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**A new element in Zinc** *By Rachel Jena*

***A new year and a new space for KLites to revel in creativity and art. Rachel Jena looks up Zinc art space in Bangsar.***

If you or your oversized handbag have ever been involved in an unfortunate collision with an expensive sculpture, fret no longer for there's a new art space in town that looks to eradicate this problem forever.

Zinc art space opened late last year and the most noticeable thing about it is that the open-plan space is vast. It also ticks all the right boxes in terms of what contemporary art galleries should look like with its minimal design and wide use of exposed concrete. Natural light streams in through glass panels, and if the breadth of space or magnificence of the art pieces overcome you, there are some strategically placed benches for you to kick up your feet and relax. The space is nestled along a busy stretch in trendy Bangsar in between a car showroom and an Indian temple. Greeting you at the entrance to the 5,000 sq ft space is a bright yellow organic sculpture by Ahmad Osni Peii (titled 'Sibayak'). It's fun, engaging, and sets you in good spirits for the artworks inside.



At time of writing, the artworks on display at Zinc were – for lack of a suitably academic word – very trendy. A recycled metal sculpture of a dog by Indonesian artist, I Nyoman Agus Wijaya, was gazing fixedly at the entrance and there was also a highly captivating self-portrait by local artist, Nurazmal @ Ali Mohd Yusoff, where he portrayed himself as a clown with his arms outstretched like a crazed puppeteer. Compelling stuff and definitely pleasing to the eyes.

'We really want to bring the best of pop culture to KL,' says Tong Chee Wei, the space's Managing Director. Meeting the demands of the mainstream art market, Zinc's main trade will be in paintings, though they'll also be showcasing installations and sculptures. Some knowledge of Zinc's close relative, H5, also helps. H5, a store in Bangsar Village II that carries cult high-end brands like Nooka, Feiyue, and Alive Tokyo, is a sleek, futuristic space that displays its very cool products like art objects.

Tong, also the founder of the store, says, 'At H5, the philosophy is to lend a voice to a subculture that already exists in pockets around the city.' Tong hopes that Zinc will extend this further. He's careful, for example, in defining his new baby. 'It's a creative art space and not a gallery per se.' He also adds that he wants to leave it to the public to define the word 'creative'.

It does sound offbeat and a bit vague, but really what Tong is hinting at is the space's flexibility. He's looking to go beyond a gallery's regular services, for instance, and to tailor projects that enable collaborations with high-end brands. The space, in short, will be where fashion, music, and art can collide. 'We want to be associated with pop culture and anything urban, current, and forward,' he adds.

There's justification for this slant. Tong, a collector himself, has over sixteen years of experience in high-end fashion retail. He'll be transferring his acumen in this area into the art business, which may brew something new and interesting in how art is marketed locally. There's also the prospect of widening the range of collectors and art lovers too, which is always a perk.



Joining Tong in Zinc's endeavours is resident curator, Imaya Wong, and space assistant, Hudd Salleh. Both are artists themselves and the trio hope to host exhibitions by three international artists per year, along with a monthly rotation featuring local ones.

Since opening, they've been working hard to keep to these goals. Last month, they started their MINDstyle LIFEstyle series with an exhibition called Family Tradition featuring works by vinyl toy pioneer, Michael Lau. Hailing from Hong Kong, Lau is often dubbed the 'Godfather' of the vinyl art movement and hugely popular amongst art toy collectors. His 'Crazy Children' series, for example, has spawned many imitations but nothing with the same astronomical price tags as the originals. Does it count as art? Well, why not? Zinc's choice in bringing in artists like Lau is basically a challenge to the widely held notion of the artist romantically garbed in paint-splattered clothes working frantically at his masterpiece.

So with Zinc, it looks like audiences in KL will get to enjoy a wider variety of art. Just how the more established galleries and art practitioners will react remains to be seen, but it's always good to see a new kid on the block. Do drop in to say hello.

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Zinc Art Space, Lot 61, Jalan Maarof, Bangsar.  
(03 2282 5388/[www.zinc.com.my](http://www.zinc.com.my))  
Mon-Sat 11am – 6pm, closed Sundays and public holidays

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