

A large, intricate wood engraving artwork in black and white. The scene is a dense, detailed landscape with a variety of plants, including tall stalks, leafy vegetation, and what appears to be a large, textured, possibly fungal or root-like structure in the center. The style is highly detailed and characteristic of traditional wood engraving techniques.

engraving life

*The collection of  
wood engravings by*

**Abdul Mansoor Ibrahim**

# ENGRAVING LIFE

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ABDUL MANSOOR IBRAHIM

## Meeting Pak Chot

The meeting with Mansoor Ibrahim, fondly known as Pak Chot, offered a glimpse into the past, a simpler life yet full of optimism about the present. It was supposed to be an interview for his upcoming solo exhibition. Interestingly, our conversation revolves around various territories, from his experience as an art student in the 1970s during the student riot, working as an assistant to repair a destroyed Tugu Negara in 1976, to mastering basic art fundamentals. Currently in his early 70s, he still actively engages with the younger generation of artists and continues producing works. "Artist never retires," he claimed—the statement that echoes his sincerity as he recalls his early years. There is a bitter truth in this statement. Learning art is not for a roll of degree. It is a life-changing experience. It changes your view of the world and helps you understand yourself and your surroundings—art, with its transformative power, bestows sensitivity, where we can make sense of things, a testament to the enlightening power of art.

Living on the edge of simpler times and turbulent moments, Pak Chot's early student life was a testament to his resilience. He managed to balance his artistic growth during the 1974-75 student uprising, where all higher education institutions were forced to close. Pak Chot was among the students accepted into the art department at ITM in 1971. The institution was then located at Happy Mansion, Sec 17, Petaling Jaya, before moving to Shah Alam in 1974. The school introduced the printmaking subject as part of three major departments, along with painting and sculpture. Besides the lack of printmaking facilities, the school also needs more teaching staff with printmaking specialities. Kok Yew Puah, who taught printmaking as a part-time tutor at ITM after his studies in Australia in 1975, was among those who left a lasting impression on him. His role as a teacher and mentor provided guidance and valuable connections to the broader art community.

In reflection, Pak Chot recognises himself as exceptionally fortunate to have had the opportunity to be in the presence of the luminaries of Malaysian modern art during his formative years. Despite the fledgling state of the art scene, the dialogue and discussions were not just vibrant but also dynamic. The influential figures of Redza Piyadasa, Sulaiman Esa, Syed Ahmad Jamal, Joseph Tan, Chong Kam Kaw, Kok Yew Puah, Salleh Ben Joned, and others infused the scene with passionate debates on Malaysian art, creating an intellectually stimulating environment. This period marked Pak Chot's induction into the art world, where a fundamental grasp of visual language was desirable and necessary for anyone aspiring to be an artist or meaningfully engaging in these discussions.

Our conversation shifted to the significance of the art community as a foundation for artistic practice. An artist-run space like Chetak 17 provided a safe platform for Pak Chot to express his creative drive. The collaborative and communal nature of art remains deeply rooted in contemporary art practices, particularly printmaking. With limited access to printing tools and facilities, establishing a dedicated platform to support this artistic discipline becomes crucial. This supportive environment not only fosters collaboration among community members but also encourages the development of art events and programs aimed at broadening the participation of other artists. Moreover, it is essential for exchanging diverse perspectives and facilitating engaging discussions and interactions among art practitioners. This sense of community and connection is what makes the art world so vibrant and enriching, and we, as part of this community, should always cherish and nurture it.

Pak Chot made a thoughtful and intentional decision to venture into the world of printmaking. This artistic pursuit not only provided him with a sense of control over his emotions but also over the tools of his trade. The meticulous practice demanded a high level of discipline, effectively testing and refining his patience. Printmaking's regimented and strict process, while not always favourably received due to its reserved and inflexible nature, deeply resonated with Pak Chot. He perceived this process as mirroring the complexities of human existence - acknowledging the existence of free will alongside the limitations imposed by uncontrollable elements. To Pak Chot, life itself demands structure and discipline to unleash our full potential.

As a student of a great master, Pak Chot demonstrates a deep understanding of the fundamentals of art and the intricate connections between visual language and episteme. Through the Engraving Life exhibition, he showcases his mastery of wood engraving techniques and offers insight into an artist's creative process. The art of engraving differs from woodcut in that the selection of print blocks depends on the wood grain. While woodcut blocks utilise vertically cut wood that is easier to carve, the resulting details may appear slightly rough due to the softer surface. On the other hand, wood engraving involves cutting into the end grain of the wood, resulting in finer details due to the more rigid surface. Furthermore, many of these wood types are readily available locally.

The exhibition comprises three distinct sections: Life, Frame of Nature, and Eyes of the World. Pak Chot's selection of subject matter reflects the artist's profound consideration of the surrounding environment. The "Life" section encapsulates the artist's meticulous observation of various insects. The microscopic view of the anatomy of several insects, such as ticks and bugs, brings about the surrealist nuance. Pak Chot adeptly captures insects' intricate lines and shapes, affirming his comprehension of their external structure. Furthermore, the subject matter serves as a thought-provoking social commentary, offering insights into human behaviour with an obscured title meant to shed light on a particular attribute.

The concept of "Frame of Nature" delves into formalistic methodologies, utilising the contrast between black and white to underscore the equilibrium in design and to undertake a more profound examination of the significance of form. As espoused by Pak Chot, nature serves as a fount of education, not solely through its functionality but also in its often disregarded exterior intricacies. This vantage point facilitates comprehension of the intricate nature of existence, a facet frequently overlooked due to our acquiescence to the unbridled advancement prevalent in our contemporary lifestyles.

"Eyes of the World" is a thought-provoking art series that delves into contemporary issues directly impacting our lives. In this series, Pak Chot provides a compelling social commentary through images depicted in the series that offer a poignant reflection, such as on the Gaza massacre, MH370, the emergence of Bitcoin, the extensive effects of economic decline, and the noteworthy bias within the UNHCR. The artist skillfully captures the pervasive feelings of impending doom and the encroaching darkness that inadvertently influences our lives. This artistic portrayal blurs the lines between reality and fiction, akin to narratives commonly found in movies or comics.

