



KL: *MyUtopia*

Chin Kong Yee
Gan Sze Hooi
Khabir Roslan
Kim Ng
Wong Chee Meng

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15th November – 6th December 2025

Wei-Ling Gallery
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Wei-Ling Gallery is pleased to present a group exhibition titled KL: MyUtopia, featuring five Malaysian artists – Chin Kong Yee, Gan Sze Hooi, Khabir Roslan, Kim Ng, and Wong Chee Meng – whose works respond to Kuala Lumpur's shifting rhythms and realities. Through painting, installation, and mixed media, they explore Kuala Lumpur as both a physical landscape and an emotional terrain: a place of ambition and contradiction, memory and reinvention.

More than a capital, Kuala Lumpur is rhythm, residue, and restless motion. Born at the muddy confluence of rivers, built by migrant hands and shaped through colonial ambition, the city carries its past within every *lorong* and skyline. Its foundations were laid through toil and transformation. Beneath the constant hum of traffic and construction, echoes of its beginnings still linger.

A city of convergences wherein lies the intersection of cultures, languages, and faiths. The scent of incense mixes with exhaust, while skyscrapers rise beside shophouses that have seen generations pass. The city's soul is not in its towers, but in the *kopitiams* and *mamaks* where stories, histories, and people intertwine. KL is a city in pursuit of progress, but as humble meeting grounds give way to cement and steel, what do we lose along the way? Distracted by colourful neon lights and the rush and roar of the city.

Art becomes a mirror here, reflecting both the beauty and unease of this transformation. It captures what progress overlooks – the textures of daily life, the quiet resistance of those who remain, and the invisible ties that hold the city together. This exhibition invites artists to reimagine Kuala Lumpur not as a polished skyline, but as a living body shaped by its people. Through their works, they are asked to explore what it means to belong, to remember, and to dream anew.

KL is not just a place; it is a pulse. The question remains. *Can we still hear its heartbeat?*



1st permutation

Kuala Lumpur in Ultramarine
Oil on jute
190cm x 260cm (Diptych)
2025



2nd permutation

Written alongside the oil painting Kuala Lumpur in Ultramarine.

These three texts are not explanations of the work,
but the atmosphere from which it emerged.
Ultramarine speaks of the time of material;
KL Street speaks of the memory of place;
The World After Oil Painting speaks of the fate of medium.

Painting is not a representation,
but a new appearance.

Ultramarine – A Chronometry of Pigment

Most of what I use is modern ultramarine—synthetic.
Affordable. Stable.
The ancient kind is too expensive, too legendary.
I've never understood why a pigment needs a story to be valid.
Modern ultramarine is strange enough on its own—
when applied, it feels like a sedative:
it draws the eye in, yet never sticks to the hand.

Sometimes it carries a faint trace of violet,
as if daylight were breathing through oil.
Ultramarine seems to come alive only in oil paint;
in other media, it turns sluggish.
Perhaps its oil absorption is simply ideal—
it glazes without suffocating the underlayer.
The entire logic of oil painting
is written in the curve of a pigment's oil absorption rate.
And ultramarine sits perfectly in the middle:
structure, transparency, stability, absorption—
everything in balance.

Astronomers say
blue belongs to light that is leaving,
red to light that is approaching.
A receding star glows blue;
an oncoming one burns red.
When sunlight strikes the Earth directly, the world turns red.
Only when light begins to leave
does space become blue.
Between dawn and dusk,
blue awakens the world—and lets it go again.

I once lived in Hong Kong for a few months.
What I miss most is not the harbor or the night markets,
but the blue of early morning.
Europe has its blue nights—
in summer, the daylight lingers,
and the sky seems thinly glazed with oil,
a film of ultramarine.

In Kuala Lumpur, blue light fades too soon.
Before the sun has fully set, the street lamps are already on.
That instant of blue—brief enough to be overlooked—
hurts with its beauty.

Whenever that light appears,
my palette fills with ultramarine.
It feels like trying to keep
the warmth of a departing world.

