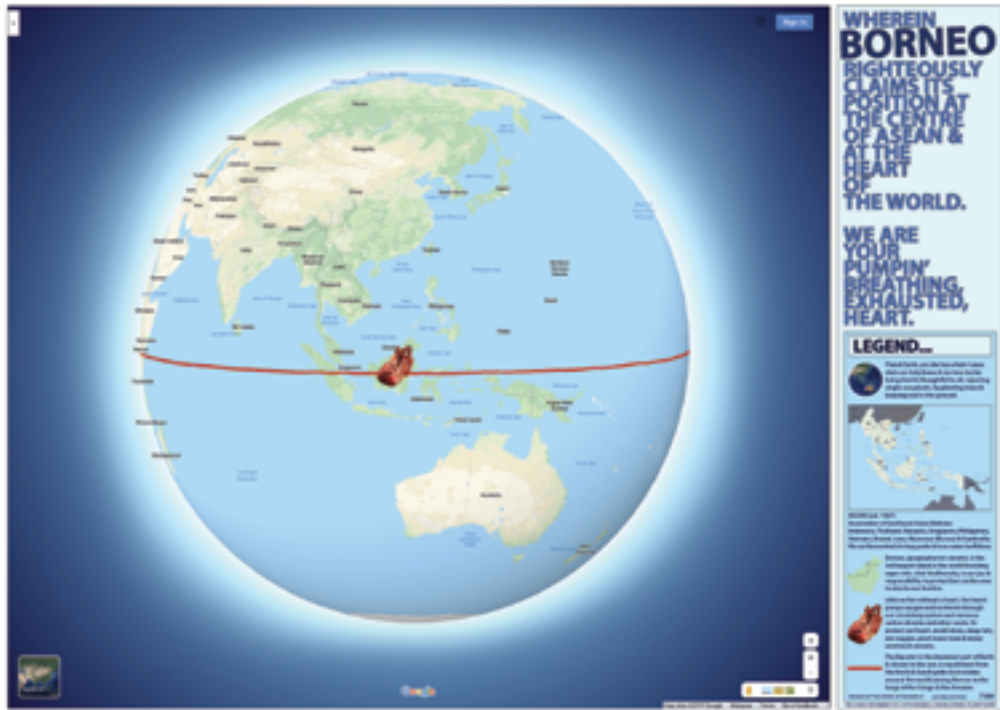
you and me and you and i and you and you

Saya paling suka menganyam dengan kawan supaya senang berbincang. Apabila kami menganyam, kalau satu orang tidak begitu pandai tetapi ada orang lain yang lebih pandai, orang itu yang akan mula, baru kami sama-sama buat. Itu pertama sekali dalam hidup saya menganyam begitu.

I like it best when I'm weaving with others because it's easy to discuss things. When we're weaving, if someone doesn't know how to do it but someone else does, the person who knows will start the mat and the rest of us will follow. I've never done weaving like that before.

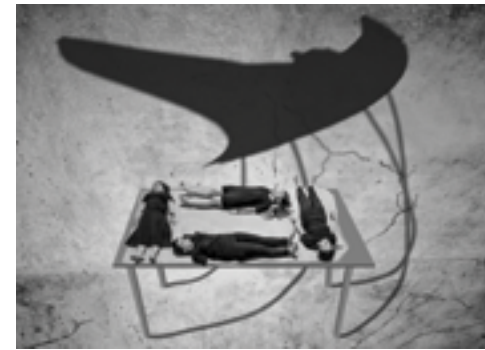
- Siat Yanau





Borneo Heart
2019
off-set print
59.4 x 84.1 cm (A1)
2nd edition of 100

→ local / global dichotomies
 ← shared / activated shared
dream space betw the local/global



Measuring Project: Chapter 1
2021
Digital inkjet pigment print (Giclée) on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper
29.7 x 42 cm (A3 x 4)
Edition of 8

The Bajau Sama DiLaut community at Omadal don't use feet or inches to measure. Seven feet (kaki) means the mat weaver's foot multiplied seven times, toe to heel.

Measuring a foot's length is more than just counting steps, it's the life you embed in the mat. When you take the first step, you say aloud, "Hidup!" ("Life!"). When the next heel touches the previous toe, you say aloud, "Mati!" ("Dead!"). Then with the next foot you say, "Hidup!" then "Mati!" and onwards. You must start with hidup and end with hidup. And the foot used to measure must belong to the principal or collectively nominated weaver.

- Yee I-Lann



photo: Andy Chia Chee Shiong

Tikar Emoji
 with weaving by Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Sanah, Kak Budi, Kak Roziah, Kak Goltiam, Kak Kuluk, Macik Merah, Macik Appay, Adik Darwisa, Adik Alisya, Adik Enidah, Adik Dela, Adik Erna, Adik Norsaida, Adik Asima, Adik Aline, Adik Dayang, Adik Tasya, Kak Solbi, Kak Anjung
 2020
 Bajau Sama DiLaut Pandanus weave with commercial chemical dye
 488 x 396 cm



culturally assigned significance, sacred meanings, need ritual
 • shared community meanings aka source, place familiarity with context, cosmology, symbols, story telling, pictograms, story telling, vague (unknown) ownership aka copyright issues, engagement, communication, local/global, generational, dead/stiff, untouchable in a vitrine, **alive** used & abused, embraced.

Traditional heritage motifs VS **emoji motifs**

• mass aka common knowledge, community, learning systems, readily systems, knowledge systems.

• ready systems, knowledge systems.

• local/global, generational, dead/stiff, untouchable in a vitrine, **alive** used & abused, embraced.



photo: Al Hanafi Juhar

hello from the outside
 with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin, Juraen Bin Sapirin and S. Narty Raitom
 2019
 Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
 225 x 364 cm

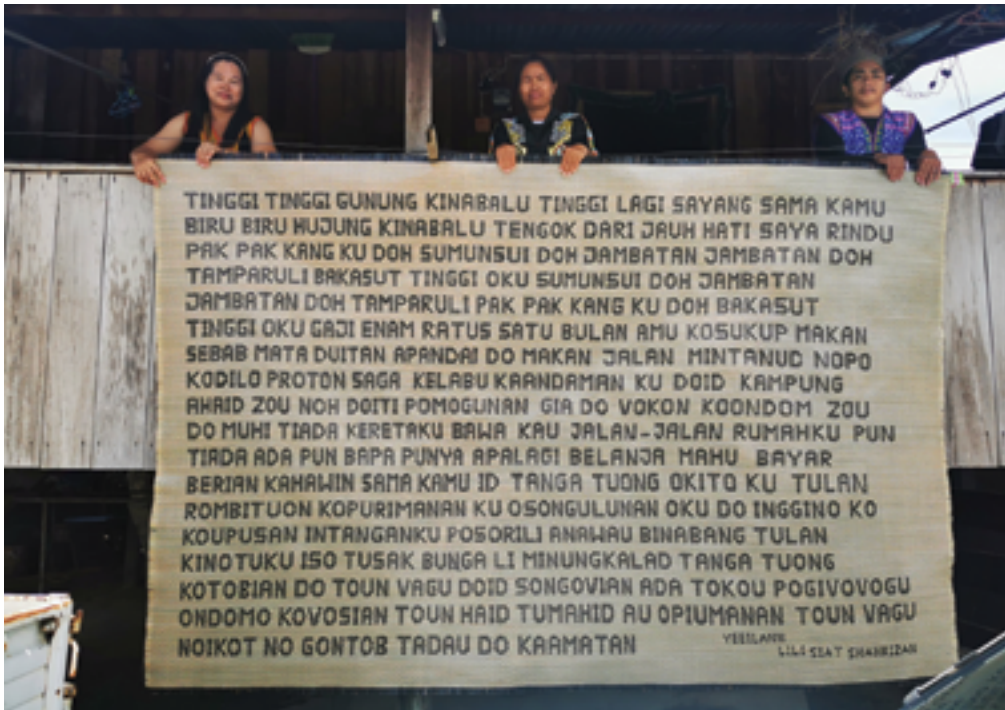
Anyaman tikar karaoke memang susah untuk buat tetapi saya sangat suka dan seronok sebab semasa kita membuat, kita boleh bernyanyi ikut anyaman sehingga anyaman siap.

