



PROCEEDINGS
THE ASIAN CONFERENCE
ON ARTS AND CULTURE 2014

SRINAKHARINWIROT UNIVERSITY
BANGKOK THAILAND
JUNE 12 - 13, 2014



Welcome Message



The Asian Conference on Arts and Cultures 2014

June 12 - 13, 2014

at Srinakharinwirot University
Bangkok, Thailand

Organized by

College of Social Communication Innovation, Institute of Culture and Arts,
Department of Thai and Oriental Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Fine Arts, Graduate School, and
Center for Academic Services, Srinakharinwirot University - Thailand.

In cooperation with

Khon Kaen University, Ubon Ratchathani University, Walailak University and Thaksin University - Thailand.
Guangxi Teachers Education University - China.
East 15 Acting School, Essex University - UK.
University of Canterbury - New Zealand.
Illinois State University - USA.
University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University
Ho Chi Minh City- Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
Busan University of Foreign Studies - Korea.



Proceedings :
The Asian Conference on Arts and Cultures 2014,
June 12 – 13, 2014

at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand.

ISBN : 978-616-296-063-5

Editor :

Associate Professor Prit Supasetsiri
Assistant Professor Dr. Supak Mahavarakom

Editorial Board :

Assistant Professor Dr. Panupong Udemsilp
Assistant Professor Dr. Usaporn Sukharom
Dr. Huynh Van Phuc
Dr. Porawan Pattayanon
Dr. Weeranan Kamnungwut

Managing Team:

Nitien Pomumpaisakul
Nonkamon Limtanakul
Nuengruthai Pankaew
Nutpapass Channonthawat
Phornrat Tiranant
Vararin Charoenchalkom

Proof :

Phornrat Tiranant
Vararin Charoenchalkom

Printing :

Santisiri Printing
Tel. +66 (0) 2424-3975

Contents

ARTS

Crafting the Ideas of Movement through Bamboo Basket Installation

Iriantine Kamaya

Nina Dwi Handayani

Ratu Arum Kusumawardhani

13

Fashioning Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Girls through Magazines

Nisa Kumia I

21

Diversification of Malaysian Art (1990s - 2010s)

Dr. Sarena Abdullah

31

Research and Creative Video Art for the Preservation of Thai Culture: the Lives and the Arts of Ancient

Dr. Supachai Areerungruang

41

CULTURES

The Role and Presence of Cultural Objects as Temporal Attributes in Balinese *Ngaben* Ritual

A.A. Ayu Suci Warakanyaka

Paramita Atmodiwirjo

51

Flower of Life, the Creativity to its best of the *Meetei Phanek Mapal Naibi* in South Asia: an empirical study

Dr. Nunglekpan Premi Devi

63

Legends Dotting the Sacred Space of Goa

Dr. Padmaja Vijay Karnat

69

The Act of Journeying and Settling: Migrancy and Inhabitation Script on the Stacked Housing in Jakarta, Indonesia

Verarisa Anastasia Ujung

77

FILM THEATRE DANCE MUSIC

Creative Realization of Applied Local Dance "RumThonKorat"

Dr. Nualavee Junloon

91

R.I.P. Process : The Creation of Methodology in Costume Design Concept and Process Development

Panchana Soonthompit

99

Diversification of Malaysian Art (1990s - 2010s)

Dr. Sarena Abdullah

Fine Arts Department, School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: sarena.abdullah@usm.my

Abstract

The development of arts in Malaysia during the 1970s and the 1980s has been directly or indirectly influenced by the Malaysian government policy since late 1969s. As a result, the development of Malaysian art during the two decades were highly influenced by the National Economic Policy (NEP), National Cultural Policy and the subsequent Islamization Policy spearheaded by the government. These policies were instrumental in shaping mainstream form of Malaysian art, at least, throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. However, since the 1990s these proclivities have altered. This paper will discuss the diversity and expansion of Malaysian arts in the 1990s: firstly, through the various technical approaches and media used, secondly, the change of artists' attitude towards figuration, thirdly, exploration and diversification of subject matter and finally the expansion of Malaysian art.

Keywords: Malaysian art, National Economic Policy, National Cultural Policy, modern arts

Introduction

The development of arts in Malaysia during the 1970s and the 1980s has been directly or indirectly influenced by the Malaysian government policy since late 1969s. As a result, the development of Malaysian art during the two decades was highly influenced by the National Economic Policy (NEP), National Cultural Policy and the subsequent Islamization Policy spearheaded by the government. The NEP was aimed to increase Malay economic ownership from around 3 percent in 1971 to 30 percent over a 20-year period (Cheah 2002: 141) and the subsequent implementation of the National Cultural Policy in the early 1970s further reiterated the ethnic preference policy as advocated by the NEP. The National Cultural Policy for example, upholds three principles that form the basis for national culture - first, the Malaysian National Culture must be based on the culture of the native people in the region who are the Malays, second, only suitable and appropriate elements from other cultures can be accepted as elements of the national culture and third, Islam must be an important foundation in shaping the national culture itself (Hassan 1973).

