



# VISUAL REPORT



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## ABOUT PROJECT

**Bling Bling Traditions** is a special edition of Arts-ED's flagship Cultural Heritage Education Programme (CHEP), where artist-facilitators use the arts as a tool to encourage cultural transmission between the community and youths.

Through CHEP, youth participants interact with and interview community members of different ethnicities, religions, ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, and employ multiple media to learn about the cultural assets and value of the living heritage sites.

For this edition, Arts-ED collaborates with Universiti Sains Malaysia's Graphic Communication Department (School of The Arts) to connect second-year degree students with the cultural heritage of gold jewellery through research and Place-based Learning (PBL) alongside their regular academic study in the field of graphic design and communication.

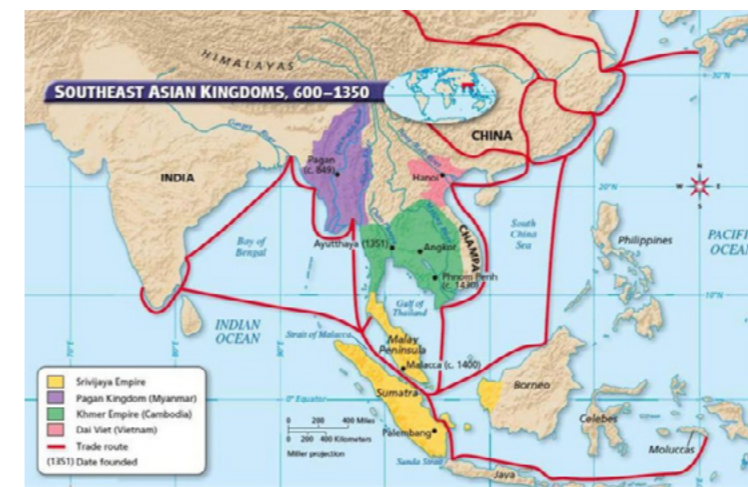


To view the project overview video, [click here](#)

## WHY GOLD JEWELLERY?

The gold jewellery trade in Penang can be dated back to the 19th century and the island remains the hub of the gold and jewellery trade in Malaysia today. About 80% of Malaysian gold jewellery exports come from Penang-based manufacturers and exporters, mainly catering to countries such as Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Japan and Hong Kong. In 2019 and 2020, gold jewellery constituted a significant component of Penang exports, contributing RM6.97bil and RM4.16bil respectively. The sharp decline in 2020 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The early local goldsmiths from China, India and the Malay Archipelago brought to this multicultural trading port diverse indigenous designs and skills. Over time, Penang became a gold jewellery hub in Malaysia, famous for its unique designs and outstanding workmanship.

