



SARKASI SAID

SARKASI BIN SAID (b. 1940), better known as Tzee, is a Singaporean batik painter known for his unconventional wax-resisting technique, bold use of colours and depictions of nature. By employing abstract and modern techniques, Sarkasi portrays vibrant and intricate decorative elements in his works. Dedicated to his artistic pursuit for almost 60 years, Sarkasi is regarded by many Singapore visual artists as the pioneer of local batik paintings.

His interest in art was sparked at age five or six by a gift from his grandfather for his birthday – a toy aeroplane made without the use of nails. At 16, he dropped out of Beatty Secondary School to pursue his interest in art. He cycled around Singapore, painting and selling landscape works. He knew about batik from young because his grandmother earned extra income from selling batik cloth. However, it was only after he became aware of the use of batik techniques in the paintings of foreign artists that a more serious interest in batik took root.

As a Javanese, batik is part of his cultural heritage. Sarkasi travelled extensively in the region, visiting Karang Malang, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, his grandparents' hometown and a batik manufacturing centre. A self-taught artist, he has always been eager to learn from the masters. He studied with the famous Indonesian batik painter, Pak Aznam Effendy, at Yayasan Akademi Senipura Nasional in Jakarta, Indonesia.

As a batik painter of international renown, Sarkasi has held exhibitions in many countries including Brunei, France, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines and the United States. His works have been displayed in the homes or offices of prominent figures, including the Sultan of Brunei, across the world. Likewise, his batik paintings have graced the halls of local hospitals, government and embassy offices and the Istana. In addition, many Singapore leaders have worn batik shirts designed by him. In May 2003, Sarkasi created a 103-metre long work, the world's longest batik painting, achieving a Guinness World Record.

Sarkasi has served on several committees as a board member, such as the Malay Heritage Centre Committee (1992–1995), the National Arts Council's (NAC) Arts Advisory Panel (1992–1998), Singapore's Modern Art Society (1995–1998) and the NAC Council (2006–2008). He has promoted awareness of batik through workshops at the Malay Heritage Centre, mentored many young artists and served as an external examiner and adviser in art schools. He has also donated many of his paintings to charitable organisations and taught art, as a volunteer, in Changi Prison, Sembawang Drug Rehabilitation Centre and Jamiyah's Children Home.



Student visits to "Always Moving": The Batik Art of Sarkasi Said, NUS Museum, 2017.

Image courtesy of NUS Museum.