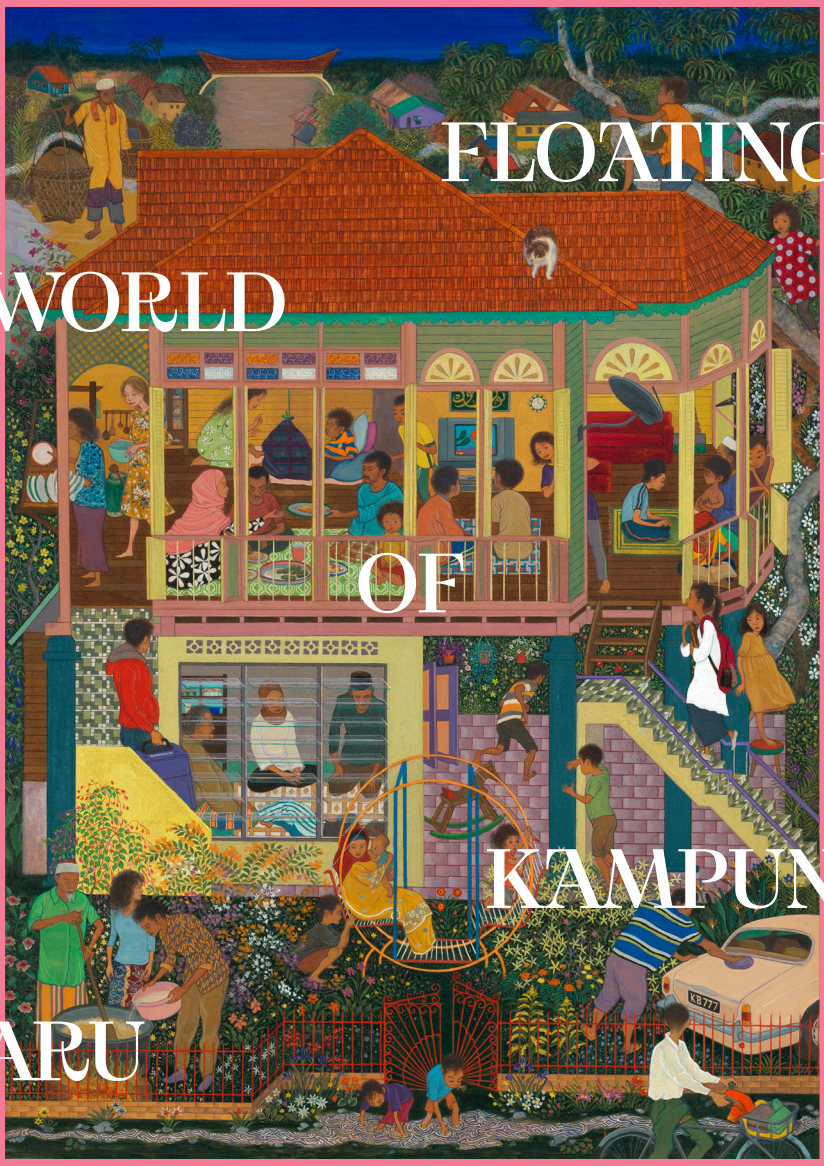
STILT HOUSES —

THE FLOATING WORLD OF KAMPUNG BARU



with essays by Tan Siuli, Lim Sheau Yun and Daniel Chong

Leon Leong

STILT
HOUSES —

THE FLOATING WORLD OF KAMPUNG BARU

Exhibited at the
ILHAM Art Show 2022

Leon Leong

BETWEEN PAST & PRESENT: THE FLOATING WORLD OF KAMPUNG BARU

by **Tan Siu Li**



Stilt Houses—The Floating World of Kampung Baru is a project by Leon Leong that chronicles the history and socio-cultural significance of the oldest surviving Malay village in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Today, the rich and layered (hi)stories of Kampung Baru are under threat from encroaching redevelopment. Sitting on a piece of prime real estate in the capital city's centre, the rustic enclave with its traditional stilt houses makes for a charming contrast with the shiny skyscrapers looming behind; it does however face several infrastructural issues. Despite this, attempts to modernize the area have met with staunch opposition from its landowners, who have sought to tenaciously safeguard the

village's cultural heritage and unique identity. Adopting the form of the Indo-Persian miniature—a genre that once served as 'history painting' in parts of Asia, and a reference to the



Middle Way (detail) 2022, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

religio-cultural background of Kampung Baru's early settlers—Leong's vignettes of Kampung Baru collapse time and space, bringing together multiple narratives within the same picture plane to narrate significant events that have shaped the enclave, including its present at this critical juncture: a veritable 'floating world' unmoored from its urban environs, and poised between the past and an uncertain future.