- Azzad Diah





ODANATA, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
24.5 cm x 16.5 cm / Edition of 12/20



POLLEN BATH, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
10 cm x 11.5 cm / Edition of 20/25



BLOOD SUCKER II, 2017

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
12 cm x 15 cm / Edition of 5/6





IGUANA, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
12 cm x 14.5 cm / Edition of 25/30



LADY BIRD, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
13 cm x 11.5 cm / Edition of 20/20



LIPAS, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
12 cm x 14 cm / Edition of 25/25



PENYENGAT, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
19 cm x 25 cm / Edition of 7/30



ARTIST PROOF 1 "SI MANIS"  
ZUMANSOR D/15  
KUALA LUMPUR

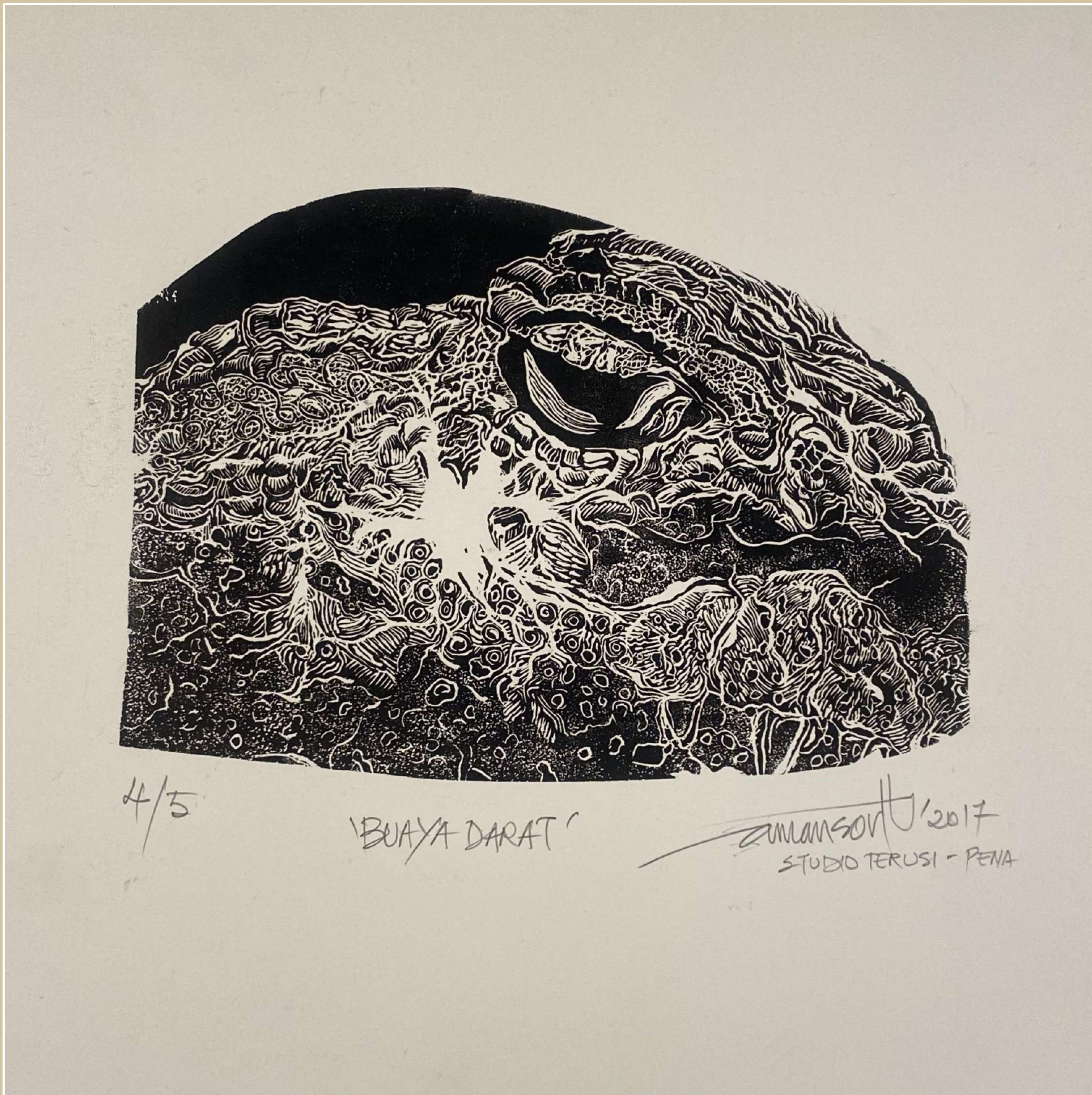
SI MANIS, 2015

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
9 cm x 10 cm / Artist Proof



BUAYA, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
13 cm x 24.8 cm / Edition of 30/30



BUAYA DARAT, 2017

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
14 cm x 19.5 cm / Edition of 4/5



SCAVENGER, 2024

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
21 cm x 19 cm / Artist Proof





KETONGGENG, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
26 cm x 17.5 cm / Edition of 20/30



UDANG KARA, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
23.4 cm x 21 cm / Edition of 20/20



BELALANG KUNYIT, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
16.5 cm x 24 cm / Edition of 10/30



CARI MAKAN, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on Shi Lu Japanese paper  
17.8 cm x 26 cm / Artist Proof



KURA KURA, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
19.5 cm x 24.6 cm / Edition of 18/20



