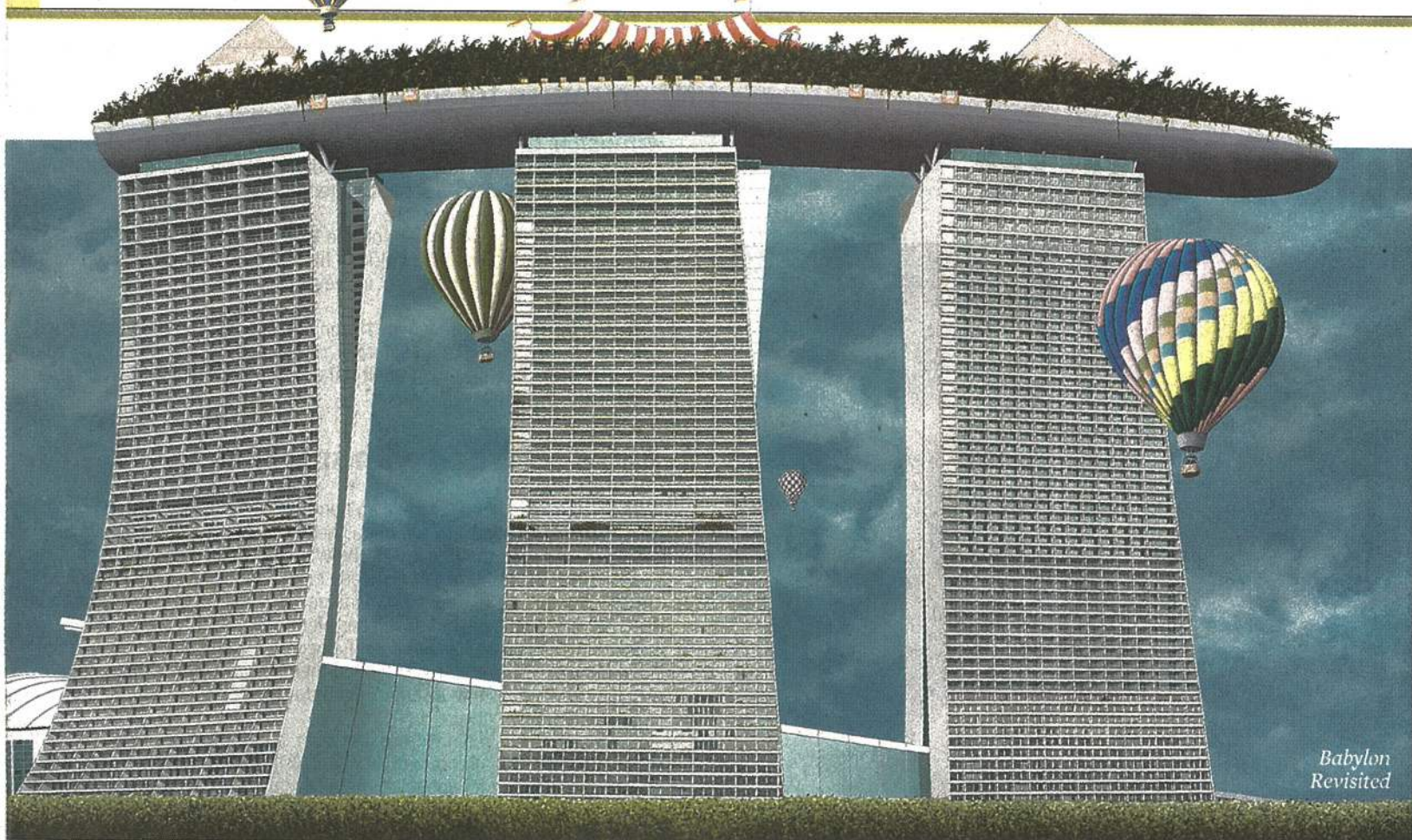


ENTERTAINMENT

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Courtesy of Melbourne the Photographer

KEN PATTERN LAMPOONS MARINA BAY SANDS

Ken Pattern, a Canadian-born artist who has called Indonesia home for the past 25 years, is renowned for his drawings and stone lithographs that meticulously document the changing urban landscape of Jakarta.



