

Want to see who's sharing this foreign land with you? Get acquainted with this sampling of expats! If you'd like to see yourself on these pages in a future issue, we'd love to hear from you. Just drop us a line at [info@tegmedia.my](mailto:info@tegmedia.my) and request a questionnaire.



**Name:** Upasana Mishra  
**Home Country:** India  
**Designation:** Artist  
**Marital Status:** Married

**What brought you to Malaysia?**

We moved to Malaysia because my husband got an assignment here.. Being an artist, I saw it as an opportunity to learn new art forms, and Malaysia's diversified culture gave me the option to explore and expand my horizons.

**What do you like and dislike about living here?**

I like the local culture and the art scene in Kuala Lumpur, which gives me the opportunity to learn the unique arts of Chinese and Malay cultures. Through the teachers here, I learned the Chinese paint brush art and some Southeast Asian Art forms. The teachers here are very helpful and eager to share their knowledge to help me develop a more rounded perspective of art. This has resulted in an influence of Southeast Asian art in my work. I also take the opportunity to help people through my art by donating a percentage of my earnings to charity.

**Name three typical weekend activities that you enjoy.**

Malaysia has such a vast variety of cuisines to offer that I just can't get enough of! Some of my favourite

dishes include kuey teow, roti canai and laksa. However to keep my health in check, I love to trek in the green environs of FRIM and Bukit Kiara.

**What is your favourite holiday destination in Malaysia or in the region? Why?**

My favourite destination in Malaysia is Taman Negara. I love going there as it is an extremely nice and quiet place. I am quite fond of nature and being in the forest. My favourite activity is taking strolls in the forest. I find that it helps me calm down and get away from the chaos of the city.

**Describe a memorable eating experience you have had here.**

My most memorable eating experience by far was at Yok Tho Hing, a Chinese restaurant located in Petaling Jaya. The first time I went there, I was welcomed with a variety of aromatic smells as well as an amazing staff who were very accommodating in altering their usually non-vegetarian dishes by removing the meat from them.

**What do you miss most about your home country?**

I miss my family a lot (as a lot of people do). I also miss being able to be have my favourite vegetarian dishes in India.

**What advice do you have for a newly arrived expat?**

I think that getting acquainted with what Malaysia has to offer should be a priority for anybody coming here. If you have children, I would suggest looking at the curriculum and helping them and yourself pick the perfect school. Otherwise, I would suggest just having an open mind because Malaysia has a lot to take in for anybody, and by not letting yourself experiment, you may not discover the best things.



**Name:** Georgina Scambler  
**Home Country:** Australia  
**Marital Status:** Married, Two Children  
**Other countries you've lived in:** United States, United Kingdom

**What do you like and dislike about living here?**

Coming from Melbourne where we are known for having four seasons in one day, it's so great knowing every day of the year I can get up and throw on a sundress and sandals! We love the food, and how easy it is to travel all over Asia. I also like how Malaysia embraces and celebrates so many different cultures and religions, and being able to participate in all the different celebrations. There's not much I dislike but one thing that comes to mind is how pedestrian un-friendly KL can be. I tend to get around on foot and the footpaths are often hazardous or non-existent!

**Name three typical weekend activities that you enjoy.**

A typical weekend for me begins with Parkrun at Taman Pudu Ulu. It's a free 5km run every Saturday at 7.30am, run entirely by volunteers. Afterwards the runners and walkers gather for a traditional Malaysian breakfast. The kids also play Auskick. It's pretty cool that they can still participate in such a typically Aussie pastime while we're in Malaysia. More often than not we end

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up at our local *mamak* on Sunday night for *naan*, *nasi goreng ayam kunyit*, *tandoori* chicken and fresh juices. My kids especially love cheese *naan*.

**What is your favourite holiday destination in Malaysia or in the region? Why?**

We've had some incredible holiday experiences since we moved here, but my favourite destination in Malaysia so far is undoubtedly Kuching. Seeing the orangutans up close was something I'll never forget, and we also really enjoyed kayaking, hiking, exploring the town, and learning about the fascinating cultural history of the area.

