

HOTEL ART COLLECTION

ORMOND
THE CHOW KIT

Introduction

There is something about Chow Kit that first makes you flinch, and then linger.

The Chow Kit neighbourhood is Malaysia in miniature: the effortless melding of culture and language – curling national languages undercut with accents from far flung places – the arrival of new visitors and dreamers into lived spaces, everyone living cheek-by-jowl. A city thrumming with new sights and smells, and the undeniable sense that change is just around the corner.

Chow Kit draws you in, every shadowy corner hiding another secret waiting to be discovered.



The Chow Kit Hotel is designed with a spirit of curiosity and inspired by the confluence of old and new Kuala Lumpur, a city of transition where people are always coming and going. Within the boutique hotel, spaces blossom into other another, each one crafted with a distinct persona and aesthetic – and despite their distinctions, every room is tied together by a sense of intimacy, elegance, and an undeniable Malaysian flavour.

The artworks featured in the hotel have been carefully selected to reflect the diversity of Malaysia's stories. Guests will encounter artworks by local artists, such as Ahmad Zakii Anwar, Saiful Razman, Bibi Chew, Liew Kwai Fei, Ang Xia Yi, James Seet, Hoo Fan Chon, among others, as well as the private collections of Dato' Kali Seri Kalimuhallah and Mr. Lim Kian Onn. The hotel's collection also includes a new commissioned artwork by Chong Siew Ying. All the works have been curated in collaboration with Liza Ho, an art consultant and gallerist.

Once you step through its front doors, you will recognise you've entered a different culture, new place that is definitely not home – nevertheless, curl up in an arm chair, meet a stranger, pluck a book off the shelf, and settle in.

Welcome home.

Flow (2019) by Chong Siew Ying

The Chow Kit Lobby



High above the wood panelling of the Lobby, you are greeted by Flow, a new commissioned artwork by Chong Siew Ying. Flow is a painting pure distillation of an “east meets west” sensibility, rooted in Chong’s education in Europe and her Malaysian upbringing. Though the painting is inspired by traditional Chinese watercolours, the work is crafted with Western mediums and perspectives, and a definite Southeast Asian influence: distant and misty mountains are foregrounded by spindly trees and sharp palm fronds rendered in violent strokes that spread and splinter, or dissipate into incorporeal clouds. Charcoal and acrylic medium both introduce a dynamism to Chong’s work that is expressive but tempered by the inherently meditative quality of the work’s depth and distance.

Chong Siew Ying is a visual artist based in Kuala Lumpur. In 1990, she moved to Paris to study at the École des Beaux-Arts de Versailles. Her artistic practice is grounded in both Eastern and Western painterly sensibilities, as well as references to literary themes and concepts. Her works embrace broad themes such as nature and human sentiments, while also displaying the important influence of her many travels. She has exhibited widely in a number of solo and group exhibitions in Asia, Europe and the USA.

Reclining Figure 6 (2015) by Ahmad Zakii Anwar

The Chow Kit Kitchen & Bar



Collection of Mr. Lim Kian Oon

Nothing tells you more about a culture than the food its people cook and consume, and nothing is more essential to Malaysian culture than food. Here, the Restaurant space is inspired by a persona that delights in the hedonisms of food and drink, where human connection is at once intimate and public.

The Restaurant features a figurative work by artist Ahmad Zakii Anwar, from his Reclining Figure series. Reclining Figure #6 is a large charcoal drawing that invites the eye to linger on the sensuous lines of the body, curving in one direction before doubling back – a quiet celebration of the human form. The work is nearly erotic in its blatant exploration of skin and muscle, yet private in its anonymity. Placed in a dimly lit corner, the artwork lends the space a quiet sense of intimacy – you're compelled to speak in near-whispers, bend your head close to your companions in conversation.

Ahmad Zakii Anwar is a visual artist born in the city of Johor Bahru. He graduated from the MARA Institute of Technology Malaysia (UiTM) and began his career as a graphic artist before embracing a fine art practice. Zakii became well-known for his photo-realistic still life paintings and portraits, though his later works would feature more urban settings and subjects. Zakii's work has been exhibited widely across Asia, as well as in Australia, Europe and North America.

