

Ahmad Osni Peii

FORMS UNKNOWN MADE



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Wei-Ling Gallery

Front Cover

Bowarc

23 x 13 x 7.5 cm - Bronze - 1997

(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)

Back Cover

Louisiana

18 x 13 x 13 cm - Bronze - 1997

(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)

To accompany 'Forms Unknown Made' exhibition

by Ahmad Osni Peii

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Ahmad Osni Peii

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FORMS UNKNOWN MADE

The two previous catalogues of my former exhibitions are entitled, "Form Unknown Made". Again the catalogue of the present show I name it identically. I have purposely kept the title for as long as I work at the trend that I have been pursuing, since 1966, in the making of my art. Then as a choice I studied at the school I came across that suited my temperament and belief, as there are physical and intellectual involvement practiced in the class.

In the class we did welding and soldering besides drawing and designing. The school is characterized by using industrial materials such as glass, sheet metal, plastic, concrete, and primary colours: red, yellow and blue. With the materials we model, assemble, make mould and cast or fabricate by welding or riveting. Hence we make nonrepresentational, often geometric or organic objects. The school is known as Constructivism.

My work has so far generated from cubical to spherical and lately modular and trihedral structures. The development can begin any way at random. I would not know what will my next style be like (note that this is not a fixed personal style, like thumbprint or signature) – rather a genre that should be mobile and dynamic. For our source for growth seems infinite as if one embarks on the open of uncharted path leading to the wilderness, unlike that one that, I fear, will end up at dead-end street circling around and around then stuck in boredom and decay.

As a finalist at a presentation for a monumental project, I proposed a maquette. A CEO asked why the piece does not...he raised his hand and slightly wiggled his palm – signifying a flower or something. Yes, undecorated I thought. In another occasion, having admiringly wondered at the model, a prominent investor, had to do with the project, inquired: "What's the meaning?" We purposely make no functional thing nor figurative statue, say, of a cow, a bike, a general or holy man. Neither do we intend to make abstract sculpture wherein meaning or symbol is made hidden that prone to subjective and fanciful interpretations. As such there is no meaning in our work in inherited sense. If there is meaning, whatever, it should be visually gestalt. A discursive statement, however, imparts best in prose or essay, as, we think, it is the proper medium, rather than hidden in mismatch mean in plastic art. For that reason we would rather call our work "Three-Dimensional Art" rather than sculpture.

The visualization may look oddly contented, unsentimental, clear and easy, yet pulls no punches. Like tones arranged in music or dance performed in movement, we work likewise on the materials to achieve aesthetic in the composition of visual elements such as space, mass, void, line, square, circle, light, dark, etc. bound in unity, order, rhythm, symmetry, asymmetry, balance and proportion, defined in space in cubical, trihedral or spherical shape. Being spherically 3-D the work embodies numerous visual displays as observed from all pointed of view as one moves around it – vibrant, kinetic and often kaleidoscopic.

