24 OCTOBER - 16 NOVEMBER 2014

ARTELIER GALLERY

KUALA LUMPUR

ANEES MAANI: KAYU

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Anees Maani is a contemporary sculptor of rare intellectual proportions. Hailing from Jordan, an ancient culture rooted in history, the creations of Anees Maani evokes a similar response to one's memories as looking at an artefact of nature – symbols of our core nature as a human being.

Anees' aesthetic is a highly minimalistic yet powerful statement into basic formations created by the early hands of man, and his use of various mediums explore the abundance of materials provided by our natural environment. His conceptualisation of abstract sculptures create an instant trigger into the viewer's memory through automatic association and calls for an intriguing search into the closest semblance of the form in question.

The artists' evolution into the utilisation of multiple mediums such as bronze, foam and more recently wood pushes him above and beyond the regular visual dialogue, as it pulls him and the viewer into a full experience of texture, colour and the metaphysical nature of the material. His creations breathe an unusual breath of life through its organic references yet provides an insight into the skill and dedication which man delves into his craft, which at its most archaic forms led to the industrialisation and progression of mankind to where it is today.

WOOD

My research is mainly forms in nature and their evolution. I am very interested in forms created by humans, especially ancient people, from different environments and areas on earth. My work is mostly abstract, most of my sculptures are untitled, with my art have no messages to convey. Sometimes people who look at my work can see things that I have not seen and seeing through someone else's eyes is something enjoy. The style of my work in stone, bronze or wood triggers memories of shapes or asks the imagination to search for a resemblance to something it knows.

work... Heaven.

Anees Maani

ANEES MAANI: ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2006, 2010 AND 2014

One day I received a call from Sharifah Fatimah Zubir, an artist whom I have known since my student days, particularly when I was an internee at the National Art Gallery, Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur in 1982. At that time, she was working as a curator for the gallery. As an experienced curator, she was tasked to head the Risalah Dari Malaysia project. First held in 1992 in Jordan, the show then travelled to Germering City in Germany and several cities in former Yugoslavia, namely, Sarajevo and Tuzla in Bosnia Herzegovina and Dubrovnik in Croatia in 1996. From my involvement in the Risalah Dari Malaysia tour around Europe, I learned a lot from her about how to organize an art exhibition.

In 2006. Kelantan was chosen to host the next series of the Risalah Dari Malaysia project. Called then Malaysia-Jordan Artistic Harmony Workshop and Exhibition, it involved a workshop at the campus of Universiti Teknologi Mara in Machang, Kelantan, and an exhibition at the Galeri Shah Alam in Selangor. The purpose of the call from Sharifah Fatimah, which I have mentioned above, was to ask me to join the workshop in Kelantan. She told me that among local artists who had agreed to participate were Zakaria.Awang, Romli Mahmud, Faizal Ramli, Rashidi Mohd Salleh, Ramlan Abdullah, Susyilawati Sulaiman anda Azman Ismail. Samer Tabaa and Anees Maani were two Jordanian artists invited to the workshop.

The invitation to participate in the workshop trulyre invigorated my spirit. After 23 years of creating woodblock prints, I went through a very serious mid-life career crisis between 2004 and 2005. Thus, the invitation from Sharifah Fatimah was really meaningful for me. Without further thoughts, I immediately went to Kelantan to take part in the programme. I met Anees Maani there. My wife felt a bit doubtful at first because she thought that the artist who would be working and staying with me was an woman. Only later she came to know that the artist was full of beard and moustache! Anees and 1 always laugh when we recall this incident. Anees is an easy going person, always smiling and joyful. Being with him makes one feel happy. Whenever there are problems, he will offer his help.

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For Anees, sojourning in Kelantan was like living in heaven! He enjoyed the weather in Malaysia. His life in Jordan is surrounded by wide-open deserts and jungle of stones, and accordingly, the weather there is hot, dry and harsh. On the other hand, the climate in Malaysia is warm and humid since the country is located in the tropical zone with lush foliage of rainforest. Furthermore, tropical rainforest here is so thick that it tends to limit our view. In contrast, in a desert landscape, nothing can block our view except when there is a rocky mountain looming in the background. I saw that Anees was living in two entirely different worlds, both in terms of climate as well as geographical location. Despite this though, I also realised that he knew how to make use of the surrounding geographical features to live his life and create his art. His smile was full of joy, and certainly rooted in something solid and real. It is true that every human being is born with a speck of talent, but they holds the responsibility to develop it as far as possible. Our programme in Kelantan ran smoothly as per the plan, and everybody seemed busy producing their artworks. My friends in Kelantan often brought Anees to visit various places of attraction, including Tunjang Bakawali in Kampung Raja, Besut, the jetty at Kuala Besut, the Bukit Keluang beach, a Buddhist temple in Tumpat, recreational parks, rivers and waterfalls. This was to make him aware of the local culture, acclimatised to the local conditions, and more alert to the sensitivity of the local community. He was also provided with a bicycle to get around, and he really enjoyed cycling in the area.