Teapot (The Blue & White Collection) (2010 – 2012) by Hoo Fan Chon

The Chow Kit Kitchen & Bar



Also featured in the Restaurant space is a selection from Hoo Fan Chon's The Blue and White Collection (2010). The prints feature a teacup and a teapot constructed from paper printed with cyanotype, with reinterpretations of the popular "Willow Pattern", a design by 18th century English craftsmen and embellished with imaginary landscapes made up by oriental follies found in the UK.



Hoo Fan Chon is an artist and curator based in George Town, Penang, as well as a co-founder and member of the Run Amok art collective. Hoo graduated from the London College of Communication in 2010 with a BA in Photography. Notably, he was a finalist of the Saatchi Gallery's New Sensations 2010, and was mentioned in the 2011 edition of the Caitlin Guide. Hoo's work explores "taste" as a cultural and social construct, while also investigating how the processes of cultural translation and assimilation may have unexpected or incoherent results. Hoo's work has been exhibited both locally and internationally.

Red Head (2010) by Liew Kwai Fei

The Chow Kit Kitchen & Bar



Within the Restaurant space, diners will also encounter a piece by Liew Kwai Fei. In *Your Head* (2010), Liew's experience during his two month residency stay in Mumbai interplays with his own personal memories from his native Malaysia, thus creating a non-linear narrative that immerses the audience with rich tropical imagery and invites them to read their own meaning in the work. The work on display is a celebration of Malaysia's rich visual tradition, intermixed with a postmodern, borderless sensibility. The work suggests the possibility for new interpretations and variations on a theme, of a city life that is both local and international, new and old.

Liew Kwai Fei is an artist from Pahang but works and lives in Selangor. Spanning more than a decade, Liew's body of work include modular paintings and installation art that explore high and low culture alongside issues associated with the legacy of colonialism such as class, nationalism, and race. His practice is contextually specific to the artistic and political landscapes of the time, both locally and globally, while also exhibiting the idiosyncrasies and hybridity of his artistic style. He has exhibited in both Malaysia and Singapore, in both solo and group shows. Liew has also participated in a number of residencies locally and abroad in Australia, India and Pakistan.

Selected Works by Khalil Ibrahim

The Chow Kit Meeting Room



Collection of Dato' Seri Kalimullah

The space features a special selection of works by the late Khalil Ibrahim, drawn from the private collection of Dato' Seri Kalimullah, an art lover who has generously extended his art to be shared with other dreamers and travellers.

Khalil Ibrahim was born in 1934 in Kelantan state, and made a name for himself as master of figurative artwork, as well as batik paintings and landscapes. Khalil received formal training Central St Martins School of Art and Design in London and would later go on to create an impressive body of work over the next 50 years. He died in 2018.



Amongst local and international art collectors, Khalil's work is considered to be the high watermark of Malaysian artistic achievement – his evocative landscapes and abstract works helped create the primary language of what “Malaysian” art should look like. Especially prominent in his artwork is a visual lexicon informed by his East Coast life and heritage – fishermen, batik drying in the sun, beaches imprinted by human feet and endless horizons stretching out in blue gradations. The artworks are broadly figurative in nature, displaying Khalil's talent for envisioning the beauty of the human form and bringing them to life.

Selected Works by Khalil Ibrahim

The Chow Kit Meeting Room



Flower Head 11 & 4 by Ang Xia Yi

The Chow Kit Lobby



Two of the pieces on display by the hotel's lifts are selections from Xia Yi's photographic series, Flowerhead (2018). Flowerhead pays homage to Simryn Gill's A small town at the turn of the century (1999-2000) in which subjects' heads are substituted with tropical fruit. Gill's work explores how an artwork's subjects can be anonymised and their individual identities become variable with simple changes in their appearances and environment. Flowerhead explores similar terrain: individuals' heads are hidden by excessively large bouquets, thus turning humans into something strange while also humanising the natural world around them. The blended nature of the photograph's subjects suggests the transformative nature of the city itself: how does a neighbourhood change or define one's identity? How does the city's residents influence the character of a neighbour itself? Just as Gill's work seeks to investigate the artist's hometown as time and change envelop it, Xia Yi's

work explores the space between modern Kuala Lumpur and the natural, tropical world around it.

Ang Xia Yi is a visual storyteller and multidisciplinary artist based in Kuala Lumpur who works across the mediums of photography, fashion journalism and graphic design. In 2017, she began pursuing her degree in Fashion Journalism, at the University of the Arts London Central Saint Martins. Ang has interned with the London-based fashion houses, Hussein Chalayan and Xu Zhi.