An interest in people, place and history has always informed Leong's practice. In his work, inhabited spaces play as much a part as his portraits of people in conveying psychological states and narratives. Starting with his first suite of works *Optimistic Melancholics* 2015, realized after a stay in Istanbul, Leong established a modus operandi of taking up residence in a particular community or neighbourhood in order to observe its life

and rhythms, translating these into intimate portraits of its residents in their lived environments. At times these environments inform his choice of artistic medium, as in the case of *Cracks in the Wall* 2017–2018 where Leong rendered his paintings of Razak Mansion and its residents on pegboard, to echo the brise soleil façade of the historic housing block. Like Kampung Baru, Razak Mansion was a piece of tangible heritage—an iconic public housing project feted for its modernist architecture when it was first launched in 1967, and now lost to the bulldozer.



The Kampung Baru project bears many similarities to the Razak Mansion suite of works. Both are attempts to record for posterity a certain built heritage and lived experience that will soon be gone forever. Leong's chosen method of presentation for both has been to anchor the paintings of people and place within an environment that echoes that of the original. For instance, the paintings from *Cracks in the Wall* were presented at the inaugural Kuala Lumpur Biennale in a long corridor painted turquoise (referencing the original paint colour of the housing block), with the floorplans of Razak Mansion marked out on the floor. Similarly, the "Kampung Baru" suite of works will be presented in a *tanggam* structure that also appears in one of the paintings, thereby lending an immersive quality to the presentation as well as implicating the viewer in the ongoing narratives of Kampung Baru. The *tanggam* is a wooden structure that forms the foundation of indigenous architecture; its joinery is a tribute to the ingenuity of this local/traditional craft, and symbolic of the *gotong-royong* spirit that holds together communities—an apt metaphor for this project.

Within *Cracks in the Wall* can also be found the genus of Leong's exploration of aerial perspective, which he employs in "Kampung Baru" in order to suggest a multiplicity of viewpoints, spaces and events. Leong's earlier works, and most of the paintings in *Cracks in the Wall*, are naturalistic depictions of people in their habitats, depicted from a single point perspective. Within this series however, is a work that focuses on the external structure of Razak Mansion, seen from a bird's eye view. *Drawers of Memory* 2018 is a surrealistic rendering of the housing block, depicting individual dwelling units pulled open from the main building like a series of Chinese boxes, each 'drawer' in turn housing many more miniature worlds, contained in the living room, bedroom and dining

rooms partitioned by walls within each unit, like an endless memory palace.

Similarly, a simultaneity of spaces and narratives—scenes within a scene—can be found in "Kampung Baru" suite of works, suggesting a myriad perspectives and events in the narration of its community's histories. In a painting titled *Progress of Love* 2021, a single house, modelled on an actual one in the enclave, dominates the frame. Depicted in cross-section, its multiple rooms and spaces house several stories and temporalities all at once, offering audiences a bustling visual microcosm of society and the circle of life. In a small corner at the back, a young boy is circumcised, marking his passage into adulthood.



Progress of Love (detail) 2021, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

Familial and community bonds are celebrated with a meal shared on a rug laid out on the floor. A girl returning from school makes her way up the stairs; on the opposite side, making his way down to ground level is an adult with a suitcase, signifying impending departure. While children play outside the house, a group of adults indoors gather around a figure lying on the floor—possibly infirm or unwell. Bridging these two passages is a circular swing, on



which are seated a mother and her children, a reminder of the cycles of life and time.

Here, the conventions of the Indo-Persian miniature have been employed to shift the perspective of the artworks' subject matter from the immediacy of a specific moment, to the *longue duree*—a more encompassing view unfolding over time. As the artist reflects, "I am more and more intrigued by non-linear perspective and the narrative style of Persian (or "Asian") art. I also noticed my viewpoint, or 'lens', has also gotten longer and wider over time, from close-ups of faces to include more and more of the background; the human subject gets smaller while the environment gets more prominent." Leong's human subjects have also morphed from being portraits of particular individuals, to 'stock characters' that represent the Everyman or Everywoman, and speak to a certain shared humanity and lived experience. As such, Leong's paintings have shifted from telling individual stories to parables, as his vignettes seek to encompass a far wider arc of history and human experience as compared to his previous projects. This is evident in how his artwork titles have changed from the specificity of Razak Mansion's *Apothecary Brothers* or 'bank programmer' to the much broader and abstracted themes of *Progress of Love* and *Being and Becoming* in the Kampung Baru series.