He confessed that his first stay in Malaysia for two months had a great impact on his personal life as well as his art. His experience with the local culture and weather was really meaningful and absolutely inspiring. When he visited a Buddhist temple in Tumpat famous for its Sleeping Buddha, he was overwhelmed with a surge of emotions. In the temple, he saw that despite one of its hands broken off, the statue was still highly revered and considered sacred. For him, this portrayed the people's resignation and hope to the will of invisible powers. What was more interesting to him was that this Buddhist temple is situated in a state with majority Muslim population. He felt that the Muslim society in Malaysia is very much different from those in his own country especially with regard to religious toleration and freedom.

From his observation, weather plays a very important role here. He comes from a country whose climate does not have a profound effect in changing topographical features. Moreover, forests only covers about one percent of the total area of the desert there. As such, it is very difficult to find wood for making artworks. But Malaysia provides a vast range of raw materials. The tropical rainforest here possesses a large and interesting variety of not only fauna but also flora. I remember a remark made by my Finnish friend named Aila Salmivaraa. He said that Malaysian artists like to incorporate a lot of elements in their artworks as reflection of their surroundings. Malaysian forest is so rich in resources for art-making. In Europe, the concept of minimalism in art emerged basically due to the lack of such materials there. How many types of plants can you find in European forests? He further stated that summer houses in Europe do not require special care and maintenance, unlike houses in Malaysia. Anees also felt the same way. The weather in Jordan does not produce much changes and damages. However, the unique characteristic of the climate in Malaysia, in respect principally to its altering and damaging effects, served as one vital source of inspiration for him, a part from the diverse species of creeping, crawling and flying animals and birds which he never came across in his own country.

That was my first encounter with a 33 year old artist who travelled far from Jordan to Malaysia to further his art practice. In my opinion, travel is itself an art, a process of becoming more refined, of honing skill and a knowledge. It is not a mere sightseeing trip to be narrated

to friends over coffee, and with loud laughter to boot, just to inform them with pride that we have travelled here and there. After a few days visiting and staying in my studio, Anees returned to Jordan. Several days later 1 received an SMS from him: lt was a beautiful dream, Malaysia. all the people, you, thank you all for the upgrade. that was the result of what I learned in your country.

l miss you all. I hope to keep in touch with you,anees@go2petra.com,
And hope to see you in Jordan, I'm doing well here, sculpting stone
with wood in mind!
Sender: +962795760513; April 4, 2006; 16:57:44

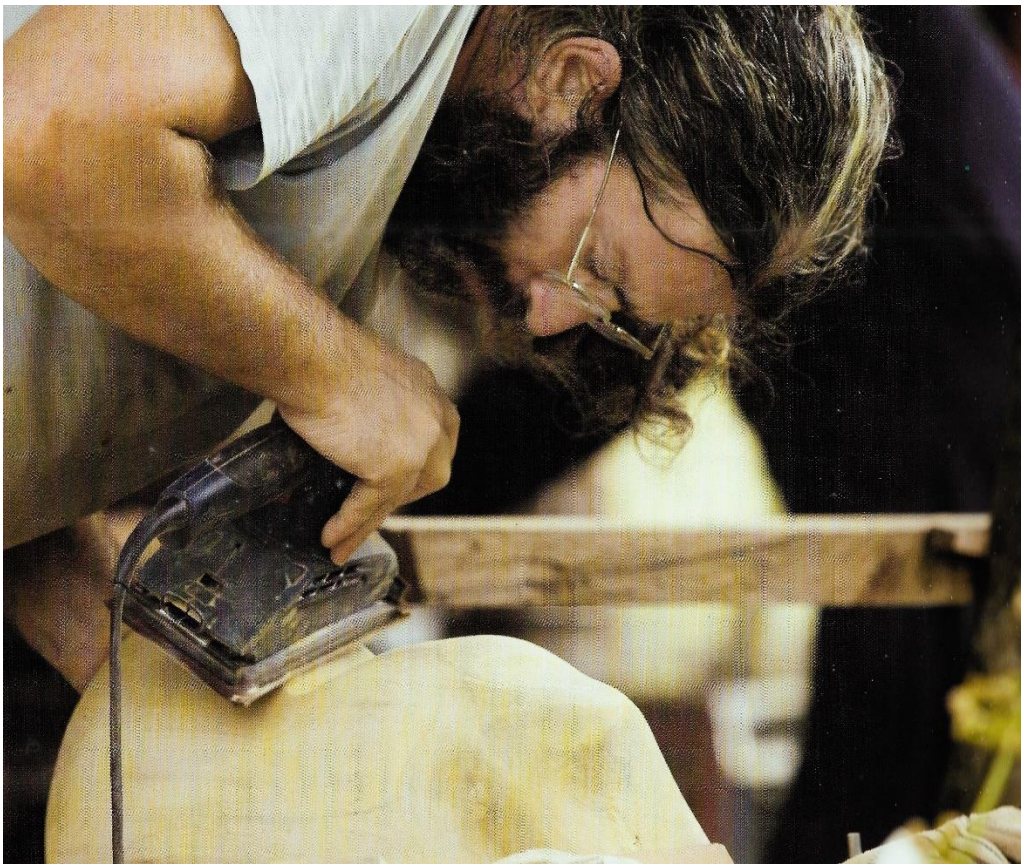
In 2010, after completing my fellowship at Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, I decided to call Anees in Jordan. He told me that he would like to migrate to the US. But by the tone of his voice, deep in my heart sensed something strange, as if he was facing somekind of crisis. I instantly invited him to come over to my home, and stay and work at my Akaldiulu studio..When he arrived from Jordan, I was fully occupied with my work, but I believe Anees understood my situation at that time.