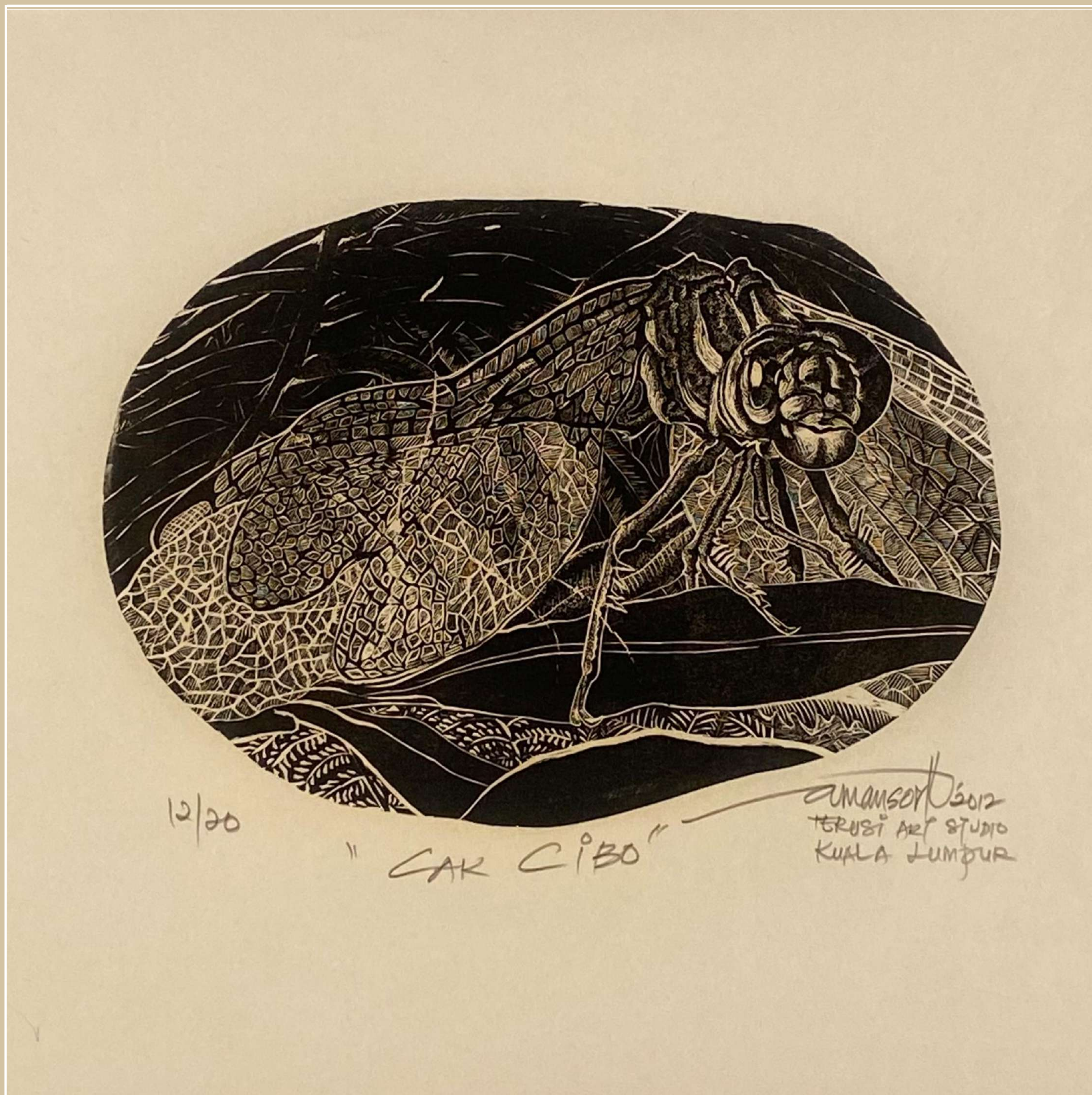
RIANG RIANG, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
15 cm x 23.5 cm / Edition of 12/20



KUMBANG BADAK, 2013

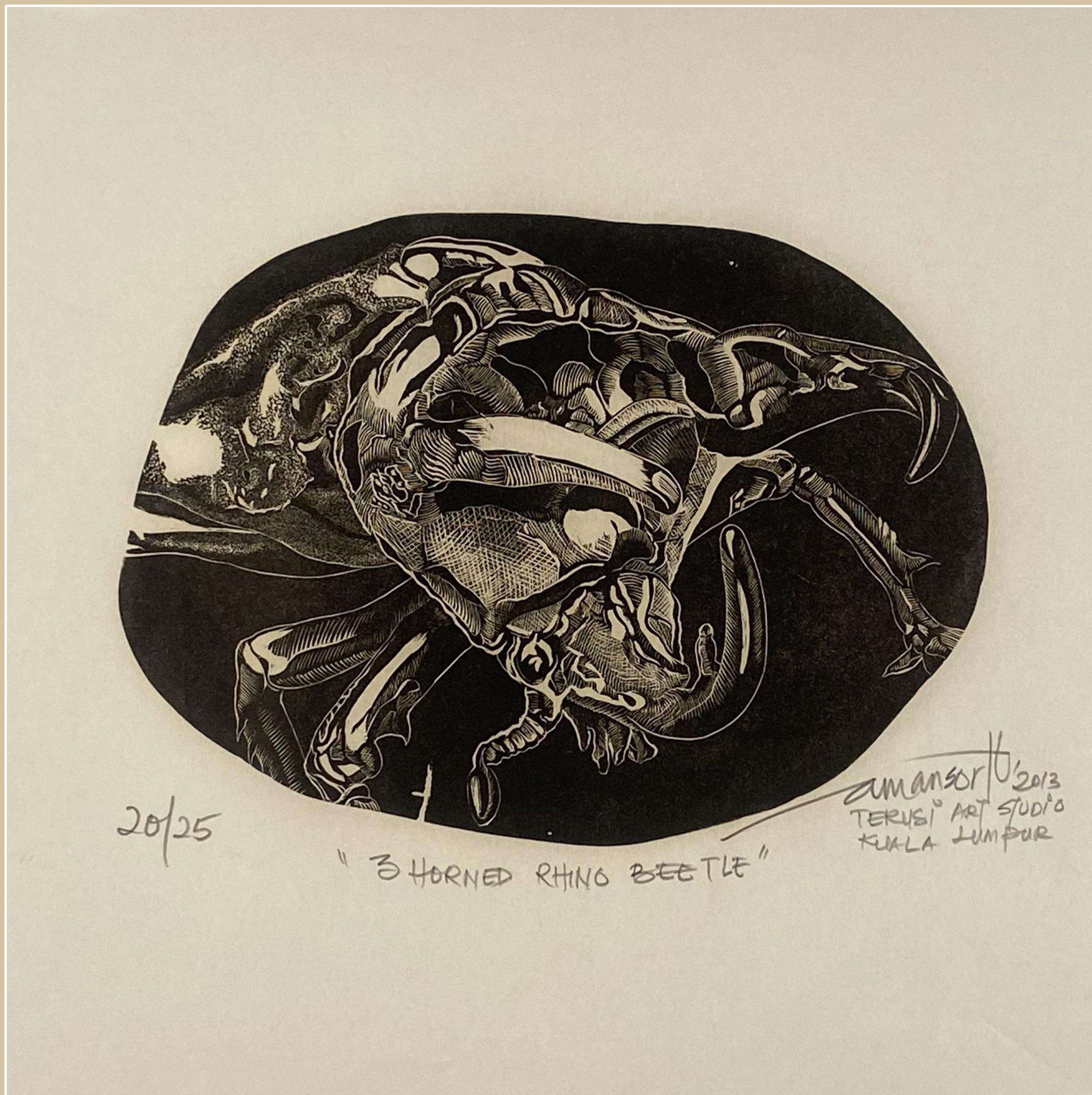
End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
17.5 cm x 26 cm / Edition of 20/25