The conventions of miniature painting allow Leong to traverse and condense different temporalities on the same picture plane, thereby communicating concisely multiple events and dominant themes in the unfolding of Kampung Baru's history. For instance, with the first work in the "Kampung Baru" suite, titled *Origin of Place* 2021, Leong establishes Kampung Baru's *genius loci*, combining within a single landscape, events and narratives that span a range of geographies and timeframes. These include the founding of Kampung Baru during the British administration, suggested by the presence of the sultan and figures in colonial garb at the bottom right of the painting; the journey of migrants from the south to the new settlement; the building of the first home with the blessing of a *bomoh*, and the trade along the Klang River with Chinese tin miners further up north. In composing this scene, which narrates at a single glance the origins of Kampung Baru, Leong has employed a number of conventions of Indo-Persian miniature, including the use of landscape motifs such as bodies of water (rivers) to visually connect and





Origin of Place (detail) 2021, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

unify various sections of the painting (and by extension, the multiple chapters of the unfolding narrative). The miniature's attention to decorative detail can also be seen in the meticulous depiction of various species of flowers in the bottom of the painting, the patterning of the shrubbery in the middle ground, as well as the feather-light strokes at the top right corner that suggest a gentle mist of rain, reminiscent of the fine brushwork found in miniature painting. A lyricism pervades this setting, with the undulating contours of the land and its rivers lending a pleasing rhythm to the scene, suggesting an idyllic pastoral. Given that miniature painting once served as a form of 'history painting' for parts of Asia—the visual accompaniment to epic chronicles such as the *Shahnama* (the Persian *Book of Kings*) and *Akbarnama* (the official chronicle of the reign of the third Mughal emperor)—it is perhaps fitting that Leong has employed this genre to imagine a historical re-enactment of the founding of Kampung Baru, a history that has not been documented in a photo or painting.

If the first few works in the "Kampung Baru" cycle are defined by a certain regularity and structure, conveyed through the planned composition and interlocking grids of the houses that dominate the images, then the mid-point of the series marks a change in tenor, dissolving prior foundations into indeterminate chaos. To narrate some of the watershed events that have defined Kampung Baru, Leong returned to a motif previously explored in his triptych for *Cracks in the Wall*—that of the swirling cloud. For the Razak Mansion project, the cloud was quite literally a cloud of dust and debris from the demolition of the building. Leong peopled the cloud with figures, buildings and events—lives gone up in smoke with the destruction of Razak Mansion. For the Kampung



Being and Becoming (detail) 2021, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

Baru series, the painting *Being and Becoming* 2021 is conceived of as a swirl of people and events, too numerous to immediately 'read' or make sense of, conveying the violence and chaos of historic episodes of civil unrest. This is followed by a depiction of the 1971 flood in the following painting *Floating World* 2022, where churning waters threaten to inundate the houses.



The same amorphousness is reprised in the final work in this series titled *Middle Way* 2022, which speculates on Kampung Baru's present, and possible future. The enclave is depicted as a 'floating world', distinctly out of place in the built-up, urban surroundings. It is a place under siege. Skyscrapers loom over its low-rise orange roofs, while construction workers peer down at startled residents. The intrusiveness is emphasised by the presence of drones hovering over the village. Men in suits regard Kampung Baru thoughtfully from their vantage point of neighbouring skyscrapers, while a row of tents at the bottom of the painting suggest plans being made for the future of Kampung Baru—out of sight from its residents. The river makes its reappearance here, but unlike



Middle Way (detail) 2022, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

the blue stream that watered the land and carried settlers upstream in *Origin of Place*, the river in this final painting is grey, and the land is barren. It is what separates Kampung Baru from the encroaching territory of modern high-rises, and it has recently been breached. A scaly bridge spans the river—the Saloma Link Bridge, newly built in 2020 with the purported aim of linking Kampung

Baru with the business district. As Leong reflects, "when I was visiting Kampung Baru, the Saloma Link Bridge stood out, I felt something wasn't quite right. On drafting this painting, and referencing Persian miniature paintings—which often depict siege and conquest—I then began to see what it signifies."
The meticulous detailing often found in Indo-Persian miniature, which serves both decorative and symbolic functions, is employed here to great effect.