The karaoke mat was very challenging to do but it was still fun and enjoyable to make because we would sing along to the words we were weaving until the mat was done.

- Lili Naming

Songs for Karaoke Mats





photos: Severinus Gimrit

Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti
 (Malay trans: Lama sudah saya disini / Eng trans: I've been here a long time)
 with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, and Shahrizan Bin Juin
 2020
 Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
 221 x 317.5 cm

Song lyrics in the original Kadazan or Dusun language (trans. Bev Joeman, Loriot Moujing, Didy Maison, Charles Darwin):

"Sayang Kinabalu" by Kimin Mudin

Sabah Malay: Tinggi tinggi gunung Kinabalu / tinggi lagi sayang sama kamu / biru biru hujung Kinabalu tengok dari jauh / hati saya rindu

English: So high is Mount Kinabalu / my love for you (Kinabalu) is higher / so blue is the edge of Kinabalu seen from far / my heart is longing

2) "Jambatan Tamparuli" by Justin Lusah

Dusun: Pak pak kang ku doh sumunsui doh jambatan jambatan doh Tamparuli bakasut tinggi oku / sumunsui doh jambatan jambatan doh Tamparuli pak pak kang ku doh bakasut tinggi oku

English: i make a "pak pak" sound as i walk along the bridge the Tamparuli bridge in my high-heeled shoes / as i walk along the bridge the Tamparuli bridge i make a "pak pak" sound in my high heeled shoes

3) "Proton Saga kalabu" by jokteo akang

Dusun: Gaji enam ratus satu bulan / amu kosukup makan / sebab mata duitan / apandai do makan jalan / mintanud nopo kodilo proton saga kalabu

Sabah Malay: Gaji enam ratus satu bulan / tak cukup untuk makan / sebab mata duitan / (wanita) pandai cari jalan / asyik mengikut kereta proton saga kalabu (diaorang la ba ni selalu ikut2 lelaki yg berlainan)

English: Salary of 600 a month / is not enough to



eat / with eyes just for money / (woman) clever to look for ways / busy following the gray Proton Saga (following many different guys - following wealth or status)

4) "Kaandaman doid kampung" by Irene Thaddeus (singer) music & lyrics by Gundohing Thaddeus Majakul

Kadazan: Kaandaman ku doid kampung / ahaid zou noh doiti / pomogunan gia do vokon / koondom zou do muhi

Malay: Teringat saya di kampung / lama suda saya disini / tempat orang lain / saya teringin mahu pulang

English: Memories of the kampung / I've been here a long time / this place belongs to others / I want to go home

5) "Tanak Kampung" by Jimmy Palikat

Sabah Malay: Tiada keretaku bawa kau jalan-jalan / rumahku pun tiada ada pun bapa punya / apalagi belanja mahu bayar berian / kahwin sama kamu

English: Don't have a car to take you driving / don't have a house that's not my father's / what's more paying a dowry / to marry you

6) "Kosorou kopo nangku doho" by Jestie Alexius

Dusun: Id tanga tuong / okito ku tulan rombituon / kopurimanan ku osongulunan oku / do inggino ko koupusan // Intanganku posorili / anawau binabang tulan / kinotu ku iso tusak bunga / li minungkalad tanga tuong

Malay: Di tengah malam / ku lihat sinaran bulan bintang / tersedarlah ku kini kesorangan / ditinggal pergi yang tersayang // Ku pandang di sekitarku / diterangi cahaya sinaran bulan / ku petik pucuk setangkai bunga / mekar berkembang di tengah malam

English: In the middle of the night / I see lit by the moon and stars / aware of being alone / left by the beloved // I look around me / illuminated by moonlight / I pick a flower / blossoming in the middle of the night

7) "Kasakazan Bambaazon" by Datuk Claudius Sundang Alex

Kadazan: Kotobian do toun vagu doid songovian, ada tokou pogivovogu, ondomo kovosian // Toun haid tumahib au opiumanan, toun vagu noikot no gontob, tadau do kaamatan

Malay: Selamat tahun baru kepada semua, jangan kita ada irihati, tapi fikirkan yang terbaik // Tahun lepas sudah limpas tanpa disedari, tahun baru sudah sampai dengan penuh berkat tuaian.

English: Happy new year to everyone, let's not be jealous, think of the good // The year went by without us realising it, the time has come for us to be thankful for the harvest

Sing along to these Dusun songs here:





Black Table
with weaving by by Roziah Jalalid and Julitah Kulinting
2018
Pandanus and bamboo pus with black natural obol dye



Women Must Be At The Table (Women's March Kota Kinabalu, 9 March 2019)
with weaving by Roziah Jalalid and Julitah Kulinting
2018-2019
Pandanus and bamboo pus with black natural obol dye, reflective ribbon



TAMU, BANGUN, PEMUDA PEMUDI, DAMN MAHAL
with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin
2020
Bamboo pus with black natural obol dye
29.7 x 21 cm (A2)



Kedai KerbauWorks, 2021, selling tepo Pulau Omadal; topi cap Keningau; KerbauWorks t-shirts, aprons and patches; products by AVVASI, WAPO and Venice Foo; with guest stall by KeTAMU selling rice by Wagas Dati



Weavers share their experiences collaborating on *tikar*

'Sharing Session: Sharing The *Tikar*' portipoh.com.my



'Rolling Out the *Tikar*: A conversation with Yee I-Lann' by Beverly Yong, *ArtAsiaPacific* 117, Mar/Apr 2020

