

# LECTURER CREATES ‘FIRE ART’ PAINTING TECHNIQUE

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Dr Emmanuel working on a painting.

ASKED to describe himself in three words, lecturer, artist and winner of various art awards, Dr Emmanuel Osakue replied: “Detailed, talented and easy-going.”

To him, his biggest accomplishment in life is more than winning awards. Rather, it’s knowing he can help and contribute towards making his students better artists of the future.

Emmanuel, from Nigeria, is a lecturer at Limkokwing Borneo, a creative art college in Kuching.

He came to the state capital eight years ago to take up the post and during that time, has learnt a lot about local cultures and arts.

“I like to teach people creatively. It’s a passion I enjoy — it makes me proud to see what they become,” he said.

Apart from being an art lecturer, he is also known in the local and international art scenes as the artist who initiated the fire-burning or wood-burning painting technique.

He has won many awards for his artworks at local competitions, including two organised by Kuching North City

Commission (DBKU) titled The Eyes That Saw Many in 2012 and ‘Save The Trees and Save Me’ in August this year. He took first place in both.

Emmanuel holds a PhD in Fine Arts from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and is famous for using various new as well as original techniques on assorted fabrics for his paintings.

One of his famous works is a fruit-themed painting on black velvet cloth which shows a strong contrasting effect with colours.

On this technique, he said: “I discussed with my friend because we were supposed to have an exhibition but we couldn’t participate because of the lack of materials — so I was thinking, is it possible to create a picture without relying on western materials such as acrylics, pencils and things like that which are very familiar.

“You can actually create pictures with whatever you have in your environment like flowers and the traditional material we call henna. You can use these as an art medium to create pictures,” he added.

“So this same hunger and desire actually led me to create a technique which is very affordable and available to every home — Fire Art.”

“I did a little bit of experiment and research and I came up with the idea of using pyrography which is a technique using very hot metal on fire or electricity and on wood.”

“Pyrography can only give you marks — it doesn’t burn a lot of material to have an effect. So it wasn’t good until I decided to use the traditional gas cooker

which gives you flame — all you have to do is control it to give effect.

“Using this fire technique is like using a pencil to shade. It comes out black and white. Also, I need to choose the wood which is another area of my experiment,” he explained.

Emmanuel said wood burning is actually time-consuming, adding that it took him about two weeks to complete an art work using this technique.

According to him, it’s very tedious but the effect is very good.

“The mayor of Sabah actually saw this and thought it was a ground-breaking technique. This gave me a lot of confidence to continue with the technique.”

Most of his paintings have been sold to foreigners – expatriates in the country and tourists from countries like France, Netherlands, Australia and Canada.

Although some local art aficionados in Kuching have bought his paintings such the owner of a restaurant called Simply Sedap at Jalan Setia Raja, Tabuan Jaya, who displays them as art decors at his eatery, Emmanuel understands that art appreciation is still low in Sarawak.

He noted that the percentage is still low but he believed the numbers would grow in future.

“A whole lot of designers and artists cannot rely on painting as a career right now in Sarawak. It’s too tough.”

However, he believed this should not stop an artist from constantly coming up with creative works.

He will exhibit his works on Saturday (Oct 29) in conjunction with the Art Galleria 2016 event, organised by the mass communication students of Limkokwing Borneo.

The event which starts at 1pm, will be held at The Canteen of ChinaHouse, at the Old Court House.

Emmanuel lectures on life art to students taking different art majors such as graphic design, animation design and fashion design.

He works on his paintings during his spare time, and is a member of the Sarawak Artist Society.