Ultramarine is not a color.
It is a memory of light.
Some blues are the shadow of time itself.
The painter's hand only holds it for a moment.

KL Street

I once had a classmate who lived on this street.
His family ran a coffin shop.
Few people at school knew about it;
he made us promise to keep it secret before inviting us in.

The shop wasn't eerie, but it carried a kind of weight.
The air mixed with the scent of wood and lacquer—
what people called “coffin fragrance.”
It didn't smell of death, but of craftsmanship, of time itself.

That was in the late 1980s.
The building hadn't been renovated since it was built.
The wooden stairs groaned under our feet, nearly splitting,
and we walked lightly, holding our breath.
When we reached his room, my new shirt brushed the wall,
leaving a trace of white lime.
Old walls were like that—fragile, powdery, yet warm.
My grandmother's house was the same.

Around five in the evening,
the scent of porridge would sweep down the street.
The stall below began setting up for business.
That smell still lingers today—
they later moved in with the Sung Kee Beef Noodle shop,
selling noodles by day and porridge by night.
Every dusk, the same fragrance floats out again.

That classmate became an actor and moved away.
The coffin shop closed.
He must have been one of the last original residents of KL.
Such shops vanished long ago—
even their “clients” have disappeared.

Now, the RHB Bank at the corner looks almost futuristic
among the old shophouses.
Its clock still ticks precisely at the entrance—
I've always felt it was built to counter the “Big Ben” tower nearby,
a kind of urban charm or defense.
Now it sounds more like a hymn to the 1980s.

The old quarters of KL never fall out of view.
I've painted them for two, maybe three decades,
and they're still compelling—
not because they are grand,
but because their space and time overlap like old glass—
scratched, clouded, yet clear.
Several eras are fixed at this single street corner.

The World After Oil Painting

The history of oil painting, to be honest, is not long.
It was merely an accidental success within the Western craft system:
a few pigments, some linseed oil, and a piece of linen.

Early oil painters could barely prime a canvas without apprentices.
Knowledge was scarce, techniques guarded.
Whoever held the formula, held the authority.

For centuries, oil painting sat at the top of the fine arts hierarchy.
Almost every other form—fresco, tempera, watercolor—eventually converged
toward it.
It became both the destination of visual art and a symbol of institution.

The real turning point came with the Industrial Revolution.
From then on, creation no longer required a studio—
a visit to the art shop was enough.
Pigments came in tubes, canvases were pre-stretched,
mediums standardized into commodities.
The mystery of oil painting was decoded by factories.
Artists multiplied. Studios turned into academies.
Craft gave way to knowledge;
the secret became a curriculum.

From conservatism to competition,
and from competition to marketing,
oil painting completed its institutional cycle.
It ceased to be a secret and became a discipline.
The threshold dropped, and its sanctity dissolved.
Impressionists were branded as rebels;
oil paint became the emblem of an old world.

Then came photography.
People said it killed painting,
but its true revolution was not invention—it was replication.
Photography followed the same fate as oil painting.
When Kodak appeared, everyone could take pictures.
Photographers multiplied overnight.
It was another “art shop moment”:
art no longer required privilege, only products.

AI stands at the opposite end.
It was born Kodak, yet sealed inside an imperial black box.
The age of oil painting was the age of secret craft;
the age of photography, the liberation of technique;
the age of AI, the enclosure of systems.

AI is not a revolution—it is a counterrevolution.
It doesn't challenge the system; it absorbs it.

Everyone thinks AI is taking over,
but it is civilization itself that is collapsing.
People simply need a visible form of collapse to condemn,
so that their resistance still looks meaningful.
Like environmentalists accusing each other of hypocrisy—
both sides performing opposition,
neither solving the problem.

After its "popularization," oil painting stopped evolving.
The real pigment revolution came with petroleum: acrylic.
A universal adhesive that could imitate any medium.
More transparent, safer, more convenient—
but stripped of the complexity that once fused materials, methods, and thought.
Acrylic enclosed oil painting, just as AI encloses knowledge.