Like his previous series of works, Leong has conceived of "Kampung Baru" as a kind of cycle, charting the birth of a village and community, its passages, and possibly, its impending end. Unlike the human life cycle which was suggested in *Optimistic Melancholics*, the end of a village however, is not always inevitable, and the last work in the "Kampung Baru" suite raises this question for consideration. The works also seem to ask if we are able to imagine the many pasts and present co-existing, as imagined by Leong in his paintings. The multiplicity of perspectives and narratives the artist has sought to capture through the lyrical form of miniature painting, rejects the notion of a singular viewpoint, the kind of rhetoric that might be employed to argue for or against redevelopment. While it does not offer an answer, Leong's project resurfaces histories and narratives that may have been forgotten by the advent of modernity and development, to make a case for considering their preservation, and for remembering. The charming vignettes, brimming with details and rendered on a scale approximating that of traditional miniature paintings, foster a certain intimacy of encounter, and are an invitation to slow looking and discovery—a counter to the *tabula rasa* that often accompanies urban planning and redevelopment. "Kampung Baru" pays tribute to cultures and traditions that have persisted and endured, and charts episodes in the enclave's history that run parallel to pivotal moments in the nation's history, asking how we might best remember and honour these, and how they may still offer wisdom and inspiration for today.





Theatre Of History (detail) 2022, gouache on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm

TAN SIULI is an independent curator with over a decade of experience encompassing the research, presentation and commissioning of contemporary art from Southeast Asia. Major exhibition projects include two editions of the Singapore Biennale (2013 and 2016), inter-institutional traveling exhibitions, as well as mentoring and commissioning platforms such as the President's Young Talents exhibition series. Her previous speaking engagements include presentations on Southeast Asian contemporary art at Frieze Academy London and Bloomberg's Brilliant Ideas series. She is currently Contributing Editor (Digital Content) for ART SG.

MAKING ROOM

by **Lim Sheau Yun**

Kampung Baru comes alive in the rhythm of everyday life. A small settlement in Kuala Lumpur founded at the turn of the twentieth century, its market bustles on weekend mornings, its food streets fill with motorcycles in the evening, the zinc roofs of its homes and lurid umbrellas of its stalls domineered by the skyscrapers in the background. To many, it stands as a romantic symbol of a simpler "kampung life" in a world overtaken by the urban. Yet this unassuming Malay enclave belies a far more complicated history. It was both where the first Malay Congress was held and where the May 13 riots were sparked. Urban poverty is widespread, and its residents live in fragile conditions: the village

was nearly destroyed by floods in 1971 and again in 2021. Its lack of development is often conflated with a sense of quaint anachronism, with a CNN article declaring Kampung Baru to be "lost in time". Now gazetted for re-development, a Malay Heritage Park has been proposed where eleven wooden stilt homes will be conserved so that, according to Bernama, "the Malay image and the image of Kampung Baru are retained". Being outside of time has endured so persistently in the popular imagination of Kampung Baru that its commemorative park captures this very sentiment: lost, frozen, floating.

Over the past year, artist Leon Leong spent two months living in Kampung Baru, where upon his stay and his frequent visits back, he familiarised himself with the nuances of its narratives and geographies. The image that emerged was not of a place frozen in time but a palimpsest of lived experience compressed by the density of the city. In search of a formal response, Leon turned to Indo-Persian miniatures, itself a mode of representation conspicuously belonging to the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Taken as a series, *Stilt Houses—The Floating World of Kampung Baru* roughly tracks the one hundred years of Kampung Baru's history, tracing the lives, loves and dramas of residents, from the story of its founding to its political turmoil in the late twentieth century. But within the world of each painting, time is suspended. Distinct historical events exist alongside each other in *Theatre of History* 2022, while *Progress of Love* 2021. tracks the seasons of a family's use of a house, allowing what Leon calls a "spontaneous temporality", that "compresses multiple spaces and temporalities on a same plane". Stories and myths ordinarily recited in linear time are superimposed on the spatial logic of a page: the tale unfolds with the eye as it travels across the rectangular bounds of paper. His image of Kampung Baru tracks the thematic tendencies of memory, grouped not by sequential time but by feeling.