I tried to provide the best that I could for him, my resident artist: a good range of machines and tools, and an assistant, Pak Jo, who had vast experience in wood working. Thus began Anees' second sojourn in Malaysia. And I felt like in heaven! I was so excited with his presence. I would only observe him from a far, and smile to myself. His first week at the Akaldiulu residence was spent helping Pak Jo with the expansion work of the outer part of my studio. Whenever I travel to Europe or Japan, I always like watching snow fall. And I saw that Anees too enjoyed rain fall, particularly when it is accompanied by thunder and lightning, thus creating some sort of orchestral sound. He often got wet from playing in the rain, and this reminded me of how I also enjoyed snow in foreign countries.

Anees' residency programme at my studio lasted for three months. Throughout the period, he worked alone. Sometimes he stayed in the city for one or two days. When he returned, he always brought backmind bending puzzle games, like Rubik's Cube, for Pak Jo. Since Pak Jo could speak only in Indonesian both of them could not communicate much. However, the lack of linguistic interaction between them was replaced by a more effective

and universal non-verbal language, the one rooted in their personal characters and personalities and their strong sense of courtesy. They eventually became very close and enjoyed each other's company.

Like numerous art residency programmes that I had participated in Japan and Europe in the 1990s, Anees' residency in my studio also was not designed to end up with a special show. Creating works during travel in foreign lands poses a great challenge to an artist, which can lead him to understand himself better. I did not know whether Anees appreciated or not that objective. Before he went back to Jordan, he left a 'great' message to me. He said, "I could not bring back to Jordan the sculptures that I had produced. So, leave them here, at Akaldiulu. It's up to you whether you want to keep them, sell them, or burn all of them !"



One of the wooden sculptures that Anees created during the workshop in Kelantan was presented as a gift to the National Art Gallery after the exhibition at the Galeri Shah Alam. The rest are kept by Sharifah Fatimah Zubir and me. Anees' sculptural works in my collection are stored with good care in my studio. A few months later I received an e-mail from Anees in Jordan, informing me that he had managed to own a large studio outside the city of Amman. At last he had fulfilled his wish of having his own studio. My wife and I were so very happy to receive this news. Since then, he frequently emailed photos of him working in the studio.

In 2011, I was offered by the administration of Universiti Malaya to become a resident artist there for a period of two and a half years. This is part of the effort initiated by the Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Tan Sri Dr. Ghauth Jasmon, and Abdul Aziz Rashid, the curator and the Head of Department of Asian Art Museum, to make arts an important element in higher institutions of learning, such as Universiti Malaya, the oldest university in the country. In line with this effort, the university took the initiative to establish the Universiti Malaya Art Gallery, or UMAG. As a token of my appreciation for their dedicated work and commitment, I decided to donate six wooden sculptures by Anees Maani: five from my collection, and one from Sharifah Fatimah's collection. I then informed Anees in Jordan about this.