CAK CIBO, 2012

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
16.5 cm x 24 cm / Edition of 12/20





3 HORNED RHINO BEETLE, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
16 cm x 23.5 cm / Edition of 20/25



MANGSA, 2013

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
25 cm x 19 cm / Edition of 9/25



AKSI MIMPI, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
27 cm x 18.6 cm / Edition of 10/20



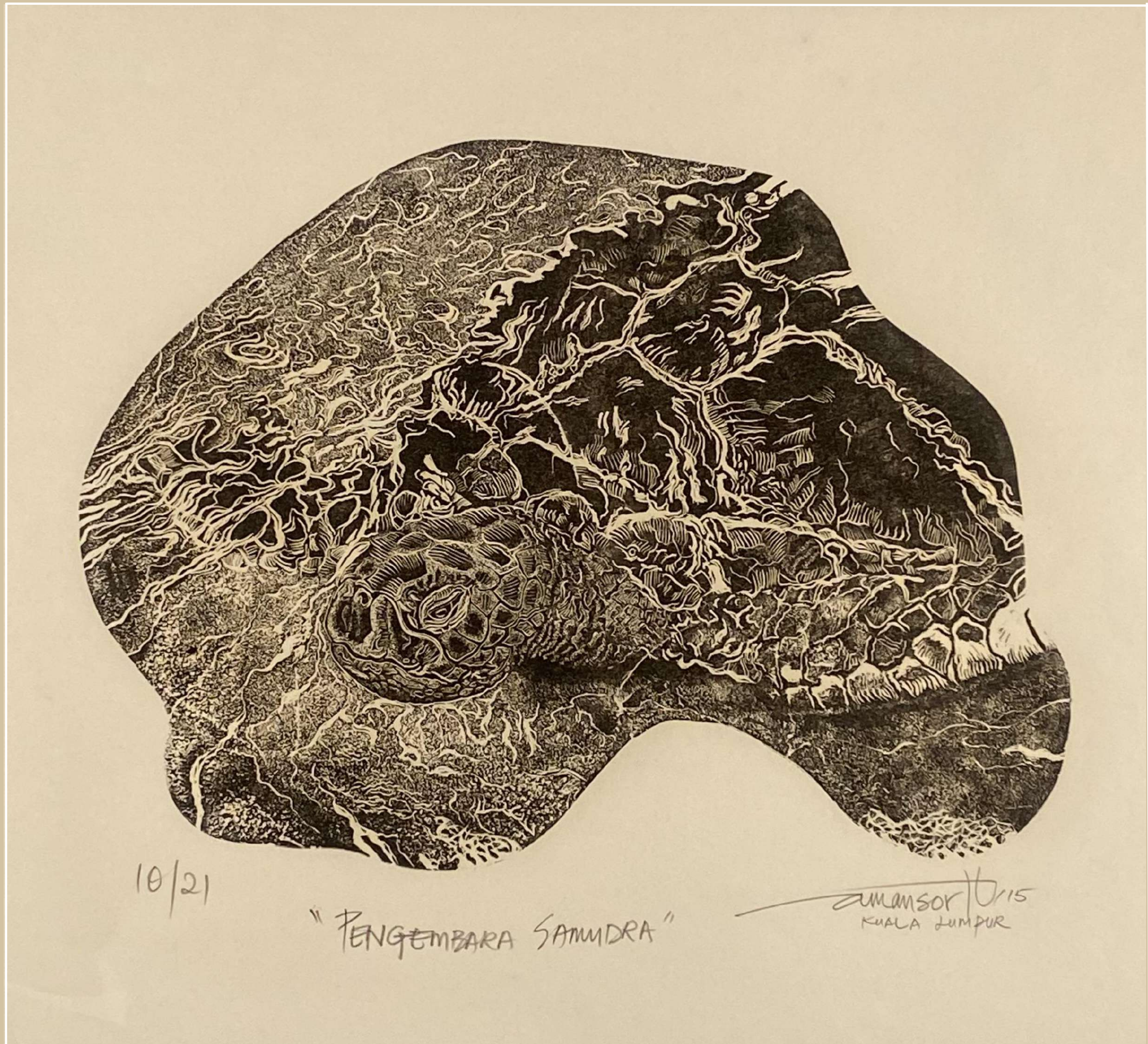
BLOOD SUCKER, 2012

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
24.5 cm x 16.5 cm / Edition of 10/20



POLLEN BATH & NECTAR COLLECTION, 2015

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
27.3 cm x 21.4 cm / Edition of 15/20



10/21

"PENGEMBARA SAMUDRA"

ZAMANSOR URIS  
KUALA LUMPUR

PENGEMBARA SAMUDRA, 2015

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
24.6 cm x 33.5 cm / Edition of 10/21

