

# Children making waves

Five children tell **Aneeta Sundararaj** what makes their works of art precious in a unique "children-only" art exhibition



**I**N art classes of yesteryear, we sat at tables in a schoolroom and painted nondescript objects as instructed by the teacher, like a bowl of fruit on a table. We painted on A3-sized paper and used poster colour paints which dried before the class ended. Although we enjoyed these classes, many of us had questions which were never answered: Where were the easels? Didn't artists paint on canvas and use oil paints? And who on earth was Vincent van Gogh?

It was, therefore, a pleasant surprise to meet Gwen Koh Ting Zhi, 8, who said, with utter confidence, that she used van Gogh's *The Starry Night* technique in her piece. Together with other works by children aged 6-13, Gwen's work is being showcased in the Making Waves exhibition at The Studio At KL, Bangsar South.

The name of the exhibition is based on Katsushika Hokusai's most famous painting, *The Great Wave Of Kanagawa*. The children were taught the art styles of artists like Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol and Vincent Van Gogh and asked to think outside the box and come up with their own piece.

**MINI VAN GOGH**

Gwen makes a point to tell me about the turtle she's included in the painting because it's her favourite animal. While we take time to appreciate the greenish moon



Millie Baltzer's work is inspired by the en

"You can do (raise children's self-esteem) through writing, drama or sports. We choose art."  
Jennifer Tan

in Gwen's work (another reference to van Gogh's painting), Jennifer Tan, the 50-year-old curator of this exhibition, explains the concept behind The Studio At KL. She says that it's a unique open plan art studio for children where they have structured classes in an art studio. They paint on easels and are able to demonstrate their individuality, take risks and be creative.



Hugo Wang Kian Chaun offers something with an aboriginal fe

The children showcase their special brand of art in this unique children-only exhibition.

PICTURES BY NIK HARIFF HASSAN

## LIFE&amp;TIMES ART

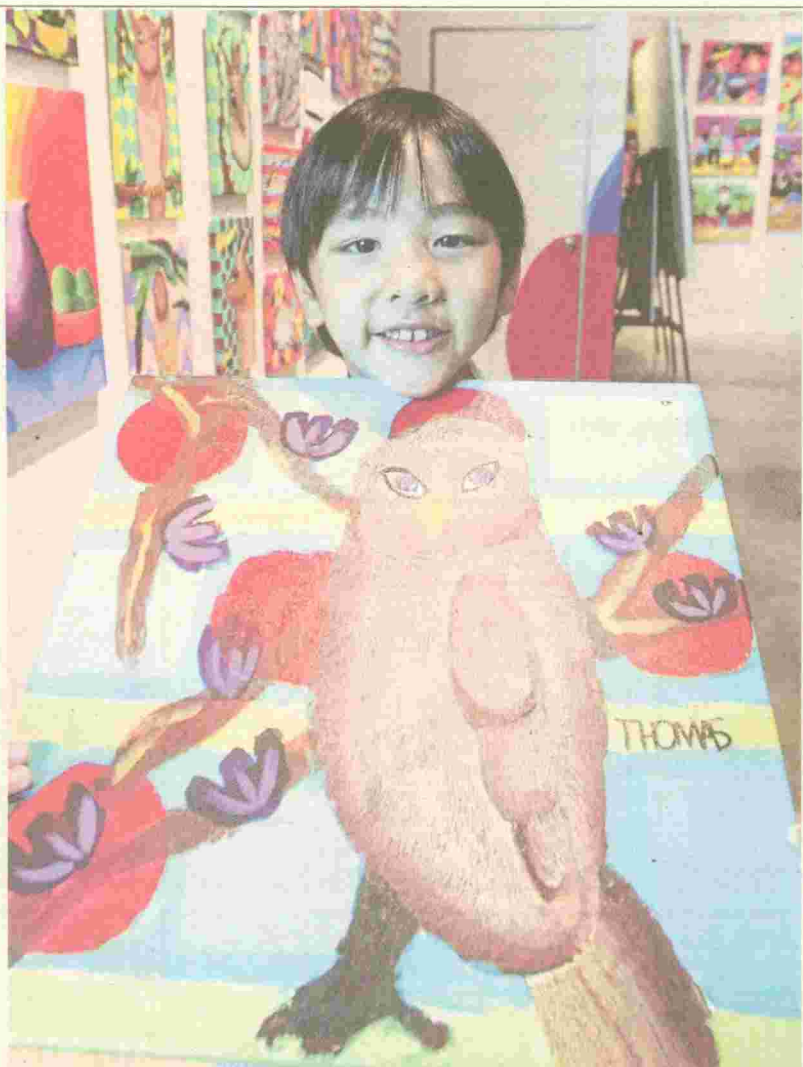


endangered rhinoceros.

"We aim to raise these children's self-esteem," says this native of Kuala Lumpur. "You can do this in so many ways, through writing, drama or sports. We choose art."

Under the theme, Kampung Life, the children were taught about Stephane Delapree whose work depicts very vibrant and colourful scenes in the villages of Cambodia. In her piece for this series, 12-year-old Ashley Tew Min Jie chose to depict village life in Malacca. The other children show their appreciation for her work by pointing out the vibrant colours used and warm feelings evoked from images of the hibiscus and the basket of fruit to the bird and fish.