I reject no medium.
I only think it's a pity that acrylic ends in imitation,
and a waste that oil painting has gone dormant.
The "resistance" of oil lies in time—
in its transparency lives a delayed magic.
The "universality" of acrylic lies in flow—
it clings to everything.

In recent years I've returned to mixing pigments, oils, and mediums by hand.
Tedious work. Slow work.
I used to finish five or six large series a year;
now a single one drains a year's patience.
All that I learned from ink, digital painting, acrylic, and lacquer
I've folded back into oil.
Not to hybridize, but to recover.

It may no longer be "creation."
It feels more like a ritual—
a ritual of calling back to the body
what the system has forgotten: the craft itself.



I did not know it was our last time together
Oil on canvas
102cm x 153cm
2025

In Utopia, where everything's under public ownership, no one has any fear of going short, as long as the public storehouse are full.

Nobody owns anything, but everyone is rich for what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from anxiety.

[Thomas More, *Utopia*, Book 2, Penguin Classics, p.128]

My Urban Utopia

I was born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, a city whose spirit of freedom runs deep in my heart. With a touch of nostalgia, I cherish and record the passionate years of growing up here. My childhood was filled with the warmth and colours of the city. Among all the places that shaped me, **Jalan Petaling**, **Kenanga**, and **Pudu** hold the most beautiful memories. These were the neighbourhoods where I played, dreamed, and learned about the world.

I spent my primary school years at **Kuen Cheng (1) Primary School**, and later continued my journey at **Tsun Jin High School**. Both schools were more than just places of study—they were second homes, where laughter echoed in the corridors and friendships blossomed under the bright tropical sun. Those days were simple, yet full of meaning. The streets, the old shops, and the familiar sounds of Kuala Lumpur became part of who I am. Looking back, I realise how deeply those early years shaped my heart and my sense of belonging.

When I was ten, I used to walk alone after school to my father's shop in Kenanga. Along the way, I would pass an old abandoned railway track—now part of the MRT route—where I often spent the day catching Thiania, the small jumping spiders I kept as pets for play fights.

In Pudu, there was a street famous for its goldfish shops. I often went there to buy Siamese fighting fish, and my friends and I would hold “fighting fish championships.” The winner would earn a bottle of 7UP or Pepsi from the loser—a sweet victory shared under the afternoon sun.



Close-up of *I did not know it was our last time together* (2025)

During secondary school, I was a scout for six years, where I met some of my closest friends. There was one big tree in the schoolyard, and we used to climb it, build a small treehouse, and even cook red bean soup up there. It was our secret world, a place where we shared stories and dreams. We also built a bamboo watchtower, learning teamwork and practical skills that strengthened our friendship. After a hard day's work, we would celebrate at the evening street food stalls in Kenanga, enjoying our sense of freedom and companionship.

All those lovely memories became the foundation of my urban utopia. To me, utopia is not merely a distant paradise, but a reflection of the world we live in—a search for balance between freedom and equality, tradition and progress.

In 2025, I lost a close friend to suicide, a tragedy that changed my world. We used to talk about everything, but somehow, our connection faded. His passing made me question myself and the fragile nature of human bonds. My utopia was no longer the same.

My idea of utopia has always been shaped by the contrast between the **Old World** and the **New World**—two realms with different dreams, histories, and social structures. I often wonder: Which kind of society can truly make people happier? That question has become the foundation of my artistic imagination.

In my visual art painting, I depict the real world as I imagine it today: Kuala Lumpur is changing. The climate is harsher—floods, droughts, and storms come more often. Buildings rise endlessly, yet many stand empty, reflecting greed and neglect. Gentrification replaces authenticity; traditional foods and old tastes fade away. Skyscrapers feel like mega cages, trees are torn down for highways and tolls, and the 5G towers grow like weeds, while smartphones quietly control our daily lives.

