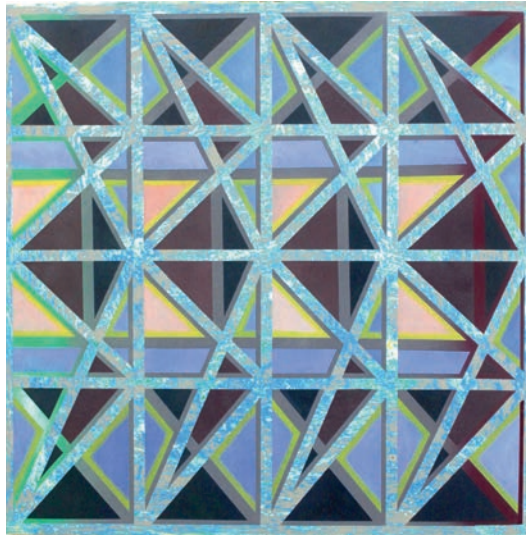


# THE EMPTINESS OF PROGRESS

The landscape of *The Wizard of Oz* inspired the work of Haffendi Anuar, an artist profiled as part of *Funds Global Asia*'s new partnership with Kuala Lumpur gallery Richard Koh Fine Art

**A SCENE IN** the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* stuck in the memory of the young Haffendi Anuar. In it, the heroine Dorothy and her friends are standing on the Yellow Brick Road, looking towards the glittering Emerald City, where they hope to find the wizard who will make their dreams come true. What fascinated the Malaysian most was how a Hollywood production designer had depicted the fictional, fantasy city. On the one hand, the prosperous skyline seemed imposing and impressive. On the other, it was strangely lacking in human warmth.



**INSPIRED BY CITY SKYLINES:** Anuar's abstract installations employ bright geometric patterns to create fictional urban landscapes.



In notes to accompany his 2015 exhibition in Taipei, *Elephant Utopia*, he wrote: "The skyline of the Emerald City in the image, though seductive and mesmerising, is seen devoid of human presence and could be read [as] somewhat cold and distant."

The theme of modernity was something Anuar wanted to explore with his own work. His installations, though abstract, are inspired by city skylines and employ bright geometric patterns to create fictional urban landscapes.

Anuar's vision of the future is not a utopia, however. Although modernistic, his installations are reminiscent of the metal grilles that protect the doors and windows in the rougher parts of his home city, Kuala Lumpur, where he has his studio.



College of Art and Design in London. In between his studies, he worked as a model-maker for architecture firm TR Hamzah and Yeang, studied Mandarin in China, and worked in art galleries. He has exhibited in Malaysia, the USA, Korea and the UK. He lives and works in Kuala Lumpur.

Established in 2005, Richard Koh Fine Art showcases South-east Asian art in Malaysia and the region from its gallery in Kuala Lumpur. [rkfineart.com](http://rkfineart.com)



The idea of linking modernity with the threat of crime is part of a broader ambition to question the value of development in his home country. Anuar writes about questioning “the facade of progress” in his work. His ambition is to reveal the deprivation that coexists with development. A modern metropolis, like the Emerald City, can be an imposing achievement and at the same time represent a cold emptiness.

Another aspect of modern life – the standardisation of objects – inspired Anuar’s previous solo exhibition, *M13*, at Richard Koh Fine Art in Kuala Lumpur.

To create the pieces in the exhibition, Anuar used standard-size masking tape, canvases, household items and even standard colours, emphasising that much of what modern society depends on is pre-fabricated.

The artworks include free-standing pillar sculptures constructed out of store-bought and found melamine tableware, plus geometric panelled paintings made out of mass-produced canvas sold for art students.



Born in 1985, Anuar obtained his International Baccalaureate certificate in art at the International School of Kuala Lumpur. He went on to gain his foundation in the US, at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, and his Bachelor’s degree at Central Saint Martins

**LOCKDOWN:** Much of Anuar’s work is reminiscent of the metal grilles that protect the doors and windows in the rougher parts of Kuala Lumpur, where he has his studio.

