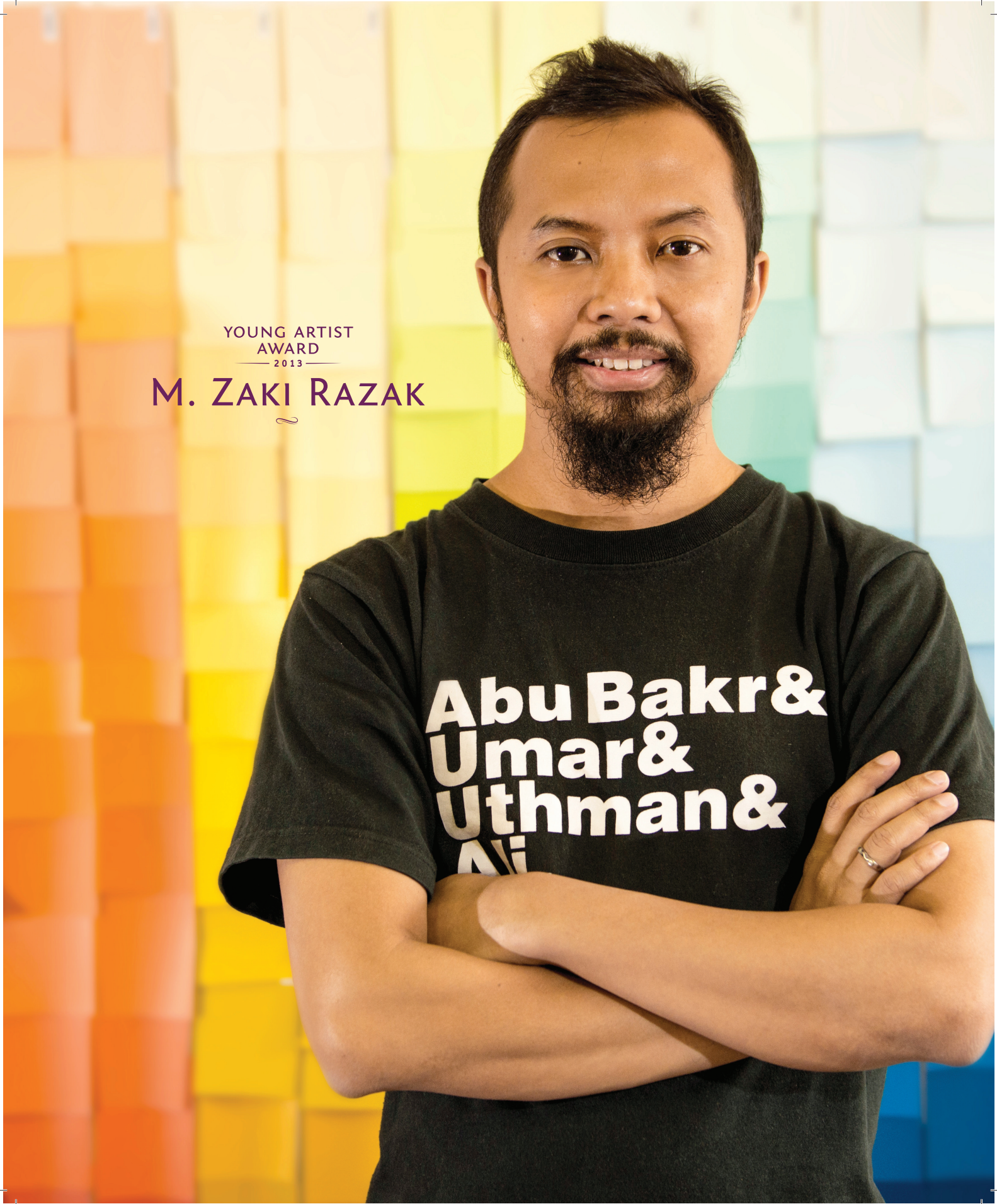


YOUNG ARTIST
AWARD
2013

M. ZAKI RAZAK

Abu Bakr &
Umar &
Uthman &
Ali



Born in 1979 in Singapore, M. Zaki Razak has developed a rich artistic practice that spans the fields of street art, graphic design, performance art, writing, curating, installation art and education. A Visual Communications graduate from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (2000), Zaki is an artist with tenacity and dedication to his craft, having built an extensive body of work even while pursuing his Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours (University of Huddersfield, UK) in 2007, and his Master of Fine Arts (Open University, UK) in 2011.

A vision for inclusive modes of creation, reception and transmission of art intrigues the artist and forms the foundation of his body of work. History, spirituality and the everyday are also common underpinnings in Zaki's artistic creations. These visions and motivations in turn engender a new hybrid practice that employs a playful participatory approach to art—both for audiences and artist-collaborators. His notable performance-installation pieces

such as *Eat for Peace* (Hong Kong, 2008) and *seVen: a wedding exhibition* (2011), the latter being his very own wedding ceremony, are illustrative of his distinct modus operandi.

