

# THE WHEELS OF LIFE

**Marginalised communities helped to create abstract works using adapted bicycle wheels in a project by Hings Lim, a Malaysian artist profiled in our latest partnership with Richard Koh Fine Art.**

**TWO OF THE DEVICES** look like unicycles without the saddle, while another pair of machines consist of horizontal poles bearing two or three bicycle wheels each. Paint-flecked and displayed in an artist's studio, the devices might themselves be mistaken for art; however, for Hings Lim, a Malaysian artist based in Kuala Lumpur, they are not the work but the tool.

In *Reciprocity*, his exhibition at Richard Koh Fine Art, Lim took his wheels out on to the streets, seeking out areas where Kuala Lumpur's populations of



**ROLL PLAYING:** Lim ventured into areas of Kuala Lumpur where refugees, foreign workers and immigrants live and work.



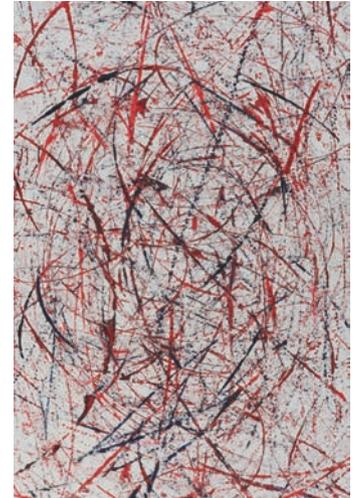
immigrants, foreign workers and refugees live and work. He lay large canvases flat on the ground and invited residents and passers-by to dip the wheels in acrylic paint and roll them across the surface to create patterns. Essentially, the project was an outdoors, participatory art installation, where many hands came together to make art.

The results were similar to early experiments in abstract expressionism. The marks left by the bicycle wheels are reminiscent, for instance, of the colourful trails left by Jackson Pollock as he dribbled paint from cans over his famous canvases of the 1940s and 50s. Like Pollock's work, the paintings could be seen as depictions of nature, the lines seeming to form a tangled thicket in a wood. Another interpretation is that they are crude maps, the



projects and workshops.

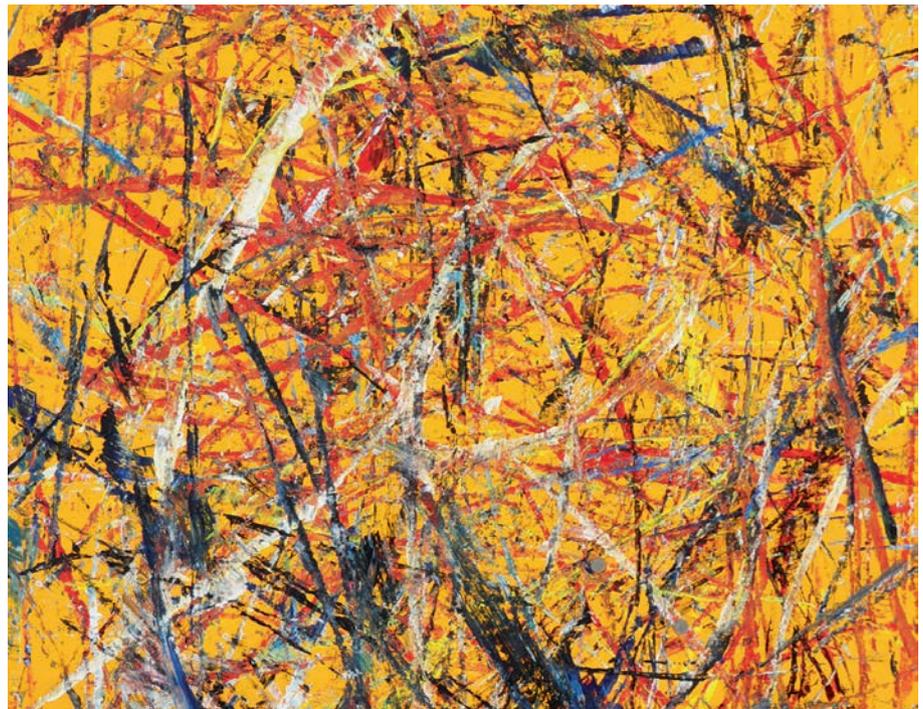
**Established in 2005, Richard Koh Fine Art showcases Southeast Asian art in Malaysia and the region from its gallery in Kuala Lumpur**



marks of the wheels indicating roads or paths across a nameless landscape.

Photography accompanying the *Reciprocity* paintings shows that the event was quite a spectacle, with crowds of several dozen people surrounding the canvas to watch as people took turns to apply paint to the work. The contributors are not individually credited, a decision taken by Lim because he wanted to “complicate” the idea of authorship. By creating the circumstances in which groups of non-artists come together, outside of a studio, to create art anonymously, Lim is stretching our understanding of what it means to be an artist.

The work has a political edge. By going to the parts of town where marginalised communities live and extending to them the freedom to express themselves on canvas, Lim is underlining how often the rights of these communities are overlooked. In many parts of the world, refugees are seen as a burden rather than as individuals with their own



creative abilities.

Born in 1989, Lim studied fine arts at the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia. In 2012, he was awarded the Petronas-P Ramlee Chair’s award, which supports research work. Since 2013, he has worked with the National Visual Arts Gallery on community art

**FOLLOWING IN HIS FOOTSTEPS:** The marks left by the bikes are similar to Jackson Pollock’s colourful paint trails in the 1940s and 50s.

