distinguished painter-draughtsmen from the Philippines and Malaysia visited with a renowned Mexican sculptor for a nine-hour but productive two weeks, shared inspiration from the people, history, and landscape into whose midst they had suddenly dropped, and returned to their homelands to work as they had before, armed with more grist for their visual mills… - Peter Frank, curator.

The encounter in Mexico City of a Malaysian, Filipino and several Mexican artists is a clear example of artistic globalization, the result of which is already tangible and will become increasingly so in subsequent exhibitions. As is only natural, this stage of positive exchange has been observed and discussed in Mexico. - René Aviles Fabila

POST MEXICO RESIDENCY EXHIBITION
HANDS ACROSS THE WATER

AHMAD ZAKI ANWAR | BENCAR | SEBASTIAN
HANDS ACROSS THE WATER

AHOOD ZAD AND AMAA | RECEM | SEBASTIAH
THIS EXHIBITION HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY THE VISION AND UNWAVERING COMMITMENT OF H.E. AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO TO SINGAPORE ANTONIO VILLEGAS, LA EMBAJADA DE MÉXICO EN SINGAPUR, LA FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIAN, THE LEE FOUNDATION, VA@T, AND THE ARTISTS: SEBASTIAN, AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, AND BENCAB.

ANDREWSHIRE GALLERY_
HANDS ACROSS THE WATER
POST MEXICO RESIDENCY EXHIBITION
AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR | BENCAB | SEBASTIAN
“HANDS ACROSS THE WATER” IS AN EXHIBITION OF INTERTWINING EXPRESSIONS OF ART AND FRIENDSHIP ACROSS THE PACIFIC OCEAN, SIMILAR TO THE LEGENDARY GALLEON TRADE OF FOUR CENTURIES BACK. IN TODAY’S CASE, THE EQUIVALENT TO THE GALLEON’S ROLE AS A POWERFUL BRIDGE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO RICH CULTURAL WORLDS CORRESPONDS TO THE FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIÁN, TO WHICH WE ARE THANKFUL FOR THIS ENRICHING EXPERIENCE.

PROBABLY FEW PEOPLE IN SINGAPORE KNOW THAT FOR 250 YEARS, FROM 1565 ON, MEXICO SERVED AS THE MAIN CONNECTING BRIDGE, FOR COMMERCIAL AS WELL AS FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGES, BETWEEN AMERICA AND EUROPE, AND ASIA.

ON THAT DISTANT YEAR, THANKS TO THE DISCOVERY BY ANDRÉS DE URDANETA OF A SAFE MARITIME ROUTE FROM MANILA TO ACAPULCO, THE LARGEST SHIPS IN THE WORLD AT THAT TIME, THE GALLEONS OR “NAOS”, BEGAN SAILING FROM ACAPULCO ON MEXICO’S PACIFIC COAST TO THE PHILIPPINES WITH THEIR SHIPMENTS OF HIGHLY DESIRABLE CARGOES: CHILLIES, PEANUTS, TOMATOES, COCOA BEANS (ALL OF THEM NATIVE TO MEXICO), MUCH-COVETED MEXICAN SILVER, AND MANY OTHER PRODUCTS.

LIKELY, FROM THE PHILIPPINES, THE SHIPS RETURNED TO ACAPULCO WITH PRECIOUS MERCHANDISE FROM ALL AROUND ASIA: SPICES, SILK, BROCADES, IVORY, LACQUER, PORCELAIN, FANS, AND METALS.


FAST-FORWARD FROM THIS HISTORICAL LANDMARK TO OUR PRESENT TIMES: FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIÁN, A NON-PROFIT MEXICAN FOUNDATION, WELL KNOWN IN MÉXICO AND THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA FOR ITS CONTINUOUS SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXCHANGES, HAS REACHED TO ASIA TO SUPPORT A VERY ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE. THIS WAS THE ARTISTIC RESIDENCE IN MÉXICO CITY, ON OCTOBER 2011, OF TWO OF SOUTHEAST ASIA’S MOST PROMINENT ARTISTS, BEN CABRERA (BENCAB), FROM THE PHILIPPINES, AND AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, FROM MALAYSIA.