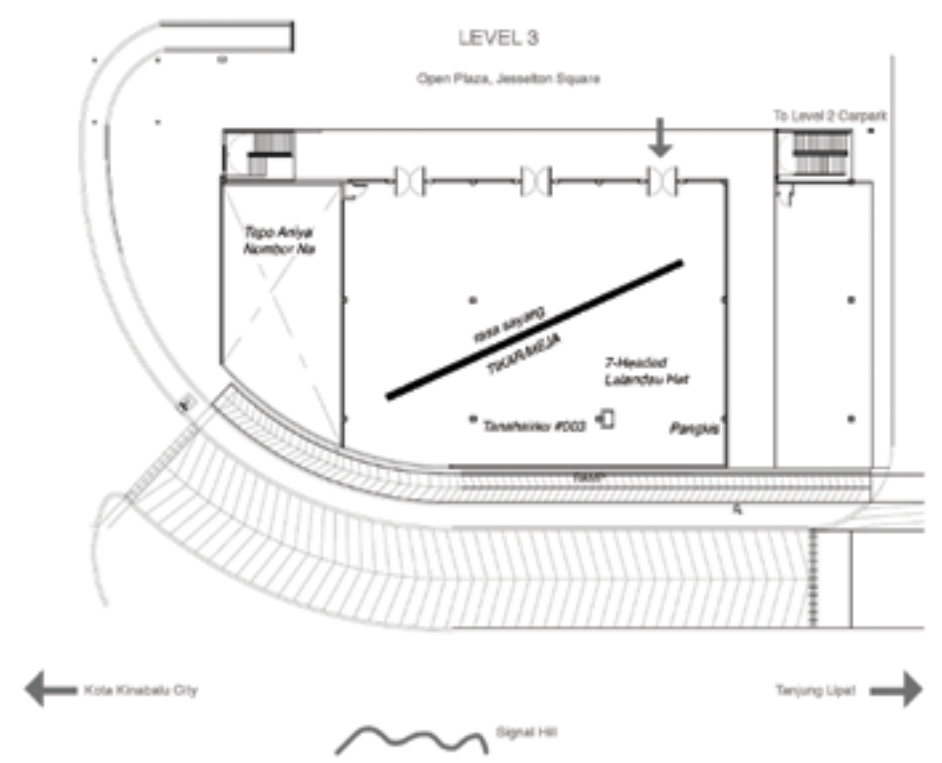
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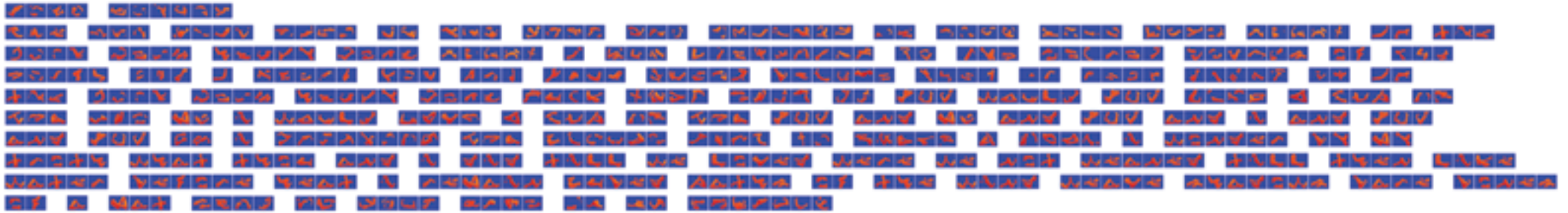


domination
 exploitation
 ignorance
 sovereignty
 reclaim
 undoing
 managed
 joy
 corruption
 respect
 acknowledgment
 connection
 legitimacy
 licensed
 appropriation
 culture police
 control

literacy
 text
 reading
 mother tongue
 community

deliver us from this long night





Title: rasa sayang
2014

Chapter 1: the sun will rise in the east and deliver us from this long night
2012

Chapter 2: in the dark dark heavy dark night i was listening to the secret sounds of the earth and i heard you and your sweat became that of fear didnt it in the dark dark heavy dark night
2014

Chapter 3: f**k that s**t oi you would you like a cup of tea who me i would love a cup of tea you and me and you and i and you and you am i drinking tea clouds part to share a moon
2016

Chapter 4: i wonder by my troth what thou and i did till we loved were we not weaned till then like water before heat i remain cubed
2018

Chapter 5: paths of the wind weave shadows bare bones of a mat
2020

Epilogue: send me your arms in an embrace
2021

Exhibition Print: Dye sublimation print on aluminium sheet
21 x 29 cm (A4 x 488)

Edited print: Digital inkjet pigment print on metallic paper

Background

Rasa Sayang Chapter One (2012): 'the sun will rise in the east and deliver us from this long night'

send me your arms in an embrace'
by I-Lann Rasa Sayang series (2012-2021): Epilogue (2021)

The Rasa Sayang series is a long slow artwork made over a 10 year period. This is the last chapter (epilogue) of the series. The full series consists of about 500 donated hugs by people from across Malaysia. These hugs have been isolated and spell out phrases into a textual essay reflecting shifting moods or mantras across the respective time chapters. To donate a hug for the final epilogue please.....

(Photograph a hug between 2 people (any kind of hug you want). Hugs should only be between people from the same household under Covid circumstances, it is important hugs are between 2 people already physically close to each other)

Please photograph the hug against a plain background and push hair aside from blocking view of arms.

Please arrange the hug with light coming from the right side of photo frame.

Please email me your photo of a hug to yee@lannmail@gmail.com, you can send as many hugs as you want, at any resolution

I will then cut out and isolate the hugs and match these to alphabetical letters making legible words

The words in this epilogue of the Rasa Sayang series will read: 'send me your arms in an embrace'

This work will premiere at my solo exhibition in Kota Kinabalu May 2021.

Many thanks, big hugs! I-Lann

"Rasa sayang": A sense of love and loss' by Pauline Fan
Malay Mail, 11 November 2014





TIKAR/MEJA
 with weaving by Kak Sanah, Kak Kinnohung, Kak Budi, Kak Kuoh, Kak Turuh, Makcik Lokkop, Abang Barahim, Abang Tularan, Adik Darwisa, Adik Alisya, Kak Daiyan, Adik Dayang, Adik Tasya, Adik Dela, Adik Enidah, Adik Norsaida, Makcik Bobog, Kak Roziah, Abang Latip
 2020
 Bajau Sama DiLaut Pandanus weave with commercial chemical dye
 Sizes variable
 Edition 2/2



The Story of Monsopiad
 told by Yee I-Lann

Colonization begins
 and ends
 in the mind

colonised
 mind - deepest level of enslavement

politics of corruption
 cultures of patronage } linear
 politics



photos & cinematography: Andy Chia Chee Siong



Tepo Aniya Nombor Na
 (Mat with a number)
 with weaving by Kak Sanah, Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Budi, Kak Roziah, Adik
 Darwisa, Adik Enidah, Adik Dela, Adik Asima, Adik Dayang, Adik Tasya,
 Adik Alisya, Adik Erna
 2020
 Bajau Sama DiLaut Pandanus weave with commercial chemical dye
 366 x 427 cm





Seven-Headed Lalandau Hats
with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin
2020
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
approx 5m laid out
Edition of 3



PANGKIS
With weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin. Choreography by Mohd Azizan Danial Bin Abdullah; Dancers Jay Adner James, Carey Didier Chin, Mohd Hairul Azman Peter, Addam Jesley, Shahrhijaz Khan, Mohd Nazri Adam, Earl Steiner (Tagaps Dance Theatre). Cinematography by Al Hanafi Juhar; Lighting by Candy Yik (Huntwo Studios). Location: The Factory @ Inanam
2021
Single-channel video, 9m 30s, loop
Edition of 5

Saya memang minat budaya Borneo dan budaya Dusun. Saya takut tiada yang minat lagi budaya ini pada masa akan datang. Saya takut budaya ini akan pupus. Jadi, biarlah saya teruskan budaya dan tradisi Dusun ini. Komuniti Dusun dan Murut tidak patut melupakan tradisi ini.

I have always had an interest in Bornean culture and Dusun culture. I am worried that no one will take an interest in this in the future. I worry it will go extinct. So, I better be the one to continue this culture and tradition of the Dusun people. The Dusun and Murut people should not forget their traditions.

- Shahrizan bin Juin



Title: Tanahairku #003
with weaving by S. Narty Raitom, Julia Ginasius, Julitah Kulinting
2021
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
160 x 223 cm

photos: Al Hanafi Juhar



The Story of Huminodun
told by Yee I-Lann



photos: Severinus Gimit

The Bare Bones of a mat
The Bare Bones of a mat
The Bare Bones of a mat
The Bare Bones of a mat.

Mother tongue word of mouth
paths of the wind weave shadows
bare bones of a mat
Mother tongue word of mouth

Cursive writing in your line
Handwritten across
Handwoven across realms
Handwoven portals
Astral nomads.