"But why isn't she holding her



Thomas Jacob Lee Hahn used the technique of 'blending' for his owl piece.

nose?" asks little Thomas Jacob Lee Hahn, 7. The conclusion the group makes is that the girl in the painting doesn't have a nose because she can't stand the smell of the Rafflesia flower that Ashley's painted in the background. Thomas then points to his painting of an owl using a technique called "blending", but freely admits that it was a "boring technique".

**DREAMTIME**

The prevailing sense of humour in some of the works is evident in a piece by Hugo Wang Kian Chaun, 9,

under the Australian Aboriginal Dot Painting series, based on Australian Aboriginal people and animals. The children were encouraged to create their own stories using chopsticks, toothpicks, skewers, and reverse tips of pencils and brushes. Their aim was to create a painting with dots, circles and patterns reflecting the look and feel of aboriginal art.

Hugo makes a curious statement about his work: "The lizard is laughing." Seeing that the story he's trying to tell is lost on us all, he's at pains to explain that

**Making Waves**

**When:** Until July 28 (Open daily from 10am to 6pm)  
**Where:** The Studio At KL, 2-5 Nexus Bangsar South, 7 Jalan Kerinchi, KL  
Details at [www.thestudioatkl.com](http://www.thestudioatkl.com)

**THE A-LIST**

BY INTAN MAIZURA AHMAD KAMAL

**LAG-LAGI GILA-GILA**

**Where:** Galeri Petronas, Level 3, Suria KLCC, Jalan Ampang, KL City Centre, KL

**When:** Ends July 15

Go to [www.galeripetronas.com.my](http://www.galeripetronas.com.my) for details

Free Admission

GALERI Petronas pays homage to the country's iconic humour magazine *Gila-Gila* and its famed cartoonists, showcasing over 200 pieces of original artworks ranging from comic strips, editorial cartoons, rare first editions and sketches and drawings.



Gila Gila.

**SHIFT**

**Where:** Galeri TAKSU, 17 Jalan Pawang, KL City Centre, KL

**When:** Ends July 17, Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm; Sundays and public holidays, by appointment only.

Go to [www.taksu.com](http://www.taksu.com) for details

Free Admission

Featuring the works of 10 exciting

artists, among them Zulkifli Lee, Najib Bamadhaj, Khairul Izham, Syed Fakaruddin, Hisyamuddin Abdullah and more.

**SEYRUSEFER—TRANSCONTINENTAL MALAYSIA**

**Where:** Shalini Ganendra Fine, 8 Lorong 16/7B, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

the dangerous crocodile is about to attack the lizard. However, the lizard isn't afraid because the kangaroo "is about to jump over the crocodile" and possibly save the lizard.

Showing a deeper understanding of aboriginal art, 11-year-old Millie Baltzer adds that it's special because "they don't use paints. They used earth colours and that takes a lot of patience."

With lots of enthusiasm, Millie presents her piece under the theme Alive and says that she chose to feature a rhinoceros. She, too, used vibrant colours like pink and turquoise. Inspired by the work of graphic artist Andre Preis, the children had to focus on endangered animals in line with the celebrations for Endangered Species Day on May 16, 2014. Each child had to decide on a word as a message that signified the animal they chose to draw.

"I chose 'Strength'," says Millie, "and I used brown at the bottom. To show it's rocky." Since her father works for WWF, she's aware of the dangers posed to the rhinos all around the world. There's an element

of sadness in her voice when she says: "People are killing the rhinos because they want their horns."

**SO PRECIOUS**

Most of the children are proud that many of their works of art are mounted on the walls of their homes. Some say that their parents have put their works in the store room and one thinks his mother's thrown his work away. When asked if they'd consider selling their work, there's a collective gasp.

Jennifer, a professional artist, comforts them when she says that when she sells her paintings, she's sharing a part of herself and showing people her identity. Most seem pacified, but Millie, whose paintings are currently stacked in one corner of her home doesn't seem convinced. Her parents are scheduled to leave Malaysia soon and no decision has been made about the future of her paintings.

Millie then sums up the value these children place on their works of art when she says: "My paintings... they are precious."

Gwen Koh Ting Zhi used Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* technique in her piece.

**When:** Ends July 19, Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-7pm; public holidays and other times by appointment only.

Featuring the ceramic work of four Turkish artists, Fidan Tonza, Funda Altin, Lale Dilbas and F Mujde Gokbel, the exhibition will also feature an education component on modern ceramic practice. It is part of the gallery's landmark Designer Glaze exhibition.

Go to [www.shaliniganendra.com](http://www.shaliniganendra.com) for details

**TWISTED LIFE**

**Where:** Print Room, 49 Lorong 16/9E, Section 16, PJ

**When:** Ends August 8

Go to [www.theprintroomkl.com](http://www.theprintroomkl.com) for details

Free Admission

SHOWCASES the most technically challenging body of work by a small group of film photographers at The Print Room. Composed of subverted conventional still life narratives, alternative film processes and photos exposed to solarisation, we see how the photographers try to challenge established ideas.

**THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN: A VISUAL CELEBRATION**

**Where:** Islamic Arts Museum, Jalan Lembah Perdana, KL

**When:** Ends Aug 31

A photography exhibition showcasing Islamic art, architecture and cultural diversity. Don't miss out on workshops, Quran recitations and talks to be held during the course of the exhibition.