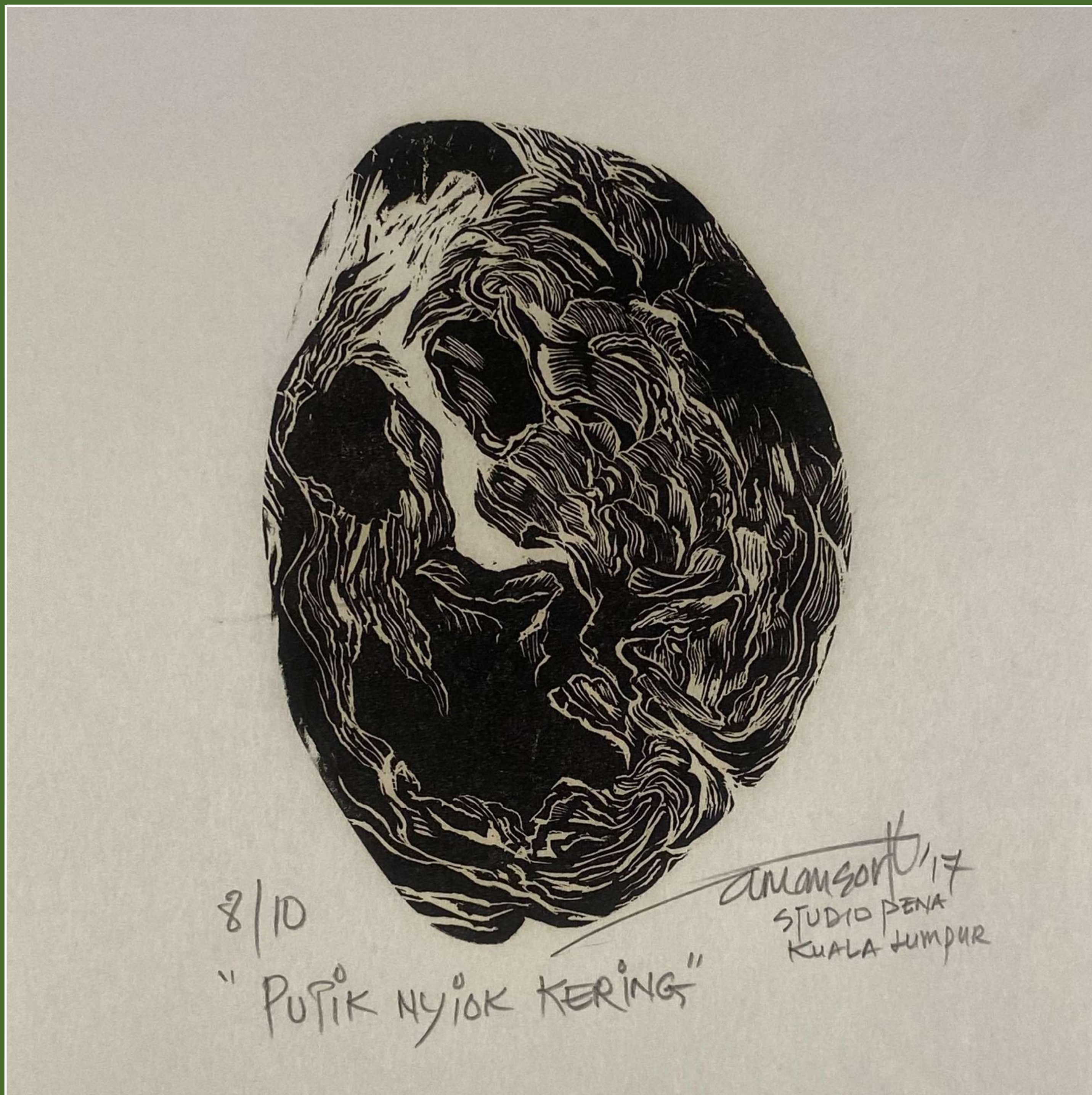


RUMAH HARAM, 2014

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
44 cm x 44 cm / Artist Proof

frame of nature





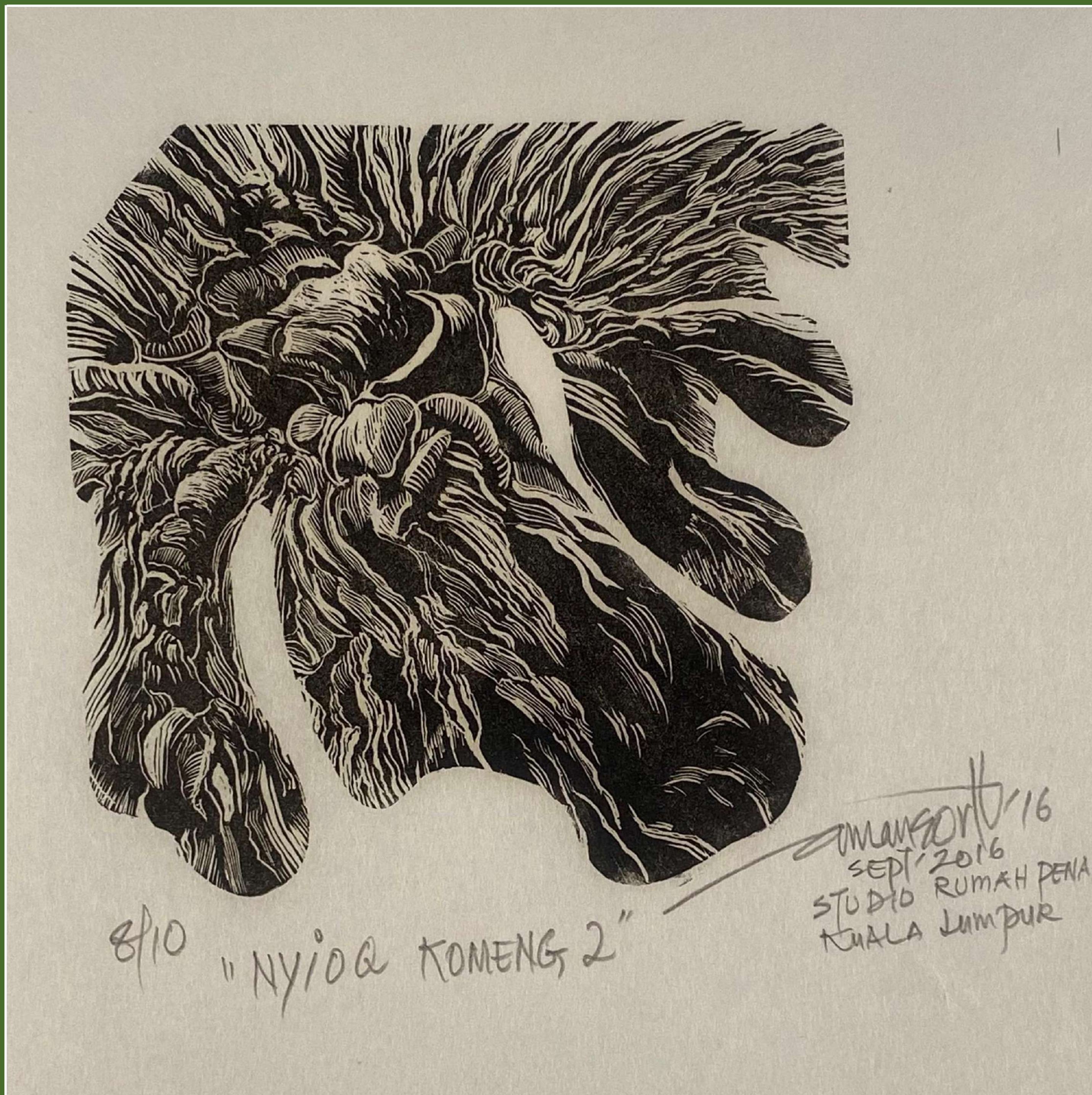
PUTIK NYIOK KERING, 2017

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
13.5 cm x 9.7 cm / Edition of 8/10



