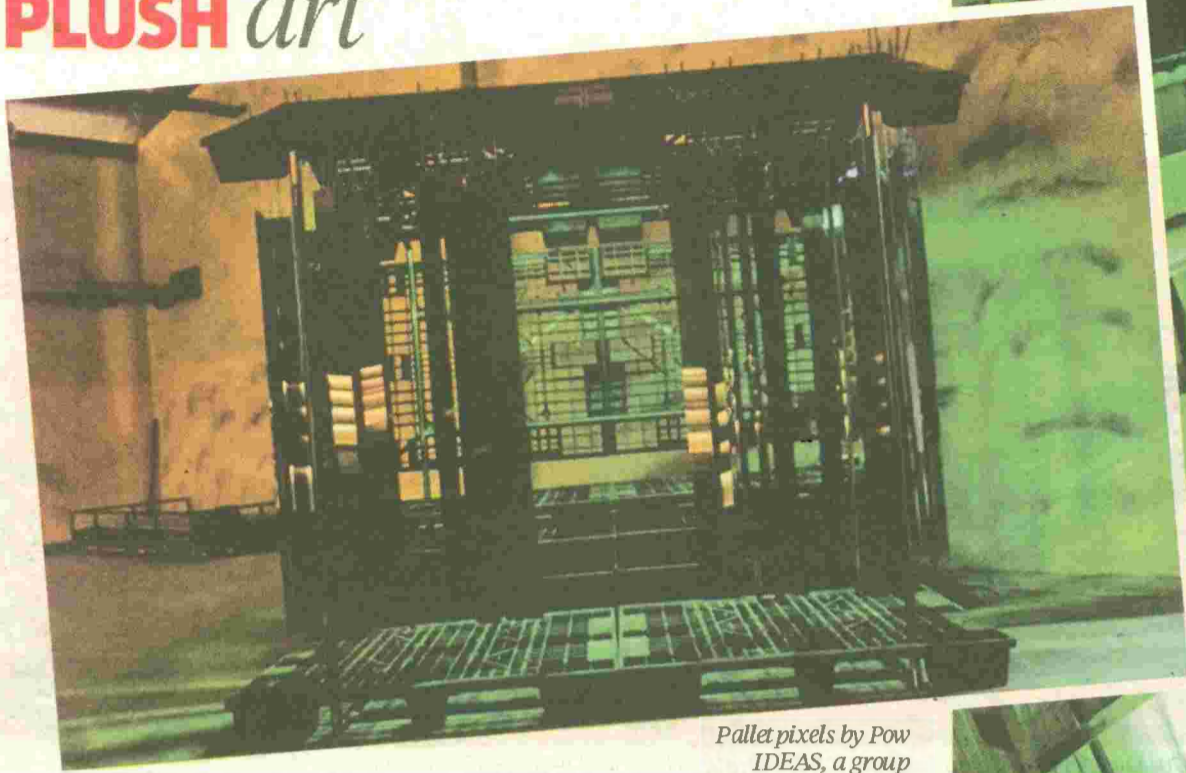


BROUGHT TO YOU BY LIFE & TIMES

**PLUSH art**



*Pallet pixels by Pow IDEAS, a group co-founded by Kyle.*

**A**RTISTS Matthieu Mertens, Callen Tham and Kyle E Yon Kyle have two things in common. Firstly, all three are artists. Secondly, they are using their craft to ignite creativity among city folk.

The idea they have is very simple: They want people in the city to move past the screens of their smartphones and engage in face-to-face conversations that could spark creative ideas. To do that, the trio have now combined their craftsmanship in Shape Your City, a campaign by Heineken to inspire city dwellers to express themselves through non-digital interaction.

The installations were first displayed at Hin Bus Depot in Penang on July 30 and have now made their way to various locations in Kuala Lumpur.

