

A Batik Man Through and Through

Amir Harith, popularly known as Bujin, is a batik man through and through and, together with his business partner, Taufiq Hussien has grown a successful business out of his passion for the traditional art form

Bujins L Batik Sdn Bhd is a producer of high quality batik attire and accessories with contemporary and futuristic designs for a mid-to high-end clientele.

As evident in his product design, Amir is a talented batik designer whose works reflect youthful appreciation for a traditional art form but with a contemporary twist. He draws inspiration from the environment – flora, fauna and people around him. His designs are fresh and unique and each is one of a kind. Each piece of his work has a rationale, a distinctive look and story behind it.

On how he got involved in the batik design, Amir said, "Since the age of twelve, I was always fascinated by batik painting. This interest grew stronger through the years especially as I watched my father who is an art teacher at work."

Amir said, "Producing high quality artisan batik is a time-consuming process, so mass production for our products is not feasible. We have partnered with a few high-end retailers to sell our batik, especially the ready-to-wear collections. We also travel the world to promote and sell the Malaysian story."

The business was established just three years ago in partnership with Taufiq. It currently has a workforce of six.

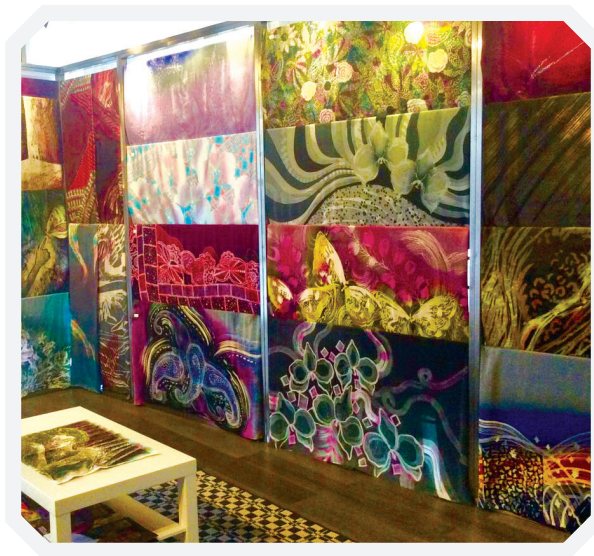
Amir said, "The business is still in its infancy. Obviously, there is a lot of work ahead to grow it. We also need more talents for design work. Fortunately, we had set up Bujin Academy in 2015 to develop a talent pool of batik designers and we can draw from this to help us expand. There are also other challenges to overcome,



such as the increasing cost of materials. For example, the price of cloth has risen 30% but we have to absorb that to maintain our finest batik standard."

Amir, whose talent was discovered by Kraftangan Malaysia, had already shown his potential before even setting up Bujins L Batik by winning the 2012 Pertandingan Piala Seri Endon organised by Yayasan Budi Penyayang. In 2014 he had his works showcased at the international ready-to-wear fashion show, Who's Next in Paris, France and Capetown, South Africa, under the auspices of Kraftangan Malaysia and Tourism Malaysia.





Besides the boutiques, the company also sells its products online, supported by advertising on Instagram and Facebook. The company uses various media such as e-commerce platforms as well as social media to reach its market, particularly the millennial. At the same time, it uses the available analytics to further enhance their marketability.

Asked about the challenge of going into e-commerce, Amir said it was 'more difficult than learning how to make batik'.

"There are so many options available and we didn't know which would be effective. In this matter, we were fortunate to have guidance from SME Corp. Malaysia and other friends along the way."

The company plans to enhance their website to give better customer experience and position itself at the forefront towards TN50. However, though the partners are well aware of the importance of keeping up with developments in the digital economy, they are also passionate about keeping traditions alive.

Taufiq, Amir's partner, is also the owner of several technology companies. He said, "We kept talking about the advancement of technology, IoT and stuff like that but sometimes, we have to take a step back and not forget our history and culture. We should

marry technology and tradition to get the best out of the two, especially in a business like ours."

Looking ahead, Taufiq said, "The market for batik is huge not just in Malaysia and ASEAN but also around the world. We are always exploring other international markets and spreading the batik story to the world. We are looking for opportunities to collaborate with organisations, especially fashion designers, to produce specially designed batik products using different materials that would make them unique in the market. In this respect, collaboration with suppliers and technology partners is important. We are very grateful to be working closely with them and particularly SME Corp. Malaysia who is guiding and helping us to explore new markets."

Amir is confident that Bujins L Batik will continue to grow.

"Our unique selling point is our customised products. Right now we are looking at ways to improve our production process to cater to market demand. Ten years down the road, I want to see the Bujin Batik brand recognised in the international market."