NYIOQ KOMENG, 2016

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
12 cm x 11.5 cm / Edition of 8/10



NYIOQ KOMENG 2, 2016

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper

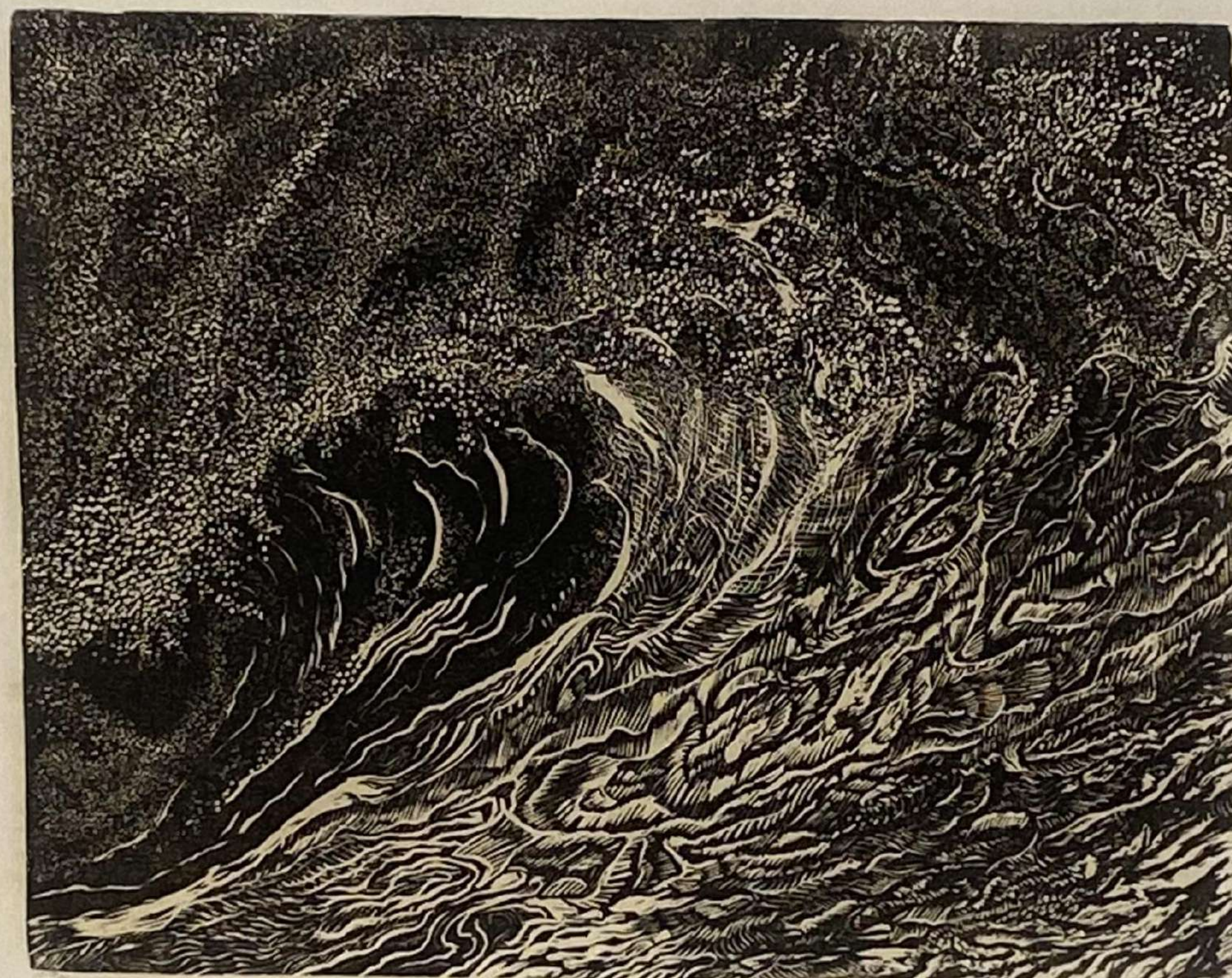


8/15 "NYIOK KOMENG 3"

AMAN SOVI 1/16  
STUDIO PENNA  
KUALA LUMPUR

NYIOK KOMENG 3, 2016

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
13 cm x 13 cm / Edition of 8/15



4/9

"GULONGAN AIR"

Amangsoh 2012  
STUDIO PEVA  
KUALA LUMPUR

GULONGAN AIR, 2012

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper  
28 cm x 30.5 cm / Edition of 4/9