Library



The Chow Kit Hotel's Library is a wood-paneled jewel box that features a special commissioned wallpaper by Josun Huakhuak, inspired by the stories and characters from the eclectic neighbourhood outside: the stall owners, historical figures, the diverse lives and experiences of the residents that have made this neighbourhood what it is. Each story and depictions honour the roots of the Chow Kit neighbourhood while also looking forward to what will come.

Staircase



Kuala Lumpur came of age in the time of photographs and mass media – the archives of storied newspaper organisations are rife with images of a city in transition, a city made of people, a city which has lost old neighbourhoods and gained new ones.





The Chow Kit Hotel honours the past through a number of old magazines articles, archival newspaper clippings and photographs culled from the extensive libraries of the New Straits Times daily and etching works of architecture. Some of these photos depict Chow Kit as it once was: bright pink mini buses clustered in a chaotic mess, the arteries of the city; endless numbers of umbrellas that shaded sellers and shoppers alike from the sweltering heat as they traded goods and money; the shaggy hairstyles and fashions from the 60s; a crowd of Sudirman fans enraptured by the performer.



Scattered amidst these photos are newspaper clippings of pre- and postindependence Kuala Lumpur. The city bore witness to the historical events of 1957, a story which was broadcast to the world through the headlines of daily newspapers: Merdeka! These newspapers are relics of a turbulent and rich history, full of images of the past and future potential: Tun Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's first Prime Minister declaring the country's independence, upturned faces of all races clustered in celebration, Kuala Lumpur rejoicing.



Alongside these visions of yesteryear are modern views of the city by photographer, Kenny Loh and printmaker, Mark Tan. Action-Reaction II, a giclée print on Hahnemühle German etching paper by Mark Tan is a black and white rendering of a city skyline that pierces an unrelenting black background. Through this work, Tan explores the notion of 'construction', particularly how the act of construction - whether it's building or artwork - reflects a desire to create and push boundaries. Construction is an act that sparks transformation.

One might consider The Chow Kit as an architectural experiment made in the same vein: can one building, one idea, transform and push the boundaries of the Kuala Lumpur of the future? Can it embody a regenerative force that might inspire other creators to drive the city's development in new and interesting direction? For Tan, the act of photographing, Kuala Lumpur enables him to portray the omnipresence of these creative and transformative desires, while also prompting viewers to ask themselves, "Why do we build?".

Guest Rooms



There is something particularly intimate about a guest room – they are the space travellers are most familiar with, it's the closest thing to “home” they will have in a new city. From the Chow Kit Hotel's guest rooms, travellers are invited to indulge and explore Kuala Lumpur.

The artworks featured in the guest room have been selected for their unique approaches to texture and material. The artists here are distinct, but they are united in a fascination with the feeling and fabric of objects. You would have a hard time resisting the urge to touch: carved wood panels, patterned ceramics, cloth sewn together in haphazardly charming chaos, softly corrugated and torn cardboard, and so on.

Every piece is a little weird, a little eclectic, and each one will evince a different reaction.

Where Have All The Flowers Gone (2019) by Bibi Chew



Bibi Chew is an acclaimed multi-disciplinary artist, whose work has been exhibited in Asia, Europe and North America. She has won the Singapore Della Butcher Award for Excellence in Painting, and in 2000, was the recipient of YCA Major Award by the National Art Gallery of Malaysia. Chew received a Diploma in Fine Arts (Painting) from the LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, and would later receive her BA and MA of Fine Arts from RMIT University, Melbourne. She currently serves as the Head of Illustration with the Malaysian Institute of Art.

The title *Where have all the flowers gone?* is taken from an antiwar song written by Peter Seegar in the 1950s. Chew takes the song as a point of departure to explore the loss of landscape and our natural “home”, the land beneath us. In this series, the artist delicately carved panels of plywood and applied lifting effects that trace the wood grain in whorls and waves, thus revealing and expressing the natural world’s inherent fragility.

Rhythm of Nature (2019) by James Seet



James Seet is a Kuala Lumpur-based ceramics artist, with over 20 years of experience in Malaysia's advertising industry. James began his ceramics practice with a stint with local potter, Yeow Seng Cheah, and would later go on to attend artist residencies in Australia, Canada and Japan. James' work has been widely featured abroad, across Southeast Asia, North America and Europe, in solo and group exhibitions.