MAESTRO SEBASTIÁN (ENRIQUE CARBAJAL), IS A WORLD RENOWNED SCULPTOR AND PRIDE OF MEXICAN ART WHO DOES NOT NEED MUCH INTRODUCTION. MAY I ILLUSTRATE HIS SUBSTANCE AS AN ARTIST, AUTHOR OF LANDMARK “URBAN ART” (AS HE CALLS IT), BY QUOTING MATHEMATICIAN MARIO LIVIO WHEN HE DESCRIBES SEBASTIÁN’S WORK:

“INSPIRED BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, AS WELL AS BY OTHER ARTIST–MATHEMATICIANS SUCH AS PIERO DELLA FRANCESA AND ALBRECHT DÜRER, SEBASTIÁN CREATES MONUMENTAL STRUCTURES THAT FUSE GEOMETRICAL PRECISION WITH POETIC BEAUTY.”

“HANDS ACROSS THE WATER” PRESENTS TO ITS VISITORS THE RESULT OF THE IMMERSION OF BENCAB AND ZAKII IN MEXICAN CULTURAL LIFE AND THEIR MUTUALLY ENRICHING DIALOGUE WITH SOME OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED PRESENCE IN THE MEXICAN CULTURAL SCENE. IT WAS A TWO-WAY DIALOGUE THAT ALSO LEFT A DEEP AND POSITIVE IMPRESSION IN MEXICO ABOUT CURRENT ART TRENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES, MALAYSIA, AND ASIA IN GENERAL.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU, KIND VISITORS TO THE EXHIBITION, TO TURN YOUR EYES TO THE ARTWORKS PREPARED BY BENCAB AND ZAKII, INSPIRED BY THEIR EXPERIENCE IN MEXICO. THEIR WORKS, INTERACTING WITH THOSE BROUGHT TO THE EXHIBITION BY SEBASTIÁN, SPEAK A LANGUAGE OF FRIENDSHIP, COMMON VALUES, HISTORY AND UNIVERSAL ART, THAT I HOPE WILL DELIGHT YOU.

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO THE MEXICAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE VISUAL ARTS @ TEMENGGONG FOUNDATION, AND ANDREWSHIRE GALLERY OF SINGAPORE FOR THEIR MOST VALUABLE SUPPORT OF THIS LONG DREAMED PROJECT, WHICH TODAY BECOMES A REALITY.

FOREWORD

AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO

ANTONIO VILLEGAS
VA@T is happy to co-host, with the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore, this international multi-media exhibition of three artists from three different cultural milieus – Mexico, Malaysia and the Philippines – spanning two continents. To bring artists from different locations to work together and exhibit art works that emerged out of the intense interaction during a residency period is precisely the mission VA@T sets for itself.

In this particular exhibition, VA@T is delighted to have the opportunity to work with Ambassador Villegas, who is a strong advocate of arts in general, and of course, Mexican arts in particular. Indeed, the exhibition was initiated by H.E. Villegas. The idea of bringing these major artists from three different locations to a residency in Mexico was initiated by him.

The three artists selected were Ben Cabrera from the Philippines, Ahmad Zakii Anwar from Malaysia and Enrique Carbajal, better known as Sebastian, who hosted the residency in his studio-fabrication center in Mexico City, with funding provided by Fundación Sebastian and AndrewsHire Gallery.

The current exhibition is the result of the two-week residency period in Mexico City. The works in this exhibition were executed in their own respective studios, after having the time to reflect on the residency experience. Although this exhibition did not emerge out of a residency period at VA@T premises, it nevertheless fulfills another mission of VA@T to bring international art to Singapore for education and enjoyment of the larger community.

The current exhibition adds an important mode to the different evolving strategies of collaboration, as VA@T develops its fledging program.