**DISTORTED VIEW**

The aim of such a programme is to create functional installations to help breathe life into unexpected and often neglected spaces in the city. A case in point is a breathtaking installation called Koleidoscope by Themancalleduncle, whose real name is Callen Tham. The installation comprises

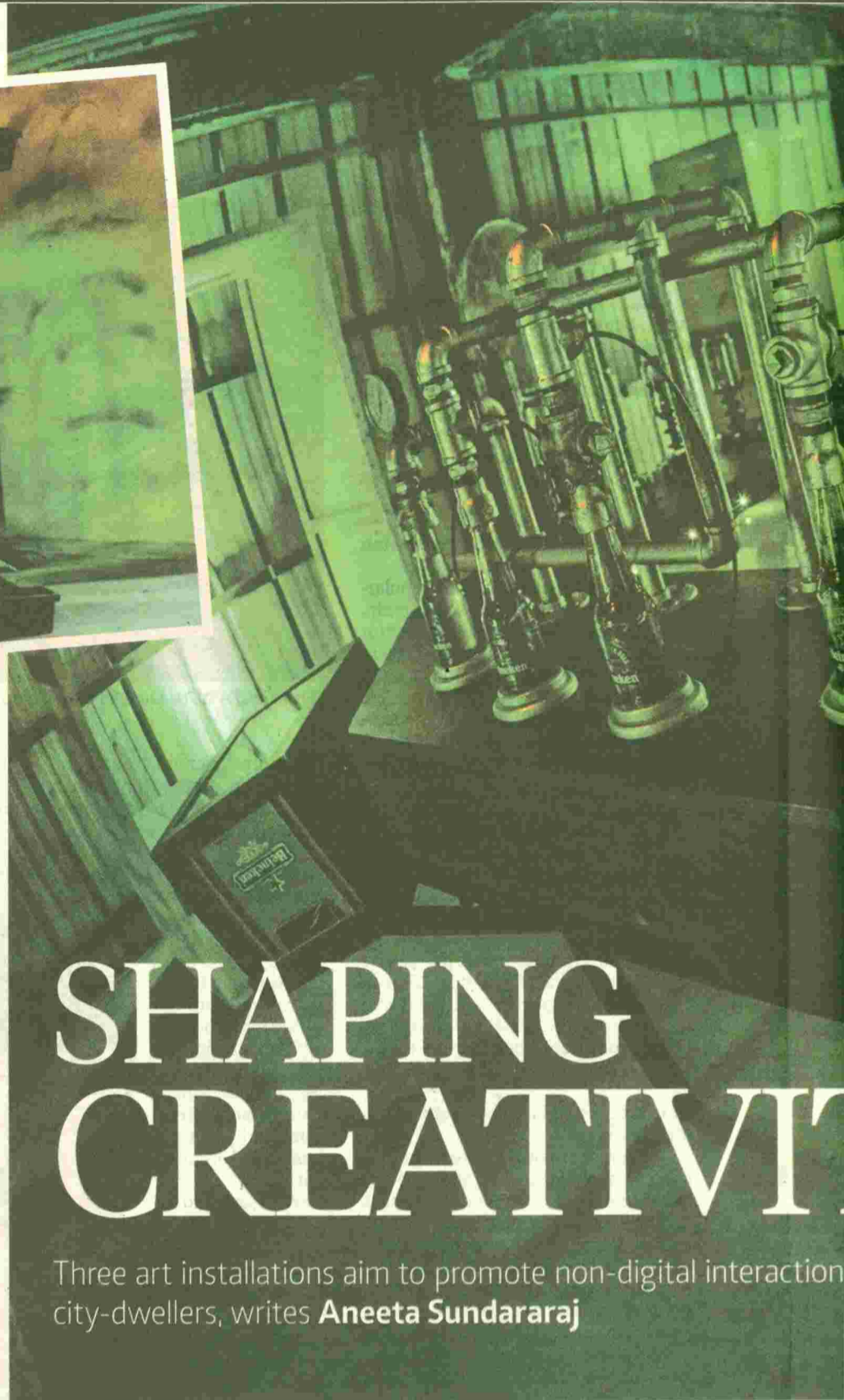
rotatable mirrored panels. When you rotate these panels, you distort the image that's reflected and get a new point of view of our urban surroundings.