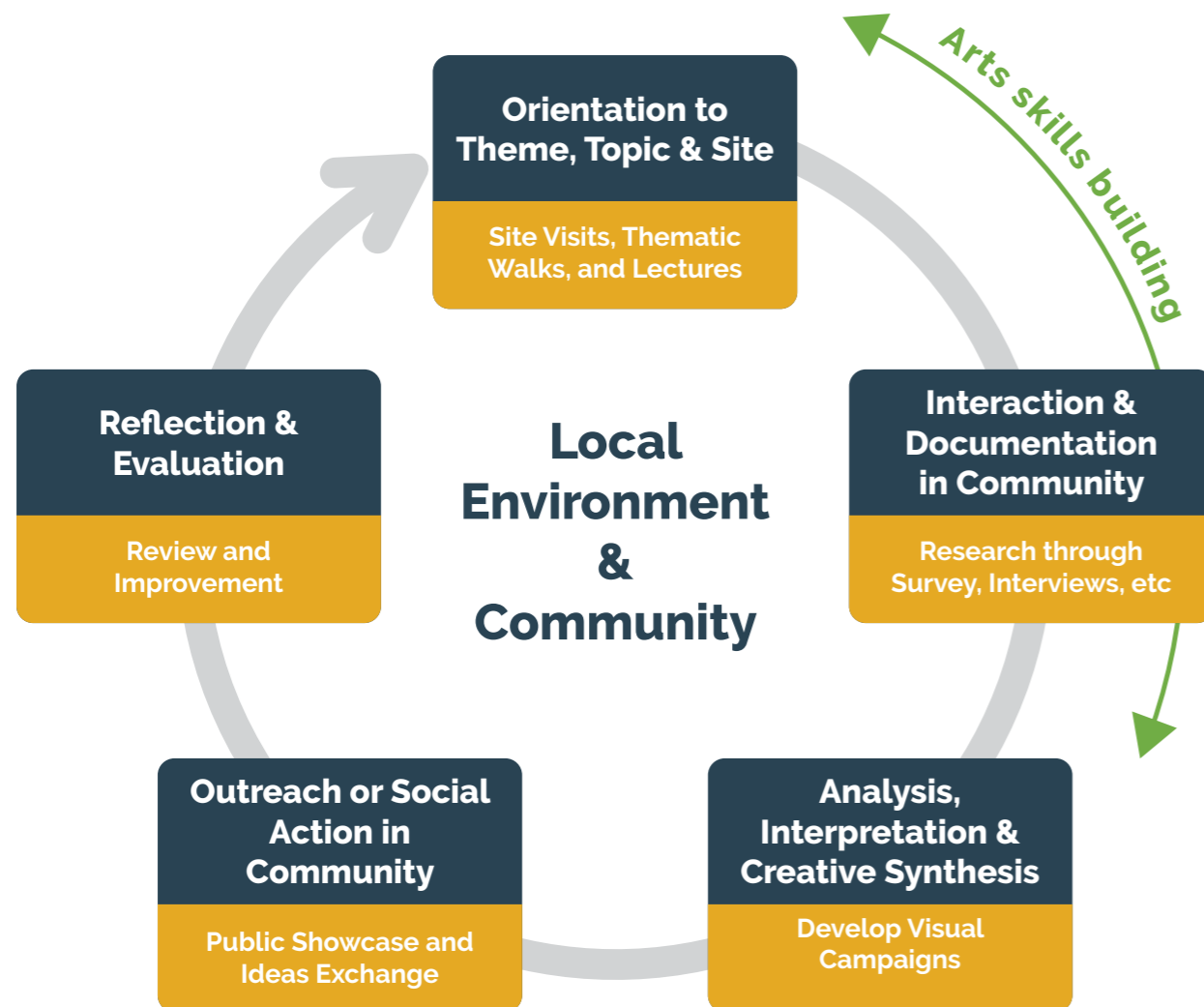


As an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Penang, the gold jewellery trade deserves careful study to maximise both local appreciation of its historic role in the culture and economy of the state and its potential as a heritage tourism attraction and product. This project aims to partially fulfill these twin aims through research and explorations into the history of the gold jewellery trade in Penang, its current status as well as prospects for its development that is aligned to contemporary tastes and preferences. It is hoped that through highlighting both its heritage and adaptability to contemporary designs, the young would see its current relevance, even igniting in them vocational aspirations in the heritage gold jewellery industry.



# ENGAGED ARTS APPROACH

Process of learning in community based on Engaged Arts Approach



# ORIENTATION TO THEME, TOPIC AND SITE

## WORLD GOLD HISTORY

Over the course of 21 weeks, from October 2021 to February 2022, 90 students from Universiti Sains Malaysia's Graphic Communication Department attended a series of lectures by Bling Bling Art Traditions facilitators that introduced them to the global history of gold, and the various functions and cultural content of gold jewellery practised globally and locally.



Gold has been a much desired metal for humankind since 5000 years ago - equally coveted through the ancient, classical and mediaeval civilisations, extending to the modern age. Today, people all around the world continue to fashion gold items for different purposes.

As this project focuses on the ICH elements of gold jewellery, the first lecture aptly sought to introduce the connections between gold jewellery and people's lives throughout history. It provided the contextual background for later discussions on gold jewellery in the Malay Archipelago, where elements from different parts of the world met, giving birth to its unique material culture.



Gold jewellery has a very long history - going back to the ancient civilisations. This ancient Egyptian painting depicts how women from different classes distinguished themselves through the types of jewellery they wore.



The origin of engagement and wedding rings can be traced back to the time of the Roman Empire. This painting shows a man putting a ring onto a woman's finger as a gesture of "sealed contract".



## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The project introduced the ideas of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and ICH domains, by exploring oral traditions and expressions, social practices, rituals, and traditional craftsmanship. The ICH of the gold jewellery trade was explored in two main areas:

Functions of Gold	Culture Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adornment</li> <li>• Protection</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Rite of Passage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Folk Stories</li> <li>• Visual Symbolism</li> <li>• Performing Arts</li> <li>• Social Practices</li> <li>• Rituals</li> <li>• Festivals</li> <li>• Traditional Craftsmanship</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>

**1. JEWELLERY**  
Lucky Charm

**2. FUNCTION (min. 1)**  
Protection/ Blessing

**3. CULTURAL CONTENT (min. 1)**  
Visual Symbolism

**4. DATA COLLECTION METHOD (min. 3)**  
Photography, Interview, Literature Search

**5. DATA ANALYSIS (min. 2)**  
Cross-cultural comparison  
Motif and meaning



Image credit: Khairulanwar Rahmat

These lectures encouraged an examination of cultural diversity, exchange, assimilation, and resurgence of ethnic identity while encouraging reflections which enabled the students to delve more deeply into cultural issues that surround them. Besides such conceptual explorations, they were introduced to a new tool each week which enabled them to take their investigations a step further.