Leon's intricate paintings, like miniatures of the past, put people in space, as "we are always living in an environment, it is the context for who we are." Each painting is anchored by a structure or a set of structures, and past and present residents of Kampung Baru play out their lives in these architectures as if in a stage set. Buildings and landscapes are depicted in mathematically idealised isometric projection, but within them, bodies in skewed perspective are put to work as they enact their aspira-

tions onto the space of Kampung Baru: men hoist wooden beams to build homes, fists are raised in protest with the conviction of political beliefs, residents whisper into each other's ears as tycoons eye the dollar signs of development. No one person's story is given more truth, although some are given more narrative space than others.

Like an anthropologist, Leon's diligent recordings are combined with an awareness of his status as an outsider. The result is a series of images characterised not by a flat, omniscient eye that sees all but rather by a perspective that simultaneously zooms in on certain characters and zooms out to a larger plot structure. Told in tiny details, these images are verbose. Like a Jane Austen novel, it is as if we both inhabit their stories while being coolly distant from their turmoil. Things are observed as they were and they are. In the words of art historian Oleg Grabar, "Nothing is happening, has happened or will happen. It is all a dream, a fantasy, and that fantasy without event, without story, has been expressed with a stunning visual clarity in which every part, every brick or tile, every bit of inscription has been defined with utmost precision." In repose, residents exist in a ceaseless alternation between their specific, mortal entanglements and the universal structure of the image.

We might think of these fantastic images as resigned to the inevitable fate of Kampung Baru, just another commemorative project within—in Leon's words—a "cemetery of artefacts". New malls will join the pantheon of urban recreation space, luxury apartments with their geometric metal facades will dot Kuala Lumpur's skyline. In an issue as politically charged as gentrification and re-development, what can art do?

Historically, Indo-Persian miniatures were made to be seen behind closed doors, contained within the covers of books or albums. The art form was largely private and privatised, made for an owner's pleasure and stored in the homes of royalty and wealthy colonialists. In this display of the Stilt Houses series, Leon does away with miniatures in a book and instead mounts his paintings on the social space of an installation, entitled *Stilt House No 1*. Modelled after the stilt homes he depicts but painted in the baby pink of anonymous millennial airspace, the installation speaks to coded neutrality: what is apparent also has a lineage. These paintings may speak in dreams and float in front of

our eyes, but their allegorical fictions chart the hopes of generations and speak the entangled truths of time, history and capital. In Leon's words, "In the act of observing, in the act of creating, we must think beyond just preserving the house." In ILHAM Gallery, located just across a highway from Kampung Baru, he makes not images but room.

LIM SHEAU YUN (SHEAU) is the Research Lead at Malaysia Design Archive and the founder of cloud projects, an indie publisher. She graduated from Yale with a BA in Architecture (concentration in History, Theory, and Criticism) and is currently based in Kuala Lumpur.







