

# Klang River Graffiti, a creative visual space

THE Klang River Graffiti is a wall of visual and graphic representation on the banks of the Klang/Gombak river. Running a span of almost 3km on both sides of the river, the graffiti images were painted over the course of nearly 10 years (from 2005) by a motley crew of graffiti artists with a diverse range of styles.

With about 32 images on the left bank (on which construction is now ongoing) and 46 images on the right, starting from the staircase of the Pasar Seni LRT landing, the visual images continue further up to the river banks adjacent to Central Market, with another 16 large visuals on the left and eight on the right side of the river.

Sadly, the graffiti and street art images on the left side of the Klang River are now in a derelict state with the ongoing River of Life (RoL) beautification and development project which was started in 2012 by the Government's reform agency, Pemandu. The project, which costs RM4.4 bil, involves the cleaning, beautification and development of the 10.7km stretch of river, with



emphasis on the area adjacent to Masjid Jamek, a popular tourist attraction.

The current phase of the project has so far decimated 30% of the graffiti/street art visuals on the left bank of the river and the remaining art works will soon be either destroyed or removed with the ongoing phase of the RoL project.

Fellow Klang River graffiti artists also no longer paint on the walls due to the current construction work, save for perhaps an occasional artist or two who ven-

ture on the right bank of the river.

This is the sad plight of the "Klang River Graffiti Walls" as it is now not the hive of activity it was three years ago. Graffiti visualisers would climb the metal railings in the early hours of morning (to escape the mid-day heat) to paint and various individuals would showcase their diverse designs, colour styles and motifs (at times competitively) on the walls. The vibrant graffiti were artworks to behold.

Some visuals had elements of

street art and the Klang River walls were a thriving creative microcosm of ingenuity and talent.

I strongly advocate the preservation of the walls and propose that future RoL projects reserve/provide wall space (with demarcated boundaries) for the graffiti/street art visualisers to continue making the walls, and the Klang River walls, their "creative pulse".

And just as the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers brought trade and commerce that transformed Kuala Lumpur into a cosmopolitan city, the Klang River graffiti/street art scene could undergo a similar resuscitation and add a certain vibrancy and creative pulse that is contrasted to concrete KL.

With proper planning, policy, support and legislation, the Klang River graffiti/street art has the potential to launch Kuala Lumpur as a creative city with a vibrant, thriving and active cultural and arts scene in the region.

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