In 2013, I went to Fukuoka - actually my 12th visit to the city as part of the organising committee of the Kembara Jiwa travelling exhibition. There I met, for the first time, Mamoru Abe, one of the two Japanese guest artists for the show - the other one was Yoshisuke Funasaka. Mamoru Abe had never travelled to Southeast Asia, but he had always wanted to come to my studio as a resident artist. He told me that he would make a trip to Malaysia around early September 2014. No doubt, I would like to help him realise his dream. I suddenly remembered Anees Maani. Yes! Yes! Yes! I laughed out loud. Although he is thousand of miles away from me, Anees is always on my mind. MAMORU ABE + ANEES MAANI +JUHARI SAID = EXCELLENCE! Anees often talks about excellence. Could this be due to his positive mind-set? Nevertheless, as a host, I always take discreet and cautious attitude towards inviting artists to work in my studio. I have to take this approach in view of

past experiences. We should take heed of the advice from our fore fathers to do good within certain limits but never once do bad things.

In September 2014, Anees Maani came for the third time to my studio as a resident artist. This time around, though, he was not working alone anymore but with Mamoru Abe, a Japanese artist as well as a professor at university in Fukuoka. This opened up a new experience not only for Anees and Professor Mamoru Abe but also myself.

This solo exhibition of Anees Maani's work summarises his travel and art-making in Malaysia since 2006. The artist was born in a place surrounded by ancient objects, specifically the world famous Nabatean rock-cut architecture in Petra. As the climate in Jordan is not so damaging to the environment, this historical building is still in good condition even though it has been in existence for thousand of years. Anees has come to know very well about this architecture since he has been involved, albeit in directly, in the documentation of the site.

However, and undoubtedly, his travel to foreign countries has also influenced his artistic sensibility. This is particularly evident in the wooden sculpture he did in Kelantan in 2006. A vertically tapering form commonly found in his country, is now equipped with a block of wooden wedge at the bottom part. Although a wooden wedge has its own utilitarian function, in this sculptural work it merely serves to signify a type of Malay musical instrument. This piece clearly shows how travelling to and sojourning in a foreign country can expand and enrich one's creativity. None the less, it too depends largely on our intention and goal because, in essence, everything has its roots deep in ourselves.

Juhari Said
Akaldiulu, October 2014.

Left: Untitled, Wood, 110cm x 55 cm x 55cm, 2006

Right: Untitled, Wood, 137cm x 29cm x 24cm, 2014

Left: Untitled, Bronze, 20cm x 4 cm x 4cm, 2014

Right: Untitled, Bronze, 7.5cm x 13cm x 13cm, 2014

Below: Untitled, Wood, 16cm x 19cm x 36cm, 2010

Left: Untitled, Wood, 35cm x 30 cm x 89cm, 2010

Middle: Untitled, Wood, 20cm x 18cm x 20cm, 2010

Right: Untitled, Wood, 25cm x 21cm x 40cm, 201

Left: Untitled, Wood, 65cm x 45 cm x 45cm, 2006

Right: Untitled, Wood, 28cm x 38cm x 15cm, 2006

Below: Untitled, Wood, 80cm x 30cm x 25cm, 2006

Above: Untitled, Wood, 22cm x 43 cm x 16cm, 2014

Middle: Untitled, Wood, 23cm x 85cm x 17cm, 2010

Below: Untitled, Wood, 10cm x 21cm x 35cm, 2014

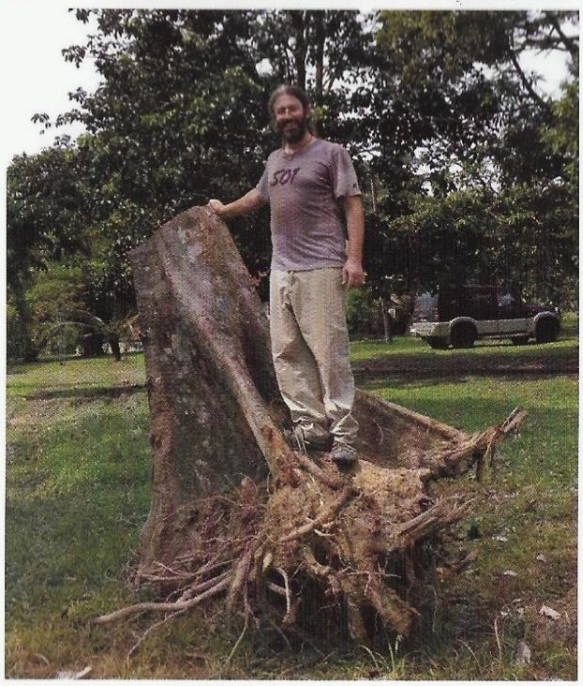
Left: Untitled, Wood, 26cm x 18 cm x 7cm, 2014

