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BY **KERRINE GOH**
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This week, in the series By People / In Cities, the third Kuala Lumpur-based interview introduces Michelle Alice Tan, a young design advocate who wants to trigger social change in her country.

Q: If you had to pick a word that captures KL, what would it be?

Learning.

It's a learning city. A city that tries to be like other big cities, but what it

really needs is to first discover itself.

Q: How would you describe KL's creative community?

Growing at great speed.

The crowd's great, all it needs right now are more doers.

Q: Who are the latest movers and shakers?

Organizations

thinklab(c) in guiding the local design policy makers (i.e.: MRM, the Malaysian Design Council) to up their game. The **British Council in Malaysia** greatly supports the local creative scene as well.

Community

There's a growing community of young web designers/developers and designers that are putting ideas together to create change.

Venues

There are a few commercial complexes that are focused on growing the creative scene much more aggressively and have become a sanctuary for designers to belong to.

Q: What are the biggest challenges for culture and creativity in KL?

I love my country, but like other places (i.e. Singapore & Seoul) where design is placed with greater priority within policy making and industrial export, we need to start understanding that design is beyond mere aesthetics.

Q: Is the future bright for KL?

It is definitely, but I can see that other Malaysian cities such as George Town and Kuching will soon be leading the way as creative cities of Malaysia. What KL needs is the right policy makers with a genuine understanding of design and innovation.

*Michelle Alice Tan, advocate on design for social change, worked at design-research organisation, **thinklab©**, for 2 years with the intention to inspire local designers. There, she organised and hosted over 6 design conferences within KL and Penang. Michelle has also*

*recently completed a research paper on local Humanitarian Design efforts, and led a home building project for indigenous people called **E.P.I.C. Homes** (Extraordinary People Impacting Communities).*

She is the founder of the Youth Design Network (YDN) which seeks to showcase Malaysia's budding young designers to the world through design servicing.

Read more:

[Kuala Lumpur city profile](#)

[Interview with Grey Yeoh, designer and arts manager at the British Council Malaysia](#)

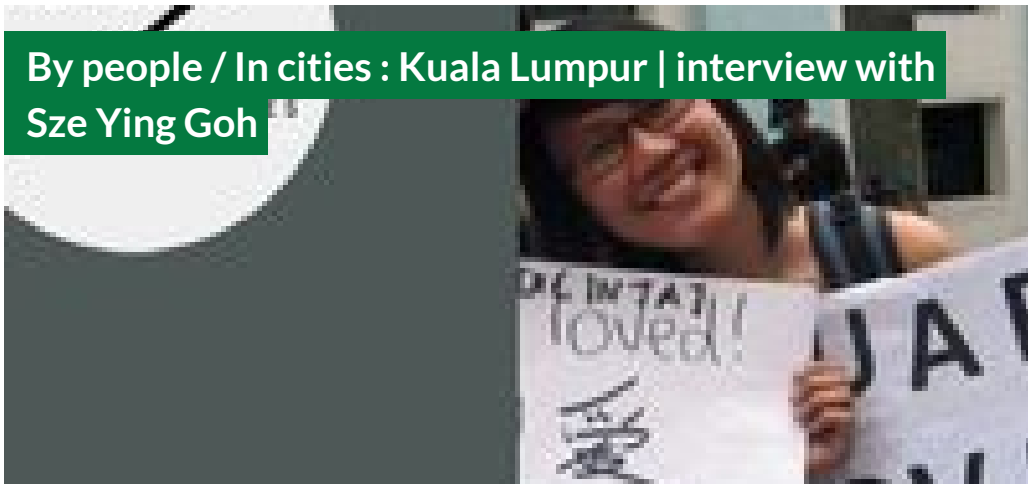
[Interview with Vishal J. Singh, design and architecture consultant](#)

***By people / In cities** is a series of articles and interviews that aims to enhance the understanding of art and culture in Southeast and East Asia through individual stories and perspectives including artists, cultural practitioners, and policy makers from the following 6 cities: Bangkok, Jogjakarta, **Kuala Lumpur**, **Phnom Penh**, **Hong Kong** and Singapore.*

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