

Sunday, 20 October 2019

Explore the public art scene in Kuala Lumpur!



You never know what you might discover. That adage rang true as I ditched my car, put away my phone and decided to walk around the city. There's much to notice in Kuala Lumpur – perhaps too much.

Taking in the capital city on foot, has led me to discover some things that are worth more than a passing glance. Public art spaces have now sprouted around the city, but they struggle to compete for attention in a place where the technologies of attention theft have defined city life for more than a century.

Old-school blinding commercial signage and eye-grabbing shop windows now compete with ad-bearing screens looming over public spaces, coupled with clever technology that makes your phone buzz with geo-specific commercial appeals. This can be overwhelming when you visit a new city. And it becomes numbing as you move through the one you call home.

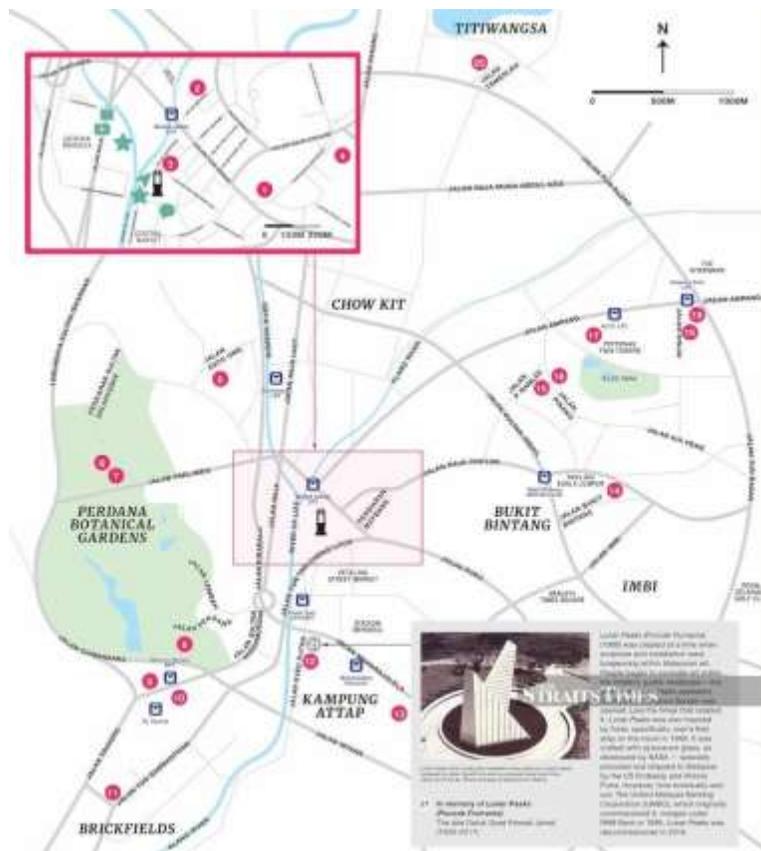
A riot of colours and sounds dominate the city landscape but there are pockets of areas where – if you'd just stand and take in the view – moments of timelessness take over. Dolphins suspended in mid-splash, bronze soldiers gazing sightlessly into the distance, an elaborate celestial gateway, a complex sun dial – these sights stopped me in my tracks. This is Kuala Lumpur like I've never seen before.

In a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Federal Territories and Kuala Lumpur City Hall, CENDANA (Cultural Economy Development Agency) had recently launched Art In The City, a stunning outdoor visual display of local arts across Kuala Lumpur with the aim of making art more accessible to the public. Or to be more accurate – making art more visible to the public.

The theme I heART KL reintroduces the public to Kuala Lumpur through the narrative of its plural histories that encourage people to rethink, relook and re-evaluate the capital city.

CENDANA has come up with a map highlighting the role of public art within the context of a growing nation. Public art, they say, exists for reasons beyond being a mere decoration; they attempt to represent the aspirations of a nation. After all, it is as alive as the people who traverse through and past it.

So why not embark on a journey to reacquaint yourself with the city and artworks which have been amalgamated into our dazzling city landscape. You may have seen some of these works in passing, but pausing to appreciate art can redefine your experience in the city. It can change you, because art – in its purest form – can do just that.



Map to the sculptures.



Keris at Menara Maybank.