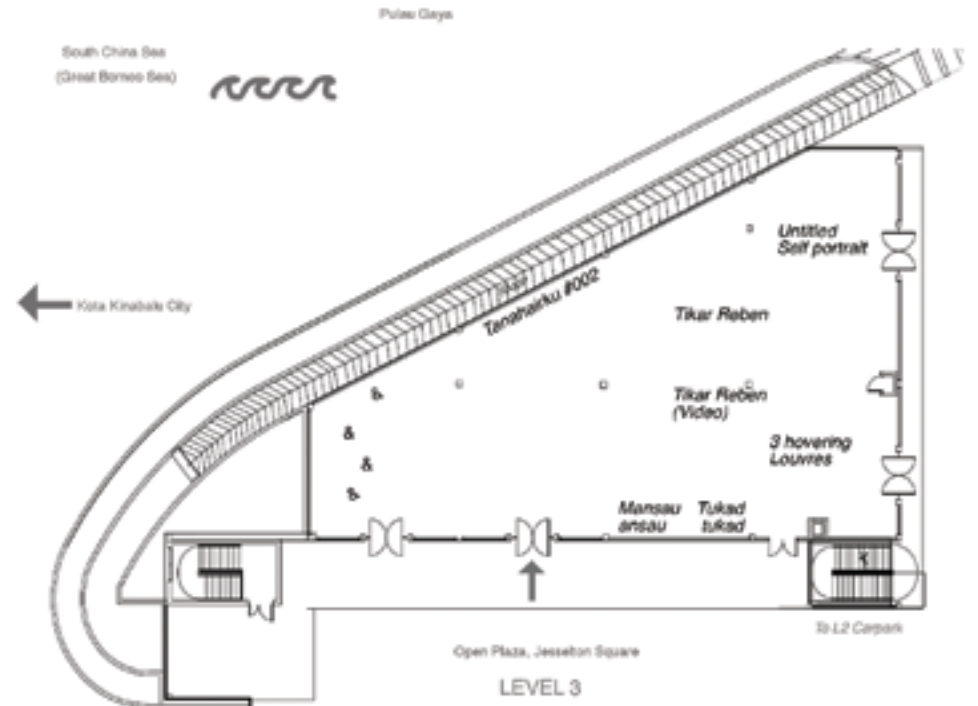




photo: Al Hanafi Juhar

Tanahairku #002
 with weaving by Kak Sanah, Kak Budi, Kak Roziah, Adik Koddil, Adik Darwisa, Adik Alisya, Adik Dela, Adik Enidah, Adik Asima, Adik Norsaida, Adik Erna, Adik Dayang, Adik Tasya
 2020
 Bajau Sama DiLaut Pandanus weave with commercial chemical dye
 396 x 457 cm



photos: Andy Chia Chee Shiong

Kalau saya dibuat pilihan antara semua projek bersama I-Lann yang berkaitan dengan tepo, saya suka tikar Tanah & Air. Sebab apa saya suka tikar Tanah & Air? Tikar ini membawa makna kepada dua bahagian yang sangat penting dalam komuniti kami. Tikar ini ada maksud yang sangat penting, iaitu kami tidak boleh dipisahkan. Tanah dan air. Tikar ini yang saya suka sebab dia memang ada makna yang sangat penting. Bukan sahaja penting untuk saya sendiri ataupun komuniti saya sendiri. Kepentingan untuk semua masyarakat. Ikatan tanah dan air yang memang kita tidak boleh berpisah.



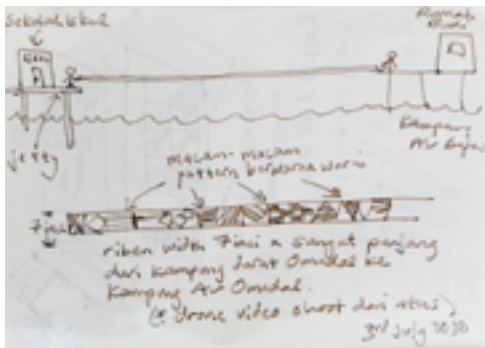
If I had to choose among all the tepo mats we have worked on with I-Lann, I like the Tanah & Air mat. Why do I like the Tanah & Air mat? It brings meaning to two vital parts of our community. It has a very important message, that we cannot be separated. Land and water. I like this mat because it has significant meaning, not just for myself or for my own community. It has significance for our whole society. The ties between land and water can never be separated.

- Roziah Jalalid



photos: Andy Chia Chee Shiong

Tikar Reben
with weaving by Kak Roziah, Kak Sanah, Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Koddil
2020
Bajau Sama Di Laut Pandanus weave with commercial chemical dye
22 x 6279 cm (l)



Tikar Reben (video)
with weaving by Kak Roziah, Kak Sanah, Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Koddil. Cinematography by Andy Chia Chee Shiong (Deebee Studio). Performed by Kak Roziah, Kak Sanah, Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Budi, Adik Darwisa, Kak Anjung, Adik Erna, Adik Norsaida, Kak Kuluk, Kak Goltiam, Kak Kenindi, Adik Koddil and Adik Anneh. Song by Kak Budi
2021
Single channel video, 12m 30s, loop
Edition of 5



Mansau Ansau (to walk and walk without knowing where you are headed)
 with weaving by Julitah Kulinting, S. Narty Raitom, Julia Ginasius, Hollyvia Kimin
 2021
 Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, commercial chemical
 colour dyes, matt sealant
 216 x 411 cm



Tinukad tukad kad (ridges at the top of the mouth)
 with weaving by Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, and Shahrizan Bin Juin
 2021
 Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, commercial
 chemical colour dyes, matt sealant
 200 x 343.5 cm



- ① ||||| pinoruhuk (vertical)
- ② ≡≡≡ pinorilit (pusung)
- ③  tukad-tukad (pusung) stairs (pusung)
 (Munt wood for top of mouth ridges) "Tinukad tukad kad"
- ④  pinoguh (pusung) lelangit dlm mulut (Julia)
- ⑤ Mansau Ansau (Julia)
- ⑥ Jendela kiri / Jendela kanan
- ⑦  ? Didi
- ⑧ hitam / putih



3 hovering Louvres
with weaving by Julitah Kulinting, S. Narty Raitom and Julia Binti Ginasius
2019
Split bamboo pus weave and matt sealant
193 x 320 cm



Untitled Self-Portrait
2017
Digital inkjet pigment print (Giclée) on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper
160 x 84 cm



Exploding & (black)
with weaving by Johin Endelengau
2021
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
119 x 84 cm



& (white)
with weaving by Siat Yanau
2021
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
119 x 84 cm



& (black)
with weaving by Lili Naming
2021
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
119 x 84 cm



Exploding & (white)
with weaving by Shahrizan Bin Juin
2021
Split bamboo pus weave with kayu obol black natural dye, matt sealant
119 x 84 cm

Versi Bahasa
Malaysia



BORNEO HEART

Tikar & Tamu

The *tikar*, as Yee I-Lann will tell us, and anyone who has grown up in Southeast Asia will know, is used for many things – for sleeping, eating, drying fish or rice; for community meetings and celebrations; for prayers, rituals.

Different communities have different names for the woven mat. And although less and less common to modern life in cities, many communities in Sabah, Borneo, Southeast Asia and indeed the wider world, maintain particular traditions of mat-weaving and motifs, so that mats also carry different histories and meanings. They are almost always woven by women.

For Yee I-Lann, who has been making and exhibiting her art in the global contemporary art world for over two decades, the journey with *tikar* began as a means of finding community as she relocated her practice from Kuala Lumpur to Kota Kinabalu around 2016/2017.

