

Inspired * by culture

ROBIN KHOO speaks to a budding designer whose unique design caught a sports brand's attention.

A TRIP to the mall was all it took to inspire Alex Teh to participate in Nike's "Born From Obsession" Art School Contest. The 31-year-old part-time student had initially decided that he wasn't going to participate in the competition that already had his course mates all excited. But when he went shopping during the recent Deepavali and Hari Raya celebrations, Teh was moved by the idea of multiculturalism and decided to conceptualise a design to reflect that.

"The festival decorations inspired me," he said during a recent interview. "I thought about the culture of Malaysia and tried to merge it with technology."

Within a matter of hours, Teh came up with the idea for his artwork and submitted his design at the very last minute. To his surprise, his was among the top five that were selected. After a public online vote, Teh emerged the winner of the competition.

"Most of my classmates said that my design was too simple," said the student of



The winning entry of the Nike art school contest.

Advanced Animation at In-House Multimedia College..

The competition, held in conjunction with Nike's Holiday 2006 Premium Performance collection, required participants to come up

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with a work of art based on their perception of either the Nike Shox Swift or the Nike Free 7.0 Trainer. According to Nike Malaysia's country marketing manager Glenn Heng, the campaign aims to "unearth and introduce up-and-coming talents."

Teh opted for the Nike Shox, which is yellow, as he wanted to use contrasting colours in his design.

An additional requirement of the competition was that the each designer had to come up with three words that

best represented their perception of the shoe. For Teh, the key words were "culture", "technology" and "inspiration".

He thus decided incorporate the *keris* into his artwork as felt that the traditional weapon shared a number of elements with the shoe.

"I chose the *keris* because its intricate

design is similar to a good shoe and both have form as well as function," he explained. "The *keris* is the main object. It's creativity and fine work is just like the shoe. It is a great sword and a lot of effort is put into

creating it just like a Nike shoe."

The *keris* is also something that has withstood the test of time and is most effective when used with speed.

"Similar to Nike technology," he said.

Once he had thought of the concept, Teh began deconstructing the shoe and incorporating the various elements of the shoe into his artwork. His design won him

a RM1,000 Nike voucher and it is also currently on display at the Nike store in Mid Valley Megamall, Kuala Lumpur.

Now that winning the

competition has given him a boost, Teh, who aspires to produce animated or short films in the future, intends to come up with more good work in the future.

His philosophy to design is pretty straightforward - make the effort but enjoy the process as well.



Alex Teh merged elements of Malay culture with technology in his winning design.