JP/Meghan Downes

Meghan Downes
THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

His latest exhibition, "On Marina Bay", focuses on a very different city: Singapore. The pieces in this collection depict surreal and absurd versions of Singapore's Marina Bay Sands, an expensive integrated resort and casino complex that opened in 2010.

In one painting, *The Wiener Takes All*, the building's upper section is replaced with a giant sausage, while *Silverado* sees the complex reclaimed by jungle foliage.

In other pieces we see hot-air balloons, circus tents, bananas, enormous sharks, sand dunes and waterfalls. The paintings are bright and playful, with a sharp satirical edge that pokes fun at the excesses of contemporary Singaporean life.

The current exhibition at Galeri Hadiprana in Kemang, South Jakarta, which runs until Jan. 4 next

year, also includes an impressive retrospective of his works since the early 1980s, some of which are being displayed in Indonesia for the first time.

Pattern explained that he ended up in Jakarta by pure chance; his wife was offered a one-year contract with an aid project in 1988, and here they remain, 25 years later.

He admitted that he knew very little about Indonesia before moving here.

"Most Canadians don't even know where Indonesia is," he said.

But Jakarta's distinctive streetscapes, filled with contrasts and contradictions, immediately captured his imagination, and he has been creating beautiful images of the city's local kampung areas ever since.

"I wanted to know what was beyond the walls," Pattern said when asked what first drew him into the narrow lanes and backstreets. "Most foreigners live in cages, but there is so much going on in the kampung areas."

He described these areas as "labyrinths" where one could wander for hours, and recounted how he "always came out exhausted and sweaty, but fulfilled and elated by the contact with people."

"People are so hospitable [...] all you need is a smile," he added. When he noticed local kampung areas being bulldozed and replaced with skyscrapers during the 1990s, he felt like his artwork was an important way to document these disappearing communities.

"Kampung buildings may not have much architectural value, but they definitely have social heritage."

At a leisurely pace, the artist shared these stories, pointing out his

art really is all about these personal experiences.

While walking through the exhibition, he told fascinating anecdotes behind each artwork, such as when he discovered the old man featured in his lithograph *Eyewitness* was in fact blind, and when, during a previous exhibition at the Four Seasons Hotel, a hotel worker approached him excitedly, explaining that he lived in one of the riverside houses in his *Kali Sunter* piece.

He also enjoyed pointing out the jokes and puns he has worked into many of the pieces and their titles. A recent lithograph titled *All about Mie* features a food cart proclaiming "Mie Ayam Here", which read aloud is "Me, I am here" though it actually advertises chicken noodle soup.

Another more serious wordplay appears in *Still Life*, a classic painting title, which also references the green shoots of living foliage among a maze of black-and-white banyan roots.

"There's no such thing as a bad pun," he insisted, with a cheeky grin.

He takes the wordplay up a notch in his Marina Bay project, with titles like *Lone Shark*, *Hot Air*, *The Wiener Takes All*, *Spitting Image* and *Pisang - Marina Bay*, all offering playful double meanings.

Pattern described the Marina Bay pieces as "pure satire" directed at the hedonistic consumerism represented by the complex.

"I love architecture. I'm basically a frustrated architect — but I was no good at math so I chose art instead," he said.

When he explored the building more closely, he discovered that "it really is an icon of Singapore, with casinos and malls, gambling and shopping, a kind of modern Babylon [...] a place of indulgence."

Ken Pattern



Courtesy of Melbourne the Photographer

The Wiener Takes All

For Pattern, it has been "a fun year" working on this satirical material, because "Marina Bay just begs to be lampooned!"

When asked if he thinks Jakarta will ever be at risk of becoming like Singapore, he replied emphatically: "Not a chance."

"Jakarta and Singapore are polar opposites. I'm glad Singapore is there, but I wouldn't want to live there. Sure, it's orderly, clean, with good health care and so on, but I prefer the anarchy of Jakarta."

What's next? Pattern is never idle for long and his next project will move away from the strong narrative focus of the Marina Bay pieces, focusing instead on color and imagery.

"I'm currently playing with rain-forest imagery, tracing a fine line between abstract and hyper-realist modes of expression," he said.

The writer is an intern at The Jakarta Post.



Courtesy of Melbourne the Photographer

All about Mie