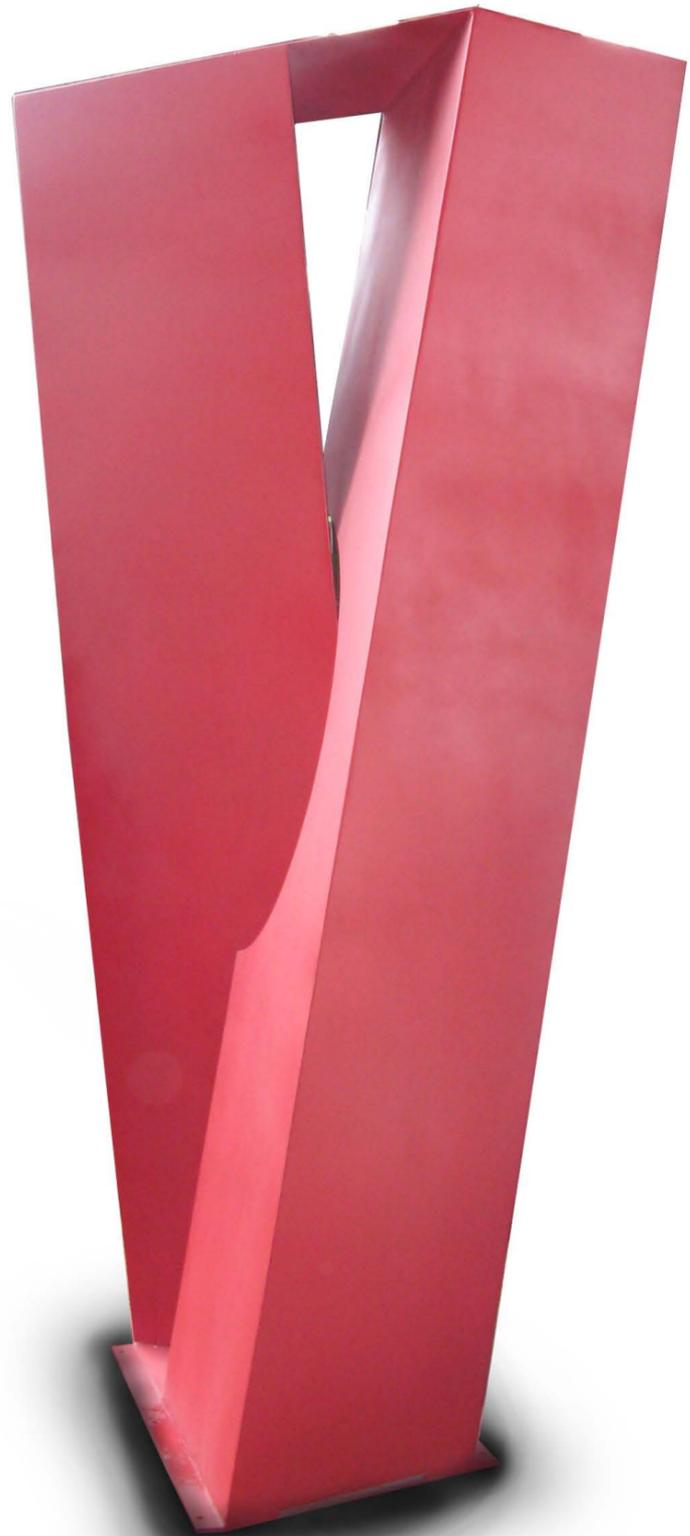
There are, as choice, definitely myriad ways of doing things. Instinctively we tend, however, to see things put in its place. In the morning the sun for sure unfailingly rises, and the moon solemnly retreats, while birds chirp rejoicing. Such is the common order of the day that, except brute, a child or an Inuits would intuitively grasps the gestalt.

A critic wrote that my work has not a trace of Indonesian flavor. I feel that a birth-land at heart is one thing and an outlook in the world is another. Thanks to the sobriety of the artists then in Moscow and later in Bauhaus clashed with the decadence of their own culture that subsequently Constructivism in modern art surfaced. Islam, however, has long preceded modestly the practice of nonrepresentational geometric patterns in its arts – the universal nonfigurative measured art.

Despite his naivety, my 4 year old son frolicked in, and identified, all my work as his. "These are all my works, too, bapak (father)," claimed my playful son. There is an innate sense of humour and fairness, I think, in him as well as goodness and order – a reflected attribute from on high. Like the mighty light of the sun reflects on the turbid tiny moon.

Ahmad Osni Peii
Kuala Lumpur, March 2012





Arcangles

275 x 122 x 183 cm - Aluminium - 2012



Anglearc

275 x 122 x 183 cm - Aluminium - 2012



Polanoor
32 x 32 x 32 cm - Bronze - 1996



Moon Rhyme
51 x 51 x 61 cm - Bronze - 1997



Lacey Ball
46 x 46 x 46 cm - Bronze - 1996



Nusantara

51 x 51 x 51 cm - Bronze - 1997



Dovetail

51 x 51 x 51 cm - Bronze - 1995





Untitled
51 x 51 x 51 cm - Bronze - 1993



Bowarc
23 x 13 x 7.5 cm - Bronze - 1997
(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)



Louisiana

18 x 13 x 13 cm - Bronze - 1997
(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)



Medina

15.5 x 15.5 x 15.5 cm - Bronze - 2010
(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)



Timur

15.5 x 10 x 13 cm - Bronze - 1996
(Enlargeable from 1 to 4 meter)