THERE IS, IN FACT, NO LONGER ANYTHING EXOTIC IN THE CONCEPT OF ARTISTS FROM, SAY, SOUTH ASIA VISITING AND WORKING IN, SAY, MEXICO – EXCEPT, PERHAPS, IN THE EXOTICISM THE ARTISTS HAPPEN TO FIND AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN. IN THE PROJECT DOCUMENTED BY THIS SHOW, PAINTER-DRAUGHTSMEN FROM THE PHILIPPINES AND MALAYSIA VISITED WITH A MEXICAN SCULPTOR FOR A WHIRLWIND BUT PRODUCTION TWO WEEKS, GAINED INSPIRATION FROM THE PEOPLE, HISTORY, AND LANDSCAPE INTO WHOSE MIDST THEY HAD SUDDENLY DROPPED, AND RETURNED TO THEIR HOMELANDS TO WORK AS THEY HAD BEFORE, ARMED WITH MORE GRIST FOR THEIR VISUAL MILLS. THEY DID SO WITHOUT INTERVENTION OR PERMISSION FROM ANY AMERICAN CURATOR OR EUROPEAN GALLERIST. EVEN THE ROLES OF THE ANDREWSHIRE GALLERY AND THIS WRITER, BOTH BASED IN LOS ANGELES (ITSELF A “PERIPHERAL” ART CENTER UNTIL RECENTLY), HAVE BEEN TO SUPPORT RATHER THAN DIRECT THE INITIATIVE. IN THIS PROJECT, THE ARTISTS OF EMERGING NATIONS HAVE LED THE WAY – A POST–POST–COLONIAL PHENOMENON.

ENRIQUE CARBAJAL, THE SCULPTOR BETTER KNOWN AS SEBASTIÁN, IS ONE OF MEXICO’S LEADING ARTISTS. AN EXPANSIVE AND GENEROUS MAN, DEDICATED TO HIS MÉTIER AND HIS FELLOWS, HE SUPPORTS AN INFORMAL ARTIST’S RETREAT ON THE GROUNDS OF HIS STUDIO–FABRICATION CENTER IN MEXICO CITY. UNLIKE MORE “OFFICIAL” ARTIST COLONIES AROUND THE WORLD, SEBASTIÁN RUNS HIS PLACE AS IF HE WERE PERSONALLY ENTERTAINING GUESTS – ONLY HE PROVIDES HIS GUESTS NOT JUST WITH TOURS OF HIS CITY AND COUNTRY, BUT WITH STUDIOS TO MAKE ART FOR THEIR BRIEF STAYS.

CLEARLY, SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT SUITS CERTAIN KINDS OF ARTISTS BETTER THAN OTHERS. THE ARTISTS MOST ACCOMMODATED TO THESE CONDITIONS ARE THOSE WHO NEVER REALLY TAKE A VACATION FROM THEIR METHODS OF WORKING, BUT CAN SET DOWN ANYWHERE AND PRODUCE WHAT THEY PRODUCE IN MATERIALS THEY CAN READILY FIND AT HAND. FILIPINO BEN CARRERA (POPULARLY KNOWN AS BENCAB) AND MALAYSIAN AZKI HAKIM ARE TWO SUCH “PARATROOPER” ARTISTS, TAKING THEIR INSPIRATION FROM WHAT THEY OBSERVE AND HIGHLY RELIANT ON THE “PICK-UP” DISCIPLINE OF DRAWING. APPROPRIATELY, THEY ARE MEN OF GREAT CURIOSITY AND, LIKE THEIR HOST, GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT, SO THEY CAPITALIZED READILY AND DEFTLY ON THEIR QUICK IMMERSION IN CENTRAL MEXICAN LIFE. THEY DREW, ALMOST NOTATIONALLY, FROM THE PEOPLE AND SCENES THEY SAW IN THE CAPITAL CITY AND NEARBY TOWNS, RICH WITH A MIX OF FOLKORIC TRADITION AND THE DYNAMICS OF RECENT HISTORY AND CURRENT SOCIAL CHANGE. AS IN THEIR OWN LANDS, THE TWO ARTISTS SENSED A COUNTRY AT OR NEAR A CROSSROADS, REFORMULATING ITSELF AT A MILLENNIAL MOMENT TO EMERGE AS A DISTINCT CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ENTITY ON THE WORLD STAGE.


IN THIS SENSE, MEXICO IS AN ARTISTIC “OLDER BROTHER” NATION TO MALAYSIA AND ESPECIALLY (WITH ITS SHARED SPANISH COLONIAL HERITAGE) THE PHILIPPINES. SEBASTIÁN’S DEVOTION TO HIS ARTISTIC VISION, AND HIS SUCCESS WITH IT, ONLY PARALLELS ZAKI’S AND BENCA’S, BUT OCCURS IN A LESS EXCEPTIONAL CONTEXT. IN SHORT ORDER, THE RAPIDLY GROWING ART SCENES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND MALAYSIA WILL BE AS BROAD, COMPLEX, AND SOPHISTICATED AS MEXICO’S, AND AS UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED; RIGHT NOW, THE SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES ARE ENJOYING ATTENTION AS EMERGING ART CENTERS, WHILE MEXICO IS ENJOYING RECOGNITION AS A “MATURE” CENTER.