STILT HOUSE № 1

2022, wood in pigmented varnish and cement stumps
H240 × W368 × D276 cm



ORIGIN OF PLACE

2021, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm

TO BUILD A VILLAGE

2021, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm





PROGRESS OF LOVE

2021, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm

BEING AND BECOMING

2021, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm





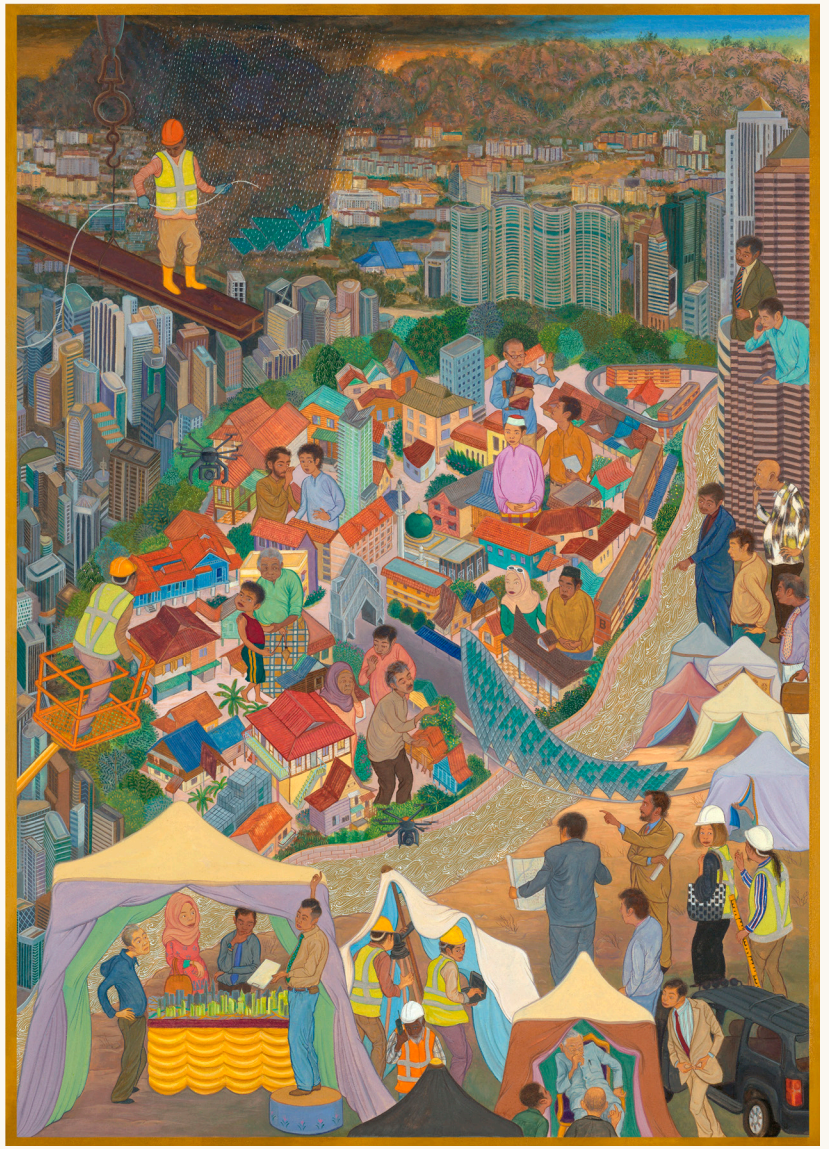
FLOATING WORLD

2022, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm

THEATRE OF HISTORY

2022, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm





MIDDLE WAY

2022, gouache on paper
29.7 × 21 cm

LEON LEONG'S MINIATURE PAINTINGS IN A TIME OF MICRO/ DIS-CONTENT

by **Daniel Chong**

The patterns of a hundred stars and more can be concentrated in the mind when simplified, symbolized, and turned into stories. Ancient zodiac of various cultures charted the constellations above so well, farmers who consulted almanacs timed their crops to increase yield. The recorded celestial movements gave fishermen, sailors, merchants, and pilgrims greater confidence heading out and navigating home. Unfortunately, astrological paths may also be mistaken for destiny even in this day and age. Closer to reality, there is dawning realization that every digital user's post and viewer's flick is mapping our identities for others to (mis)use.

Keying in 'Leon Leong' in English on several different search engines usually has our man on the front page along with a few other dashing major and minor male Chinese celebrities. His CV from leon-leong.com states he won a slew of prizes for advertising in the late 1990s. Throughout 2000s, there were regular accolades for competitions in modern Chinese literature. Are there scandals, secrets, or more banal reasons for his departure from these fields? Unknown. His year and place of birth? Hidden. Going to his IG and scrolling down to the end, one has the impression Leon's focus on a serious fine art career is relatively recent. His first fully painted series *Exorcising Demons* made just a decade back, featured modestly sized portraits of various men he met on video calls via Skype (not Zoom). Since then Leon has continued peering into the lives of modern urban folks, shifting perspectives, and pushing technical challenges as he goes. 2015's *Optimistic Melancholics* saw larger sets of oil canvases depicting bourgeois families. Their fine apartments and delicate facial features were painted to the standard of academic sophistication but stopped short of cold hyperrealism. 2017's *Cracks in the Wall* continued such interior examinations with an eye that balanced the need for details with harmonious space. But the figures and location this time were turned towards the working class and a unique KL housing project facing demolishment. His research on how space shapes the psychosocial condition led to a more magical grasp of reality by usage of textured surfaces, isomorphic perspectives, and selectively surreal scenes. Less obvious unless one spends more time digging into his data is how that exhibition was also so much more than a typical solo artist's romantic sketches and paintings. *Crack in the Wall*'s downloadable catalogue highlights the friendships Leon formed with residents, and collaborations with other creatives that produced accompanying videos, photo-essay print booklets, a unique gallery hang, special social media accounts, public talks, etc. Was he led there by his experiences in commercial campaigns and building literary worlds? Could this taste for enterprising experiments and collective success be typical of Chinese folks born under the pig zodiac? Unclear. Leon will continue this centrist manner of working that values both individualist and collective creativity in his 2022 series.