This new world feels like a **maze**—beautiful yet suffocating. Friendships fade, people grow distant, and everyone is too busy chasing wealth. The familiar becomes strange. I fear that one day, this imbalance will collapse, like a domino effect that sweeps through everything we know.

Utopia, I have come to realise, is born from dissatisfaction with reality. It grows from our longing for a world that could be better, fairer, and purer. Yet it is not a paradise of endless pleasure, nor a fantasy of indulgence. It seeks a life of simplicity—where people respect boundaries, reduce desires, and live with quiet dignity.

For me, utopia is a spiritual sanctuary, a private inner realm that words can never fully describe. In this new century, it exists in a surreal way—everywhere and nowhere at once—flowing through time and space like an eternal echo.

Utopia is not a destination, but a ruin of eternal memory, reminding us that the pursuit of perfection is what makes us human, even when perfection can never be reached.



Tanggam
Compost soil, fiber thread, acrylic on bandage
Variable dimension
2025

Kuala Lumpur, the city that once rose from mud, now gleams in vertical light. Yet beneath the shimmer, the ground still breathes as a pulse of soil remembering what the skyline forgets. Between demolition and renewal, between the rhetoric of progress and the silence of loss, *Tanggap* finds its form:

“an act of listening to what the land still murmurs beneath our feet”

Created entirely of compost and medical bandages, *Tanggap* stands as both wound and remedy. The materials are humble, intimate which I imagine soil as memory, bandage as gesture that together embodying the slow rhythm of care and compassion. The work takes inspiration from *tanggap*, the traditional Nusantara method of interlocking joinery that binds without nails. This ancestral design principle, where strength emerges through balance rather than force, becomes both structure and philosophy. The modular form, interlocked and breathing, reimagines architecture as empathy that I see as a relational system rather than an imposition.

In this work, compost is not residue but revelation. It speaks the cosmological language of return, the humility of all things dissolving into the same earth that once bore them. The bandage, fragile yet persistent, signifies the act of tending, the refusal to let wounds be erased. Together, they form a porous body, absorbing the city's quiet dissonance where its soil displaced and its textures polished into silence.

Within *Tanggap*, the idea of ‘*tanah air*’, land and water as the continuum of self now becomes central. Not as geography or possession, but as a metaphysical inheritance. ‘*Tanah air*’ is where the seen and unseen meet, where memory is not held by monuments but by ground, breath, and the scent of decay. The work invites the viewer to return to that origin, to a form of belonging that resists ownership, development, investment, capital, asset, commodity and instead recognizes participation in the cycles of becoming and undoing.

Philosophically, the work draws from Islamic metaphysics, Nusantara cosmology, and wabi-sabi aesthetics. Through tawhid, the oneness of all existence, compost becomes a devotional material means the convergence of matter and spirit. Through fana, the dissolution of form, its slow drying and darkening become acts of remembrance. The *tanggap* form reflects Nusantara's relational worldview, a structure that breathes with reciprocity, echoing the organic intelligence of forests and communities.

From wabi-sabi, the work inherits a reverence for impermanence. The irregular textures, quiet hues, and mutable surface reject the city's obsession with perfection. Here, beauty is not found in control, but in surrender, in allowing time to leave its trace, in accepting erosion as a kind of truth.

Close-up of *Tanggam* (2025)

Tanggam thus becomes a contemplative architecture, a meditation on how cities, like bodies, heal unevenly. It observes, without naming, the slow replacement of soil with concrete, the quiet transformation of communal memory into curated progress. Its critique is whispered, not declared as an insistence that even as the surface gleams, the ground still feels.

Eventually, *Tanggam* is an invocation, a call to reimagine how ‘*tanah air*’ not as territory but as compassion. Between compost and bandage, fragility and resilience, it proposes an ethics of care rooted in the humility of materials. What endures is not the structure, but the act of solidarity to earth, to impermanence, to one another.

In its slow decay, *Tanggam* reminds us that the most radical form of renewal may not be to build higher, but to listen deeper, to the soil that still remembers our names.



