

DESIGN DECODED 2021 : ART EXHIBITION



*Decrypt your  
visual creativity*

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ISBN               978-967-2948-13-1

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Printed by

Sinaran Bros. Sdn Bhd (No. 3968-X)  
Percetakan-Offset-Digital-Penjilid  
5-3-18, The Promenade,  
Permaisuri Mahsuri,  
11950, Bayan Baru,  
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## Fiona Wong E Chiong

### Eclectic Façade

The artwork titled Eclectic Façade portrays four fanlite windows of different shophouse façades that were built in the early twentieth-century British Malaya. This type of windows were common in two- or three-storey shophouses located in many major towns (many now cities) all over the country, in East and West Malaysia, especially in the Peninsular.

Known as the transitional type of shophouse, these built structures began to experience transformation on their appearances as the builders, artisans and owners started to be creative and expressive with different styles of design and colours. Influenced by the then European architectural and stylistic trends, the shophouse began to witness an evolutionary change in its façade from a plain structure and unadorned exterior into an eclectic surface depicting European influences of Greek columns and pilasters, Venetian windows and vents, Renaissance motifs on cornices and stucco reliefs; the window shutters are made of local wood and are sometimes carved in Malay-styled motif; Chinese-characters or letterings and sometimes symbolic images may appear on the signages or as plastered reliefs.

The syncretism of cultures evident in the eclectic façade of the Malaysian shophouse is deemed a tangible cultural heritage as they are part of our country's built history. However, with the advancement of our society towards a digital era, our present towns and cities are seeing less and less conservation or preservation of such shophouse façades. Many of them have been refurbished or revamped to look more modernized or contemporary in appearance with a more streamlined and tidier front; however it has lost its edge of an eclectic surface that reflects a syncretism of cultures. Over time, some of these older shophouses

eventually lost their original appeal and are left to decay and abandoned, resulting in the demolition of these buildings to make way for modern structures or high-rise developments.

Slowly, these built structures which carry memories of our forefathers who worked on this land and built up towns and grew cities would gradually diminish and cease to exist anymore. Our future generations would someday begin to realise the relevance of such built structures as part of their cultural heritage but only to find it too late. This artwork is digital collage using photograph manipulation by the artist to add on superficial colours to the worn-out shophouse façades in many towns around the country, as a means to restore its past glory and a colourful reflection of our multicultural people in this country. The four colourful fanlite windows, pilasters, and cornices look similar but are in fact dissimilar; individual yet interconnected.

This artwork is inspired by the artist's own research endeavours during her Masters studies which looked at the evolution of the shophouse façade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Malaya, and which prompted her to travel to many towns around the peninsula and photographed the different shophouse typology since twelve years ago. The artist also writes and publishes papers that call out on the conservation and preservation of these eclectic shophouses in the country.



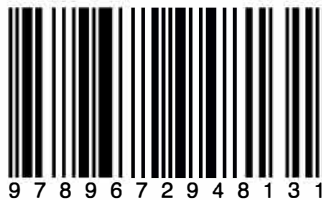
**FIONA WONG E CHIONG**  
Eclectic Façade

Digital Photography Print on Canvas  
42 cm x 42 cm  
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ISBN 978-967-2948-13-1



Cawangan Kedah  
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