



Stilt House No. 1 (Main Installation) (2022)
Wood in pigmented varnish, concrete stumps
240cm × 368cm × 276cm

This installation as a whole is actually a sequence of works that compress a very long history and tell a long story about Kampung Baru, Kuala Lumpur.

What makes this different from the Razak Mansion work? Razak Mansion, as you know, is just one development. It's about 600 families and maybe 12 or 16 blocks. Kampung Baru, on the other hand, spans 120 hectares and is more than 120 years old.

So when I approached this, I took a different method. I wasn't trying to document everything realistically. Part of that decision came from my experience with Razak Mansion. That process was too exhausting and defeating. And Kampung Baru is not literally vanishing in a few years or half a year, the way Razak Mansion was.

I wanted to tell a different story here. One that I could evoke through its long history. I think history, in this case, is about meaning. It's about what gives this place its meaning. That includes the people who live there, their way of life, the culture, the heritage.

So to me, the focus is still the pain. Even if these works are small in size, that is where the weight sits. This part gives it form in the mind, something for people to hold on to when they see it.

And I want to draw people in. At one point, someone asked, "Do you want to block it off?" Others wondered, "Do you want to let people in?" Especially in galleries, that is always the first concern. But that is exactly the point. We always pass by these places. I want people to step inside. You will not really know it until you do. It is a beautiful place.

We are part of the institutions we are trying to critique. If I block it, I would just be repeating the same logic. So instead, I kept it open, with the magnifying glass and the stories.

Hopefully the work itself, even though it is modest, carries enough visual tension to pull people in. And once they do, it becomes about looking closer. Really seeing. Giving the place the attention, and maybe the justice, that it deserves.



On the colours and embellishments

About the colours used in this installation, especially on the screen and in the embellishments along the frames that hold each of the works. The colours, especially pink, are interesting. Some people read it as millennial or trendy, but it's not. If you look closely at the vernacular architecture in Kampung Baru, the houses are actually painted in quite charming ways.

You'll see green, yellow, brown. Maybe not so much red, but these colours were common. It wasn't some deep philosophical choice. For me, it just reflects the vernacular. That's how people painted their homes. The green has a similar story.

And then there are the embellishments on the frames that hold each of the works. These come from a traditional practice. In miniature painting, especially, you'll see decorative borders, often in gold. In this case, I've used Malaysian patterns to frame the works.



Origin of Place (2022)

Gouache on paper
29.7cm x 21cm

This was the first painting I made for the series, and in many ways, it marked a beginning for me as well. I wanted to imagine how Kampung Baru might have looked at its founding more than 120 years ago. There isn't much recorded from that time, just a few scattered photographs and fragments of memory. So I turned to books, conversations, and walking the site to piece together a picture of how it might have been.

I approached it as a re-enactment. In the image, you can see people building their homes, raising the *Tiang Ibu*, or mother column. I painted it using three colours that carry meaning in traditional Malay houses. Working in miniature helped guide the way I saw the scene. It gave me a kind of wide, overhead view. Not divine, but more open. Less fixed, more fluid. The rivers became a central part of the image. The Gombak and Klang rivers meet near Masjid Jamek, and that meeting point helped define how I saw the origins of the place. It reminded me of the way early civilizations formed around rivers. Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley. It made me realise how old and important this space is, even if it's rarely described that way.

Kampung Baru was intended as farmland, but over time, people shifted toward the tin mines further north, around Ampang. Many of the first settlers came from Melaka, so geographically, the movement came from the south. I included quiet clues throughout the work. An ox cart. A colonial figure. Rain falling while the sun is out. That contrast feels very familiar here in the Klang Valley. It all comes together in this small image, where a beginning is imagined with care, detail, and a sense of place that continues to shift even now.



To Build a Village (2022)

Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

This piece follows *Origin of Place*. It moves from the idea of a beginning to the slow and steady act of building. The title carries weight. In architecture, there is the concept of *genius loci*, the spirit of a place. I wanted to hold on to that feeling while shifting attention to the people who inhabit the land and shape its future.

Here, the village begins to take form. A road starts to stretch out, and houses begin to cluster along its sides. What unfolds is a picture of settlement, of people arriving, staying, and slowly creating a shared rhythm of life. It is a portrait of cooperation, of small adjustments, and of the care it takes to live side by side.

Scattered across the painting are gestures of connection of figures working together, hands offering help, structures beginning to rise in dialogue with one another. This is not just about putting up buildings. It is about forming a community and learning how to live in relation to a place. Look closely at the river. If you view it with a magnifying glass, you might notice a shimmer of silver beneath the surface. That detail is quiet, almost hidden, but it hints at the layers of history and the early resources that once drew people to settle here.