Gelang Patah
300 x 270 x 270 cm - Aluminium - 2008





Sibayak
250 x 250 x 300 cm - Aluminium - 2007

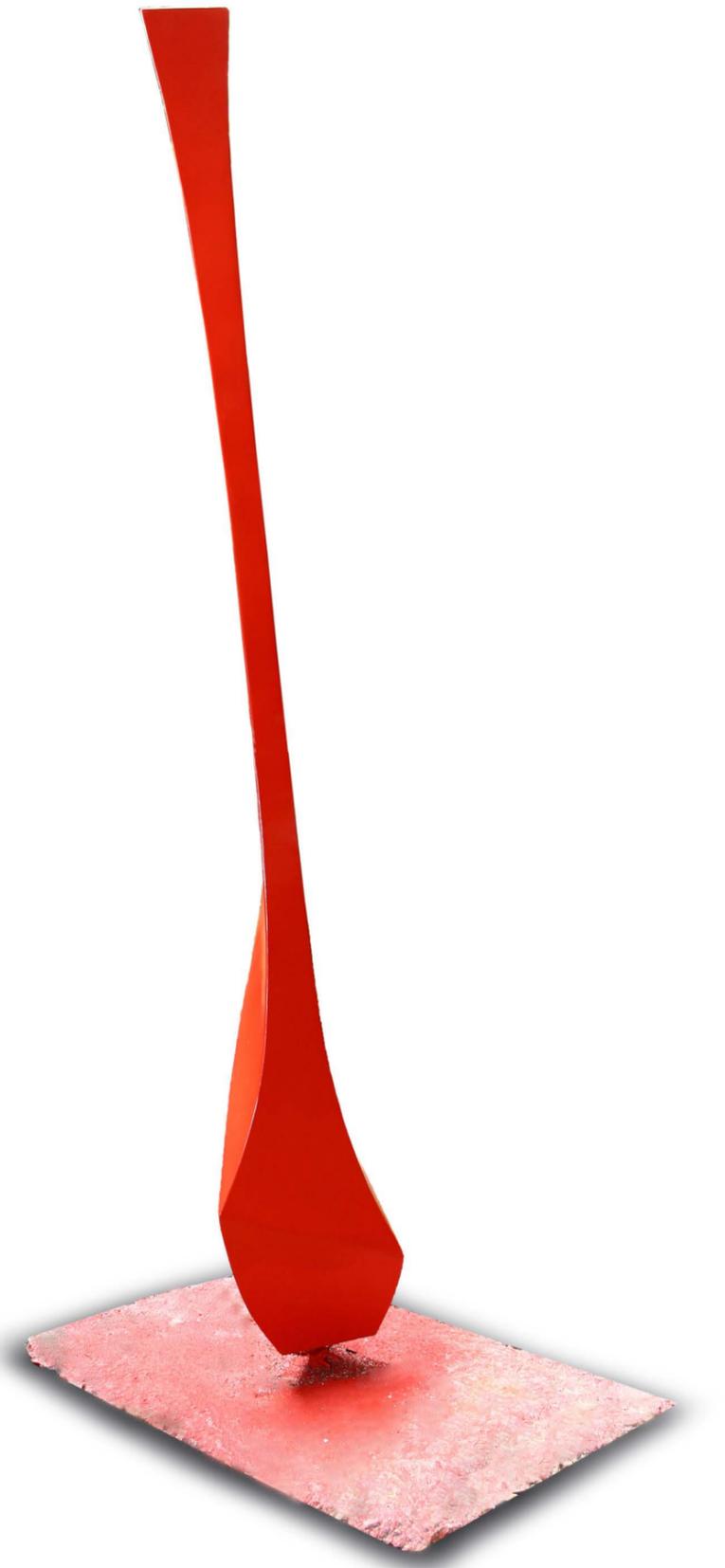




Siguntang
350 x 250 x 280 cm - Aluminium - 2009



Yamlikha
275 x 50 x 50 cm - Bronze - 2009



Mordecay
366 x 61 x 61 cm - Aluminium - 2012

Dynamism, space, and form | The sculptures of Ahmad Osni Peii

If conventional meaning is sought after in my work, there will be none.

Ahmad Osni Peii

The artist’s own words offer the most fitting description of his sculptures – “they are dynamic,” he remarks, “boleh nampak dari segala sudut (you can peer from every angle)”. After formalities, these words are the first utterances from Ahmad Osni Peii, as he spins a miniature model of one of his sculptures atop a worktable. Boasting a pyramid-like shape, the model has a gaping hole in the centre – it looks like a 3D reconstruction of the letter ‘A’ – and as the artist promises, each twirl with his fingers brings forth a different shape; his sculptures are indeed dynamic, and their appearance is ever-changing in our hands.