"It's an abstract way of looking at a city," says the 49-year-old native of Sabah, adding: "I want people to look at that and then come up with their own interpretation."

Although this piece suggests that Tham is a serious man, a glimpse into his history reveals something altogether different. For one, he's a self-made man, having left Sabah for Kuala Lumpur straight after school. Seeing and seizing all the opportunities that came his way, he worked hard and today, owns and manages three companies. Very early on, he learnt a big lesson about prioritising what was important and says, tongue-in-cheek: "Don't buy a girl a pizza on the first date. At almost RM50 per meal, there's very little left when you have only RM100 in your pocket."

**INCREMENTAL HOUSING**

Developing another perspective to how things are seen is also a skill that Kyle E Yon Kyle has mastered. Born in Malacca,



**SHAPING CREATIVITY**

Three art installations aim to promote non-digital interaction among city-dwellers, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**



*Themancalleduncle's Koleidoscope is made out of rotating mirrored panels.*



*(From left) Matthieu Mertens, Callen Tham and Kyle E Yon Kyle.*

Kyle asked his an...  
Cor that a to mal profes Lump being l he dec Ho Kylea Austr story o skires —ago budget insulte him at untary realise work on the destroy Whi though the tim Thecli

## artPLUSH BROUGHT TO YOU BY LIFE & TIMES

Initiative's piece called Synth City Table. Using the idea of the bar as the central collective hub, the challenge German-French engineer Matthieu Mertens and his teammates faced, was to create an environment that inspires conversations and forges new connections among Heineken's consumers.

In a practical sense, when you approach Synth City Table and touch parts of it, you will trigger various touch-sensors. This will generate light and sound, which encourages guests to interact and connect with one another. "It's a collective jam session," explains Mertens.

### DUALITY

Today, all the lessons this landscape architect has learnt can be crystallised into the following question: How can we adapt to the brief that changes? It's the foremost question Kyle asks whenever he creates a design. One answer is the two-piece installation he designed and created for the Shape Your City campaign. It's made from shipping pallets and called Palletpixels by Pow Ideas.

The idea is for city dwellers to understand the duality of life in a city like Kuala Lumpur.

"On the one hand, you have something as fascinating as Chow Kit," says the 30-year-old. "It's the seedier side of the city but one that has the most interesting market and very good food. On the other hand, you have something like KLCC Park. But you're not allowed to do this and that. It's the Yin and Yang of a society."

Keeping that in mind, the black version of the installation represents the dark and gritty aspects of urban dwelling. On the other hand, you have the white version of the installation, which represents a clean and pristine interpretation of the city.

Describing this two-piece installation as being "very instagrammable", Tham interjects to point out the non-digital aspect of it. Reinforcing this point, Kyle says: "This is to make people more tactile. We hear a lot, we see a lot. But we don't feel our city. Touch is a choice, it has texture to it."

As Mertens concludes: "We want people to talk about our pieces. We want them to experience them and then say to their friends, 'Eh, come. Join us. Let's play.'"

ITY  
among

ys that as a child, whenever he was what he'd like to be when he grew up, wer was "artist".  
vinced by the adults around him tists are often poor, he was asked e an "Asian decision" and choose a ion instead. At the time, the Kuala r International Airport was also ult. Duly inspired by this structure, ded to become an architect.  
ever, it wasn't all smooth-sailing for architecture school in Melbourne, ia. As part of his training, he tells the time he was required to design a rt, which had to have a unique feature den flagpole. When Kyle asked for a within which to work, his client was d and asked Kyle how he questioned out a budget. Perplexed by this invol-affront to the rich man's ego, Kyle also d that, in future, he wanted only to designs and properties that focused need for incremental housing without ing social structures that are in play. at, precisely, does that mean. ? To illustrate, Kyle shares about e he worked on aboriginal housing. ents had a simple enough request: A