## MAPPING & RESEARCH

### Research Flow Chart

#### 1 CHOOSE ONE JEWELLERY SET

#### 2 Function (min. 1)

Adornment  
Protection  
Identity  
Religion  
Relationships  
Rites of Passage

#### 3 Cultural Content (min. 1)

Folk Stories  
Visual Symbolism  
Performing Arts  
Social Practices  
Rituals  
Festivals  
Traditional Craftsmanship  
Others

#### 4 Data Collection Method

Interview  
On-site observation  
Drawing/Sketch  
Photography  
Videography  
Literature Search  
Archival Search  
Others

#### 5 Data Analysis (min. 2)

Cross-cultural comparison  
Motif and meaning  
Skills and techniques  
Trends analysis  
Personal story & values  
Others

#### 6 Design Strategy & Outcome

After exploring and understanding the cultural content of a chosen set of jewellery, students were tasked to create a campaign to promote the cultural heritage value of gold jewellery to youth.



# STUDENTS' PERSONAL PERSONA

The students introspected on their own relationship with gold through a 'personal persona', exploring their connection with gold jewellery on a personal level, through family traditions or in their respective cultures.



**Kayer Tiong Huang** illustrates the intricate jewellery frequently gifted as part of traditional family ceremonies; some of these items have been passed on to later generations and are still worn today.



**Bryan Tan** illustrates a gold abacus pendant gifted to him by his grandmother to symbolise her wish for him to be highly skilled in mathematics and to use this ability for monetary gains.



**Leong Qing Chean** illustrates the tradition of gifting a gold amulet to bless a mother with an abundance of children, and she hopes to give one to her sister at a suitable time.



**Fatin Umairah** illustrates how she adorns her baju raya outfit with a pair of "dokoh" which portrays Malay identity through the use of typical motifs such as flowers, leaves and geometric patterns.



**Chuah Jia Ying** illustrates her interest in world history and how she discovered artifacts of gold gifted in certain cultures with a prayer for the receiver's wellbeing.



**Kavitaanjali** illustrates the relationship and fond memories with her family through the various jewellery gifted by her family members symbolising blessings of good health and expression of love.

To view the personal persona produced by students, please visit [Arts-Ed Instagram page @artsedpenang](https://www.instagram.com/artsedpenang).



# INTERACTIONS & DOCUMENTATION IN COMMUNITY



**Visiting living gold jewellery enclaves at Campbell Street, Little India and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling (Pitt Street) in George Town, Penang.**



## SITE EXCURSIONS

The gold trade in Penang traces its origins to the early 19th century, during the period of British colonialism. Merchants from the Middle East, India and China found themselves on this island to trade in spices, silk and precious stones, making Penang one of the most important trading ports in the region. Inspired by the fusion of cultures brought over by the trade, early Penang craftsmen developed some of the most stunning and intricate traditional forms of jewellery — prized for the quality of its workmanship and materials.

Rooted in deep cultural history, the booming gold jewellery trade gave birth to a “gold bazaar” in George Town, mainly made up from Chinese goldsmiths along Campbell Street, with Indian and Middle Eastern jewellery shops along the “Street of Harmony” on Pitt Street (also known as Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling). Many of goldsmiths’ trading and retail businesses in Penang remain family businesses which were handed down from generations to generations.

This gold bazaar opens the door to the history of Penang’s gold merchants and craftsmen and their century-old traditions, providing the students insights to our collective heritage and a glimpse into the city’s rich past, present and future.