As an artist, activist and thinker, her practice has consistently spoken to urgencies in the contemporary world. In her work with photomedia, she has been a stitcher of images, a weaver of stories, pulling together personal experience and popular aesthetics, local and Southeast Asian cultures and histories, into an imaginary, critical space. As she makes a significant turn in her art practice, the *tikar* comes to represent a “space where things get activated”.

On the *tikar*, everyone is invited, everyone sits on the same level, and anything can happen. The *tikar* is domestic, it is local, it is feminist, democratic, egalitarian. It is a way of thinking, and rethinking, about how we use and share space – the space of community (politics), the space of storytelling, the space of cultural production and economics (art-making).

Delving into this concept, I-Lann embarked in early 2018 on working with weavers from

Keningau associated with Pusat Kraftangan Sabah, and from Pulau Omadal, Semporna, to make *tikar* as collaborative contemporary artworks.

For Julitah Kulintang, head teacher of bamboo pus weaving at Pusat Kraftangan Sabah, and her team, the *tikar* collaboration has created an important opportunity for experimenting and innovating in an industry sustained by mass production primarily for the tourist industry, mostly of baskets and sirung hats. Today, most mats made by inland people like the Dusun Murut are made for practical purposes, with plain mats used for rituals.

For the stateless Bajau Sama DiLaut women weavers off Pulau Omadal, weaving *tepo* first and foremost puts rice on the table. The heritage *tepo* they weave for special occasions such as wedding dowries, had previously all but disappeared. An alternative economy has been created through this collaborative art project, and through the sale of mats of their own designs made possible by this collaboration. With income from their craft, the community depends less on fishing to survive, and they can stay home with their children. For lead collaborator Roziah Jalalid, marine conservationist, documentary filmmaker, and Chairperson of WAPO (Persatuan Wanita Pulau Omadal) from the Malaysian Bajau Laut or self-identified Bajau Tempatan (“local Bajau”) community on Pulau Omadal, the revival of *tepo* weaving has also meant less damage to a vital and increasingly threatened marine environment that is part of the Coral Triangle.

As the collaboration between I-Lann and these weaver communities developed and expanded, with mats commissioned for institutions and exhibitions around the Asia Pacific, it came time to bring together a body of work as an exhibition, starting on home ground. The inaugural presentation of *Borneo Heart* in Kota Kinabalu includes a 60-mat installation, giant mats, a

woven sculpture, works in photomedia and video involving dancers, photographers, videographers and friends, a stall selling the weavers’ mats and special *cenderamata* (souvenirs), and, pandemic allowing, a planned curated weekend *tamu* (market) by KeTAMU.

Borneo Heart is an exhibition about sharing the mat, the *tikar* (Malay), or *apin* (Murut), or *tepo* (Bajau Sama DiLaut): “When you come to a meeting or a celebration on a *tikar* and there is no room left on the mat, your host will hurry to lay down another mat to make space.” (Yee I-Lann)

In this way, the body of work presented in *Borneo Heart* has grown to encompass different practices, communities and individuals, and the exhibition itself has enveloped supporting institutions and independent teams and professionals. *Borneo Heart* then becomes a platform for sharing and exchange, reflecting the function of diversity of the traditional *tamu*, where peoples of the hills, plains, river and sea communities of Sabah meet to trade resources, knowledge, skills and stories.

In this exhibition we find stories of home, love, language, power and community.

It begins at the complex of the brand new Sabah International Convention Centre, built on the site of the original Jesselton Port, across from Pulau Gaya, where the British North Borneo Chartered Company first established a “capital” at Api-Api, burnt down by Bajau hero Mat Salleh in 1897. This area has always been a home to Bajau peoples. The Centre backs onto Signal Hill and Kota Kinabalu town, with Mount Kinabalu to the northeast.

The exhibition is spread across two annexes connected by a wide plaza in front of the main centre. One faces the sea, the other the hill.

Tanah & Air, paths of the wind weave shadows bare bones of a mat

We can begin by walking towards the water. Against the glass walls of the annexe facing out onto the South China Sea hangs a 4 x 5m pandanus mat. On it, the words “Tanah & Air” patterned with stripes, checks and chevrons in brightly-dyed Bajau Sama DiLaut colours stand tall as people. The mat, titled *tanahairku #002*, hung up, becomes a billboard, proclaiming a

central principle of *Borneo Heart*, which is the coming together of *tanah* (land) and *air* (water/ sea) to make up *tanahair* (homeland). Between the peoples of the interior and the peoples of the sea in Sabah there is historic animosity and suspicion, underscoring even contemporary politics. “Tanah & Air” is a statement woven by both stateless and Malaysian Bajau weavers about belonging to a place, a message from the people of the sea to the people of the land that they belong to this place together. In the building opposite, in *tanahairku #003*, the same message is woven in black obol dye on bamboo pus by the Dusun Murut weavers of Keningau, above it, a row of small triangles indicating the mountains in the distance, below it a row of larger triangles like the waves of the sea.

Looking out the glass windows, you see Pulau Gaya with its large community of stateless Bajau inhabitants. One end of a narrow, richly coloured 63m-long *tikar* stretches out towards the sea, coiled up at the base. Back at Pulau Omadal in Semporna right across the interior on the other side of Sabah, its weavers unfurled this *tikar reben* from the small jetty of Kak Roziah’s Bajau Tempatan kampung on the island across to Kak Budi’s house in the water village, crossing a border between citizenship and statelessness, between paper rights and a life with no safety nets and no protection.

The pandanus plants used by the Bajau Sama DiLaut weavers, dried, stripped and boiled in commercial dye, grow along the coast of Omadal and surrounding islands, and are replanted by the community, so that there is a sustainable ecosystem providing their materials. The Bajau Sama DiLaut weave by counting, from the centre outwards, so that patterns and motifs built of bright colours provide for the complexity and richness of their designs, which at the same time speak of the colour and diversity of life at and under the sea.

The bamboo pus used by the inland DusunMurut weavers, says Julitah Kulintang, is getting harder and harder to source. The bemban and bundusan plants I-Lann’s Kadazan grandmother used to weave have proved almost impossible to find now. Using this stiffer material, most inland weavers weave with the “x” and “+”, creating subtle motifs and patterns within the weave itself, which draw from the natural landscape and animals of the interior, the life and culture of the rice harvest, and more, at most using natural black and occasionally red dye for colour.

These are the bare bones of a mat, the basic material and forms of its visual languages.

Three *tikar*, *Mansau Ansau*, *Tinukad tukad kad* and *3 hovering Louvres*, looking tentatively out at sea, offer a distinct contrast to the bright and forceful statements made above in the mats from Pulau Omadal. Here, as images of objects are put in play with motifs which are designed to be read flat, a sense of optical illusion and flux is created.

In *3 hovering Louvres*, the shadow-like forms of a mat beneath three louvre windows are built out of different weaves. The small mat is formed using a traditional snaking *ulanut* motif, the hovering windows from an improvised weave that creates the effect of light falling across glass panes. These are set within a background made up of a new weave invented in 2018 by Julitah Kulinting, Lili Naming, Shahrizan bin Juin and I-Lann they have named *mansau ansau*, Dusun for "to walk and walk, not knowing where you are headed".

The image created captures the experience of lying on a mat, with warm wind and sounds flowing in and out through the louvre windows. They are the familiar louvre windows of I-Lann's childhood bedroom, but the mat's title is also a play on Paris' Musée du Louvre, representing the weight of European cultural and art history. And so this *tikar* proposes an idea of balancing that weight, and decolonising our visual language and our cultural imagination.

