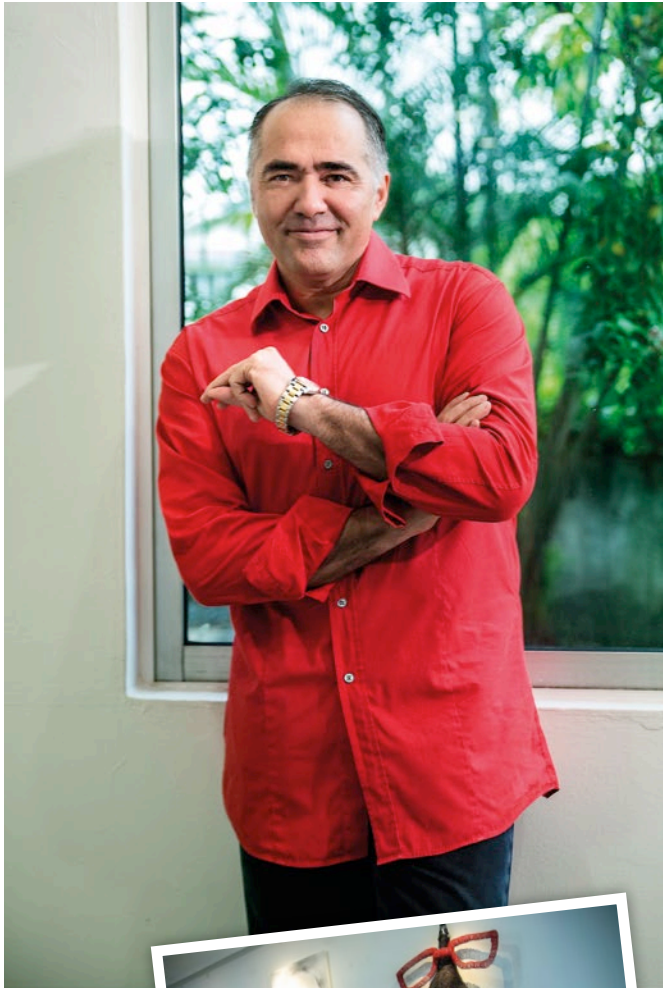


text WENSHAN PANG  
portrait photography ANDREW O/  
ABSOLUTE ART CREATIONS



**who** PATRICE VALLETTE  
**why** THE FRENCHMAN AIMS  
TO BRING MALAYSIAN ART TO  
THE WORLD STAGE  
**what gets him out of  
bed in the morning**  
“LIFE.”

Patrice Vallette admits that he had no prior experience in art before establishing Gallery Fine Art 69. He is driven by sheer passion. “It was amazing growing up in France because art is everywhere,” recalls the gallery owner, who now calls Kuala Lumpur home. “During my younger days, I was interested in photography but put it on hold to concentrate on my business.”

His business in healthcare brought him to live in cities like Athens and Istanbul where his appreciation for art grew. “Art is important for your health,” he says with a laugh, when asked how two seemingly bipolar roads that are healthcare and art converge in his life. “It is good for your soul.” The father of two did not consider venturing into art until 2011, when he moved to Malaysia. “I was intrigued by the richness of Malaysian art and started buying and collecting them.”

What started out as a mere interest soon evolved into something more significant. After amassing an enviable collection, Patrice began holding private viewings at his home. Last year, he decided to take the plunge by opening his own gallery – right in his own backyard. What Gallery Fine Art 69 is now was in fact the pool house of his residence in Damansara Heights. Patrice handpicks the artists and coordinates the exhibitions himself. Since June 2013, the Gallery has hosted a myriad of Malaysian painters, photographers and sculptors like Lim Kim Hai, Marvin Chan, Ng Foo Cheong, Tan Chee Hon and Jamil Zakaria.

Patrice has, inevitably, attracted much scepticism when his gallery first opened its doors. After all, it’s hard not to wonder: what does a French man know about Malaysian art? But he is unnerved. “I am a dreamer and I believe that good things happen,” he says optimistically. “The competition between galleries in KL is tight but I enjoy being one of the players. It’s not just about winning and I certainly did not do this to be famous.” ●

**Gallery Fine Art 69 is at 22 Jalan Bruas, Damansara Heights, Kuala Lumpur, tel: +6019-301-2569. Sublime & Infernal by French artist Yvan Magnani runs till 14 June.**



upper sculptures and paintings by local artists Jamil Zakaria and Faizal Suhif. lower The gallery looks out to the swimming pool.