*Resource: “The Gold Trail of George Town” by Sehra Yeap Zimbulis*

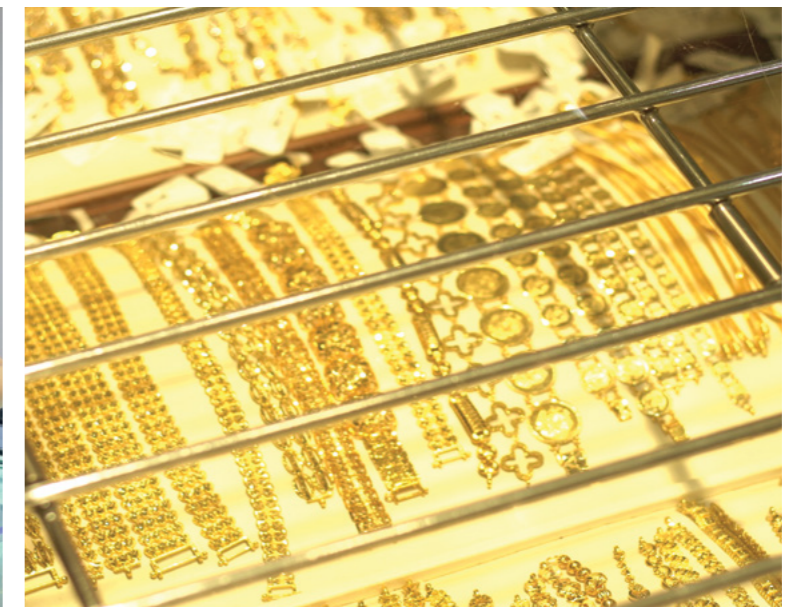


## SURVEYS & INTERVIEWS

### Local Jewellery Shops

A number of local and traditional gold jewellery shops served as very good sites for the students' research and interviews. The shop owners and staff were supportive and readily accessible, providing the students with valuable information on the cultural content of their choice from the diverse communities.

Amongst the jewellery shops that supported the students' research process were Nam Loong fine jewellery, VKN Jewellers, Habib Jewels, Haji S. Abdul Wahab Jewellers, S. Ameer Jewellery, Varusai Jewellers, and a few other accessories retail stores.





## Local Jewellery Artists & Designers

### Philip Thong of Nam Loong Fine Jewellery



Nam Loong Fine Jewellery was founded by Thong Yuet Seng who journeyed from China to South-East Asia in the early 1900s and was passed down to grandsons, Philip and Peter Thong.

Philip's love for antique collection and a natural sense of design made him churn out sleek, and wearable jewellery crafted carefully from traditional pieces. He realized that while the modern generation keeps coming back to old-time fashion and trends, there is a requirement to make accessories convenient for everyday use.



***“We still have a handful of older craftsmen, but we are in a dilemma — once they leave us, it’ll be difficult for us to source craftsmen skilled in handcrafting jewellery. Because the younger generation are not interested in [making] handmade jewellery.”***

### Jonathan Yun of Jonathan Yun Sculptural Jewellery



Jonathan Yun is an award-winning jewelry artist who has come into his own with his range of jewelry made in his atelier, Jonathan Yun Sculptural Jewelry, located in the heritage enclave of George Town. He creates pieces inspired by Peranakan culture, mostly through memories of his maternal grandmother, with a modern twist while maintaining its heritage integrity. He works predominantly in silver as he finds the soft patina of silver fascinating and alluring, and he often incorporates gemstones and pearls into the design.



***“I would like to work with the younger generation. I’m just waiting for young people with good ideas to come up. My advice is to be brave to explore something that may not make money for you.”***

## Local Heritage Experts

### Lillian Tong

Lillian Tong is Penang's iconic Nyonya impresario and Museum Director of Pinang Peranakan Mansion. She is an author and authority on Penang's quintessential Straits Chinese community. Her passion and portfolio, spurred by her interest and involvement in history, anthropology, arts and culture, has seen fruition in promoting and conserving Penang's history, heritage, people and places, and in particular, the Straits Chinese as Penang's quintessential community.

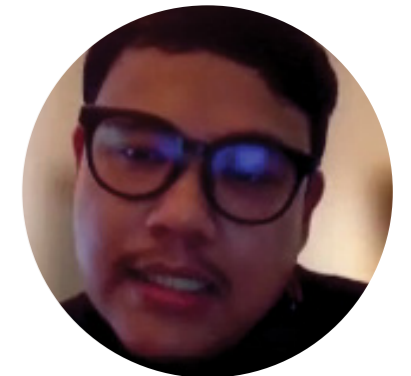


***“It is important to be accepting of changes. Of course we would want to maintain what is traditional but we could improvise and explore, and we must allow people do that. Otherwise, it will be rejected by the young.”***

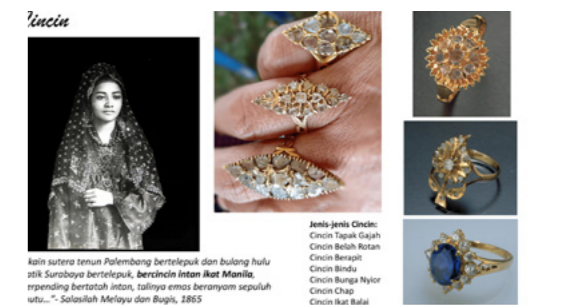


### Mohammad Khairulanwar Rahmat

Khairulanwar is a writer, researcher and Malay culture enthusiast. His area of interests encompasses world history, arts and culture, and especially in Malay heritage and cultural practices. His experience includes curating educational programs at the Malay Heritage Museum in Universiti Putra Malaysia and role as an advisor and researcher at the Asian Art Museum in Universiti Malaya. He's always actively sharing knowledge about the history and cultural artifacts of the Malay culture on social media platforms in hopes to bring awareness and build interest of the younger generation in cultural appreciation.



