

BY DANA TER

Kuala Lumpur

Redefining Contemporary
Malaysian Art

匯集華人、馬來、泰國與印度文化的馬來西亞藝術，近來在受到香港與新加坡藝術的強力刺激下，表現更加活潑多元，也更具有對現代社會的批判性，一個新形態的藝術形式正在馬來西亞發生。

吉隆坡：
被重新定義的
馬來西亞當代藝術

Malaysian art is shaped by a confluence of Chinese, Malay, Thai, and Indian cultures, but, caught between the Asian mega powers of Singapore and Hong Kong, its art scene has long been eclipsed. However, change is at hand: once a city for private art collectors, Kuala Lumpur's galleries are opening their doors and showing work that is bold, brazen, and critical of the social issues of our time.





01 RICHARD KOH FINE ART

Founded in 2005 by designer Richard Koh, this private space in Bangsar Village II is known for being one of the first galleries to introduce contemporary Southeast Asian art to Malaysia. Prominent themes explored are cultures caught between tradition and modernity and perceptions of home. The former can be seen in Anne Samat's deity-like sculptures which graced the walls of RKFA last year. Inspired by *songket*, a shimmering woven fabric used to make traditional ceremonial clothing, the Melaka-born artist weaves together colorful threads, stringing them on metal rings and bicycle parts that allude to industrialization. Also a prominent fixture at the gallery is Haffendi Anuar. The Kuala Lumpur-based artist, who spent years abroad, slaps oil and enamel on wooden boards to replicate a pedestrian's-eye view of KL, a city that's meant to be "home" but feels foreign to him.

➔ Lot No. 2F-3, Level 2, Bangsar Village II. Open 11am-8pm daily. (rkfineart.com)

02

WEI-LING GALLERY AND WEI-LING CONTEMPORARY

Located in a charming pre-war shophouse in historic Little India, Wei-Ling Gallery has been fostering local talent since 2002 when it was opened by artist and curator Wei-Ling Lim. Notable artists to have exhibited here include Chin Kong Yee, who is known for his dizzying bird's-eye view depictions of urban scenes in Malaysia. This month's solo exhibition is by emerging artist Cheong Kiet Cheng. Her paintings of humans and mythical creatures living alongside each other in a utopian wonderland explore universal themes of love and motherhood. 2011 saw the launch of Wei-Ling Contemporary, which endeavors to showcase works in private collections throughout Malaysia that have previously been hidden from the public.

➔ Wei-Ling Gallery: 8 Jalan Scott, Brickfields. Open 10am-6pm Mondays to Fridays, 10am-5pm Saturdays. Wei-Ling Contemporary: Lot No. RT-1, Level 6, the Gardens Mall. Open 11am-7pm Tuesdays to Sundays. (weiling-gallery.com)



03 THE PRINT ROOM

In 2011, international catwalk photographer Paul Gadd gave up a life of glamor to open a small shop in KL specializing in old school photography. Take a walk down memory lane at this breezy, two-story house which regularly features works by emerging artists that capture everyday life in Malaysia from cities to the *kampungs* (villages), as well as more abstract and conceptual subjects. On most days, The Print Room functions as a film photography studio with classes in black and white film processing and hand printing, while on weekends, visitors are welcome to peruse the exhibitions.

➔ 49 Lorong 16/9E, Seksyen 16. Open 11am-6pm weekends, by appointment on weekdays. (theprintroomkl.com)

04 ILHAM GALLERY

Sculptures by Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei and Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak welcome visitors to the modern and snazzy Ilham Tower. A newcomer to the KL art scene, Ilham Gallery opened its doors in 2015 and has since established itself as one of the premier galleries to view contemporary Malaysian art. The current exhibition, "Afterwork," is a joint project with Hong Kong's Para Site, a non-profit art space. It explores the lives and stories of migrant workers in both Malaysia and Hong Kong and includes haunting portraits by Gan Chin Lee, who normally paints dense urban scenes and the diverse people who populate them. 📍

➔ Ilham Tower, Levels 3 and 5, 8 Jalan Binjai. Open 11am-7pm Tuesdays to Thursdays, 10am-7pm Fridays and Saturdays, 11am-5pm Sundays. (theprintroomkl.com)



/ LOOK OUT FOR /

SEKEPING TENGGIRI

This guesthouse shrouded in the suburbs of Bangsar is also home to a hidden gallery featuring around 250 works by young, local artists. All the items are from the private collection of owner and landscape architect Ng Seksen. The entrance to the gallery is tucked in between two guestrooms. Visitors can call 017 207 5977 to make an appointment to view the gallery. (www.sekeping.com/tenggin)