1.Laman & Maybank Tower (Menara Maybank)

100 Jalan Tun Perak

Ensclosed within the dappled compound of Menara Maybank's south, towers Latiff Mohidin's 17-metre-tall *Keris* (1987) casting shadow over a water feature leading to the building's hawker centre. Nearby, nestled amidst trees is the bank's latest artistic addition – Yusof Ghani's *Segerak – One Movement, 1Malaysia* (2010) incorporating characters for the numeral one in Jawi, Chinese and Tamil.



Lat Cartoon Series at Masjid Jamek.

2.Masjid Jamek LRT

Jalan Melaka exit

Lat Cartoon Series (2016) by Sculptureatwork. Designed by legendary Malaysian cartoonist Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid, famously known as Lat, sculptures featuring famous characters are located around several spots within Kuala Lumpur including Masjid Jamek.



Lion sculpture at HSBC Bank Leboh Ampang.

3.HSBC Bank

Leboh Ampang

The HSBC lions have become distinctive landmarks in their own right in HSBC buildings the world over. The pair of *Lions* (1995) at HSBC's Kuala Lumpur headquarters was built by renowned sculptor Mohamed Shahabudin Abdul Salam.



Sculptor Mohamed Shahabudin and his work at the KLSE.

4.Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange

Bukit Kewangan

Bull and Bear (1997) by Mohamed Shahabudin Abdul Salam.



Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial.

5. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial

Jalan Dato' Onn

The tribute to the late Prime Minister called *Tunku Abdul Rahman* (1994) is carved out of a single block of solid granite which sculptor Mohamed Shahbudin Abdul Salam considers his most difficult work.



National Cenotaph.

6.National Monument (Tugu Negara)

Jalan Parlimen

Originally conceptualised by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Felix De Weldon's (US) 15.54-metre-tall bronze statuary commemorates the fallen heroes of World War II and the 12-year-communist insurgency known as the Malayan Emergency.

The cenotaph, designed by architectural firm Stark & McNeill, was first erected near the Kuala Lumpur Railway station by the British administration in memory of the fallen soldiers of World War 1. It was later edited to include the fallen from the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Emergency (1948-1960). It was moved to its current site in 1966.



ASEAN Sculpture Garden with sculpture by Itthi Khongkhakul.

7.ASEAN Sculpture Garden

Persiaran Sultan Salahuddin

Located within the Tugu Negara's complex lies a compact landscaped garden which fulfilled the fifth objective of the Fifth ASEAN Square Sculpture Symposium held in 1987. A collection of wood, marble, iron and bamboo installations were crafted and created by a select list of regional artistic powerhouses, including Han Sai Por (Singapore), Dolorasa Sinaga (Indonesia), Jerusalino V Araos (Philippines) and Malaysia's Father of Modern Art, the late Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal, in the hopes of influencing social change and raising public awareness of the ASEAN union.



Merdeka Sun Clock at the National Planetarium.

8.National Planetarium Kuala Lumpur

53, Jalan Perdana, Tasik Perdana

The Merdeka Sun Clock (1957) designed by Tan Sri Stanley Edward Jewkes commemorates Malaysia's independence. This meticulous and mathematically accurate sundial looks like a crescent moon of the federation government insignia. The clock originally decked the grounds between the Merdeka Stadium and the National Stadium before it was unfortunately demolished. Fortunately, the Head of the Planetarium Science Centre, Prof. Dr. Mazlan Othman, who appreciated the history, beauty and uniqueness of this sun dial, salvaged it from the heap of debris and had it restored and re-installed it within the premises of the National Planetarium.

Another sculpture using the symbolism of time is Ariffin Mohd Ismail's *Time and Space*, a winning entry from the Planetarium's Sculpture Design Competition in 1993. Also look out for replicas of the Stonehenge, Guo Shou Jing and the Jai Singh observatories in the small shaded area next to the guardhouse at the entrance of the Planetarium!



National Museum. Photo courtesy of Dave Sumpner.

9.National Museum (Muzium Negara)

Jalan Damansara

You can't miss the pair of mosaic murals across the museum's façade. Designed by Cheong Laitong (China), the stunning mosaics depict Malaysia's traditional crafts and the chronology of significant events in Malaysian history. Also within the grounds of the museum is a bronze statue (one of the surviving public sculptures erected during colonial Malaya) of British colonial officer, Sir Frank Athelstane Swettenham, made by Charles Leonard Hartwell and unveiled in front of the Kuala Lumpur's Government Building in 1921.



The Horse sculpture at St Regis Kuala Lumpur.