***“We are becoming a mass produced society. We are disconnected from nature — our soul, our past and our roots. So, when we look at some work of art, we can't connect because we don't have any idea what the artist wanted to portray. By having this kind of platform, I believe that young designers would be exposed to their roots. Otherwise, the designs would be repetitive... stagnant... or without a story.”***





## Beyond George Town

Besides conducting surveys and research in George Town, students who were based in different states across Malaysia also utilised other research methods. Some went on field trips to connect with gold jewellery related industry players from traditional and modern gold jewellery shops to expand on their online research.

These additional efforts provided an understanding of the local practices and trends in their respective communities. Due to movement restrictions during the programme, students utilised diverse means to reach out to and interview their resource persons. These included online calls, Zoom, Instagram and WhatsApp.

**Apakah kelebihan Batu Delima ?**



Kelebihan batu Delima dapat mengelakkan diri dari pembuatan jahat seperti sihir dan santau. Kedua dapat menunjuk arah kebajikan. Sebagai contoh perempuan akan kelihatan cantik.

**Apakah jenis cincin yang sesuai dijadikan sebagai cincin pertunangan selain cincin Batu Delima & cincin Batu Nilam?**



Cincin yang sesuai ialah Solitaire Ring kerana ada satu berlian dan tanpa batu permata lain. Selain itu, kelihatan mewah, cantik dan mudah dipakailah, itu pendapat saya.

**Bagaimanakah boleh memperolehi cincin delima ini?**




Cincin ini saya dapat dari suami semasa merisik sekaligus terus bertunang. Cincin Delima ini dari Mak Mertua secara turun menurun untuk dijadikan sebagai cincin pertunangan.

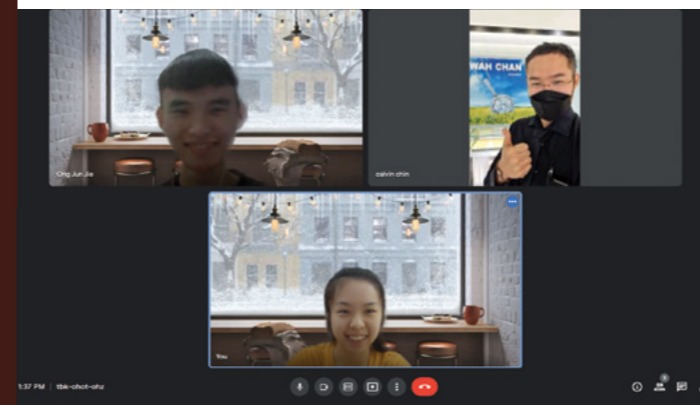
**Apakah Batu Delima & Batu Nilam sesuai sebagai cincin pertunangan ?**



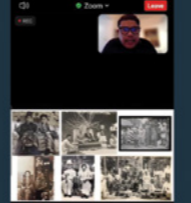
Bagi saya, sesuai sebab Batu Delima & Batu Nilam memiliki nilai estetika dan dapat menarik perhatian orang ramai apabila memakainya.




### Contoh reka bentuk motif bunga yang digunakan dalam awan larat




#### TEMU BUAL



Encik Mohammad Khairulnwar Rahmat.



Puan Medilin Anak Bain



Puan Zarina binti Saidin





# ARTS SKILLS BUILDING

## ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN SKILLS

Besides conducting on-ground research through site excursions to local jewellery shops and interviews with artists, designers and gold heritage experts, students learned how to translate these findings into interactive advertising campaigns from graphic design experts from the university and an industry expert.

### Dr. Gene Lim Jing Yi



Dr. Gene Lim is the Graphic Communication Design lecturer from the Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of the Arts (SOTA). She conducts research on youth digital literacy and is currently working on projects that aim to cultivate digital competency among young people. Her research interests include digital competency and society, cultural heritage, and visual communication design.