**Describe a memorable eating experience you have had here.**

Kuching was also where I had my most memorable eating experience in Malaysia to date. At the top of an unassuming multi-level carpark is a huge food court called Top Spot – and it's heaven for seafood lovers! Each stall has an abundance of beautiful fresh fish and seafood, and once we chose a stall, the shopkeeper helped us select the right size fish or portion of shellfish, and then suggested the best way to prepare them. Everything was spectacular, as good as any seafood I've eaten around the world, and so cheap! We enjoyed our meal so much we returned the next night to try different dishes.

**What do you miss most about your home country?**

I miss the excellent Melbourne coffee (a strong flat white is always my first purchase when I visit home!), and our bakeries for meat pies, sausage rolls, and vanilla slices. I also really miss the live sport; taking the train to the iconic MCG for the footy (AFL) in winter and the cricket in summer was a big part of my life.



**Name:** Heath Kondro  
**Home Country:** Canada  
**Designation:** Principal of Sunway International School  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Other countries you've lived in:** Vietnam and Bolivia

**What brought you to Malaysia?**

I came long ago as a young traveller to join friends living in Kuching. I ended up living in Penang for a year, then KL, then leaving for 10 years but have been back consistently since 2012.

**What do you like and dislike about living here?**

I love the food, the people, and the country still has a nice mix of old (getting out to the *kampung*) and new (like film festivals or the MPO). I dislike the traffic and the weather (I miss seasons terribly).

**Name three typical weekend activities that you enjoy.**

I try and get out of the city to the countryside a few times a month but work makes that difficult. I also like getting out on my motorcycle. I go hiking at Gasing (every Sunday morning), then for banana leaf rice, a routine that I love.

**Do you own property here? If so, where? If not, why?**

I think property is overpriced and I've reached a point, considering I have no children, where I am fine renting the rest of my life. I've been a homeowner and I'm glad I am one no longer.

**What do you miss most about your home country?**

My parents are getting older, so I miss time spent with them. I also miss the slower pace of life and the recreational opportunities.

**What advice do you have for a newly arrived expat?**

Malaysia has so many people that speak fluent English compared to other countries, so do whatever it takes to make Malaysian friends. It'll be the best part of the experience and adds so much richness to one's life.

**How long do you plan to stay in Malaysia? Where would you like to go next, and why?**

No plans to leave. I've only been principal for less than a year and we're still growing. I have many projects and tasks that I want to see through to the end.

**Is Malaysia a good place in which to work and do business? Why?**

Yes, it's great. The lifestyle is comfortable, cost of living is very manageable, and it is a stable and welcoming country. I've lived in Malaysia for more years than Canada in the past two decades and don't want to leave any time soon.



The Abha (left) and Naveya saris feature watercolour flowers by Miranda Free



Kanta incorporates Upesana Mishra's sunflowers on a black saree with a tissue gold border and tassels on the polu

## Artful attire

Kimkara creates garments in luxurious silk that are wearable works of art, and its latest collection includes traditional Malaysian garments that follow its inventive aesthetic

BY LAKSHMI SEKHAR

Fashion is definitely an artform and, at the very least, requires an artistic eye. However, the ways in which art and fashion are presented are very different. The former is displayed in galleries on walls or podiums, while the latter is worn by models for photo shoots or to strut down runways. Hanging up and gazing at your favourite painting and wearing a designer gown are very different experiences. But what if the thoughtful brushstrokes and designs on the canvases can be translated into something wearable?

This was the intention behind Shikha Grover's debut collection of saris titled *Boh*. The range featured paintings by Grover's then business partner Deepika Gupta and, while their creations were made to be worn, they were presented like works of art. "We did a beautiful exhibition at Ilham Gallery, and everybody loved it because we hung these saris from the ceiling and they looked like paintings. Imagine 75 pieces, each one different," she says.

The lead-up to this successful exhibition in Kuala Lumpur required mountains of research and development. "We went to Benares (an industrial centre in India famous for its muslin and silk fabrics, among others) and wanted to do something with saris and art. We asked the weavers, can you translate (Deepika's) paintings on saris, and they said yes... it would take six months to make one piece. That didn't work for us, so we delved into different areas when we went back to Delhi, and found digital printing," Grover explains.

She was determined that her creations would not just be simple prints but, rather, vibrant works that look like they have been painted by hand. It took three years of careful experimentation with fabrics and printing techniques to bring *Boh* to life.