THE MODELS FOR AND INFLUENCES ON THE WORKS OF ALL THREE ARTISTS, OF COURSE, ARE MYRIAD AND REDUNDANT EVIDENT, BUT ARE NOT AT ALL BOUND TO THE ARTISTS’ ADDRESSES OR ETHNICITIES. ALL THREE ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO A CONCEPT OF ART AS AN ENDEAVOR THAT DOES NOT SO MUCH ABANDON TRIBAL DIFFERENCES AS TRANSCEND THEM. IN THIS RESPECT, THEY ARE ALL AT HOME IN THE EXOTIC – THAT IS TO SAY, THEY ARE ALL AT HOME EVERYWHERE. THIS WAS THE IMPLICITE MESSAGE IN THE RESIDENCY PROJECT THAT BROUGHT ZAKI AND BENCA TO SEBASTIÁN’S DOORSTEP, AND IT IS THE EXPLICIT MESSAGE OF THIS EXHIBITION, BRINGING THE WORKS OF THESE THREE CREATIVE INDIVIDUALS TO YET ANOTHER COUNTRY. AN INITIATIVE BORN IN AND BROUGHT BACK TO SINGAPORE, NURTURED AND DEFINED IN LOS ANGELES, HAS LINKED MALAYSIA AND THE PHILIPPINES WITH MEXICO. THE PACIFIC OCEAN HAS SHRUNK CONSIDERABLY – ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD. THIS IS THE NEW FACE OF OUR NEW EARTH, THE ULTIMATE HOPE – AND ACCOMPLISHMENT – OF GLOBALIZED SOCIETY.
Historically speaking, there’s no question about it: art naturally becomes globalized because it is conceived and designed to move through a world without borders or barriers. In fact, any obstacles standing in art’s way are invariably weak and eventually surpassed. Even when considered nationalistic or localized, art is still the ultimate expression of universality. Cervantes and Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Leonardo; Vivaldi and Mozart do not belong to their countries of origin because they are the property of humanity, a status which did not require decree or law. Beethoven will always be a native of Bonn, Germany; but he is also a Mexican, Argentinian, Japanese, Malaysian, French and Spanish composer. He will always be understood in this way, no matter where his music is interpreted. In England, Cervantes is English, while Shakespeare is Spanish in Spain.

In the case of the visual arts, the situation is less confusing and abstract: a picture or sculpture can be viewed by people of all nationalities in any period because, as spectators, they relate to beauty, no matter past or present. There is no need to coerce the nature of change because, with very little effort, art becomes worldwide, universal. Accordingly, although art may represent a specific moment in a country’s history and may be imbued with its author’s values and symbols, this quality of universality emanates from the very essence of art and soon enters humanity’s collective imagination.

The globalization of art: the case of Sebastian, Zakii and BenCab
René Avilés Fabila

Mexico rediscovered itself after its Revolution, when it forged the values of its identity by blending different cultures regardless of their European, North American, Asian or African origins. This process clearly led to significant processes involving literature, music and dance, yet Mexico’s most noteworthy expression manifested in painting. Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco, the “three greats of muralism,” profoundly transformed the entire field of visual arts. They combined elements of pre-Hispanic muralism, the Catholicism of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, modernist trends and sociopolitical elements and changed the direction of Mexican painting. Their aesthetic theories and experiments have since become international benchmarks.

Throughout the latter years of the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first, one particular Mexican artist has played an outstanding role in this regard. Sebastian initially filled his country with monumental sculptures that have become reference points and challenged the grayness of the urban landscape. At the entrances to cities these works offer a rapturous welcome or fond farewell to visitors; they can be seen from afar, their striking colors complementing bold designs.

A native of Chihuahua, Sebastian has become truly universal; his magnificent sculptures grace cities throughout the world, whether in the United States or Japan, France or Spain.