*“Through this program, the students learned not only about themselves, but also about the society and other people around them. Apart from learning cultural content, they can also apply these learnings into their area of expertise which is design.”*

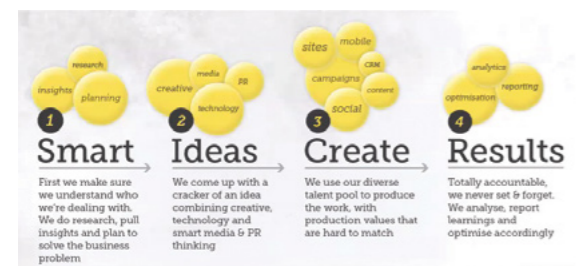


### Venus Khor



Venus Khor is a Penang native and founder of Vgotlight Worldwide, a creative agency that helps businesses and organisations express and transform their brand through creatively enforced human-centric brand presence. Venus constantly challenges the boundaries on how creativity is explored and expressed in branding. As a Brand Strategist, she creates a memorable story for her clients which makes their target audience experience, connect and remember the magic of a brand.

*“Your story telling on your chosen topic has to serve a purpose as well – why do you want to talk about this jewellery? Do you want more young people to be aware about gold jewellery or do you want to introduce it to current pop culture? Think about what you would like to achieve (through your campaign).”*



## CREATIVE OUTPUTS

The weeks of research and data findings were translated and developed into 17 visual communication campaigns based on the different functions and uses of gold jewellery in various communities. Each campaign communicates different focuses and themes of gold practices.

To view all the student campaigns, visit Arts-ED’s website at

<https://www.arts-ed.my/bbt-youth-campaign>

Click on the youth campaign logos below to view the respective visual communication campaigns.

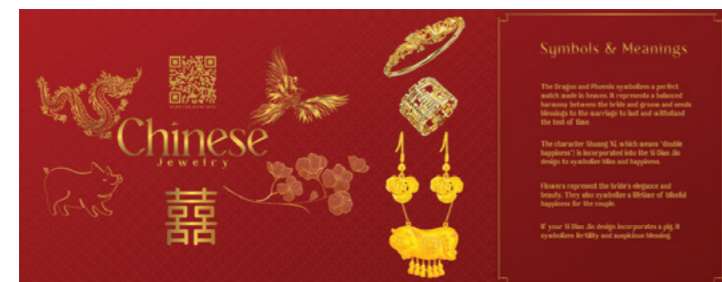
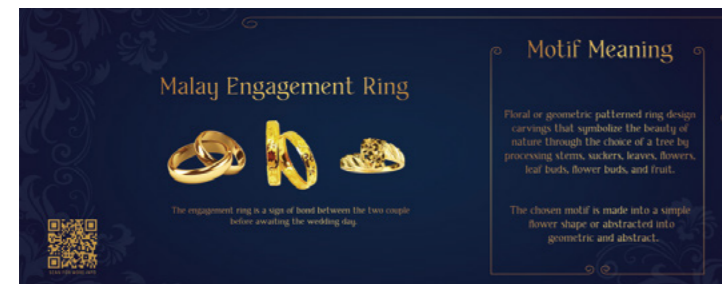




# CREATIVE OUTPUTS

## Cross-Cultural Comparisons

'Googlold'



'Culture of Wedding Engagement for Malay & Chinese' campaign

## Motifs and Symbolism

'The Greatest of Malay Motif'



'Sitaara - Maang Tikka'

'Youth Are Gold'



'Your Piece' campaign



'Dragon & Phoenix'



## Trends Analysis

### 'Old Style New Lock'



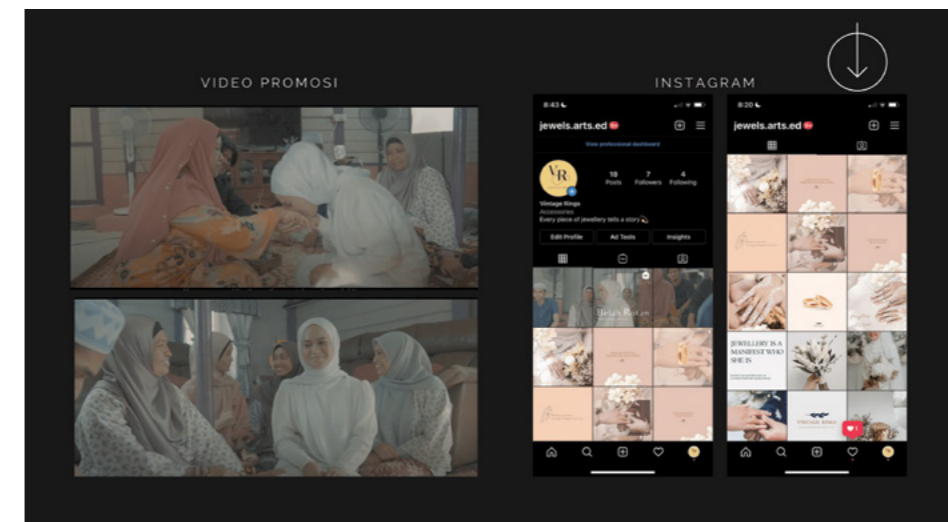
### 'chained.'

