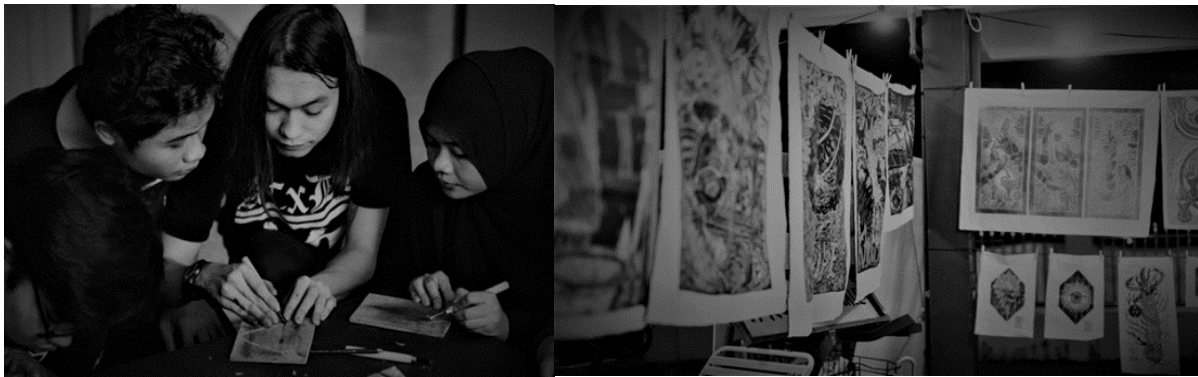


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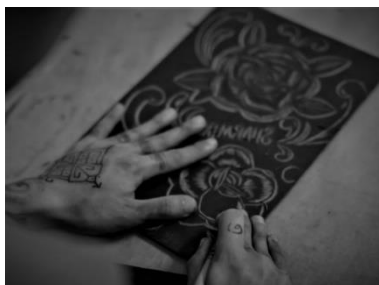
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### **PARTICIPATORY CULTURES RESEARCH** **(WOODCUT PRINTING)**



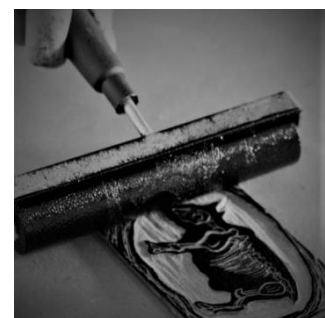
Rico Leong is a Malaysia-born illustrator venturing into woodcut as a medium of expression. Shifting gears from illustration, Rico Leong translates his work through woodcarving and curating woodcut workshops to share with others on the traditional process of woodcut printing on both fabric and rice paper. Many of his illustrations can be found as cover art for local musicians in the punk scene, which is a subculture that holds an important position for what he stands for alongside personal experiences and opinions. His wood cut prints exhibition and workshop will display the pieces he has been working on for the past years mainly depicting relations of people towards nature. This is one of the reasons I chose woodcut printing as my participatory culture.

According to Henryjenkins.org, a participatory culture means “which members of the group believe that their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connectedness with one another (at least they care what other people think about what they have created)”.



In this case, woodcut printing occasionally known as xylography which is a relief “printingartistic” technique in printmaking in which an image is carved into the surface while the non-printing parts are removed, typically with gouges (visual-arts-cork.com, 2018). According to oldprintgallery.wordpress.com, woodcut prints are amongst the most ancient printing techniques at its highest pinnacle of craftsmanship and artistic expression before the invention of machines in the second century A.D. Therefore, it is most cost-effective way to spread messages to the masses audience. Today, it has returned as a DIY method to make our own prints manually instead of using the common printer machines.

Rico Leong conducted a workshop session to share what goes into the process of woodcut printing. There will also be detailed demonstrations to guide participants in every step along the way, from woodblock to print making. Participants will be introduced to woodcarving tools and explore various carving techniques, in impression, and the traditional way of printing on fabric. His woodcut prints workshop will display the pieces he has been working on for the past years mainly depicting relations of people towards the nature.