Dissolving Boundary

Acrylic silkscreen print, carving and varnish over plywood.

122cm x 183cm

2025

Dissolving Boundary reflects the shifting emotional and physical contours of Kuala Lumpur – a city perpetually negotiating between memory and transformation. Through abstract gestures, layered textures, and carved effects, the work explores the blurred spaces where personal and collective experiences converge.

Rather than portraying Kuala Lumpur as a recognizable skyline, the piece envisions the city as a living organism – complex in form, structure, and rhythm; fluid, fragmented, and continuously reshaped by the people who inhabit it. The interlacing of printed colours and carved surfaces serves as a metaphor for the city's porous boundaries, where histories, languages, and cultures merge, overlap, and dissolve into one another.

In its quiet diffusion of form and colour, *Dissolving Boundary* seeks to reclaim a sense of belonging within the city's ambiguity. It invites viewers to pause within that in-between space – where separation becomes connection – and to imagine a more compassionate, open, and shared urban future.



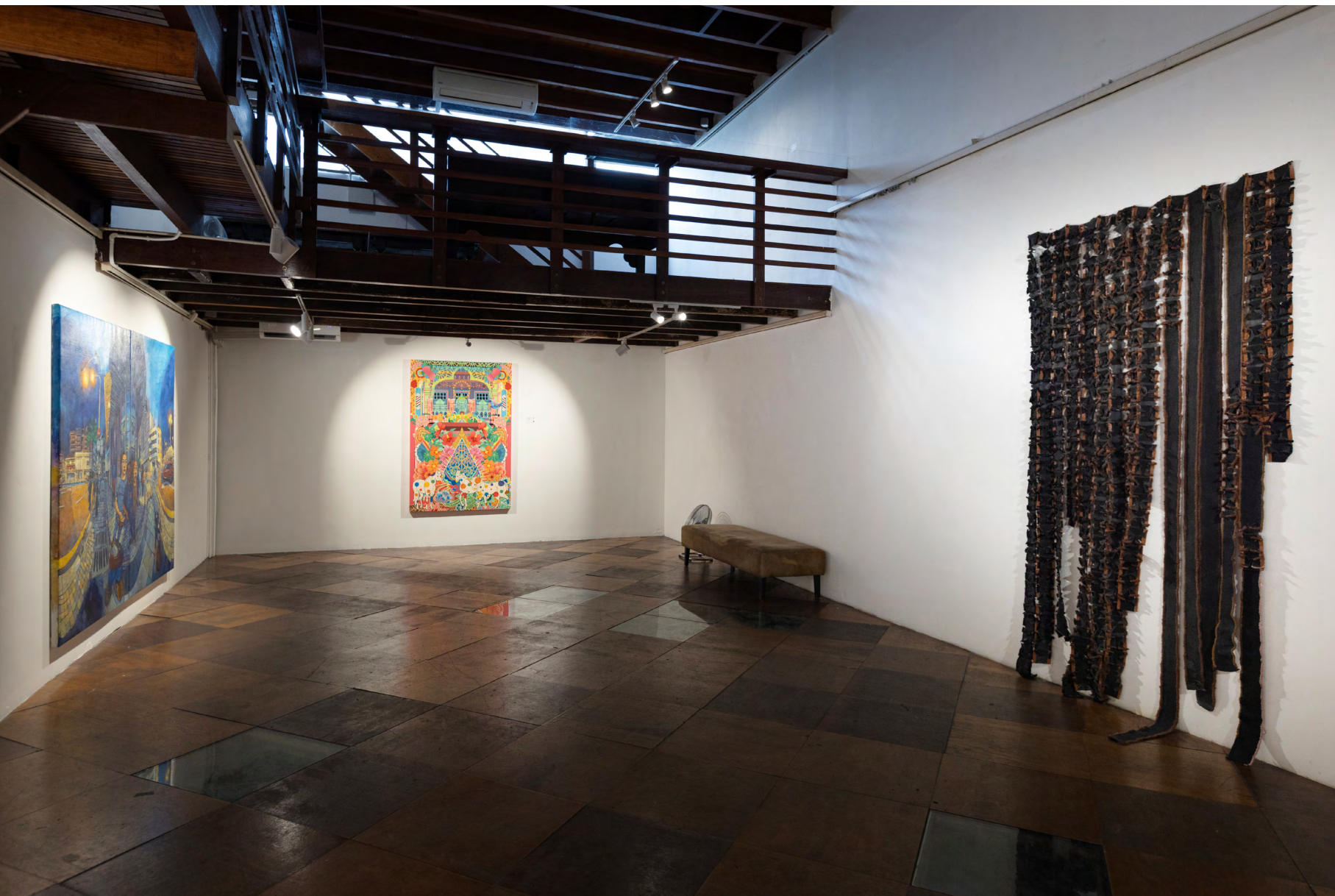
When I Stand on This Stage
Acrylic on canvas
182.88cm x 121.92cm
2025