Sebastian does not limit himself to the production of marvelous sculptures; he has also created a foundation which he uses to promote art in its different expressions, domestically and internationally. The Fundación Sebastian offers literary and musical events, honors cultural figures and stages exhibitions, but gives particular stress to the visual arts and its makers. Mexico City was recently privileged to receive two outstanding artists Zakii, from Malaysia, and BenCab, from the Philippines.
Prior to their first show, Zakii and BenCab exchanged opinions and proposals with Mexican painters, including Gilberto Aceves Navarro, Vicente Rojo, Manuel Felguerez, Gabriel Macotela, as well as Sebastian himself. The Asian artists visited Mexico’s leading museums, including the Anthropology, Fine Arts, Modern Art and Rufino Tamayo museums, as well as the house of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, among other key arts venues. They visited Teotihuacan and Tepotzlián, admired the great murals of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros, and spoke with students and teachers at La Esmeralda, one of Mexico’s foremost schools of painting and sculpture. They concluded their activities with a splendid exhibition of their work at the Fundación Sebastian.

Zakii’s and BenCab’s visit to Mexico allowed them to study what is generally referred to as the Mexican School of Painting, comprising artists of acknowledged international reputation who marked the start of a new era known as the “Rupture”. This group of impetuously expressive artists returned to the easel to explore more committed forms, techniques and themes, ones that differed from traditional figurative art and tended to be abstract and distanced from politics. The declaration “there is no way but our way,” voiced decades ago by Siqueiros (who was certainly a gifted easel painter and quite adept at abstraction), was followed by the emergence of new artistic fields, other kinds of expressive experimentation that revitalized traditional disciplines like drawing and oil painting. As a result, Mexican vanguard movements have continued to emerge and acquire international prestige.

Shortly before I began this piece, a group of ‘Rupture’ painters and sculptors staged an affectionate, cordial and even sentimental collective exhibition at Sebastian’s Gallery. The show included the work of Roger Von Günten, José Luis Cuevas, Vicente Rojo, Gustavo Arias Murueza, Gilberto Aceves Navarro, Luis López Loza, Francisco Toledo and Sebastian himself. This show was not intended to confront or criticize the great muralist-painters of the Mexican School of Painting, as has occurred in the past, but rather to recognize the subsequent enrichment of Mexican expressive arts with other cutting-edge ideas. Vicente Rojo defined these painters as a “group of individual talents, to paraphrase the ‘Contemporary Generation,’ written by Jaime Torres Bodet, Xavier Villaurrutia, Carlos Pellicer and Salvador Novo, which proclaimed itself as the generation of solitude.” As Sebastian remarked: “The ‘Rupture’ proposed that each individual follow his own personal path...”
Accordingly, the visit of Zakii and BenCab to Mexico enabled them to observe the past and present of Mexican art. This exchange between East and West was fruitful for both. We should mention that Zakii and especially BenCab were overwhelmed by the majestic constructions and pre-Columbian art they saw. They also discovered pleasing affinities with certain Mexican painters and engravers, especially those who participated in the renowned Popular Graphic Arts Workshop. In fact, there are surprising connections between the work of BenCab and Mexican artists like Francisco Zúñiga, Ricardo Martínez and Alfredo Zalce. The cover of El Búho Magazine featured one of BenCab’s beautiful works.
The art presented by the three artists, Zakii, BenCab and Sebastian, reached an extensive public. As artists, they display different characteristics, but are all the masters of their own technical and aesthetic support systems. The differences between them lie in the ideas upon which their work is based rather than the materials they utilize. Sebastian noted the enormous impact of pre-Hispanic art on Zakii and BenCab; however, as I have discussed at some length in a previous article on the sculptor, we also know that more than one aspect of Mexico’s vanguard trends has been influenced by these ancient roots. This situation naturally allows us to speculate on the short-term results of the constructive encounter between different and ancient cultures, trends and schools with shared features and in constant experimentation.
Benedicto Cabrera, or BenCab, was born in war-torn Manila in 1942, in the working class district of Sta. Cruz. He studied at the College of Fine Arts of the University of the Philippines, and dropped out in his senior year in order to earn his keep and support his family. He worked as illustrator and graphic artist before setting up Gallery Indigo with his elder brother Salvador, who was also a painter. He had his first solo show at Gallery Indigo in 1966.

BenCab moved to London in 1969 and lived and worked there for 16 years, exhibiting in several cities all over the world, and in Manila during his periodic home visits. He returned to the Philippines for good in late 1985, establishing his home and studio in Baguio City.

BenCab collaborated with other local artists to establish the Baguio Arts Guild, and later the Tam–awan Artists’ Village, as venues for artistic expression and vehicles for the careers of younger artists. He is an active participant in Asian art events and regional artists’ groups.

