

Write up on Ahmad Abu Bakar by Daven Wu
Lost City 2 at Sculpture Square, Singapore

“I’m always exploring the notion of balance and tension,” says Ahmad Bakar to explain his work, much of which is deeply rooted in the rigours of geometry. Fairly early in his career, Ahmad returned to his cultural roots, mining Sufi philosophy and Arabic calligraphy, in particular, for inspiration. The result has been a sequentially numbered series of works (collectively called ‘Journey of a Point to Geometry’) that negotiate the dynamism of change. In a way, this change generates its own evolution in the artist and his perspective. “There’s always been more of a search and discovery,” says the University of Tasmania fine arts alumnus. “You’re more conscious of your surroundings, how life has become more sophisticated, and how certain balances set up their own reaction.” Working with a mix of clay, acrylic and metal, Ahmad creates points, harnessing geometric forms of circles – his favourite motif – with angles. “If you touch the wrong edge, the whole construct just loses its balance and topples over.” Such precariousness forms its own metaphor for Ahmad’s exploration of the greater urban setting imagined by ‘Lost City’ and ‘Lost City II’. In the fifteenth series of ‘Journey of a Point to Geometry’, Ahmad has created a set of eight pieces – using a combination of ceramics and metals – which are more architectural in form than the previous incarnations: Stylised globes, balancing precariously on translucent acrylic tripods, taper off into shiny metal points like miniature spaceships or missiles. “I’m starting to challenge the idea of whether and how things will come to an end,” says Ahmad. “We live in a city which means we’re always negotiating, trying to find a point of balance in our daily lives which, in turn, is becoming more sophisticated and challenging.” By any yardstick, these are not simple notions to incorporate into art, but Ahmad finds his metaphor in the circle, a form that appears and reappears in all his work as a continuous stroke that, while leading from one point to another, has no actual beginning or end. “The circle is the symbol for par excellence for the ‘origin’ and ‘end’ of both geometric and biomorphic form,” explains Ahmad. “It is the primary cosmological symbol where it represents the wholeness and unity. The idea of unity that geometry portrays is exactly what I wanted to express in my art – in other words, the balance of the material world made up of elements like the environment, the economy, and the spiritual world which is essentially religion, family and culture.” In Ahmad’s interpretation of geometry, the purity of the form – whether the circle or especially a point – symbolises a pivotal direction which, like the core of Sufism, begin and ends the journey of discovery. For Ahmad, this resulted in him recently leaving his post as lecturer in sculpture at La Salle College of the Arts to devote more time to his craft. “I want to find a different perspective of my life. I need more time. In my search for my artistic originality, I am actually looking for a point of balance for myself, my art and my life.”