It’s this obsession with form that informs Ahmad Osni Peii’s art. The sculptor has been making abstract sculptures for the last few decades, and the focus in his practice has always been on space – how the viewers’ eyes move along sculptural forms, and how this then guides their thoughts into different and uncharted planes. There is thus excitement on our parts as we navigate the artist’s sculptures, and this thrill is also felt by the artist as his creative process involves allowing the forms to take shape in an instinctive way. “Forms are unknown. Saya sendiri tidak tahu (I don’t even know myself),” he grins.

Whilst the artist’s aesthetics are guided by instinctual processes, the philosophy behind his works are strongly grounded in real life. The dynamism of his sculptures, for one, refer to one of his life philosophies – don’t just look at things from one angle, he expounds. The octogenarian uses war as an example, noting how its often the result of man’s clashing views and prejudices. “Kesalahan manusia banyak di situ (man’s mistakes predominantly lie there),” he says with sadness, before presenting a solution that’s identical to how he’d like audiences to view his sculptures – look dynamically and look from every possible angle.

Where the forms began

Ahmad Osni Peii’s sculptures echo the aesthetics of the early twentieth-century European Modernists, who celebrated art’s formal qualities and who were creating artworks during markedly changing times. The artists, particularly those linked to movements like Futurism and Constructivism, were still reeling from the tail end of the nineteenth century, when industry and modernity were beginning to rear their commanding heads, and right before the horrors of the first two world wars were to really ensue. Their art was revolutionary. And their practices were closely intertwined with social changes and development.

In a way, all this is relatable to the artist’s own unconventional, migratory life. Born in Palembang, the artist’s adolescent years were characterised by Indonesia’s revolution from her Dutch colonialists (the artist joined the Freedom Fighters movement) and after studying at the Taman Siswa Jogjakarta, the artist boarded a steam ship in the 1950’s and set sail for San Francisco. Ahmad didn’t look back – not for a couple of decades, at least. He studied sculpture in New York with an influential Italian tutor among others, and lived in several parts of the country, including Connecticut, San Francisco, and California. To survive, the artist dabbled in construction work, but art always remained a calling. More specifically, the pull towards the principles and aesthetics of Constructivism was the strongest. So strong, you still see the early twentieth-century movement’s legacy in the artist’s present-day works, which continue in the trails of his earliest sculptures from the 1960’s.

Constructivism hails from Soviet Russia, with its earliest proponents championing an art form that could serve the revolution. Artists such as Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky were leading names within the movement, though it was the Russian sculptor Naum Gabo – whose writings and work championed the prominence of space over mass – whom Ahmad credits as his greatest influence. Gabo’s works, predecessors to Ahmad’s own dynamic works, are contradictory sculptures; they are both masculine and feminine, and elegant yet energetic at the same time. Above all, they encompass Gabo’s arguments about space; each of Gabo’s sculptures feature highly distinct voids.

Ahmad’s bear similar traits in this respect. The spherical work *Lacey Ball* (1996) illustrates this well with its gaping holes, whilst other oppositions exist in the way that the artist crafts works that are both architectonic and organic at the same time; some works feature sharper lines, whilst others like *Nusantara* (1997) and *Cordova* (2005), are more curvaceous – a strong contrast to the robustness of the bronze medium in which they have been cast. Other strong influences on the artist include Piet Mondrian, whose Pure Plastic Art shaped the artist’s earliest doctrines towards sculpture, and Paul Klee, whose abstract paintings’ forms offer some lineage to Ahmad’s three-dimensional works. The artist notes a material and technical affinity to these artists. “(Their type of art) really suits my temperaments and beliefs,” he argues, explaining that the sensibilities of these artists and their art affects him in multiple ways. “It affects my temperament because it’s very physical – you sweat a lot and I like this – and also because it helps me develop my intellect”.

Another reason – though less apparent – why these artists’ works bode well with his practice is the fact that their the art and principles are in tune with his Islamic faith. “Constructivism orients itself by dealing with nothing but form,” smiles Ahmad, as if he’s telling us a secret; space, form, balance, and geometry are all embraced by these artists’ works, and they also happen to be hallmarks of Islamic art. They’re also non-representational – one other crucial similarity – and there’s a strong correlation between the artist’s works and science; precise calculations and a strong understanding of the characteristics of metal are needed to bring his sculptures to life. “It’s all based on truth,” Ahmad sums up.

The truth is...

Like many artists before and after him, the artist suffered objection over his choice of profession. His father, in particular, wasn’t happy with his son’s career path. He’d asked his son what he wanted to be when he grew up (“an artist” was the answer), and when he repeated the question again a decade later, the response had only altered slightly – a writer. “No, no, you will live poor,” laughs the artist, recalling his father’s response.