His pieces in the Rhythm of Nature series explore the dynamism of forms and movement throughout the natural world. James' work is greatly informed by a creative spontaneity, his work is never manufactured or overtly precise – they are driven by a tightly controlled randomness that is wholly individual. In Rhythm of Nature, James embeds unglazed clay slabs with recurring patterns and organic forms that invite touch and sensation.

On The Road (2019) by Liew Sze Lin



Liew Sze Lin is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Kuala Lumpur, who has exhibited works in her native city. Liew received her Diploma in Fine Arts from the Dasein Academy of Art in Malaysia. Liew's work is primarily focused on forms of abstraction, as well as the potentials for using painting as a medium for a refined and subtle sensibility.

On the Road is inspired by Liew's travels and the places she has visited. On the Road comprises a series of mix-medium collages where loose seams, simple forms and collected fabrics that appear ripped straight off the loom are pulled together in a hodgepodge of debris and disconnection. The artwork is almost map-like in their construction – red and white threads trace their way across beige surfaces like roads, highways and borders. For Liew, the work is focused on questions of how existence is built through encounter and connection – every seam is a tenuous but real relationship, mundane yet essential.

Castle in the Air (2015) by Lok How Yuan



Lok How Yuan is a painter and academic based in Kuala Lumpur with an extensive creative career both locally and internationally. Lok received his first formal training at the Malaysian Institute of Art in Kuala Lumpur, and would later further his studies in San Francisco's Art Institute. His work has been featured in seven solo shows, as well as a handful of group exhibitions. Lok's artistic practice is particularly focused on ink and acrylic pieces. Aside from his artistic practice, Lok also works as a part-time lecturer and art writer.

Shadows and Rhythm (2013) by Lok How Yuan



Lok How Yuan's pieces – comprising of selections from two series, Castle in the Air and Shadows & Rhythms – feature acrylic paintings on torn pieces of corrugated cardboard. The contrasting textures highlight the particular disparities of the distinct layers of cardboard; black paint creates stark lines of difference from the accordion ridges of the underlying surfaces. The corrugations of cardboard are meant to reinforce its strength as a material, and in these series, Lok displays an interest in the function of cardboard itself, down to its foundational layers.

Revolution Starts from Bed (2019) by Saiful Razman



Saiful Razman is a multi-disciplinary artist, with roots in Perak state but lives and works in Kuala Lumpur. He received his bachelor's degree in painting from the MARA Technological University, and has since created an artistic practice that includes collage works, abstract oil paintings, and cross-medium pieces. His work has been exhibited widely, both locally and internationally; most notably, Saiful has been featured in solo shows in Jakarta, the 18th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh, and the 2017 Bank Negara Malaysia show, "The Unreal Deal: Six Decades of Malaysian Abstract Art".

In *Revolution Starts from Bed*, Saiful explores questions about existence by manipulating everyday objects scattered throughout his life into drawings and collages: medical gauze, tissues paper, aerosol spray and the like. In the *Revolution Starts from Bed*, these items are stretched out, combined and reinforced with polyvinyl adhesive in larger constructions in a series of grids, structures and layers. The shapes are precise and yet broken through an experimentation process that both highlights and diminish the materials' original physicality. These pieces ask us what are the "inherent" qualities of these pieces? Do they retain their original forms even if it's shifted just a little? Is medical gauze still medical gauze if it's been transformed into something inflexible? If not, what is it now?

String Theory (2019) by Shan Shan Lim



Shan Shan Lim is a multidisciplinary artist, textile and surface designer based in Kuala Lumpur. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins. Lim's work is inspired by her childhood in both Malaysian and India, where both cultures converge and diverge. Her work takes its cues from her love of nature, memories, and imagery collected from her travels.

In String Theory, Lim explores the world of embroidery and woven texture, the thread acting as a kind of journeyman that travels across the cloth. String Theory features Tenun Pahang Diraja fabric, hand-dyed pure silk fibres handwoven in collaboration with the weavers of Pahang. Each piece has been hand embroidered with delicate modern shapes and structures – rectangles within rectangles, one shape sitting akimbo to the next. Within these shapes, Lim's artistic sensibility traverses across colour, warp and weft, delicate and subtle in its expression.

