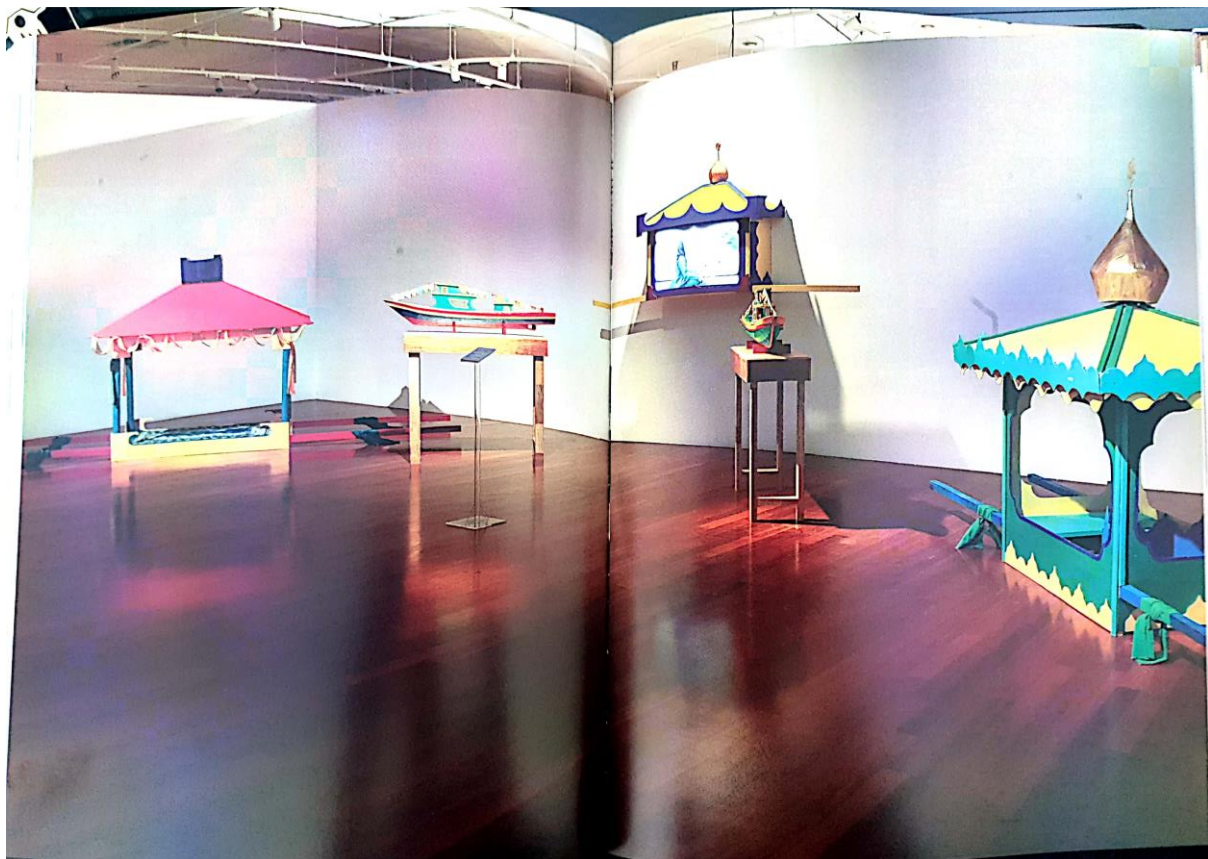


BMS19: The Parade of the Usungan
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Video





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Currently living and working in Sarawak.

The Parade of the Usungan is a proposal to celebrate a rare custom called Usungan. In life, a success is often accompanied by a celebration symbolizing happiness, harmony, unity, bonding and strength. Thus, the parade of the usungan is an articulation of victory and joy. The Usungan is a colourful tradition of palanquin/human transportation procession which is a common feature during the year-end school holiday season in the Sarawak coastal region. Usungan refers to the beautifully sculptured carriage or palanquin in which the children are carried around the neighborhood. The event is normally held to honour a large group of children who have completed their studies in the Quran recitals. It is a tradition unique to Borneo which is held to encourage the younger generation to strive for success. The usungan comes in all kinds of shape such as the plane, helicopter, fish, bird, fruit and insect, and the skill and creativity of the makers can be seen in design of the usungan. Kabong in Sarawak is a district that is committed to keep the tradition alive. Here, the usungan parade is something that people look forward to. It is usually accompanied by a hadrah performance. Sarawak has many races and tribes and each has its own distinctive traditions. It is high time that the coastal communities of Sarawak were highlighted for their creativity.

Method/Concept

The Parade of the Usungan used co-creation as a method of researching, gathering, communicating all the data and information about Usungan. The research was conducted from 19 to 23 November 2018 in the Kabong community.

Co-creation is a form of economic strategy that brings different parties together in order to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. In business, it is defined as the collaborative development of new value (concepts, solutions, products and services) together with experts and/or stakeholders (such as customers, suppliers etc.). It is a form of collaborative innovation where ideas are shared and improved together, rather than kept to oneself, and is closely connected to two other buzz-words, 'open source' and 'mass-customisation'.

The Parade of the Usungan
2019
Mixed media & video installation
Dimensions variable

Therefore, for *The Parade of the Usungan*, we collaborated with the Kabong community in a co-creation process to improve the design of the usungan and its practicality.

The research on Usungan takes place every year in several districts in the Sarawak coastal area. The practice is said to be more than 100 years old and unique to the Borneo Island. Before we carried out the research, we learned of the following from a pilot study:

1. The design needs to be documented and it has been defined by conventionally and contemporary/modern requirements.
2. The community or families need financial support to produce the usungan.
3. The materials used to make the usungan are not practical (too heavy to carry).
4. The usungan is a dying art/tradition that needs to be preserved.

Therefore, we decided to work collaboratively with the community to produce the usungan, while addressing the above problems. This time, the usungan practice in Kabong, Sarawak is taken as a case study where:

a) ideas are shared and improved together; we discuss the design, material and the practicality of the usungan. The participants (community) are free to voice out their ideas, to question and consult the experts.

b) co-creation benefits both the artists and the community; during the process, the sharing session is found beneficial and the community is motivated to continue the practice, realising the value of their unique tradition and the value of cooperation and life-long learning.

Our co-creation here serves to highlight that creating a work of art requires research, that the artists empower the community and should be shared with the community or the public, not just kept within the art community.