True leadership begins with a promise. This painting reflects on that moment of commitment—the kind we make not just with words, but with intention. It speaks to the promises we owe to Kuala Lumpur, a city that continues to grow and change, yet still holds its roots in memory, culture, and the rhythm of nature.

At the heart of the work stands a podium. It isn't a symbol of power, but of responsibility—a reminder that every word spoken in front of others carries weight. A promise should never be made lightly; it's not a formality or a show, but a quiet act of honesty in a world that often hides behind appearances.

Malaysian elements flow through the piece—the hibiscus, traditional motifs, and the outline of city towers—each one showing how the old and the new live side by side. Horses and birds move gently through the scene, watching over it all, reminding us of purity, freedom, and the balance we share with the natural world.

Leadership isn't about control or power—it's about care. It's about keeping your word and protecting what gives life to the city. Kuala Lumpur's true strength doesn't come from concrete or glass, but from the harmony between its people, their culture, and the land they stand on.



INSTALLATION VIEW AT WEI-LING GALLERY



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CHIN KONG YEE

Chin Kong Yee's (he/him) (b. 1973) paintings display his continuous search to capture his own experience of a time and place. Known for his wonderful fish-eye lens work, his works evoke a somewhat surreal feeling. By combining the present, past and future through a depiction of two perspectives (realistic and unrealistic) his paintings have an exciting, dramatic edge about them

that draws the viewer into his space. Chin Kong Yee seeks his audience to feel and see what he has experienced in the creation of his artwork.

He has labelled his style as Actuality Accorded Painting (AAP), whereby, in painting and portraying an object, it has to have existed and undergone the process of being real, in order for it to be translated onto the canvas as art. AAP is basically the act of "seeing" where the past, present and future are enveloped into one when one looks at an object. Once eye contact has been made through AAP, the images become the past. To Chin Kong Yee, nothing is ever stagnant. Images are continuously changing and evolving as you look at them. Space can never be measured or fixed and it is only present in the mobility of time.

His infinite canvas paintings saw the artist taking the depiction and perception of cities and landscapes to another level, where each diptych can be rearranged, so as to allow multiple arrangements and perspectives of the same place. His inspiration comes from the places he visits. His works have been widely exhibited internationally in Germany, Romania, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Korea, and Taiwan and collected by numerous corporate and private collectors.

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GAN SZE HOOI

Gan Sze Hooi (he/him) (b. 1977), a visual artist born in Kuala Lumpur, graduated from the Kuala Lumpur Central Academy of Arts with a diploma in Visual Arts in 2000. Currently based in Kuala Lumpur, he specialises in oil painting, charcoal, and mixed media. He enjoys exploring new territories and communities, which has shaped his unique artistic perspective mapping.

His works are inspired by observations of community architecture and infused with narratives from stories and people he encounters. Through a blend of imagination and observation, his paintings aim to reshape the community's identity while echoing collective memories.