Progress of Love (2022)

Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

This work is part of my reflections on time, memory, and Kampung Baru as a living archive. I wanted to trace a broader sense of time, from the scale of a community down to the intimacy of family. There's something very fundamental about why Kampung Baru matters. It's not just about the buildings. It's about the lives and relationships shaped by time, how we care for our elders, how generations live and die, and how these rhythms give meaning to life itself.

The composition moves in a cyclical flow, almost like a visual timeline, from infancy to adolescence to adulthood and eventually death. That's why I called it Progress of Love. There's a kind of sonar-like pulse, from the child to the elder, held within the scene. I drew a circle because I wanted to hold the entire lifespan within one orbit. The form reminded me of the moon. It reflects phases and tides, but it also holds a kind of serenity in knowing things will come and go.

The house in this painting still stands at the edge of Kampung Baru. It's now a restaurant downstairs with a rented space upstairs. The building is not well kept. Much of the original structure has been covered by additions and patchworks. Still, I kept returning to it because it sits at a turning point between architectural styles, part traditional Malay longhouse and part colonial-era settlement. There's something liminal about it. You can see how wealth translated into concrete columns and more elaborate facades, while others remained simple. That contrast says a lot.

What touches me is how personal this work can feel to others. A friend once told me the painting made her cry and she couldn't explain why. That's powerful. Many who visited the show said things like, 'My uncle used to live there,' or 'My family is from Kampung Baru.'



When we lose these places, we lose more than the buildings. The spatial relationships, the everyday exchanges, all that disappears too. After the demolition of the Razak Mansion, I saw how people were displaced even if they stayed nearby. One resident told me, 'We used to greet each other, share dinner. Now we live in towers and we don't speak.' The architecture of modern life separates us.

I'm not nostalgic by nature. But after Razak Mansion, something shifted. I began to see these places differently. They taught me that history isn't just something we read. It's something we inherit, physically and emotionally. That's when I committed to documenting Kampung Baru.



Being and Becoming, 2022
Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

This is the third work in the series. If *Origin of Place* was about how it all began, and *To Build a Village* focused on the early stages of growth, then this one sits at the midpoint. The story unfolds like an epic, tracing Kampung Baru across time. It is historical, reflective, and layered.

Here, I combined two major events that shaped the place. I wanted to show how identity is not built from a single moment, but through many overlapping ones. These events are presented in the same frame, not in sequence, but together. This is the point where the village faces growing pains, where the idea of community starts to become more complex. One part of the image references the founding of UMNO. Some say it began in Johor, but many early documents trace it back to Kampung Baru. The grassroots movement started here, and the original building still stands today, although it sits behind a wall and is no longer in use.

The other part shows the events of May 13. It remains a sensitive subject, but it forms part of Kampung Baru's place in national memory. These two events reflect both the spirit and the struggles of the place. There are questions about belonging, race, and the concept of *Tanah Melayu*. These are not easy subjects, but they are part of the larger picture.

In miniature, I can bring different timelines together into one frame. This way of working is what I call temporal simultaneity. It allows different times and events to be seen at once. Rather than separate them across multiple works, I bring them into conversation here. This lets the viewer hold everything together and recognise how one thing leads to another. This approach reflects how I see history. Events are not isolated. They are linked. The present often carries traces of the past, and many things we live with today come from moments we may have forgotten or overlooked.



You might recognise one scene in particular. The protest against the Malayan Union appears in local school textbooks. For those who grew up with that image, it might feel instantly familiar. I referred to archival photos while composing the work. That image, and others like it, helped shape how we remember these turning points.

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Floating World (2022)

Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

There was a certain urgency when I started this work. Before that, the project felt more reflective. But this one changed things.

It connects back to 1971, when Kuala Lumpur faced a devastating flood. I heard stories about it growing up. Then in 2021, while I was painting this piece, we had another major flood. It submerged homes, destroyed belongings, and took lives. That moment stayed with me. After the waters receded, I returned to Kampung Baru and spoke to one of the residents. She pointed out the high-water mark on the wall. You could still see where the flood had reached. That detail stayed in my mind.

The river in this work feels symbolic. On one hand, it represents growth and trade, the way rivers have always shaped human settlements. But it also carries danger. It's a border of sorts, not just physically, but emotionally. It both defines and threatens the kampung. It reminded me of the concept of Augé, where the end of one world quietly signals the beginning of another. That's what *Floating World* became for me. It sits at the edge of disaster and rebirth, in a place still very much alive.