Considering how little the community is, the art that they have created is superbly high quality. This credits to their devotion towards doing what they are passionate about. Most of the members of the community are doing the woodcut printing during their own free time. There are no time constraints

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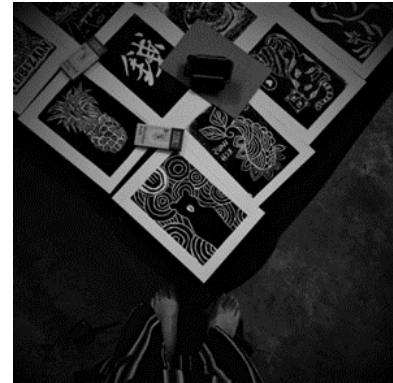
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for the arts they produced. Time to time, the members will get together, share their ideas to constantly create something wonderful and new. They are happy to occupy their minds with fresh ideas, adventurous techniques, and a vast challenge to their creativities. This leads to my main research question for this report; *"How does being a member of the woodcut printing community impacts and influences the lives of the participants?"*.

To gain in-depth information for this participatory culture, I made use of the methods of participatory research when I took part in the workshop which creates dialogue with its member of the community. Ethnography helps to find out what people think/ what the cultural phenomenon dictates community behavior (Weston, 2013). In this case, the goal of my visual ethnography is to bring the story about woodcut print arts and how does it work in terms of process on making it. Therefore, I used visual ethnography and photovoice to gain the insights on culture view of their membership in the community on the process of creating woodcut prints and conducted informal interviews while immersing myself in the participatory culture of woodcut printing as shown in the appendix.



With a specific end goal for my participatory culture research, I have taken gradually from one step to another on making sure I get accurate information from the community itself. The initial step of my research was research planning. I did make a research to inquire about keeping in mind the end goal to recognize what I need to research and gain insights knowledge about my participatory culture. Therefore, the second step of my research was sampling. To choose appropriate research participants, I initially filtered through individuals who did not portrays according to my core interest. The next stage was my participation into the community itself. After that, the following step for this research will be gather information by methods for member perception, visuals, and meetings. After the information was gathered, I attempted to discover importance by translating the distinctive discoveries. The last step that I need to do for this research is to guarantee moral gauges by inquiring as to whether his name might be utilized, and which visuals are permitted to use in my research, as not all exercises were legitimate.

By using Photovoice as one research method, I manage to ask Rico Leong about the process of making woodcut prints from step to step during the workshop. Rico explained that there are 3 stages in woodcut prints which; woodblock cutting (shown in appendix 1), traditional colouring process on the woodcut (shown in appendix 2) and print woodcut on fabric (shown in appendix 3). However, it takes approximately 2 hours depending on the woodblock size and the artwork details of each print.

*"Woodcut prints is totally different from silkscreen printing or digital printing. You need to carve your own design on a woodblock, then make a print from the woodblock." - Rico Leong*

Apart from that, there are some ethical framework for online participatory cultures that I found in the workshop which is *freedom and connectedness*. "A fundamental value of participatory cultures must be freedom of expression that gives protection to any individuals" (Henderson, 2013). In this case, woodcut print is one of the freedom of expression where individuals can express anything they want through art and post it on website for people to see their artworks (shown in appendix 4). According to Henderson (2013), respect must be the centre of participation, and it arises from interacting with other members of a group. Creativity is another one, as members share ideas, get inspiration from one another, and are encouraged to create new things. From this, woodcut print also can give connectedness within another member of this workshop by sharing ideas and knowledge.

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*"Every print is unique because you will see the texture and colour is uneven when you print. It is one of the way to express yourself and that is the beauty of the woodcut prints" – Rico Leong*

In the workshop, I asked few participants about how they felt being part of the culture and what should be improve in the future. Most of the participants said they would like to expand this culture to other people, not only young generation but people who really likes art. From that, people will deeply understand about the beauty of woodcut prints. Therefore, a development of the woodcut printing culture will automatically attract many art exhibitions that will be organize in future for society to really value their work.