window of the world



BERSATU ROBOH UNHCR, 2024

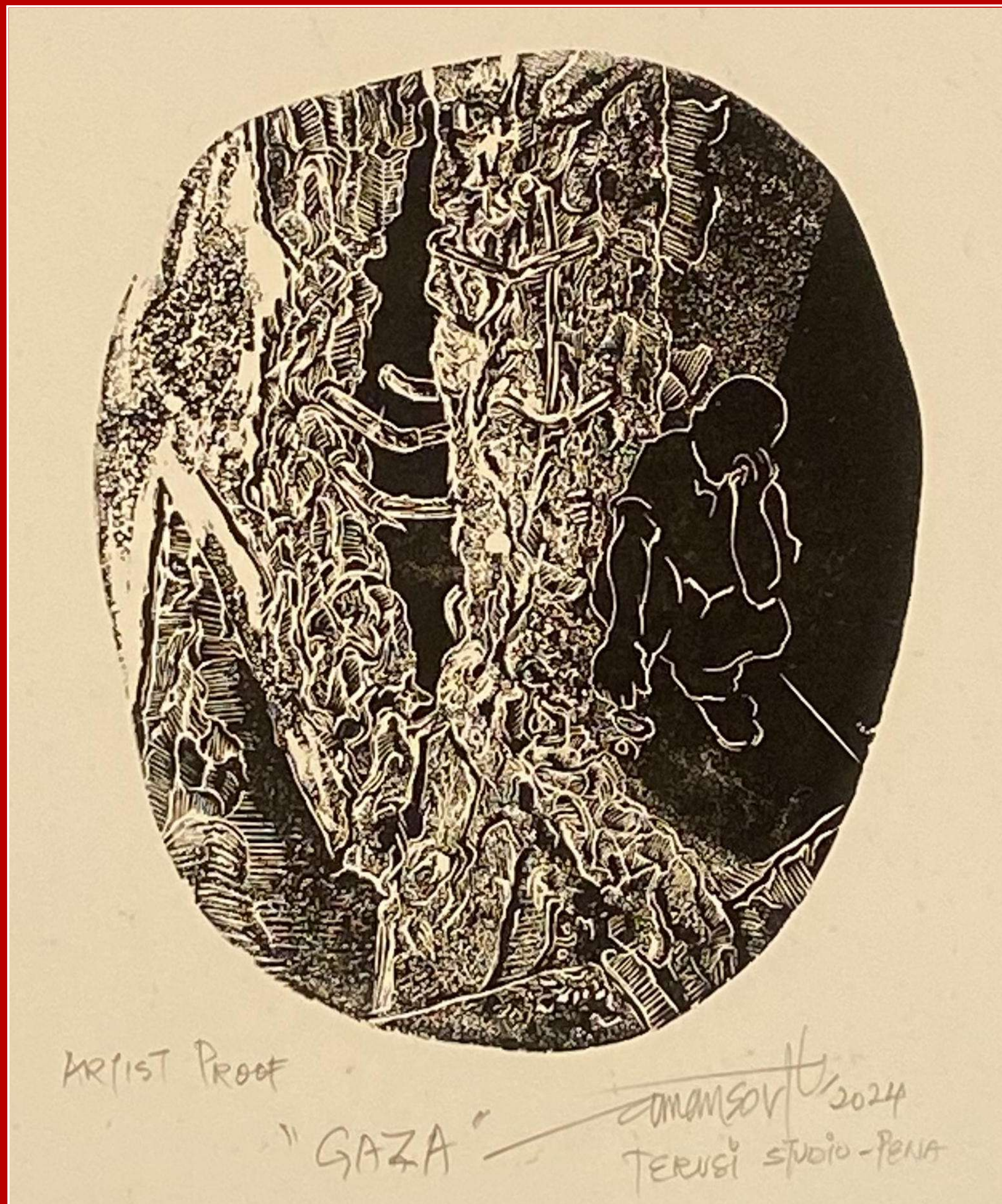
End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 20.8 cm x 21.8 cm / Artist Proof



TERGELINCIR NILAI, 2023

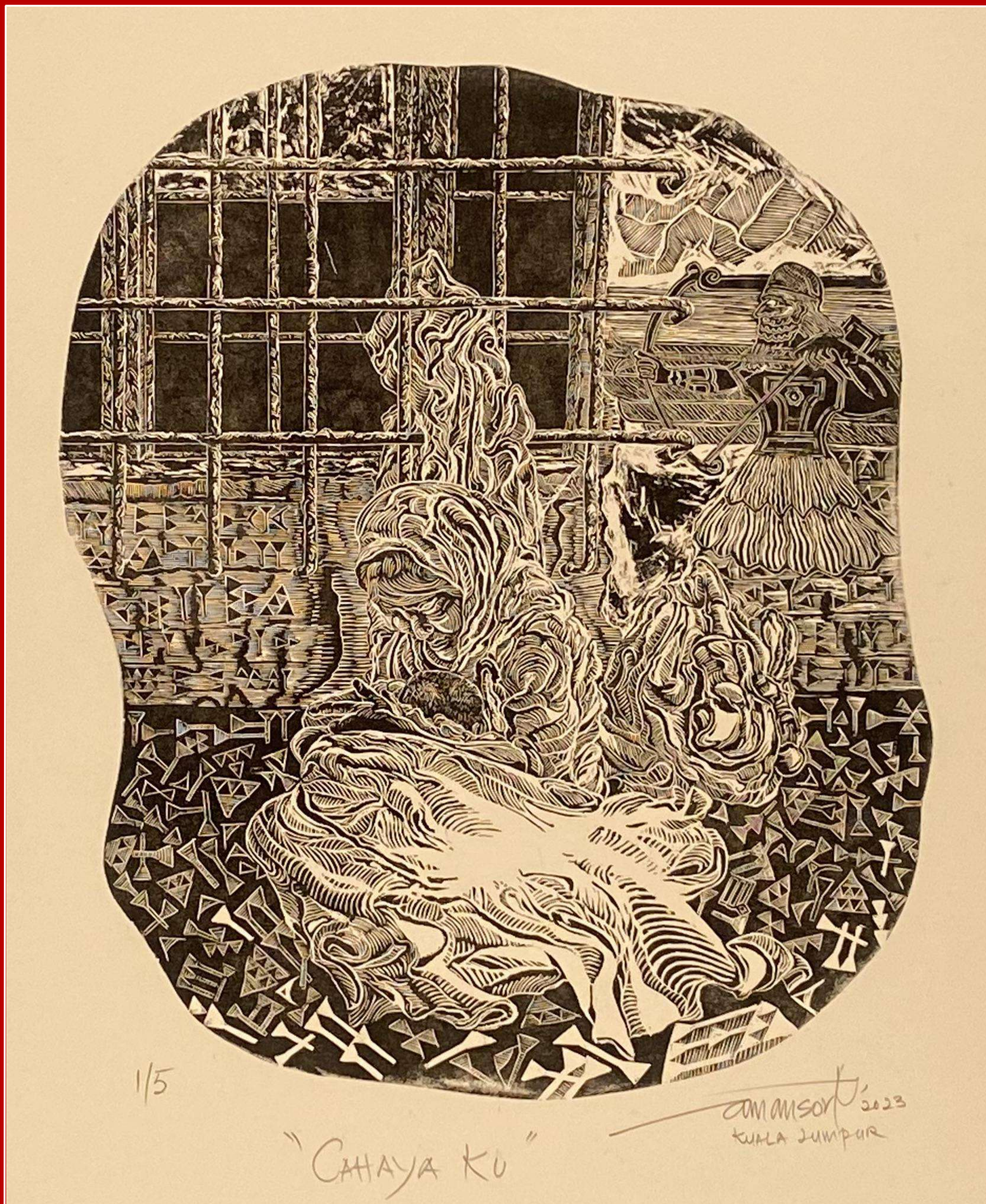
End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 22.4 cm x 25.3 cm / Edition of 6/6