On the 1st of February 2021, Khing Hnin Wa, a PE teacher

working for the Ministry of Education of Myanmar (not the Burmese actress, philanthropist, and activist of the same name), posted a video to Facebook of an aerobics routine she made in the morning. The long shot footage has her wearing modest neon black sportswear and face mask, doing light fitness dances set to rather hard EDM tunes outdoors. Framed in the background is a road so wide it could fit a dozen lanes or more. Hnin Wa's video of that day went viral as the usually empty roads behind inadvertently captured a convoy of all black SUVs sporting gun turrets head towards the parliamentary building. A coup d'état was in operation in Myanmar. The video's location Nay Pyi Daw is a fully planned mega city that officially became the nation's new capital around 16 years ago. Googling a map of it unveils various ministry headquarters as well as neatly zoned cultural, commercial, and residential areas. 3D view options are unavailable. Street view is limited to the outer ring roads. Zooming out shows jungle terrain all around. Rumour goes that astrologers had warned its then military dictator Than Shwe his junta would fail if it did not depart from Rangoon, the capital the British Colonial had establish in 1852. Although retired in 2011, it is likely that 89-year-old Than Shwe had given blessing to current military leader Htin Kyaw to end the country's short experiments in democracy. Ordinary citizen Hnin Wa has since hidden that specific aerobic video. Older ones are re-shared as 'Memories' but there are no new ones. Her FB states she holds an MA in Public Administration and over 60,000 followers. Majority of her public posts suggest side hustles selling lottery tickets and fruits. On rare occasions, she voices concerns against those profiting off her image, or causing misunderstandings with her viral video.

One could say that Hnin Wa's accidental viral video fame and Nay Pyi Daw's fascistic architecture under its authoritarian regime is the kind of reality Leon does not wish to see happen to his art or his country. His recently completed series *Stilt Houses—The Floating World of Kampung Baru* is a testament of a serious artist's drive to cement his reputation as a painter, as well as a citizen's right to discourse supposed 'sensitive' matters. Within these seven portrait-oriented gouache paintings is a representation of Kuala Lumpur's most famous rustic and historical enclave. Looking through the series can be as fun as a *Where's Waldo* illustration book, or suddenly sobering when a token corpse from the race riots of May 13, 1969 is spotted. The dominant narrative charts Kampung Baru's start in 1899 as a British Colonial plot to feed the mouths and minds of new Malays, to its ironic twist as an urban

village under siege from within and without. Even if the social-political theme may seem simple or distasteful, there are so many little icons, symbols, patterns, and motifs woven so finely together, any casual viewer would be caught between the desire to put away their phone and lean forward, or to pull it out for a snap and share. Those with greater familiarity of Malaysian artists may delight at Leon's capacity to rival the exquisite detailedness of the watercolourist Chin Kon Yit, or admire how the numerous figures are consistently balanced between the languid charm of Dzulkifli Buyong and gravitas of Ahmad Zakii's bodies. Not visible in the finished works are the drafting and tracing of the preparatory layers before painting. Behind that technical effort was also the time spent living there, researching archives and journals, producing Behind the Scenes (BTS) and outreach socmed channels, as well as interacting with residents and other professionals in order to gain the many insights necessary to produce such a deeply thought-out series.

When a virus is ravaging the world, decimating lives and rewriting a new normal, the luckier ones have a home to stay safe in. When one has wandered too far, opened too many tabs, or scrolled far down our photo albums on the cloud, the home button resets a user's orientation. Yet there is the growing feeling among us that no physical or digital home is ever completely devoid of danger. Should we lean on solutions promised by technopolies wanting to form a meta global village, or politicians hacking our intuitions with propaganda? Is it not best to just be left alone? Leon Leong has an answer. It sits as a centrepiece within the scaled down and deconstructed stilt house installation displaying his miniature series.

DANIEL CHONG majored in Art History at SUNY Purchase and completed his final year at The American University at Paris in 2000, and received his MA in Multimedia Communication in 2015. He teaches critical culture, media literacy, research writing and art history. On and off, he also participates in group art shows, art writing, and other curious pursuits.