To reflect this culture within myself, I personally think that traditional art techniques will train people in so many ways. For instance, it automatically trains the participants to be more patient and express themselves in a different way which for this case is art. Even though the process of making woodcut print will take more time, but the results of the print will amaze people in terms of the unique techniques of printing. Therefore, this woodcut printing workshop is not only for people who know how to do art, but it is for people who wants to learn about art and find out the beauty of creating your own art.

In the nutshell, woodcut print is a hobby that participant can create their own art without using talent because this is a practical skill. Therefore, most of the print usually will have their own meaning since woodcut print also one of the way to express feelings into art. From that, participants are happy to occupy their minds with new ideas, adventurous techniques, and a vast challenge to their creativities. However, it automatically answers my main research question as I mentioned before; *"How does being a member of the woodcut printing community impacts and influences the lives of the participants?"*.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix 1: Woodblock cutting**



Pictures from appendix 1 shows the first step of the woodcut printing. Participants been introduced to woodcarving tools and explore various carving techniques. Then, they will draw their own design on a woodblock with a pencil and start to carve it with woodcarving tools that been provided in the workshop.



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## Appendix 2: Traditional colour process of woodcut printing



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Picture in appendix 2 shows the traditional colour process which is a second step for woodcut printing. After participants create their own design and finish carving on a woodblock, they will start colour the woodblock using paint roller and then print it on rice paper or fabric with unique old techniques.



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### Appendix 3: Print woodcut on fabric



Appendix 3 shows that the results of the woodcut printing. After participants finish print the woodblock on a fabric, they need to dry out the fabric directly on the sun and this is the last step on woodcut printing.

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#### Appendix 4: Woodcut print online promotion

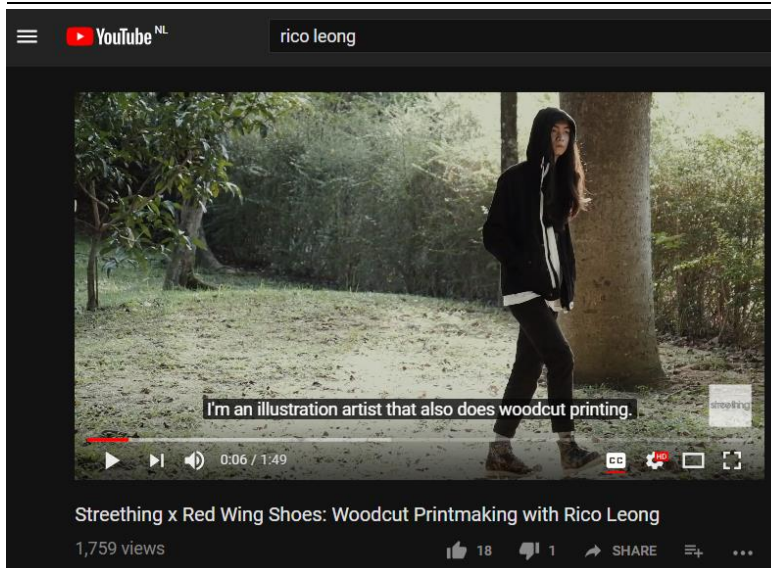
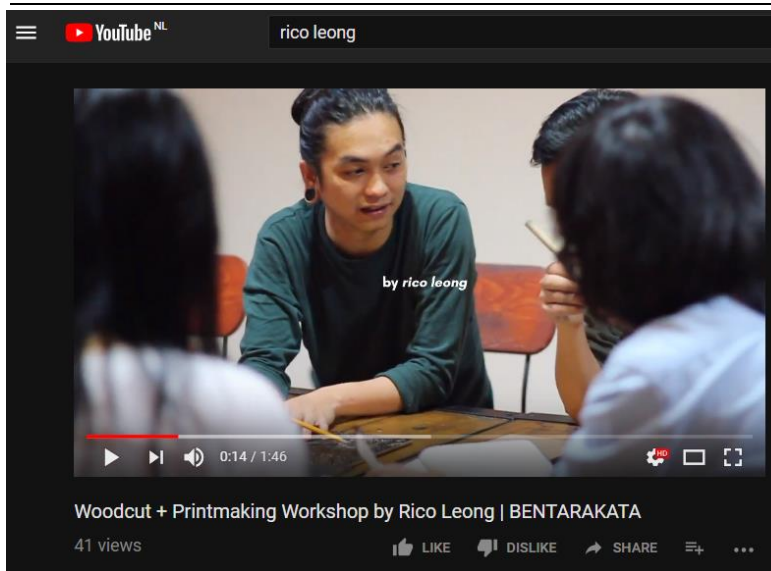
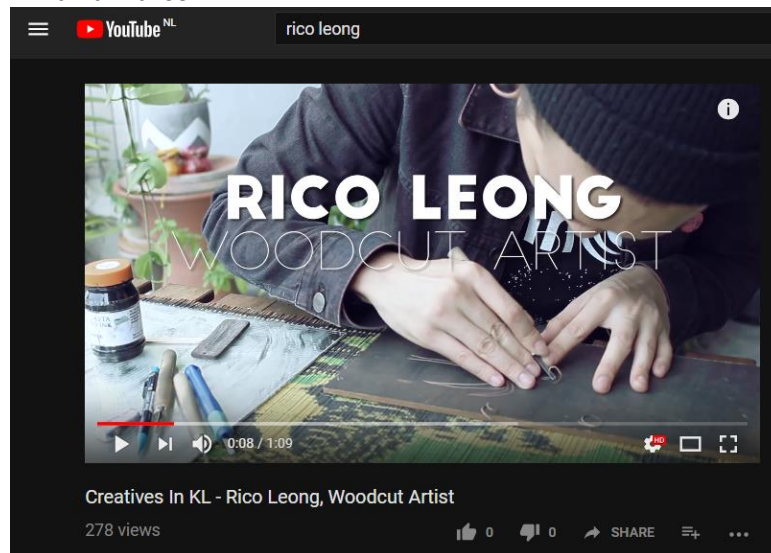