Little did the artist’s father know, but his own mannerisms and inclinations would have a marked effect on his son’s career. A machinist and entrepreneur, the artist’ father was a skilled man, who was extremely deft with his hands. It’s this DIY spirit that has fed into the artist’s own soul. Ahmad proudly lists his expertise in carpentry, plumbing, and electricity, and it’s hard to believe that he is now in his eighties. Dynamic to the core, just like his sculptures.

Dynamism – a simple, yet cogent word that essentially contains and defines Ahmad’s art and life. There may not be any prescribed meaning to the artist’s sculpture – they don’t refer to specific people, places, or events – but they are vessels that symbolise the artist’s belief that it’s important to always look at things from different angles. And with elegant curves and engaging lines, the artist’s sculptures promise an exciting and fulfilling journey as you do so.

Rachel Jenagaratnam
Kuala Lumpur, May 2012

CURRICULUM VITAE

Ahmad Osni Peii b. 1930

EDUCATION

- 1946 – 1948 Trained at Taman Siswa, Jogjakarta, java, Indonesia
- 1948 – 1950 Joined up Freedom Fighter, java Indonesia.
- 1950 – 1956 Travelled widely and lived briefly in Sweden, Holland and California, USA
- 1956 Settled in USA; studied at the New School of Social Research, New York; received BFA and DFA candidacy, Pacific Western University, CA.
- 1978 – 1980 The New School of School of Social Research, 1978 – 1980.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

- 1996 State University of New York, Albany, New York, USA
- 1995 United Nations Group Exhibit
- 1995 Norfolk International Airport, Virginia, USA
- 1995 University of Connecticut, USA
- 1994 Indonesian Consulate, New York, USA
- 1994 Institute Barcelones d’Art, Barcelona, Spain
- 1994 XEROX Palo Alto Research Center, California, USA
- 1979 Wesleyan University, Connecticut, USA
- 1973 1988 Brooklyn Museum, New York, USA
- 1967 UNICEF, United Nations, New York, USA

SOLO EXHIBITION

- 2003 Sculpture Square, Singapore
- 2000 Rumbun Dahan, Selangor, Malaysia
- 1997 National Art Gallery, Kuala Kumpur, Malaysia
- 1995 Norfolk International Airport, Norfolk, Virginia, USA
- 1994 Indonesia Consulate General, New York, USA
- 1994 University of Connecticut, Farmington, Connecticut, USA
- 1992 Atlantic Gallery, Brooklyn, New York, USA
- 1992 New Canaan Library, New Canaan, Connecticut, USA
- 1979 New York Coliseum, New York (on behalf of Johnson & Wales College), USA
- 1979 Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, USA
- 1978 University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, USA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1994 Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, Palo Alto California, USA
- 1994 Institute Barcelones d’Art, Barcelona, Spain
- 1992 Federal Reserve Bank, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- 1991 Bradley International Airport, Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 1991 Cast Iron Gallery, New York, New York, USA
- 1989 Art Center, Manchester, Vermont, USA
- 1981 New York Botanical Garden, New York, USA
- 1978 Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 1976 Slater Memorial Museum, Norwich, Connecticut, USA
- 1974 Silverman Guild of Arts, New Canaan, Connecticut, USA
- 1973 Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York, USA
- 1967 UNICEF, United Nations, New York, USA



CORPORATE COLLECTION

- Oppenheimer Fund, World Trade Center, New York, USA
- Roberts & Holland, Rockefeller Plaza, New York, USA
- Spring Mills Co., New York, USA
- JCS Design Associates, New York, USA
- Gorden Associates, Chicago IL, USA
- Johnson & Wales College, RI, USA
- Greenberg Co., Westbury, New York, USA
- The Mckenzie Family Foundation, Greenbau, California, USA

PERMANENT PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Jordan National Gallery of Fine Art, Amman Jordan
- Neuberger Museum, Purchase, New York, USA
- International Art Collective, Barcelona, Spain
- University of Connecticut, USA
- International Rotary Club, Toronto, Canada Freidus Gallery, New York, USA

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

- B. Garretz, St. Mauritz, Switzerland
- T&L Kramer, Wesport, Connecticut, USA
- D.E. Rose, Lindhurst, Ohio, USA
- N&P Shapiro, Palm Beach, Florida, USA
- JC Armstrong, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA
- R&M McKenzie, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Asian Art News, Hong Kong, 1994
- Artspeak, New York, USA, 1993
- Art in America, USA, Nov 1992
- The Day, New London, Connecticut, USA 1979
- Advocate, Stamford, Connecticut, USA, June 1997
- New Canaan Advertiser, Connecticut, USA 1992
- International Who’s Who in Art, Oxford, England
- Who’s Who in American Art