Leon Leong Wai Pung (b.1971, Malaysia) is an artist and author based in Malaysia. His work typically responds to man's relationship with the built environment and explores the broader themes of people, place and history. A combination of social commentary and creative storytelling, it interweaves fact and fiction, documentation and memory to construct narratives. He has staged solo exhibition at CULT Gallery and Richard Koh Fine Art and participated in several group shows in Malaysia. His mixed-medium installation series *Cracks in the Wall* 2017–18 which comprises 43 artworks was exhibited in the inaugural Kuala Lumpur Biennale and featured in the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 20/20 Forum. Leon's novel *Beautiful Things* 2006, published by Crown Publishing Taiwan and serialised in Sin Chew Daily, was a top 5 finalist in the Crown International Fiction Awards. His short stories have won international awards and included in the anthology of Malaysian fiction. He received his Bachelor of Science in Communication in 1992 from The University of Texas at Austin, USA.

leon-leong.com

BIENNALE
2022 *The Floating World of Kampung Baru*, IX Tashkent International Biennale of Contemporary Art, Museum of Kamoliddin Behzod, Uzbekistan
2017–18 *Cracks in the Wall*, Kuala Lumpur Biennale, National Art Gallery, Malaysia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2018 *Leon Leong: Cracks in the Wall*, CULT Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2015 *Optimistic Melancholics*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2012 *Exorcising Demons*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2022 *A Domestic Life*, Cult Gallery, KL, Malaysia
2022 *Tukang*, e-Gallery, Multimedia University Cyberjaya, Malaysia
2022 *Tukang – Design & Craft Festival*, Galeri Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
2022 *ILHAM Art Show*, ILHAM Gallery, KL, Malaysia
2020 *Sesumpah*, Publika Art Show 2020, Fergana Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2018–19 *di antara ITU & INI*, National Art Gallery, Fergana Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2015 *Eyeball Massage Fingers Exercise*, Fergana Art Space, Penang, Malaysia

TALKS
2022 'A Piece of Kampung: Thoughts on heritage and crafts', Galeri Shah Alam, Malaysia (Nov 27)
2022 'The Floating World of Kampung Baru', PAM NEXT YPLab22, KL, Malaysia (July 13)
2019 'Cracks in the Wall', UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage 20/20 Forum, Penang, Malaysia (Oct 14)
2019 'Razak Mansion: Cracks in the Wall', USCI University, KL, Malaysia (Mar 16)
2018 'Azam Belas Symposium: Cracks in the Wall', National Art Gallery, KL, Malaysia (Feb 25)

AWARDS
2022 IX Tashkent International Biennale of Contemporary Art: Jury Prize
2022 TUKANG—Craftsmanship in Selangor: Winner
2021 G-Short International Short Film Festival: Finalist
2015 Malaysiaku Photography Contest: First Runner-up
2006 Crown International Fiction Awards: Merit Award
2003 ASEAN Short Fiction Awards: Second Prize
2002–03 Huazong Literary Awards (Fiction): Finalist
2002–03 Huazong Literary Awards (Prose): Finalist
2000–01 Huazong Literary Awards (Fiction): Merit
1998 Red Ribbon Media Awards: Winner
1998 Shriro Horseman Print Awards (Self-promotion Category): Winner
1997–98 The Malaysian 4A Kancil Awards (Website): Special Merit
1996 Shriro Horseman Print Awards (Self-promotion Category): Winner
1994–95 The Malaysian 4A Kancil Awards (TVC Open Category): Silver
1994–95 The Malaysian 4A Kancil Awards (Print Pro Bono): Special Merit
1994–95 The Malaysian 4A Kancil Awards (Typography): Special Merit

GRANTS
2022 Dana Dana Kreatif Perak@PORT
2021 CENDANA CreateNow Funding Programme
2020 CENDANA VA Inspire Funding Programme

EDUCATION
1999 Visiting scholar, Chinese Literature, Beijing University, China
1993 Part-time photography course, New England School of Photography, Boston, MA, USA
1992 Spanish language, Universidad de Cadiz, Spain
1989–92 Bachelor of Science, Advertising, University of Texas at Austin, USA

SELECTED PUBLICATION
2022 *ILHAM Art Show 2022*, ILHAM Foundation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2019 *Whale Watch* (Novella), Monsoon Review Literary Magazine, Malaysia/Taiwan
2017 *Hidden Naga*, *Makcik Fashion*, *The Naga Boy* & *Mixed Rice Uncle*, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
2017 *KL BIENNALE 2017: Alami Belas—Beloved*, National Art Gallery, Malaysia
2015 *Optimistic Melancholics*, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2007 *Anthology of Malaysian Short Stories*, YouRen Publishing, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
2006 *Beautiful Things* (Novel), Crown Publishing, Taipei, Taiwan
2005 *Curious* (Magazine), How&Why, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
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