### 'Long Feng - Dragon & Phoenix' campaign



## Personal Stories and Values

### 'Cincin Batu Permata' Gemstone Ring



### 'Merisik Belah Rotan dalam Adat Merisik' Belah Rotan Ring in 'Merisik' Wedding Custom



## REFLECTIONS

### STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

*“Through this programme, I learned about the history of gold jewellery and discovered the gold jewellery practices in my own culture. I was also exposed to the significance of gold jewellery in Malay and Indian cultures. It was a good opportunity for me to better understand the cultural practices of other races.”*

**~ Chai Zen Fei**

*“Prior to this programme, I thought that gold was just an accessory for beauty purposes and to show off the amount of wealth one owned. Now, I have discovered that gold can also hold a sacred meaning in someone's life, especially in one's culture too.”*

**~ Vanisha Anak Jekeri**



*“Before this I didn't know about the sentimental value of gold jewellery and saw it as just a piece of gold but this campaign helped me appreciate more about gold jewellery after grasping the different meanings of different jewellery in different cultures in Malaysia. There should be more appreciation for the traditionally made jewellery as there's more value to it.”*

**~ Nur Liyana binti Sabri**

*“Even though I do not have a personal relationship or story with gold, I'm really curious and would love to learn more about them as artefacts. I don't really see them as just jewellery, I see them as something that records culture, heritage or even a memory. So it was very interesting for me to learn about other people's history, the stories behind their gold jewellery and hear them share about their personal relationship with gold.”*

**~ Chuah Jia-Ying**

*“Through researching about gold jewellery practices in Indian culture, I learned that there are actually two different Indian cultures practised in Malaysia – northern and southern Indian cultures and how they are actually very different from each other. This was a new discovery and insight that I was not aware of before. I also learned about the significance and spiritual purpose of Maang Tikka besides adornment. It was refreshing to learn about the deep meaning behind these practices.”*

**~ Mohamad Naeem Bin Ashaari**



## STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

"I learned more about gold jewellery in different cultures and the meaning that each piece carries. Although it was a challenging experience initiating the campaign, the work we put in and the initiatives we took helped us develop our ideas and thoughts in a more critical and creative way."

~ Kavitaanjali A/P Muniandy

"I learned not to make judgements on any piece of gold jewellery without understanding the deep cultural meaning it holds for particular communities. I also learned that stating a clear objective for a project is really important for achieving the outcome and reaching the target audiences. Lastly, the practice of presenting our projects to the facilitators and lecturer gave me more confidence in interacting with them."

~ Bushra Binti Abdus Samad

"The programme added value to my learning progress through connecting it with real-life scenarios and challenges which helped us understand the targeted stakeholders, keep up with design trends and produce works that increase engagement with and consequently impact society due to the involvement of the public in the campaign production process. It caused me to rethink if my passion as a designer should encompass conducting research that would lead to more meaningful campaigns."

~ Law Carmen

"Through this programme, I had the opportunity to apply what I have learned from my major in fine arts to the execution of our campaign output. I connected the study of wooden carvings in fine art with the designs and motives of bunga emas in Malay gold jewellery, which gave me further insights into Malay identity and cultural practices. As an artist, this was an interesting experience."

~ Nursyafiqnas binti Kamaruzaman





## FACILITATORS' REFLECTIONS

*"I was pleasantly surprised that as students underwent the process of learning about other people's culture, their interest in their own cultural background grew, which spurred them to discover more about themselves. I could see this reflected in the creation of their work, demonstrating their learning process and efforts, which I really appreciate."*

**~ Dr. Kuah Li Feng**

*"My hopes were for students to grow their curiosity and try not to conform but believe in their own desire to learn and build the courage to discover and investigate further. I was glad to witness quite a number of students with interest in cultural knowledge pushing themselves to satiate their curiosity."*

**~ Wan Atikah Wan Yusof**



*"Facilitating students from diverse backgrounds and negotiating different language barriers, as I come from a different cultural background, was a learning experience for me. Also, seeing how students interact with each other, how the other facilitators interact with the students, and how Arts-ED designs this whole learning process are some of my key takeaways."*

**~ Virajitha Chimalapati**

*"Going through this programme, I could see that the students enjoyed the learning process a lot – they learned from each other, from the facilitators, from the people they interviewed, such as the practitioners. Apart from that, the students were also excited that the people they have engaged are interested in knowing more about their campaign works."*

**~ Dr. Gene Lim**

*"It was refreshing and encouraging to witness the learning journey of the participants throughout the few months. Despite the many challenges due to the pandemic, they continue to learn by keeping discovering, exploring and going a little extra mile to go out of their comfort zone in researching, and communicating with a variety of people whom they have never met (from coursemates, facilitators and community members, and public). This is how we learn, take some risks and have courage. "*