The louvre window appears again on *Mansau Ansau*, in a kind of room under a starry night sky. In the centre is the *nantuapan* motif, which can signify *aramaiti*, with its many meanings of coming and sharing together. Above is a ceiling fan, *kipas*, circulating air; below, a mat like a portal from which coloured "*giuk*", like worms or germs from another world, another memory, explode into the space. To the right is a table, a symbol of hard (patriarchal, colonial) power and knowledge, attached to its haunting shadow. In *Tinukad tukad kad*, the motifs *mansau ansau*, *pinungoh nandayunan* (hill ridges without end) and *tinukad tukad kad* (ridges at the top of the mouth) run through wide rigid strips or geometric grids, as if trapped by, or taking over corridors and grids of power. Tables topple.

Many knowledges are at play here as familiar imagery and ancient and new motifs are woven together – inherited old knowledge, personal

memory, cultural theory. A dynamic aesthetic is created as hands and minds work through together what is possible.

An untitled self-portrait in photomedia (2017) by Yee I-Lann stands in this space, which was made in the process of relocating home to Sabah. Meanings here are similarly collapsed together, this time embedded in photographic images, waiting to be unpacked. An odd structure balances precariously against the peak of Mount Kinabalu, I-Lann's "compass to home". The artist's small figure appears in different positions, lying on a plain *tikar*, propping up, squashed between, lying and sitting on tables piled on top of one another. A banana tree pops out from a plastic stool. (Sabah is named for a type of banana; *pontianak*, for I-Lann, a feminist icon made into a monster in a man's world, are said to live in banana trees). From a watering can, a yellow hose snakes out and around the structure roughly forming the outline of Borneo. The striped cotton sheets under which she dreams envelop her and drop over the structure like a sail or curtain. Here is the artist carrying the burden of her own power, knowledge and privilege, with the understanding that she can make choices of what work to make and for whom. In her basket, she holds storytelling, the hopes and fears of her communities, ideas about domestic economy and well-being, and somewhere within, a solution.

This work relates a chapter in I-Lann's thinking that has led her home towards the mountain, and towards the mat during a time of fluctuation and foreboding: *paths of the wind weave shadows bare bones of a mat*.

This sentence forms the 5th and final chapter in a personal "essay" that began in 2012, on the 55th anniversary of Merdeka (Malayan Independence), called *rasa sayang*.

Tikar/Meja, deliver us from this long night

We walk out across the plaza towards the hills into the annexe building opposite, and we come face to face with the full text of *rasa sayang* – 488 photo tiles in complementary blue and orange arranged in rows across a 24m long wall that cuts the space in half. Each tile holds the image of a human hug, etched out to form a letter of the alphabet. The essay is made up of a title, five chapters (each chapter a sentence) and an epilogue.

The essay has been composed against the backdrop of a divided and divisive Malaysian socio-political landscape, a chapter appearing every two years as a personal and emotional response to events, taking in two historic general elections and set to culminate in 2020, the year Mahathir Mohamad envisioned the realisation of a Malaysia "fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy, in terms of social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence". The title "*rasa sayang*" describes the feeling of love, but also that of regret and disappointment.

Chapter 1 begins, "*the sun will rise in the east and deliver us from this dark night*". Yee I-Lann, living in Kuala Lumpur, in 2012, looks home towards East Malaysia with hope. The following chapters read like a letter to "the other", expressing at turns suspicion, frustration and empathy. They are written across the divide between East and West Malaysia, between ethnic groups, between the people and those who hold power.

The images of hugs come from family and friends in East and West Malaysia, collaborating with the artist as a community – her personal community – to make up a script and a message that speaks of love and holding together. For the epilogue, following a 2020 which failed its vision in every aspect, in the midst of the pandemic which has separated so many, I-Lann called out for new hugs between those who still could: "*send me your arms in an embrace*".

Going through to the other side of the 24m wall, we find ourselves facing another massive collective statement, *Tikar/Meja – 60 Bajau Sama DiLaut* mats on which have been woven 60 tables.

Tables recur through I-Lann's work as representations of administrative power, the kinds of power used to exercise control over others – colonial, patriarchal, federal, state power. They are the opposite of the non-hierarchical, community-based, open platform of the *tikar*.

Tikar/Meja boldly faces the dense greenery of Signal Hill and urban traffic through the glass wall. It forms a message from the stateless to the administration that has the power to grant them protection and citizenship, from the periphery to the centre, from the people on the mat to the people at the table. The table can be

rolled up, "eaten" by the mat. Like in a game of scissors, paper, stone.

In front of *Tikar/Meja* hangs a woven sculpture of a seven-headed lalandau "hat". The individual headdress is part of ceremonial dress for Murut men, considered traditionally as fierce, forest warriors, and usually has open "chimneys" on top representing trees of the jungle into which argus bird (*lalanda*) feathers would once have been stuffed (other coloured feathers are used nowadays). Here, seven hats are joined together by woven tubes. For PANGKIS, named after the triumphant warrior cry, an animistic guttural call, which punctuates traditional KadazanDusun rituals and dances, I-Lann collaborated with Tagaps Dance Theatre, a group of young dancers whose practice merges traditional and contemporary styles. The woven object combines with sound play and human movement to explore the rootedness and old knowledge of Sabah's land cultures, as well as male group (and by extension, political) behaviour.

In the two-storey void next to the wall hangs a giant two-sided mat in a typical checked weave, common to the *nusantara*. The front is woven with the large silhouettes of tables, which fall like shadows of power on this Sama DiLaut community's mat, bright white lines crossing through creating the effect of bright reflected sunlight.

To view the back of this mat we have to travel down to the level below: here we find the names of the makers of the mat. When asked what to name this mat, Kak Budi immediately suggested: *Tepo Aniya Nombor Na* (Mat with a Number). The weavers themselves have no number, no paper identity, so they claim the honour of an identity for their *tepo*. They claim an identity, recognition and voice through their cultural heritage.

you and me and you and i and you and you

Downstairs, we find ourselves on street level. We have worked our way back to the beginning of this essay, which talks about sharing the *tikar*.

Facing the window to the street is the giant *tikar emoji*, the only artwork in the exhibition that lies flat as a *tikar* should. You and your friends are invited to sit and lie down on it. On this bright Bajau Sama DiLaut mat, there are no tables, no names, no heritage motifs with layered

meanings. There are instead over a hundred colourful emojis that range from familiar smiley faces to symbols you may not actually find on your phone, like a seastar and an undersea diver.

Emojis carry the same function as many traditional weaving motifs, expressing everyday experience. I-Lann has noted that weavers often describe a motif not just by what it signifies or "stands for" visually but in terms of how it feels to weave a motif - like the *mansau ansau*, meandering in random directions. In our world today they offer a shared language that requires no unpacking or translation, as close as we come to a universal tongue. Perhaps we come closer to understanding the language of weaving by trying to imagine how it may feel to weave a happy or angry emoji.

Around the centre of the space are two suspended Dusun Murut mats densely woven with straight rows of text. Popular songs are another medium that connect us to one another through shared feelings, even as each of us carries a different meaning and experience to their words, and these are "karaoke" mats, to be sung along to as we read them. Karaoke singing which forms a soundtrack all around Sabah. As we, in Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Melbourne or Los Angeles, read *hello from the outside*, made up of lyrics from favourite karaoke songs surveyed among collaborators from Omdal and Keningau, we find ourselves in the same globalised cultural space as the weavers.

Focusing on a more localised collective experience, *Dusun Karaoke Mat: Ahaid zou noh doiti (I've been here a long time)* comprises lyrics from beloved and iconic Dusun songs. Many are from the 1970s and 80s, at one time banned from the airwaves, and widely sung in resistance against assimilation, forced national identity and globalisation.

