

FRUIT OF THE LOOM

Anne Samat employs traditional Malaysian weaving techniques in her eye-catching works, which were recently exhibited at Art Central in Hong Kong.

IN MANY COUNTRIES, weaving has been considered women's work. The Bayeux Tapestry, among the most famous examples of the craft, was created by women, probably in England for a Norman patron. Anne Samat, a Malaysian artist, follows in this tradition, using traditional songket

shuttle weaving techniques to create dense, colourful tapestries that celebrate the heritage and style of her homeland.

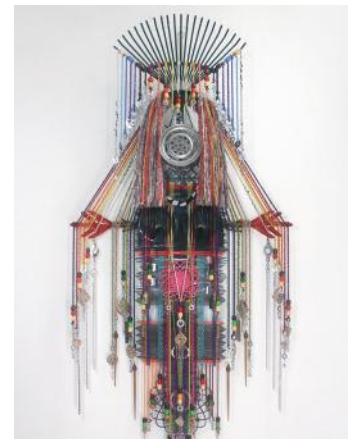
Because it has often been viewed as a feminine vocation, weaving has not always been granted the same recognition as other forms of art. By categorising

PROUD TRADITION: The Tribal Chief series, bottom left, brings to mind the head dresses worn by some native American tribes.

weaving as a craft, rather than an art, generations of critics have tended to downplay the creativity exercised by textile makers.

It is a prejudice that Samat is keen to challenge; she argues her works are "beyond craft" and prefers the broader term, contemporary fibre art.

Certainly, Samat's works are more complex than simple textiles. A series of works exhibited at the Art Central event in Hong Kong include free-standing and wall-based pieces that combine woven fabric with diverse materials such as rattan sticks, ceramic beads and garden utensils. In her words, she is "trying to elevate the art of weaving to the next level, transforming it from a two-



dimensional fabric to a three-dimensional art form".

The works seem to toy with conventional wisdom that weaving is a feminine pastime. The Tribal Chief series are reminiscent of

the imposing head dresses worn by some native American tribes (Malaysia, too, has a heritage of intricate tribal headpieces). Imposing, masculine, war-like, they bring to mind images of witch doctors and fierce battles.

The Huntsman series depicts characters, both male and female, using found objects such as tin cans to represent a head and a garden trowel to indicate arms. The long strands of yarn, decorated with beads and other jewellery, appear as thick strands of hair. The pieces present an intriguing ambiguity. With their ornaments and bright colours, they possess a lively beauty, and yet from another angle the pieces are unsettling, like the costumes worn at Halloween to terrify young children.

Born in 1973, Samat graduated from the Mara Institute of Technology in Malaysia in 1995 with a degree in art and design (textile design) and a major in weaving. In 1999, she was selected by the National Art Gallery to represent Malaysia at the International Art and Craft Fair in Bangkok. Her work has been shown at the Saatchi Gallery in London, the Art Stage event in Singapore and numerous galleries in Malaysia.

Established in 2005, Richard Koh Fine Art showcases South-east Asian art in Malaysia and the region from its gallery in Kuala Lumpur



RECYCLING SERVICE:

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