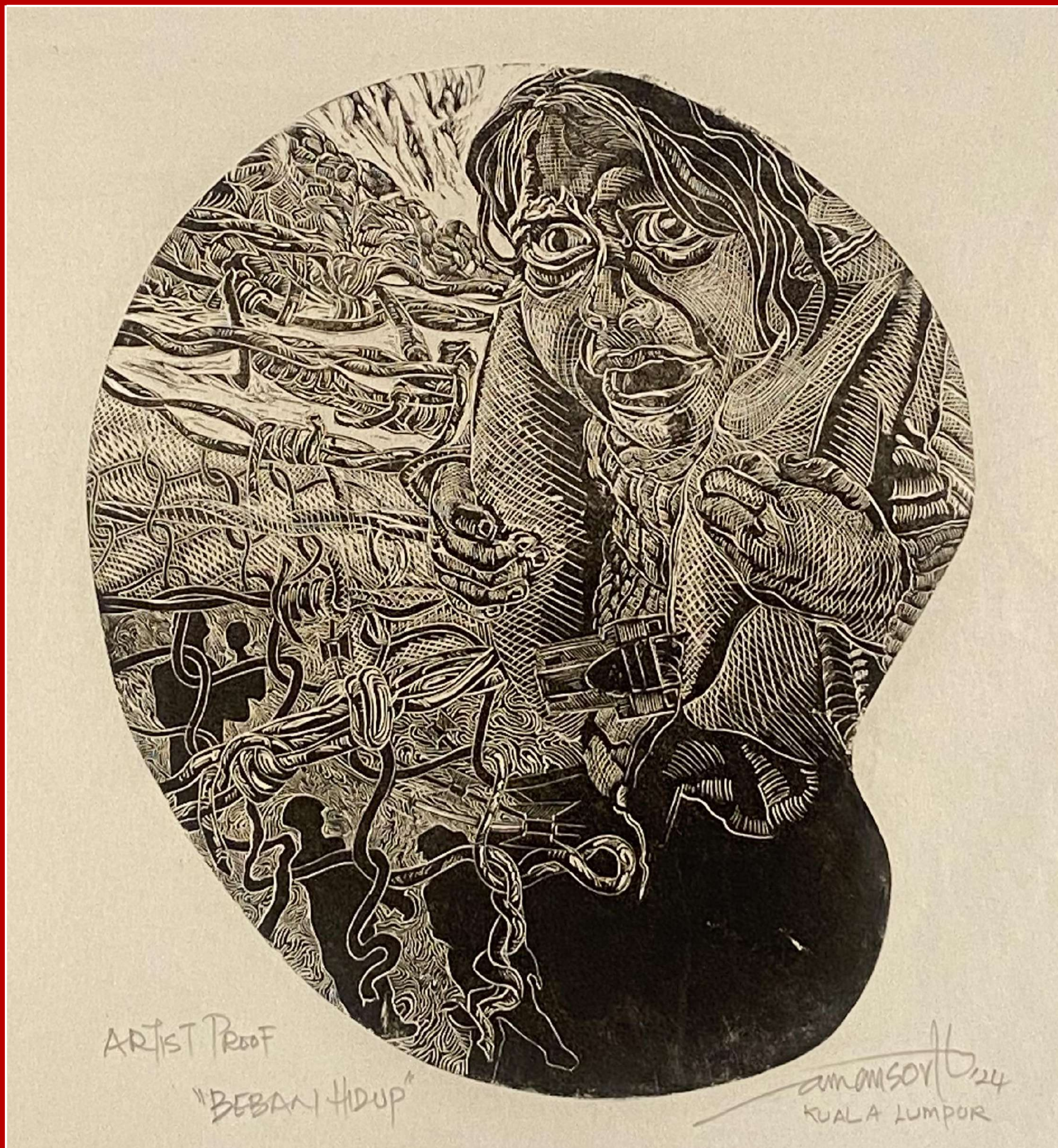




GAZA, 2024

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 18.5 cm x 15.4 cm / Artist Proof





BEBAN HIDUP, 2024

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 26.3 cm x 22.3 cm / Artist Proof



#PREY FOR MH370, 2015

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 18 cm x 15 cm / Edition of 7/30



7/20

AMANSOR / 18  
STUDIO PENA  
KUALA LUMPUR

"MANIPULATOR IN CCI 30"

MANIPULATOR IN CCI 30, 2018

End grain *Ciku* wood engraving on rice paper / 13 cm x 24.5 cm / Edition of 7/20

## Profile

Abdul Mansoor Ibrahim (b. 1952, Selangor, Malaysia) is a master printmaker that has been involved in the art of printmaking for close to half a decade. He first received his education at the School of Art and Design ITM (now UiTM) in 1975 until he graduated in 1975 and decided to pursue further education abroad. Due to the influence of a friend, he took on the journey for a printmaking education in France when he was granted a French Government Cultural Exchange scholarship, learning the French language for a year at *Centre Audiovisual de Royan CAREL pour l'étude des Langues* in 1976, before being admitted into the well-established, classical and historical school, *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Art (Paris, France)*. In the years from 1977 until 1980, he became one of the young disciples of a renowned printmaker S.W. Hayter at Atelier 17 (now known as Atelier Contrepoint), learning the art of a specialised printmaking technique, viscosity printing which was devised by S.W. Hayter himself.

After graduating, he returned to Malaysia and soon joined the infamous Anak Alam collective from 1980 until 1982, becoming the fifth batch member. In the collective, he extensively explored the multifaceted art of printmaking, joining exhibitions and participating in the group's prolific activities. He took on an Art Teachers Diploma (ITM) in 1984, where he started to teach in several art institutions. In the year 2000, he received a special accolade of a visiting grant from the French Government to Lyon and Paris. In 2004, he finally received his MA in Fine Arts at UiTM, Shah Alam. His art career took off locally and abroad, from Kuala Lumpur to France, Poland, Italy, Vietnam, Korea and Japan amongst others with works ranging from sculpture to woodcut, etching, and engraving, to name a few. His notable works are collected by and can be viewed in Balai Seni Lukis Negara (Malaysia), Muzium Seni Asia (Malaysia), Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (France), and the International Collection of Graphic Art, Prints & Drawing Cabinets, Cremona Civic Museum (Italy). Abdul Mansoor Ibrahim currently works in Selangor in a shared studio called Studio PENA with a long-time fellow artist and friend, Fuad Pathil.



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