**~ Chen Yoke Pin**



# IMPACT REPORT

## PEOPLE



**90**

Participants  
Aged 19-23 major/minor in graphic communication



**8**

Programming and Facilitation Team Members



**7**

Coordination and Documentation Team Members



**5**

Local Experts in Gold Cultural Heritage and Advertising



**54**

Cultural, Community Groups and Individuals Who Have Connections to Gold Jewellery

## DURATION



**22**

Weeks in 5 months  
October 2021- February 2022

## OUTPUT



**17**

Visual Communication Campaigns

## OUTREACH



**81**

Showcase Attendees



**8,868**

Users/accounts Reached for Social Media Postings



**922**

Users' Views on Informative Website

### Programming and Facilitator Team

Dr. Kuah Li Feng  
Dr. Gene Lim Jing Yi  
Tan Pek Leng  
Virajitha Chimalapati  
Wan Atikah Wan Yusof

### Acknowledgement

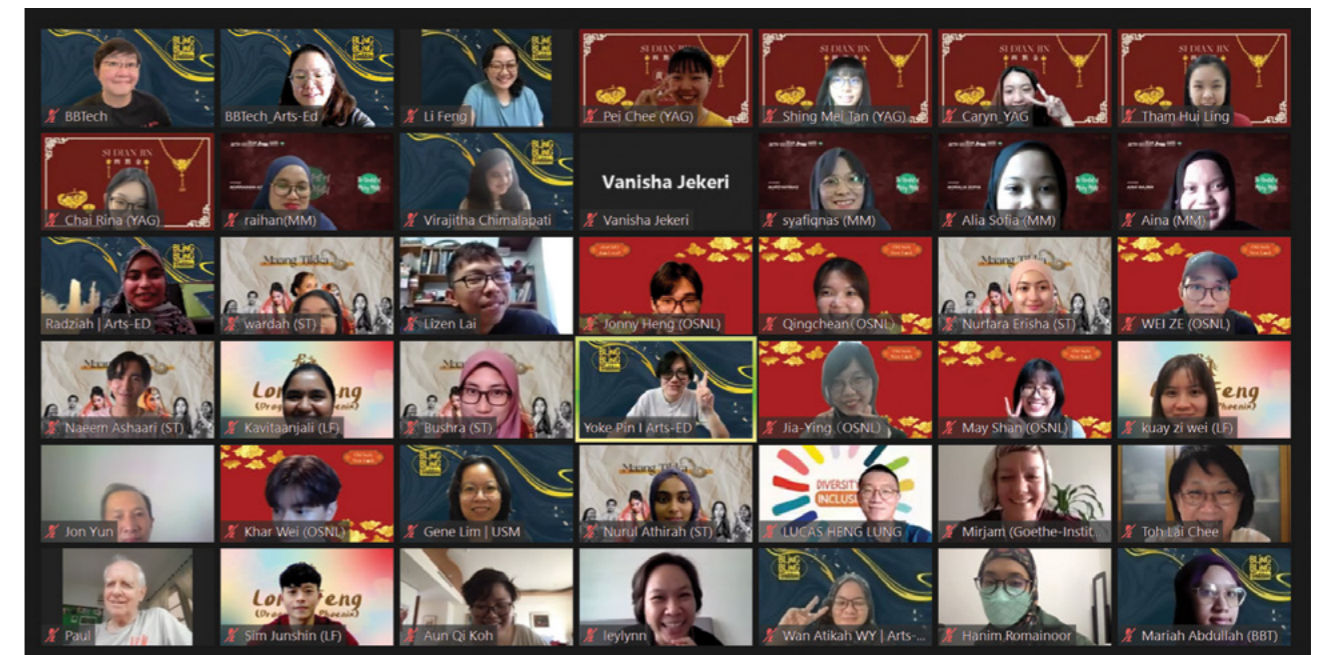
Tan Lay Cheng  
Dr. Molly Lee  
Dato' Anwar Fazal  
Dato' Dr. Toh Kin Woon

### Coordination, Documentation and Communication Team

Chen Yoke Pin  
Stephanie Kee  
Goh Choon Ean  
Nurul Shahira Jamalluddin  
Terry Neoh  
Ong Khai Peng  
Chong Ley-Lynn  
Radziah Othuman Sahib

Philip Thong  
Jonathan Yun  
Mohamad Khairulanwar Rahmat  
Venus Khor  
Lillian Tong

### Students from Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of The Arts, Graphic Communication Design



And many more who contributed in various forms



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In Collaboration with



Funded by

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