For the text on these mats, I-Lann and the weavers developed a "digital" font, tying the binary + and x of their weaving method to digital language, and the basic tiny square units created by the weave to the digital pixel. The emoji, the digital pixel, as elements of our contemporary language, are invested with new meanings and possibilities as they get woven into the mat. We come to recognise that tradition, like story, is not trapped in time, and that it can help us to find languages you and me and you and I and you and you can speak, embedded with different and same meanings for each.

Measuring Project began after almost all the mats for this exhibition had been completed, forming a kind of sketchbook for thinking about what might be unrolled in the mat. It is made as a photomedia essay, introduced by its first chapter in this inaugural presentation. Groups of people are photographed on the mat in a series of different social interactions, or acts of gathering, performing within some of the motifs we find through the other works.

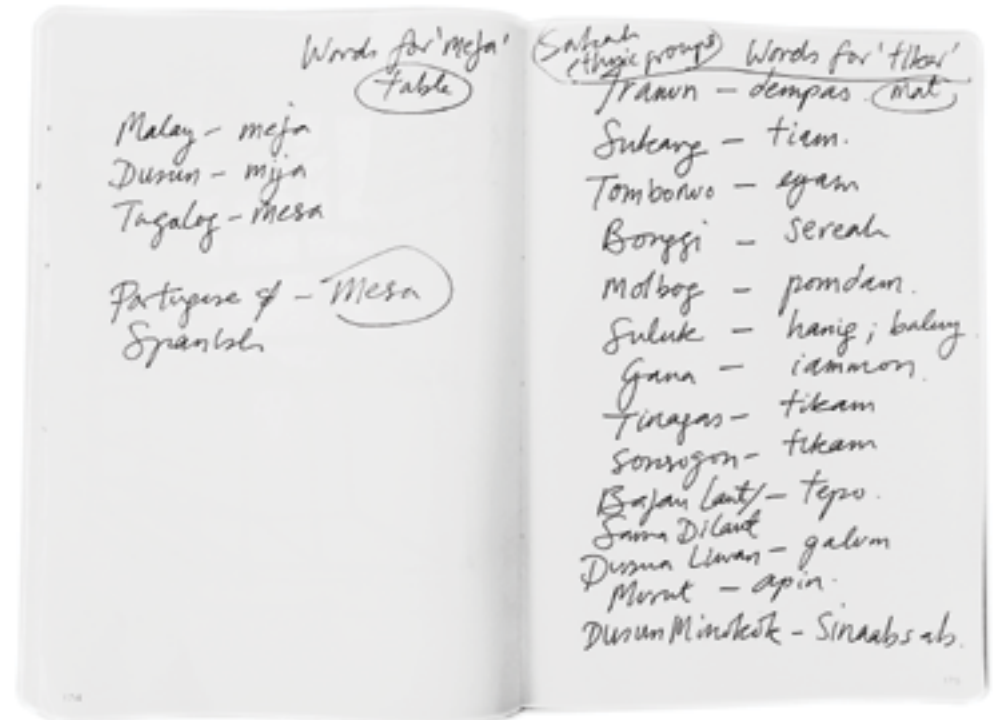
The *Borneo Heart* poster that inspired the title of this exhibition claims for Borneo "a position at the centre of ASEAN and at the heart of the world". It grew out of a Facebook post made when forest fires were raging on Borneo in 2018 causing a particularly noxious haze, and centres on Borneo as a vital and endangered nexus of the world's natural ecosystems - set on the equator between the lungs of the Congo and the Amazon.

Borneo Heart the exhibition equally audaciously claims a position at the tipping point of a world right now grappling with questions of climate change, decolonising systems of power, knowledge and culture. A position that calls for finding solutions that come from within communities, for a shift of power from the table to the mat. It argues that art can change the world, through empowering communities and creating new languages for story-telling together. It invokes the spirit of the *tamu*, calling for a reimagining of what each of us bring to the mat and to market.

Please do make sure to stop at Kedai Kerbauworks before you leave the exhibition, and maybe pick up a *Borneo Heart* poster, or a *tepo* designed by the weavers from Pulau Omdal, a t-shirt (no two t-shirts are the same), or a kilo of rice grown from one of 32 traditional varieties from Kampung Tinuhan and Kampung Lapanan Ulu in Tuaran.

If you cannot come to Kota Kinabalu, you can purchase something online at borneoheart.exhibition/kedaikerbauworks.

Beverly Yong



If it's a mat, we're healthy because mats are good.
Mats are good for resting.
Carpets are bad.

We really need the mat.
For sleeping.
For ancestral rituals.
For healing.
It's used for food.
The mat will be spread out!

- Kak Budi



Yee I-Lann (born 1971) lives and works in her hometown Kota Kinabalu. I-Lann has also worked in art department and as a production designer in the Malaysian film industry. With her partner, rock 'n roll subculture archivist, musician and designer Joe Kidd, she shares KerbauWorks, a cross-discipline project label and space. She is currently a Board member of Forever Sabah and Tamparuli Living Arts Center (TaLAC) and a co-founding partner of KOTA-K Studio in Tanjung Aru Old Town, Kota Kinabalu.

She has held solo exhibitions in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Adelaide, New York and Dallas, including a major presentation of her work at Ayala Museum, Manila in 2016, and participated in international exhibitions since the 1990s. Recent participations include: Looking for Another Family: 2020 Asia Project (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea); Asian Art Biennial: The Strangers from beyond the Mountain and the Sea (2019), touring exhibition Sunshower: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980 to Now (2017-2020) and BODY/PLAY/ POLITICS (Yokohama Museum of Art, 2016). This year, CHAT (Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile) Hong Kong will be holding a solo showcase of her work from August to November, and she will also be participating in the Our Best Interests: Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War (Vargas Museum, Manila) and the inaugural Indian Ocean Craft Triennial.



with Julitah Kulinting and Roziah Jalalid at KeTAMU, 2019



with Roziah Jalalid at Kota-K Studio, 2018



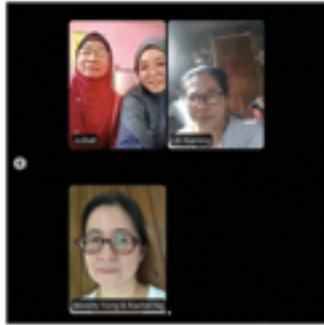
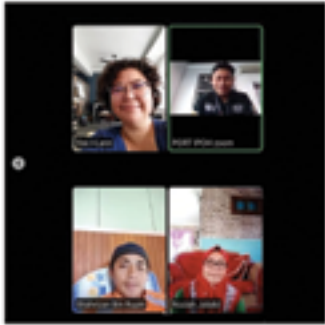
Bajau Sama DiLaut weavers (left to right) Kak Kinnuhong, Adik Erna, Kak Kuluk, Kak Roziah, Adik Norsaida, Adik Kinindi, Kak Goltiam, Kak Sanah, Kak Anjung, Kak Budi, Adik Koddell, Adik Darwisa (Photo: Andy Chia Chee Shiong)



Dusun and Murut weavers Juraen Sapirin, Siat Yanau, Julitah Kulinting, Zaitun Abdullah Hairun, S. Narty Abd. Hairun, Julia Ginasius, Lili Naming, Mohammed Shahrizan Bin Juin (left to right) with Yee I-Lann (centre) (Photo: Pusat Kraftangan Sabah)



Tagaps Dance Theatre with Al Hanafi Juhar and Candy Yik of Huntwo Studios, Isaac Collard and Emily Chin of Third Rice Culture, and Yee I-Lann (Photo: Isaac Collard)