REVIEWS

- 1994 Asian Art News, Hong Kong, Oct
- 1994 Hartford Courant, Hartford, Connecticut, USA
- 1994 Culturegram, Nusantara Jaya Foundation, Foundation, New York, USA
- 1993 ARTSPEAK, New York, USA
- 1992 New Canaan Advertiser, New Canaan, Connecticut, USA
- 1992 Art in America, New York, USA
- 1992 The Hour, Norwalk, Connecticut, USA
- 1992 The Advocate, Stamford, Connecticut, USA
- 1988 The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York, USA
- 1982 Norwalk News, Norwalk, Connecticut, USA
- 1979 The Day, New London, Connecticut, USA
- 1979 Norwich Bulletin, Norwich, Connecticut, USA
- 1978 Hartford Courant, Hartford Connecticut, USA
- 1972 Phoenix Press, Brooklyn, New York, USA
- 1968 Heights Press, Brooklyn, New York, USA
- 1967 United Nations Secretariat News, New York, USA

PUBLICATION

- 1985 & 1986 The Toth-Maathian Reviews, Lubbock, TX
- 1982 – 1985 Norwalk News, CT, March
- 1979 Norwalk Bulletin, CT, June
- 1979 The Southeastern Gale, New London, Connecticut, fall
- 1978 Williamantic Chronicle, CT, 1978: Hartford Courant

LECTURES

- Art & Mathematics Conference 96, SUNY at Albany, New York June 1996
- National Art Gallery Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia April 1996
- Institute for Visual Artists, Silvermine Guild Arts Center, CT, October 1995
- Source of Imagery, Silverman Guild of Arts, New Canaan, Connecticut, USA, 1995
- Islam and three-dimensional Art, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1996
- Design Uncovered, State University of New York, Albany, New York 1996

INSTRUCTOR-IN-RESIDENCE

- 1980 The New School for Social Research, New York, USA
- 1979 Johnson & Wales College, Rhode Island, USA
- 1977 New England Art Center, Brooklyn, Connecticut, USA
- 1974 Craft Students league, New York, USA

Awards

- 1986 & 1989 World of Poetry
- 1978 Connecticut Commission on the Arts
- 1972 & 1974 Artists-Craftsman of New York, USA
- 1970 American Academy of Arts & Letters
- 1966 New School of Social Research, New York, USA

BROADCAST

Connecticut Public Television: Symbiont, 1996

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Sculpture Guild, New York, USA
- International Society for Education through Art, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
- International Art Collective, Amsterdam, Holland

COLLECTIONS & COMMISSIONS (SELECTED)

- The Light at Cairnhill, Singapore
- The Tomlinson, Singapore
- Amaryllis ville, Singapore
- Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman, Jordan
- The McKenzie Family Foundation, Greenbrae, California, USA
- Neuberger Museum Purchase, New York
- University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, USA
- University of Connecticut, Farmington, Connecticut, USA
- Johnson and Wales College, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- Oppenheimer Fund, World Trade Center, New York, USA
- International Rotary Club, Toronto, Canada
- Spring Mill Corp., New York, New York, USA
- Robert & Holland, Rockefeller Plaza, New York, USA
- International Art Collection, Barcelona Spain
- Gordan Associates, Chicago, Illinois, USA
- Balai Seni Lukisan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Ng Seksan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- CS Design Associates, New York, New York
- B. Garretz, St. Mauritz, Switzerland
- T&L Kramer, Westport, Connecticut, USA
- A.T. Gibbons, Fairfield, Connecticut, USA
- D.E. Rose, Lindhurst, Ohio, USA
- P&N Shapiro, Palm Beach Florida, USA
- JC Armstrong, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA
- &M McKenzie, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA
- Tun Daim Zainuddin, Malaysia
- Datin Lim Lee Lee, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Mimaland Kuala Lumpur Malaysia
- Hijas Kasturi, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Draycott Park, Singapore

CATALOGUES

- “Forms Unknown Made”, Shell Structures of Bronze, 1990-1994
- Artbook, International Art Collective, Barcelona, Spain, 1996
- “Forms Unknown Made”, Discovering formal designs in “Spatio-Shell” Structure, 1990-1997 Bronze Sculpture.