10. St. Regis

Jalan Stesen Sentral 2

Horse (2010) is a magnificent two-tonne horse sculpted by Colombian artist Fernando Botero. The horse stands at a statuesque 3.6 metre in height and is the largest of Botero's sculptures in the world.



Torana Gate at Brickfields.

11. Brickfields Junction

Jalan Rakyat, Brickfields

The centrepiece of Brickfields is the fountain, with its sculptures of elephants and peacocks, flanked by the two *Little India Dancers* (2010) by Sculpturework. Looming by closely is the magnificent *Torana Gate* (2015) by Akshaya Jain & Associates, which was a gift from the Government of India to Malaysia to celebrate their lasting friendship. In Hindu and Buddhist architecture, the torana is a sacred gateway into palaces, shrines and cities. The gifting of the torana gate symbolically recognises Brickfields as a sacred, palatial space.



Vision 2000 - Nine Challenges at Taman Wawasan.

12.Taman Wawasan Public Bank

Bangunan Public Bank

6 Jalan Sultan Sulaiman, Kampung Attap

Scattered around the park are sculptures inspired by Tun Mahathir Mohamad's '9 challenges' that Malaysians need to overcome to achieve Vision 2020. From an open call competition in 1993, the selected sculptures included Lee Kian Seng's *Vision 2020*, Raja Shahrman's *Vision 2020 – Growth Equity* and Zakaria Awang's *Vision 2020 – Nine Challenges*.



Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

13.Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka

Jalan Dewan Bahasa

Selected as the winner in a design competition, Ismail Mustam's mosaic mural, the *Malayan Way of Life and the National Language (Cara Hidup di Malaysia dan Bahasa Kebangsaan)* (1981), was created in accordance with the institute's founding goal to establish Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. The building is a testament to a newly-independent Malaysia's desire to visualise a unique national identity.



Pavilion Crystal Fountain. Photo courtesy of Ling Tang.

14. Pavilion Kuala Lumpur

168, Jalan Bukit Bintang

Pavilion Crystal Fountain (2007) by Liuligongfang from Taiwan ranks amongst the world's most beautiful fountains with its elaborate sculpture design. It stands 3.6 metres in height and 6 metres in width and has been acknowledged by the Malaysian Book of Records as the tallest Liuli Crystal Fountain in the country.



Helang by Ariffin Hamid at KL Citywalk.

15.KL City Walk

Jalan P. Ramlee

Sculptures and art installations by Ariffin Hamid, Faesal Saman and Pidotski are located throughout the 416m urban street arcade located within Kuala Lumpur's Golden Triangle.



Jubilation at the Marc residence.

16. Marc Residence

Jalan Pinang

Jubilation II (2009) by renowned artist Eng Tay is his ode to the simple joys in life.



Kinetik II at Petronas Twin Towers.

17. Petronas Twin Towers

Suria KLCC, Kuala Lumpur City Centre

Two kinetic sculptures *Kinetik I* and *Kinetik II* (1998) by Latif Mohidin spin luxuriously on their mechanical axis in the lobby of the Petronas Twin Towers, their perpetual movement reflecting the tireless creativity and growth of Petronas. In contrast, the *Whale And Dolphin* (1997) by John Underwood (Australia), lie still, their movements frozen in time within the serene pool of the KLCC park.



Breast Stupa Topiary at Ilham Tower.

18. Ilham Tower

8 Jalan Binjai

Divina Proportions (2006) by Ai Wei Wei (China) and *Breast Stupa Topiary* (2013) by Pinaree Sanpitak (Thailand) strike a sharp metallic contrast to the lush green backdrop surrounding Ilham Tower.



Wild Chili Couple at GTower.

19.GTower lobby

Jalan Tun Razak

The common chilli inspires artist Kumari Nahappan and her 5-metre bronze sculpture entitled *Wild Chili Couple* (2010) standing tall in the lobby of GTower bears testament to her inspiration.



Egg Sculpture and Chow Kit Heritage House at National Art Gallery.

20. National Art Gallery

2, Jalan Temerloh

Located in the front yard of the gallery is the Chow Kit Heritage House, the last standing Malay house in Chow Kit. Across the lawn is Wong Pey Yu's infamous red standing egg (still held in perfect balance!), one of the five winners of a sculpture competition in 2000.

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(Source: <https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/sunday-vibes/2019/10/531588/explore-public-art-scene-kuala-lumpur>)