Appendix 4 shows that online platform that they used to promote their artwork and workshop online. Usually they will use website as a main online platform and follows with promotion on social media (Youtube).



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## **Appendix 5 (Interview and field notes)**

### **5.1) In-depth Interview Session**

**Name:** Rico Leong

**Occupation:** Woodcut Artist & Illustrator

**Age:** 28 Years old

**Nationality:** Malaysian

**Location:** Villa Kuriosum, Berlin

#### **Interview Questions (Woodcut printing)**

1. What is your role in this group?  
I started my career as an illustrator before I am fully into wood carving. First, I was a freelance artist sharing my forte around until I have been proposed to join exhibitions by art event organizers that recognized my artworks. I would say my absolute role in this group is the lead for the wood carving workshops yet as a member of the art exhibition community.
2. How long have you been a member of this community?  
I grew my interest in wood carving when I was 20 years old. Three years since then I have made so many wood carved artworks that gave me a thought of taking it as an actual career. At the age of 23, I was invited to exhibit my artworks at an art gallery in 2012. Soon after that, I did my first solo exhibition as a woodcut artist until now. So, it has been 5 years of joining this community.
3. What do you typically do when your community meets?  
During the workshop, what I usually do are gradually showing the examples of my artwork, explain brief of my career background and conduct the work carving workshop. I taught the participants the basic skills of wood carving and lead them till the final outcomes of their artworks. Each of us has been given a space to the workshops, spacious enough for me to conduct wood carving lessons. Apart from that, I also exhibit my top wood carved artworks by surrounding it on the walls for the visitors to view it.
4. What do you like/dislike about being part of this community?  
I like that all who participated share the same passion for arts especially a traditional art which have its own specialty and imperfections to make something more perfect. The highlight is how they show their interest to learn and explore deep into the arts they are making. For me it is a satisfaction to watch how they put their dedication in their artworks. There are no space for dislike because all who came to my workshops were by their own choice, filling the curiosity by learning and I think it is such an honor for me to able to teach them.
5. What kinds of activities do you enjoy from being part of the community?  
Sharing and being with a group of people from different cultures who gets the beauty of woodcut printing. I love that those people can see how an imperfect technique makes things wonderful.
6. Can you tell me about the first time you came to this community?  
I was overwhelmed with joy upon getting the chances to show the world my sentiment through artworks. By being one of this wonderful community, it is a big leap as we move forward together to share the heritage of Borneo to the unknown. What I saw is all of us have the same goals on spreading our heritage even though each of us have different styles