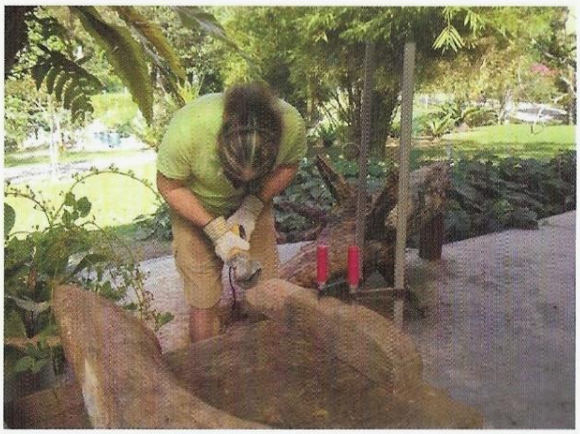
Right: Untitled, Wood, 123cm x 42cm x 21cm, 2014

Above: Untitled, Wood, 72cm x 11 cm x 11cm, 2014

Below: Untitled, Bronze, 13.5cm x 12.5cm x 2cm, 2014

Untitled, Wood, 66cm x 94 cm x 200cm, 2014





Recent residency in Akaldiulu

An early works while in Kelantan & Akaldiulu

BIODATA

ANEES MAANI
Born 1973, Amman.

EXHIBITIONS:

2014 "Bold impressions", group exhibition, Nabad Art Gallery, Amman, Jordan.

2014 "Homeland", World Wood Day sculpture exhibition, Xianyou, China.

2013 Second solo exhibition, Kunsttraject, Amsterdam.

2013 "70 year of Jordanian Contemperary Art", National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan.

2012 Featured artist, "Artist of the Month", National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan.

2012 "TRENDSETTING III", Group exhibition of uniquely designed functional & decorative items & artworks, Nabad Art Gallery, Amman, Jordan.

2011 "Floor to ceiling", Nabad Art Gallery, Amman, Jordan.2011 "We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron", Jiza

Train Station, Amman, Jordan.2010 Sunny Art Fair, Amman, Jordan.

2009 "Prints and sculptures by six Jordanian Artists", Nabad Art Gallery, Amman, Jordan.2009
"7x7 Young artists", Cairo Amman Bank Gallery, Amman, Jordan.

2009 "Dance of Vision 11", Jordanian - Swedish group exhibition,Roda Sten Gallery, Goteborg, Sweden.

2008 First solo exhibition, Zara Center, Amman.

2008 "Reunion of Love", group exhibition, Zara Gallery, Grand Hyatt Amman.

2006 "A Celebration of Jordanian Contemporary Art", 4 walls Gallery, Amman, Jordan.

2006 Amman International Theater Festival's Jordanian Artists exhibition, Royal Cultural Center, Amman.

2006 "Jordan - Malaysia, artistic harmony", Shah Alam Gallery, K. L.., Malaysia.

2003 "Hues," National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman.

1998 "Annual Group Exhibition" organized by the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Royal Cultural Center, Amman.

WORKSHOPS:

2014 Art Residency at Akal Di Ulu, KL, Malaysia.

2014 6th International Sculpture Symposium, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Jordan University, Amman.

2014 World Wood Day, Xian you, China.

2012 5th International Sculpture Symposium, Bahrain.

2010 5th International Sculpture Symposium, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan.

2010 Residency at Akal Di Ulu, KL, Malaysia.

2008 4th International Sculpture Symposium, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan.

2008 Hoy International Artists Workshop, Hoy, Scotland, a Triangle Arts Trust workshop.

2007 Shatana International Artists Workshop, Jordan, a Trianglel Arts Trust workshop organized by Makan.

2006 3rd International Sculpture Symposium, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan.

2006 Residency in University Technology Mara, Kelantan Malaysia, production of sculptures using tropical wood and a group exhibition in Shah Alam gallery,

2003 16th International Festival of Plastic Arts in Mahres, Tunisia.

EDUCATION

1996 - 98 Apprenticeship in sculpture, under the supervision of - 98 Nazih Oweis, Amman, Jordan.

1992 - 92 Studied Architecture at the Building Academy, Volgograd, Russia.

WORK AND OTHER PROFFESIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2007 - present Props maker, Art Director and other positions in the art departments of films including: Last days on Mars, Redacted, The Hurt Locker, the shooting of Thomas Hurndall, The stoning of Soraya M.

2006 - present Part of Field Guide to Jordan team.

2007 Designer and founder of Bits of Petra present Souvenirs.