The Republic of the Philippines conferred the Order of National Artist on BenCab in June 2006; while the University of the Philippines honored him with a Doctorate in Humanities Honoris Causa in 2009.

The BenCab Museum opened in Metro Baguio in February 2009, as a repository of the artist’s extensive collection of Philippine contemporary art and primitive tribal art from the Cordillera region of northern Luzon, and as a center for continuing education in the fine arts, ecology and highland culture. In three years, it has become a vibrant cultural and tourism destination.

A tai-chi practitioner and bonsai enthusiast, BenCab divides his time between painting, reading, farming and gardening at his residence/studio and farm beside the BenCab Museum in Tuba, Benguet, six kilometers outside Baguio City.
Ahmad Zakii Anwar was born in Malaysia in 1955, where he currently lives. A graduate of the Institute of Technology of Malaysia, he is considered one of the artists most committed to humanity, depicting people with their shadows or silhouettes, by inference those who are most vulnerable. Far from positing a servile copy of reality, Zakii’s unique vision offers a disconcerting realism. In his hands, charcoal and oil produce magnificent results, captivating figures. A simplistic appreciation of his work might pigeonhole him as a hyperrealist, yet a more profound analysis shows that these features result not just from a slavish imitation of reality but from his personal vision. The works he presented in Mexico are surprisingly familiar, brimming with symbols derived from cities and their people. Zakii has participated in an impressive number of collective and individual exhibitions throughout Asia, Europe and North America. He uses the elements he discovers in other schools and expressions to enhance his own creations and, like Sebastian, enriches ancient motifs through a continuous process of invention. I have written that his geometric figures are indebted to the pyramid builders: Egyptians and Aztecs and Mayas have finally become inverted triangles. Zakii explained this metamorphosis in a newspaper interview: “My interest in masks led to a series of meditations. I began this series in 1998 and have periodically worked on it, together with other series, in recent years. It deals with the individual’s search for their true identity behind the different masks used throughout life; a process that has only been partially resolved in recent times. The first works of this series were an exploration into the individual’s psyche, which subsequently evolved into this chapter of the series on the question of divinity. It is a natural progression; uncovering the intricate layers of human nature ultimately demands a metaphysical examination. The relationship between the creator and his creation forms the basis of this series.”
Perhaps the most interesting point of this splendid international encounter, to which Sebastian has now accustomed us, is the fact that there are more aesthetic solutions than problems. Similarly, this meeting allowed the three artists to emphasize the points of contact and affinities of their work over and above their apparent differences. This collective work and rich exchange of ideas and opinions took place in October 2011 under the auspices of the AndrewsShire Gallery of Singapore and the Fundación Sebastian. This exhibition will be followed by a show of the three artists’ work at the VA@T Gallery in June 2012.

The encounter in Mexico City of a Malaysian, a Filipino, and several Mexican artists is a clear example of artistic globalization, the result of which is already tangible and will become increasingly so in subsequent exhibitions. This stage of positive exchange has been observed and discussed in Mexico. Nonetheless, its repercussions have already extended to other painters of different nationalities, inspiring them to follow the example set by Sebastian, a student of Mathias Goeritz and resident of Mexico who has traveled the world creating bridges as strong and luminous as his ambitious monumental sculptures. Art, as this initiative demonstrates, is clearly an aesthetic provocation: it is also the best way to achieve a harmonious planet.
Ahmad Zakii Anwar

"Mexicans. I can sit on a street anywhere in Mexico and be fascinated by the people I see. Everything about their country, religion, culture and history, I see etched on their faces. Mexico City has fantastic museums but nothing beats the museum of the streets."
• AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, 3 MEN AT TEPOTZLÁN MARKET, 2012, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 68 X 208CM
• AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, HOMBRES 2, 2011, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 105 X 75CM
AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, MOUNTED POLICEMEN AT ALAMEDA PARK, 2012, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 68 X 208CM

AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, HOMBRES 4, 2011, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 105 X 75CM
AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, AZTEC DANCERS, 2012, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 68 X 208CM

AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR, MUSICIANS AT LA GRUTA, 2011, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 68 X 208CM
“A highlight of my Mexican adventure was the awesome experience of climbing the 250 steps up to the top of the ancient Aztec Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan. I believe that its supernatural source of power from the sun and the rest of the cosmos gave me positive energy for creative artistic ideas. Now I understand why the artists in Mexico have such strong images in their art, owing to their impressive cultural history. The influence of their majestic Mesoamerican civilization combined with a strong link with Christian influences result in the development of powerful contemporary art.”
• BENCAB, CALAVERAS SHRINE, 2012, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 102 X 76CM

• BENCAB, MEXICAN MUJERES, 2012, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS 102 X 76CM
“The encounter was an extraordinary experience that allowed us to know one another’s tastes, cultural differences, ways of being as a revelation full of surprises while on walks and visits to the cultural sights of Mexico. The coexistence between we three artists made me realize how important it is to continue promoting this kind of art exchange with colleagues from other countries. I have added two good friends to my pool of friends in the world.”
SEBASTIAN, VESTIDO AMARILLO, 1993, STEEL, POLYURETHANE, 182 X 44 X 45 CM

SEBASTIAN, 10 DE JUNIO 1971, 2011, BRONZE, 53 X 39 X 16.5 CM
SEBASTIAN, VESTIDO AMARILLO, GALLO, 2012, BRONCE, 43 X 61 X 21CM

SEBASTIAN, TIEMPO, 2006, ACERO, POLIURETANO, 127 X 85 X 80CM
AHMAD ZAKII ANWAR

BORN: 1955 JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA

STUDIES: SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN, MARA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

MALAYSIA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

1975 NATIONAL ART GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1976 SALON MALAYSIA, NATIONAL ART GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

1979 YOUNG CONTEMPORARIES, NATIONAL ART GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1982 THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE, MAYBANK GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1985 IMBAUAN LEDANG, 12TH INTERNATIONAL ASIAN ART EXHIBITION, CENTRO DE ACTIVIDADES TURISTICAS, MACAU.

1991 PURSUING A DREAM - THE COLLECTION OF RAHIME, PETRONAS GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1992 RECENT WORKS - A TWO PERSON SHOW WITH OH CHAI HOO, THE JOHN ERDOS GALLERY, SINGAPORE.

1993 NO RETREAT, OBEROI GALLERY, BALI, INDONESIA.

1994 JUST DRAWINGS, ARTCASE GALLERIES, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1995 EIGHTS ARTISTS, GALERCITRA, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1996 MOVEMENT, ARTCASE GALLERIES, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

1997 OF ASIAN ART, FUKUOKA, JAPAN.

1998 PERCEPTION & PERSPECTIVE: A MALAYSIAN EYEVIEW, HOTBATH GALLERY, BATH & PITTVILLE GALLERY, CHESTEHNAM, UK.

1999 THREE PERSON SHOW, TAKSU KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2000 MEN ON WOMEN, MIM, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2001 KARYAWAN MALAYSIA.

2002 PRESENCE, BARBARA GREENE FINE ART, NEW YORK.

2003 ONE MAN SHOW, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2004 ONE MAN SHOW, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2005 YOU ARE HERE, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2006_Exhibitions:

1999 STILLS, TAKSU KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2000 SHADOWLAND, PLUM BLOSSOMS, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2003 DRAWINGS, NATIONAL ART GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2004 PORTRAITS, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2005 HEADLIGHTS, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2006 REMBAGI KE BALU, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, BALU, INDONESIA.

2007 CONTRA I INDICATIONS, TAKSU KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2008 GAMES PEOPLE PLAY, RIMBUN DHANAN, SELANGOR, MALAYSIA.

2009 MALAYSIAN EXPRESSIONS, PANORAMA GALLERY, BEIJING, CHINA.

2010 CULTURE COLOUR CONNECTION, FREMANTLE BATH & PITTVILLE GALLERY, CHELTENHAM, UK.

2011 THREE PERSON SHOW, TAKSU KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2012 NO RETREAT, OBEROI GALLERY, BALI, INDONESIA.

2013 JUST DRAWINGS, ARTCASE GALLERIES, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2014 ART FOR NATURE, NN GALLERY, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2015 MALAYSIAN EXPRESSIONS, PANORAMA GALLERY, BEIJING, CHINA.

2016 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2017 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2018 YOU ARE HERE, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2019 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2020 CMD 10TH ANNIVERSARY, VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA.

2021 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2022 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2023 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2024 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.