In 2014, following his first solo exhibition, he became a full-time artist. His works have since been showcased in several national and international galleries and collected by private collectors as well as the National Art Gallery. Furthermore, he participated in the international Artists-Residence program for 2016 in India and 2024 in Taiwan.

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KHABIR ROSLAN

Khabir Roslan (he/him) (b. 1995) is a transdisciplinary artist whose work explores the intersections of art, science, cosmology, and philosophy. A graduate of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Shah Alam, Malaysia, with a Bachelor's in Fine Arts, he received the UOB Painting of the Year 2020 award in the Emerging Artist category as "Most Promising Artist." From 2019 to 2022, he participated in various exhibitions and residencies.

His work reimagines the value of language, connecting it to the concept of Nature (Fitrah), inspired by Physics, Nusantara cosmology, Wabi-Sabi, Theosophy, and Islamic philosophy. In 2021, he was selected as a Guest Trainee in the Ilmu Program at Museum Gallery Tuanku Fauziah, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), where he explored site-specific installations in traditional Malay houses focused on traditional arts and culture.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



KIM NG

Kim Ng (he/him) (b. 1965) is a Malaysian artist based in Kuala Lumpur. Since 2002, he has been actively engaged in academia, teaching, and managing the Fine Art department. Kim Ng holds an honours Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, which he obtained from London Guildhall University in the UK in 1996. He further pursued his education, earning two Master's degrees in Design and Media Arts from the University of Westminster in 1997 and an MA by Project from London Metropolitan University in 2002, both in London, UK.

Over the past three decades, Kim Ng has demonstrated his proficiency in multidisciplinary art. His artistic practice encompasses diverse mediums such as printmaking, mixed media painting, ceramics, sculpture,

and installation art. With an impressive portfolio, he has held eight solo exhibitions at various local art galleries and spaces in Malaysia since 2000, in addition to participating in numerous group exhibitions.

Kim Ng's talent has garnered international recognition, as evidenced by his invitation to participate in the collateral event at the Venice Biennale in 2022. His work is being collected by private individuals and corporations both within and outside the country.

Beyond his local engagements, Kim Ng has actively participated in international art workshops and artist residencies in Taiwan, Thailand, and Malaysia. As a dedicated professional, he consistently seeks growth as an artist, enthusiastically embracing new challenges and pushing the boundaries of art-making.

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WONG CHEE MENG

Wong Chee Meng (he/him) (b. 1975) views the world through blurred lines and double images, a result of an accident that left him with permanent visual impairment. His unique perspective inspires his intricate, multi-layered works, which often overlap and blend. By meticulously painting layer upon layer, he conceals stories and hidden vistas, creating compositions that invite viewers to look beyond the surface.

Wong's art explores image-making through additive and subtractive transformation. He interweaves random objects and subjects into intricate forms that fade into colour chains, examining the subtle presence of art in everyday life. Using techniques like paper cut and stencilling, he addresses social issues and cultural motifs, drawing from traditional symbolism and age-old fables to express his nuanced views.

Active since 1996, Wong Chee Meng has exhibited on local and international platforms, with a style that blends Contemporary Pop and Social Realism. He was an artist-in-residence at the Mali Hom Residency in Penang in 2007 and represented Malaysia in an exhibition in Havana, Cuba, in 2006. His work is held in notable collections, including Axiata, Rimbun Dahan, ABN Amro Bank, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Visual Art Gallery in Kuala Lumpur.

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To accompany the group exhibition, ***KL:MyUtopia***, by Chin Kong Yee, Gan Sze Hooi, Khabir Roslan, Kim Ng, and Wong Chee Meng from 15th November – 6th December 2025

Gallery Information

Free Admission for visitors with appointments.

Walk-ins permitted upon registration, otherwise a RM10 fee will be imposed.
(Applicable to individuals aged 12 years and above.)

Operating Hours:

10 AM – 6 PM (Tuesday to Friday)

10 AM – 5 PM (Saturday)

Closed: Sundays, Mondays, and Public Holidays

Image courtesy: Wei-Ling Gallery & the respective artists

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