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and techniques. From that I felt since the beginning that we are already have a strong bond towards each other.

7. Can you describe any important events for your community?

One of the important events was when my artworks have been apart of "The Black and White Group Exhibition" in 2012 at Findars Gallery as a collective portrayal of collective artwork and of course my first solo exhibition as a woodcut artist that was held in Kedah, Malaysia.

8. How did you come to be part of this community?

It began when my artworks been recognized especially when I was invited to join the first exhibition. It was a starter for my whole wood carving career.

9. Could you describe your favourite experience as part of this community?

I have a lot of wonderful experiences to tell but one of the precious is meeting new people from all around the world. The workshop does connect me with a lot of people, and it is beautiful because it is through art. When they gathered around during the workshop you can really see their unity doing things they like despite having different races, religion and culture.

10. Could you describe your most challenging experience as part of this community?

I found it is hard to get people to start doing the wood carving, not because they cannot do it but to get them into doing it. Once they know how to and understand the rhythm then they will continue it easily.

11. What is your connection with the other people in your community?

I would say we are already more than friends, we are family from the beginning as all of us came from Borneo. Even we characterized our artworks differently, we are very close on helping each other in managing the exhibitions plus we know each other's expertise.

12. Does your community have any idioms/code words/ nicknames?

Yes we do have one which is "Tales from North-Borneo" that represents all the artists who originate from Borneo, telling our stories through our own unique artworks.

13. When does usually your community have a meet up? And Where?

Mostly at the workshop. We meet each other whenever we're doing woodcut printing there or maybe sometimes during exhibitions and workshops.

14. Did you satisfy with the activities that your community had? Explain why.

I am. I love to see people who never venture into arts drawing and sketching whatever their minds were thinking at the moment, then created something authentic and beautiful.

Another thing that i feel very satisfying is to see the love for woodcut printing is much spread among more and more people through exhibitions and medias.

It's amazing when a simple and traditional art can bring people from around the world even in rural areas together.

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## 5.2) Field notes

**Date:** 1 & 2 June 2018

**Time:** 12:00 – 17:00

**Place:** Villa Kuriosum, Berlin

**Specific facts:** There are two categories for this meeting which is exhibition and workshop. Participants can choose whether to go both or one of it. The location for the exhibition and workshop are in the villa with spacious hall. There are 8 participants joined the workshop and they gathered in the hall to get briefing on the woodcut printing. Then, participants been introduced with woodcarving tools and how to use it. After that, they been given certain amount of time to draw their own design on a woodblock. Then they learned to carve their own design. After done with the carving, they been informed on how the traditional colouring process works and Rico showed some demonstration how to use the tools for printing. After the demonstration, participants need to colour their own woodblock to a fabric and wait until the results.

### Sensory impressions;

- **Sights;** During the workshop, the weather treats us well. The sun makes our workshop went smoothly without any difficulties. Also, the location of the workshop is perfect for making arts since the place is near forest.
- **Sounds;** Only the sound of bird chirping and participants talking.
- **Texture;** Full of nature environment since the place is peaceful.
- **Smells;** The smell of food and cigarettes from the participants
- **Specific phrases;** “When you carve your woodblock, make sure you don’t carve too deep.”
- **Specific words;** woodcut, woodblock, woodcut print and DIY print
- **Topic of conversation;** Tips on practicing various techniques on woodcarving and printmaking.
- **Inside language;** Explaining the history of the woodcut printing and how it evolves till now.