Since his debut at *Seni* (2004), as part of a group exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum, Zaki has exhibited extensively in Singapore, France, Thailand and Hong Kong. Recognised locally and internationally, Zaki has also been accepted for notable residencies including The Substation's Associate Artist Research Programme in Singapore (2012–2014) and the Land Foundation Artist Residency in Chiang Mai, Thailand (2006). Most recently, he was awarded the 2013 President's Young Talents Award, for his performance-installation piece, *Revising Art: The Ten Year Series* at the Singapore Art Museum.

A generous and open artist, Zaki is well-recognised amongst his peers, as one who is unafraid of sharing and opening his work and practice to fellow artists and

audiences, to inspire shared development and a true sense of co-creation and collaboration. His multi-faceted approach has opened new dimensions to art and positions him as a leader and visionary in his community.



A CONVERSATION WITH M. ZAKI RAZAK

How did you first get into the arts?

My art practice comprises a series of transitions in art genres, namely from graphic design to street art to modern art to contemporary art and currently back to questioning the essence of art. All these years have been a series of its revision as well as to seek its truest form or action. Each phase has a personality who triggers, facilitates and inspires. The talents and practices of Shahril Supangat and Khairuddin Hori have respectively encouraged me to draw and to seek creative ways in organising platforms either for self or the community/society. Most significantly, the Qur'an and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah grant him peace and blessings) are key influences in bringing me closer to the true understanding of art and design.

Describe how you knew you would become an artist, how you chose your ultimate medium of practice.

I never knew I became one and I do not have an ultimate medium of practice. I am interested in a continuous inquiry of the terminology—'artist'. While exploring various mediums, I do remind myself to seek the best medium that can benefit us in this world and the next.

When you set about creating a new work, what inspires you?

Most of the inspirations come from texts or books I have read. I had my 'dark ages' when I did not read as I was only drawn to images. The Qur'an widens my path to knowledge and unearths the mechanism of how the world works. It has since assisted in my reading of other books on various topics. By reading, my art practice blossoms.

Describe a work you have produced that you love.

How did you know it was ready to meet its audience?

It has to be *Death of an Artist*—produced and performed at Substation in 2011. It was an opportunity for me to express the contemporary state of the artist. All the essences and efforts of one's work are either murdered or killed softly by money and vanity—these, to me, are the biggest challenges everyone faces as an artist. The artwork expresses these concerns. I was absent throughout the duration of the exhibition declaring myself dead. The installation with a durational performance comprised three framed and photocopied death certificates (of my late father, my late grandmother and myself), a stack of photocopied certificates based on the framed ones and a lady in black whom I had commissioned to cry for an hour. This was not only to lament the cause of death due to worldly gains, it was also a part of my study to question the image of the artist as a symbol of vanity.



Eat Your Pun Tarts (2007)



Revising Art: The Ten-Year-Series (2013)



What do you hope your audience gets out of your work?

Audiences need to be facilitated so that they can produce from one's work. They need to be confronted so that their comfort zones are challenged. And they need to participate or act upon one's work to avoid being a passive audience. They ought to receive something after an experience with one's work. That something can be tangible such as gifts or food; or something intangible such as knowledge.

What does the Young Artist Award mean to you?

This accolade caps a ten-year journey, which I went through not necessarily as an artist but as a commoner, human and servant of Allah. The journey of wisdom, trials and tribulations teaches and guides me to a better understanding of art and life. I receive this accolade with humility, praising Allah for His Bounties and Mercy and I hope to contribute whatever I have gained with a similar stance.



WORDS OF APPRECIATION

“ Allah... Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., the line of prophets and messengers before him and his companions... Family (parents and siblings) ... Friends... Wife and Daughter. All Praise be to Allah, the Lord of All Worlds; Whose Hand where my soul lies and to His Beloved, Prophet Muhammad (may Allah grant him peace and blessings) whose sayings have guided and ever guides me to a better understanding of the world—her past narratives, present governance and that Day to come in the near future. To my courageous mother, Salamah Buksen and supportive siblings, M. Razi Razak and M. Syahid Razak who are ever sincere in assisting my needs. To my late father, Abd Razak Abd Rahman and

late grandmother, Saleha Buang who have taught me patience, perseverance and humility. To my circle of friends who have facilitated opportune platforms, encouraged my artistic pursuits and believed in the works I have done throughout the decade of practice—particularly Tan Siuli and Shirley Soh who have nominated me for this accolade. By Allah's Grace, to my wife, Siti Salihah Md Omar, my solace and my daughter, Fatimah Zahra M. Zaki, the comfort of my eyes; for both have directed me closer to the true meaning of art—one that aspires to benefit mankind in this world and the next.”

M. Zaki Razak