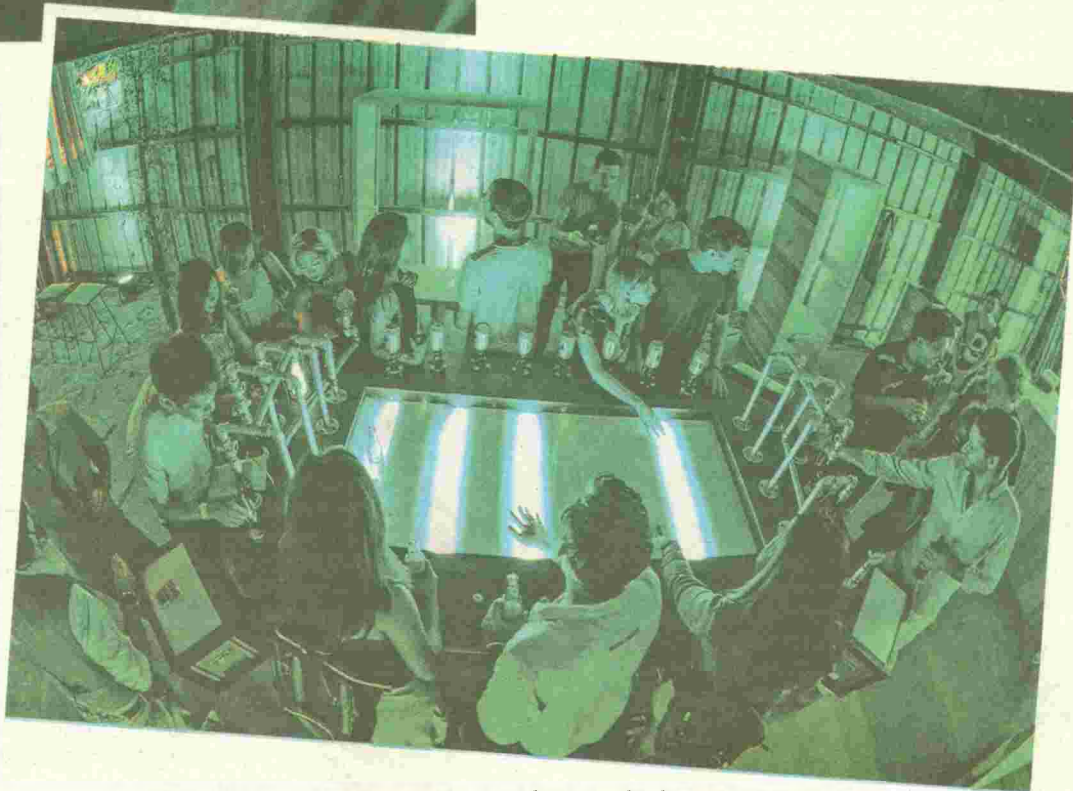
stove. When one was installed, to his surprise, the clients switched on all four hobs and put a kangaroo on top of it.

"They used it as they would a cooking pit in the ground," he says, once our laughter dies down. Eventually, Kyle modified the design and created an outdoor kitchen where there was a space in the ground to build a proper pit.

In the years since this lightbulb moment, Kyle's completed his post-graduate qualifications in architecture and learnt other lessons with the foremost being, to recognise what is sometimes not obvious. He smiles and explains this curious statement: "I was teaching in a local college recently and showed my students a photo of a carpark. I asked them to describe what they saw. They saw a ground that was not tarred. Too many cars. None saw the security guard sitting in a plastic chair in the hot sun. We don't notice them because they're foreign workers. We choose not to see it."

### SYNTHCITY

That same need to promote non-digital connections is also what's driving Biji-Biji



Synth City Table by Biji-Biji initiative.