Following the Ilham exhibition, Grover began her own luxury fashion label, Kimkara, in 2018. Her designs are based on artists' paintings, which she reinterprets for clothing such as saris, kurtans and jackets. Each artist has a distinct style — self-styled Dr Jatinder S Bhogal's works are inspired by Indian mythology and folklore; Australia-based Miranda Free's botanical artworks use mediums like watercolour and alcohol ink; and Upesana Mishra's multi-disciplinary pieces, featured in the range launched last December, boast three-dimensional strokes created by using ceramic art on canvas.

Kimkara's outfits have almost three layers of artistic creation and influence. The first is from the artist itself. The second is Grover's wizardry with Photoshop and other computer programs to translate elements of the paintings onto her outfits. She plays with colour, placement and textures, while maintaining the artistic voice from the original work. The final layer often comes from customers themselves, which is the bespoke element of Kimkara. Customers sometimes



Grover translates works from favoured artists into wearable pieces while maintaining the spirit of the original artwork

request a colour tweak or a change in size, and Grover is often ready to accommodate.

"I don't have a fashion background, so I needed somebody who knew how to work with the tailors in Bombay, for example. My daughter's very close friend, who was running her own boutique in Bombay, said, 'Auntie, I'd love to do it'. Her name is Aruna Jain and she came into the picture with *Boh*. She is pretty amazing because we brainstorm and I take one month off and go to Bombay and we go to markets together," she says.

These markets are where the two source premium Lucknowi fabrics and high-quality accessories such as tassels to complete their designs.

Made using rich organic silks, Kimkara's prices range from RM1,500 to RM3,000. While the saris are exclusive one-off pieces, kurtans and tunics come in five to six pieces each. All of Grover's designs are made to order.

Grover's diverse background has taught her so much that she can apply to this venture. Born in Bombay, India, she studied mathematics and science. She married at a young age and because of her husband's work, moved very often, with each city bringing her new knowledge. "In Benares, I ventured into buying saris. I bought them for a lot of people, so I knew the different fabrics, how the trade of saris happened and how the weavers weaved their silks. I got very interested in that."

However, Grover was suddenly diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, which led to a complete change in her lifestyle.

"I decided to fight it, and changed my whole thinking and attitude towards the disease. As I was recovering, since I couldn't take up hectic work, I decided to go back to education. I did two management degrees in education and HR back-to-back," she explains.

Grover then began working with Childline India Foundation, and it meant leaving her job and starting from scratch. She was keen to continue in social work and volunteered with Voice of the Children. Grover decided she wanted to make a real difference, even if it meant impacting only one person. She was asked to shadow a student in Garden International School who had trouble with her eyesight. It was a rewarding challenge, and Grover helped the student complete her O-levels. It was soon after this that the stirrings of *Boh* and the inception of Kimkara began.

Encouraged and supported by dancer-choreographer Detuk Ramli Ibrahim and fashion designer Gillian Hung, Grover has decided to create a *Baja* collection. She studied different styles of *baju* and delved into the world of Malaysian traditional wear. "In February, I was designing. This month, we went into production, and next month, we are launching," she says.

The *Baja* Raya collection is a fusion of sorts and includes art by Mishra. "While the art does take centre stage, the embellishments have to do something more. So, I have played around with this whole idea and given it tones of light and dark, so most of the designs have dual tones. Like, the *baju* would have a lighter sleeve of the art while the front is embellished. So, it's like two artworks happening," Grover explains.

The collection includes five styles of *baju* and five kurtans, all suitable for *Baja* wear. All the embroidery and embellishments added to these pieces are done by hand. Having seen some of Kimkara's previous works in person, I have no doubt that each design element will be thoughtfully placed and crafted to the highest quality. For the new collection, customers can look forward to a playful mix of cultural elements. For instance, Grover mentions that she has tried her hand at a few *baju* kurung styles, and one of the skirts even includes pleats, giving it that saree feel. "It's an Indian approach, to match Malaysian sensibilities," she adds.

The *Baja* Raya collection will be showcased at Sutra Gallery from April 2 to 4 from 4.30pm to 7.30pm, alongside 3Rituals candles and diffusers. For details, call (03) 4021 1092 or visit kimkaradesign.com.