



Zacharevic's new artwork *Transboundary Haze* can be seen along Leboh Pasar Besar, opposite Dataran Merdeka. — Photos: WEI MING



Zacharevic (right) finishing up the mural on June 4. This project is the first in a series of creative interventions planned throughout the year, urging those in authority to hold polluters accountable.

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# The haze must be stopped

Haze mural in Kuala Lumpur reignites the conversation about holding polluters accountable because clean air is a basic human right.

IN conjunction with the recent World Environment Day (June 5), Lithuanian multidisciplinary artist Ernest Zacharevic unveiled a new artwork in Kuala Lumpur that resembles the popular board game, Scrabble.

The 14.6m x 4.9m mural, titled *Transboundary Haze*, is painted on a metal perimeter hoarding for a construction site, located between Agrobank and the National Textiles Museum along Leboh Pasar Besar in KL.

The artwork is a collaboration between Greenpeace Malaysia, Zacharevic's public-art project "Splash and Burn" and filmmaking outfit Studiobirthplace.

The project is the first in a series of creative interventions planned throughout the year, urging those in authority to hold polluters

accountable for clean air as a basic human right.

Transboundary haze is the seasonal air pollution that affects many South-East Asian countries, including Malaysia, on a yearly basis. In 2020, the Malaysian government shelved the tabling of the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act.

"Living in Malaysia, the transboundary haze has become a natural part of life. It's a regular occurrence for many and from what I can see, it seems like people are just trying to learn to live with it rather than finding ways to pre-

vent or solve it," says Zacharevic, 36, who lives in Penang.

Similar to Scrabble, the title of the *Transboundary Haze* mural is spelt out on the "board" with letter tiles and, in place of the premium squares, Zacharevic has included pointed phrases such as "School Closures", "Peatland Burning" and "Dakwa Pencemar" (Charge The Polluters).

On June 1, the artist started sketching work and later used acrylic and water-based paints to bring his new mural to life. He completed it on on June 4.

In March this year, Zacharevic's

hopeful piece *Everything Will Be OK* was exhibited at REXKL. The 16m x 4m work featured children in "Mondrian" boxes and drew eager crowds to the venue.

Zacharevic shot to fame in Malaysia after painting six street murals for the George Town Festival in 2012. His *Children On Bicycle* and *Boy On Motorcycle* are famous tourist attractions in Penang.

While Zacharevic creates works for gallery spaces, it is his outdoor works that stand out. An important part of his work is how he continues exploring the relationship

between mural and urban landscapes.

"We believe art can help the general public to understand and relate to the issue on a more personal level. We hope it can start the conversation and encourage policy-makers to address the issues meaningfully. We should not have to wait for another haze season to look for solutions," says Zacharevic.

The Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) predicts that a rise in temperature along with the haze phenomenon is expected to hit the country from July to September this year.