Theatre of History (2022)

Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

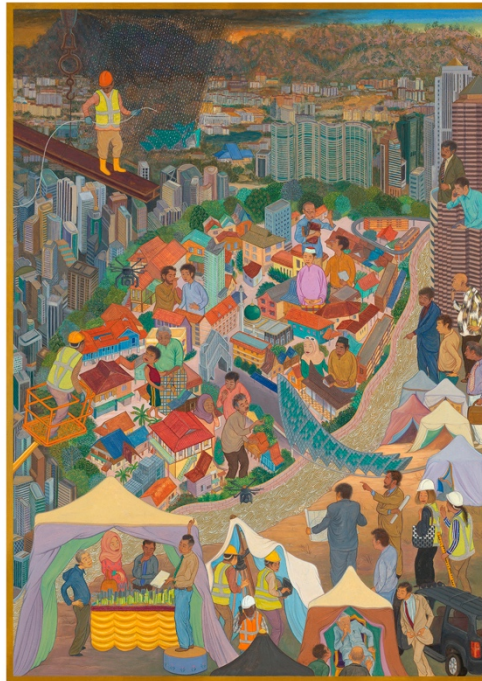
“This painting was a bit of a leap from the earlier works. The earlier ones had a more naturalistic focus on specific moments, but here I was thinking structurally, almost literally. I kept returning to Milan Kundera, especially *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. But more than the plot, what really stuck with me was how he thought about structure.

The world is complicated and often trivial at the same time. So how do we make sense of it? As an artist or a writer, you need a structure that can carry what you’re trying to say. We all have content these days. The harder part is how to hold it together.

This series of seven paintings follows a kind of structure. This one is the sixth, and I built it by borrowing from Kundera, who in turn borrowed from Beethoven. He was very into classical music. So the form of the symphony, broken into seven parts, became a model. In this painting, I tried to bring together motifs and threads from the earlier works. You might notice the red figures from the third piece reappear here. There’s an overlap.

I wanted to reflect on the cause and consequence of how one generation gives rise to another, how decisions ripple, how fates intertwine. And maybe it’s not always tragic. It could just be a family. But at the same time, there’s a dissonance. This painting is also a kind of punch to the face. It’s showing how something that looks idyllic can collapse, become something else entirely.

This is the present. The curtain rises. You see the towers, the city, the apartment blocks. We all know the contradictions, yet we keep buying in.



Middle Way (2022)
Gouache on paper
29.7cm × 21cm

So this story echoes the first one. You'll notice certain things are quite similar, but reversed. The skyline is still there. KL is still KL. But at the same time, so much has changed.

That's something I want to evoke, not so much by explaining it, but by letting viewers feel it. Why do we keep something old? Not because people say, "old is gold," but because something within us insists on holding on. Emotionally, more than intellectually, that's what I hope this work stirs. I want people to see history, to understand what value means. Some of my friends tell me, "You need to crack this for people to get it." And I understand that, but it's also something words can't always describe. It's that small, intangible thing. And there are consequences. If we let go, everything could be lost.

You might notice in this scene, a small figure is surveying the land. Someone once wanted to buy this painting because they recognised themselves in it. If you look at old miniatures, they often depict palaces, kings behind walls, sultans in victory. It places power in the middle and alienates everything around it. In this work, that same vantage point appears again. You'll notice the retaining wall along the river. It almost resembles a fortress. It feels under siege. That was intentional. The figures are closed in, surrounded. And then there's the bridge, which is key.

In the past, bridges were lifelines. They connected communities. The old wooden one served the people and linked them to the city. Then came the Saloma Bridge, a 13 million ringgit structure. They demolished the old one to build it. It has become more of a tourist landmark than a local asset.

I remember attending a public lecture about urban design. The architect who worked on the bridge was speaking, and she spoke with such pride about it. But I kept thinking, do you



understand what this bridge really is? In history, when a place is under siege, it is often the drawbridge that breaks first. The bridge becomes the point of entry. That's the Trojan horse. So this structure, built under the name of progress or beautification, ends up becoming a symbol of something else. You see people walking from the shopping centre just to take a selfie, then heading back. It doesn't help the community.

This kind of built environment, shaped by politics and capital, is what this series tries to engage with. I also painted a miniature version of Kampung Baru with some care. Not many people know this, but Kampung Baru consists of seven sub-compounds. There's Kampung Jawa, Kampung Asal, Kampung Haji, and so on. Some are more Malay, some more Minangkabau. Each had its own character. People used to say, you couldn't even marry someone across the street. That was how strongly people identified with their compounds. I learned this from asking around, living there, listening to stories.

All the elements in the painting are geographically grounded. If you follow the visual trail, there's a clear rhythm to how things move. That's how traditional miniatures worked. Without photography or video, these paintings told stories, compressed time, and left cues for those willing to look deeper.

That's where the satisfaction lies for me. To fit as much of Kampung Baru's story into one painting as I can, without needing to spell out everything.