Julitah Kulinting, S. Narty Raitom, Julia Ginasius, Hollyvia Kimin, Lili Naming, Siat Yanau, Shahrizan Bin Juin, Zaitun Raitom, Juraen Bin Sapirin, Johin Endelengau

Adik Aline, Adik Alisya, Kak Anjung, Makcik Appey, Adik Anneh, Adik Asima, Makcik Bagai, Abang Barahim, Kak Bedihing, Makcik Billung, Makcik Bobog, Makcik Braini, Kak Budi, Makcik Burah, Kak Daiyan, Adik Darwisa, Adik Dawing, Adik Dayang, Adik Dela, Kak Ebbuh, Kak Endik, Adik Enidah, Adik Erna, Kak Indah Jariah, Makcik Indah Laiha, Makcik Gangah, Kak Ginnuh, Kak Gultiam, Kak Kanuk, Kak Kenindi, Kak Kinnuhong, Kak Koddil, Makcik Kuluk, Kak Kuoh, Abang Latip, Makcik Lökkop, Adik Lornah, Kak Norbaya, Kak Norsaida, Makcik Rerah, Kak Roziah, Kak Runggu, Kak Sanah, Kak Sitti Rasun, Kak Solbi, Kak Sulman, Kak Turuh, Adik Tasya, Abang Tularan

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Amy Dangin, Melvin Sebastian, Adam Gontusan

Dewan Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu, Puan Mayor Noorliza Awang Alip, Puan Junainah Abbee, Fauziahon Ag Samad, Lizawana Martin, Nor Sarahana Zakaria

Deebee Studio/Schizo Stars, Andy Chia Chee Shiong, Borneo Demand Productions, Chris Tan; Suara Community Filmmakers, Nurul Isma bt Mansula, Masmera bt Hajih Jimlan; Severinus Gimit; Mohd Asraffirdauz Bin Abdullah

Tagaps Dance Theatre, Mohd Azizan Danial Bin Abdullah, Jay Adner James, Carey Didier Chin, Mohd Hairul Azman Peter, Addam Jesley, Shahhijaz Khan, Mohd Nazri Adam, Earl Steiner, Joanne Dayang, Athina Padua; Huntwo Studios, Al Hanafi Juhar, Candy Yik

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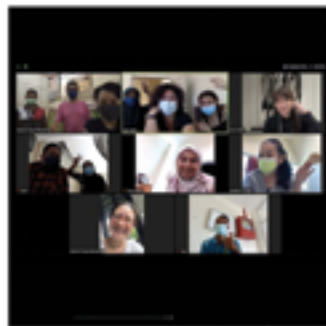
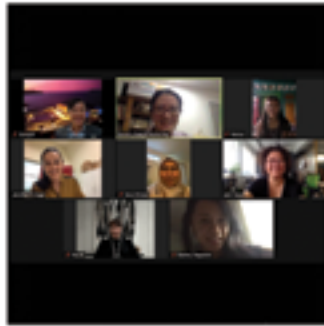
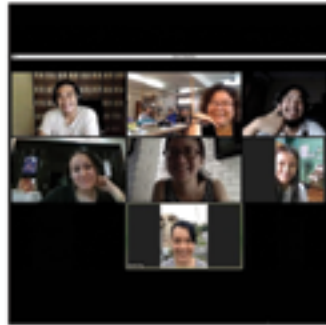
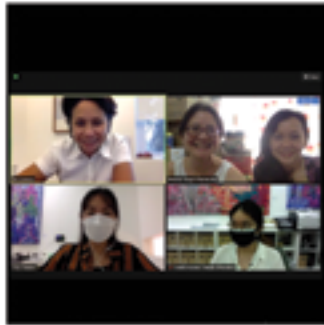
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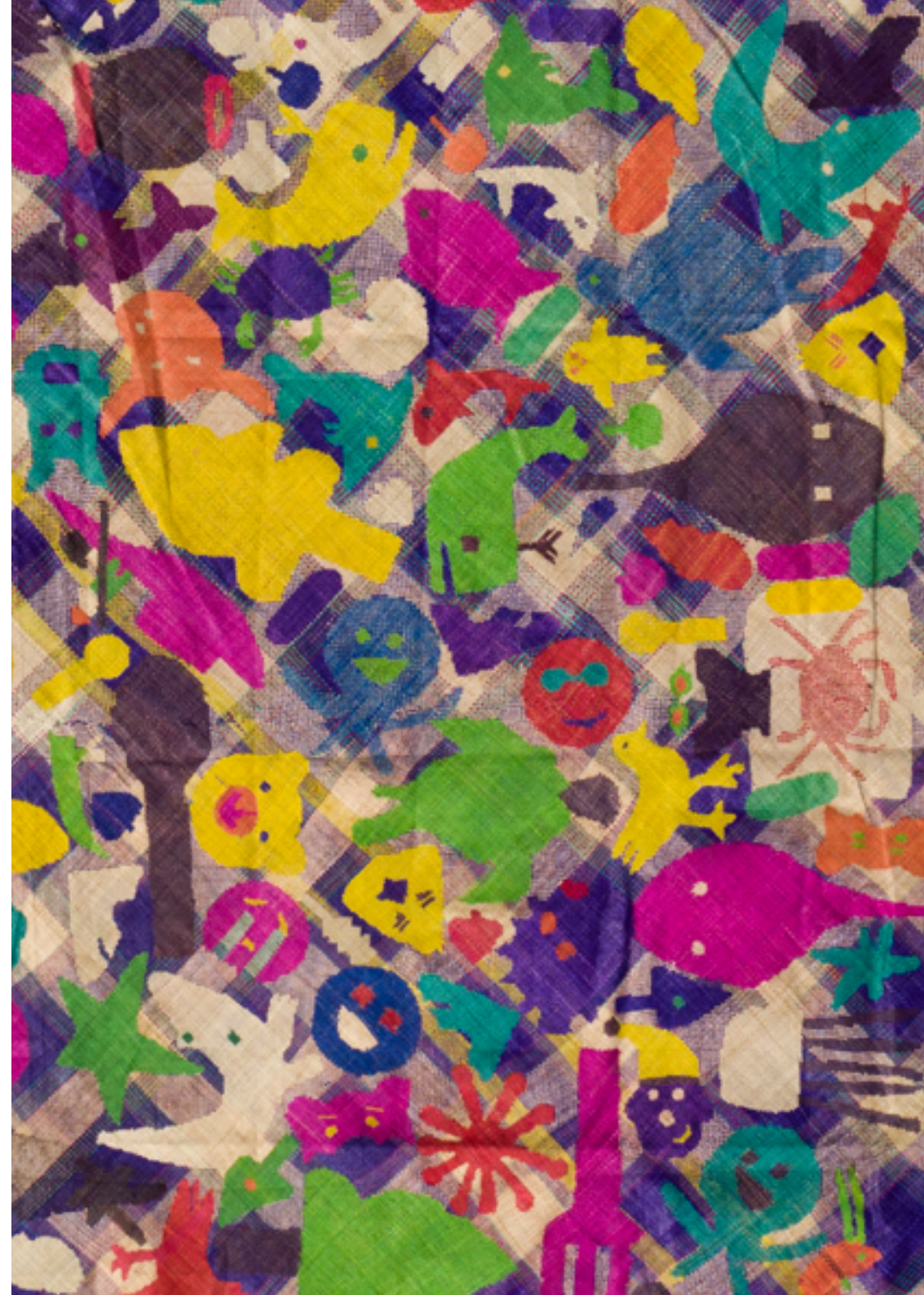
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SILVERLENS



BALAI SENI LUKIS SABAH
SABAH ART GALLERY
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