2025 ARTSINGAPORE, SUNTEC CITY, SINGAPORE.
**BENCAB**

**REED:** April 10, 1942 MANILA, PHILIPPINES **STUDIES:** COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

**SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:** INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS, LONDON | MUSEUM OF PHILIPPINE ART | GLASGOW PRINT STUDIO GALLERY, SCOTLAND | HONGKONG ACADEMY OF ARTS, HAWAII | THE OCTOBER GALLERY, LONDON | CHUCK LEVITAN GALLERY, NEW YORK | THE LUZ GALLERY, MANILA | METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF MANILA | FEATHERSTONE MEETINGHOUSE FOR THE ARTS, MARTHA’S VINEYARD, MASSACHUSETTS | PLUM BLOSSOMS GALLERY, SINGAPORE | VALENTINE WILLIE FINE ART AT THE CHEDI, BALI, INDONESIA | PINTO ART GALLERY, MANILA | BENCAB MUSEUM, BAGUIO CITY | ANDREWSHIRE GALLERY, LOS ANGELES | NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE & THE ARTS, MANILA **SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:** TOKYO BIENNALE | PARIS BIENNALE | BIENAL INTERNACIONAL DE ARTE, CHILE | ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON | JAPAN FOUNDATION FORUM, TOKYO | HONG KONG MUSEUM OF ART | NATIONAL ART INSTITUTE, MANILA | NATIONAL MUSEUM, JAKARTA | METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF MANILA | MUSEUM OF ITALY, MARSEILLA, ITALY | SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM | JORGE B. VARGAS MUSEUM, MANILA | AYAHA MUSEUM, MANILA | CULTURAL CENTER OF THE PHILIPPINES | SILVERLENS GALLERY, MANILA | BENCAB MUSEUM, BAGUIO CITY | ANGEL SANCHEZ GALLERY, MANILA | NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE & THE ARTS, MANILA | ALLIANCE FRANCAISE DE MANILLE | BENCAB MUSEUM, BAGUIO CITY | FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIAN, MEXICO

**SEBASTIAN**

**REED:** November 16, 1942 CAMARGO, CHIH. MEXICO. **STUDIES:** ACADEMIA DE SAN CARLOS, ESCUELA NACIONAL ARTES PLASTICAS, ACADEMY OF SAN CARLOS RESEARCH FELLOW IN URBAN ART, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO SINCE 1980.

THIS RESIDENCY PROJECT WAS CONCEIVED IN 2010, WHEN WE FIRST MET AMBASSADOR VILLEGAS AT A SCULPTURE SHOW WE HOSTED IN SINGAPORE, AT THE FULLERTON HERITAGE PRECINCT, HIGHLIGHTING SINGAPOREAN AND KOREAN ARTISTS.

WE WERE INSPIRED BY AMBASSADOR VILLEGAS’ IMPASSIONED DETERMINATION TO INTRODUCE MEXICAN ART TO SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND TO EXPLORE VARIOUS MEANS OF CREATING A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINED EXCHANGE OF ARTISTIC TRADITIONS AND STYLES BETWEEN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND MEXICO.

SHORTLY THEREAFTER, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET SEBASTIAN AND HIS WIFE, GABRIELA, IN SINGAPORE. WITH INCREDIBLE GENTLENESS, THEY IMMEDIATELY OFFERED TO HOST A GROUP OF ARTISTS FROM ASIA AT FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIAN IN MEXICO CITY, A HEARTENING AND RESOUNDING VALIDATION OF OUR VISION.

FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS WE THANK AMBASSADOR VILLEGAS FOR HIS CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT, WITHOUT WHICH THIS EXHIBITION SIMPLY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE.

WITH EQUAL FERVOR WE THANK SEBASTIAN, GABRIELA, AND FUNDACIÓN SEBASTIAN FOR THEIR GENEROSITY, THEIR IMMENSE WARMTH AND CARING, AND THEIR MOST GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY IN MEXICO CITY.

WE WOULD FURTHER LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION TO THE LEE FOUNDATION FOR ITS MOST GENEROUS SUPPORT.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL TO VISUAL ARTS @ TEMENGGONG FOR HOSTING THIS EXHIBITION IN A UNIQUE AND STRIKING SETTING. THE TEMENGGONG GROUNDS ARE THE PERFECT PLACE TO HOST AND DISPLAY SUCH A POWERFUL EXCHANGE.

THANK YOU ALL.