The National Cultural Policy's influence on the Malaysian society and culture, in general, deemed further investigation and systematic analysis but in the

context of the visual arts, these policies were instrumental in the shaping of the mainstream form of Malaysian art, at least throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. On top of that, the Islamization Policy undertaken by the government in the late 1970s could be seen as further reinstating the National Cultural Policy adopted earlier.

The Influenced of the National Cultural Policy on Malaysian Arts during the 1970s and 1980s

In the context of the visual arts, the influence is evident in the works by Malay artists at that time. For example, interest in Malay aesthetics intensified following the *Rupa dan Jiwa* exhibition curated by Syed Ahmad Jamal at the ASEAN Museum of Art of University Malaya from November 17th to December 9th, 1979 and a seminar entitled "The Roots of Malay Indigenous Arts and Present Developments" was also organized by the School of Art and Design at Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM, now Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)), Shah Alam from 30th November to 2nd December, 1979. Since then, Malay artists, especially, began to explore the possibility of using Malay and/or Islamic aesthetics in the context of their modern art practice.

Themes, images and symbolism of the Malay culture and lifestyles as well as Islam have become the main subject in their art making endeavor. Artists are commonly associated with Malay inspired cultural motives or themes include Amron Omar, Khatijah Sanusi, Noraini Nasir, Fatimah Chik, and Hashim Hassan (Sarena Abdullah 2005: 38- 63).

Subsequently, exhibitions that introduced Islamic art to the Malaysian public were also held. Works by artists such as Sulaiman Esa (Figure 1), Ahmad Khalid Yusof, Omar Basaree, Zakaria Awang, Raja Zahabuddin Raja Yaacob, Hamdzun Haron, Shafie Haji Hassan were among those inspired and driven by Islamic art and aesthetics. With the emerging interest in Malay culture and Islamic aesthetics, even artists working in Abstract Expressionist style find their works interpreted or viewed from the Islamic perspective (Sarena Abdullah 2010: 134 - 138).



Figure 1 Sulaiman Esa The Walled Garden of Truth II (1995). Mixed Media, 95 x 58 cm

Shifting Strategies of Malaysian Art from the 1990s to 2010

Since the implementation of the NEP, the Malaysian society has undergone sweeping changes; the NEP has primarily contributed to the increase of Malay middle class and their ownership in the country. This is evident in the increase of share in the *bumiputera* wealth ownership and the emergence of the new middle class has changed the social development in

the country, especially in terms of public ethnic relations. The new Malay middle class is generally managers and professionals that operate across economic, political, social, cultural and religious spaces along with other ethnic community groups (Saravanamuttu 2001:107).

Malaysia's preoccupation with economy and development aims since the 1970s, and even more so under the administration of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed had resulted in Malaysia's economic success. This is also manifested through a series of mega projects: the Proton Saga, the Penang Bridge, the North-South Expressway, the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, the Formula One car-racing circuit, the administrative capital of Putrajaya, the world's tallest building-Petronas Twin Tower, the cyber city of Cyberjaya and the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

Although the government introduced the National Development Policy (NDP) in 1990 to replace the NEP, the government continued to pursue most of its NEP policies as the government argued that although the Malays share of the economy is substantially larger, it does not constitute the thirty percent target according to government figures. Besides that, the 1990s also witnessed the government's introduction of a series of policies that can be interpreted as moving towards cultural liberalization. The former Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamed also articulated the Vision 2020 or *Wawasan 2020* in 1991, proclaiming that the Malaysian society should achieve the status of a "fully developed country" by the year 2020 when the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is eight times larger than the country's GDP in 1990. This could be achieved through industrialization, economic liberalization and further deregulation.

Within this new context, the arts has developed since the 1990s. Unlike in the previous decades of which I have generally pointed out in the first part of this paper, arts in the 1990s were firstly, more diverse in terms of technical approaches and media used. Secondly, the artists' attitude towards figuration had changed and thirdly, the subject matter or the content and context of the art works produced were diversified and finally the Malaysian art has also expanded.

First, we will examine the diversification of technical approaches and media used. Despite the concern that the implementation of the National Culture through the National Cultural and the Islamization Policy would result in the hegemony of Malay/Islamic culture and aesthetics approach, various cultural manifestations,

however, did not decline in the country. In fact, the various identities denoting Malaysian society increased or are at least being retained as an indirect result of the policy itself. Since the 1990s, Malaysian artists began to adopt or incorporate new approaches and media, and they have even produced works that crossed the traditional boundary of the fine arts category i.e. paintings, sculptures, prints etc.

The works that these artists produced, since then, have crossed the traditional fine arts boundary of drawing, painting, print, sculpture and photography. These new tendencies can be seen in the increasing number of works that use a more recent approach of combining fine art works such as drawings and painting with installations, performance art, electronic and video art. This could be seen as the direct result of the global technological influx as well as the government's push towards information technology. These various alternative approaches are evident in many works that were submitted in the Young Contemporaries Award, an art competition held annually by the National Visual Art Gallery (NVAG). The new premises and possibilities enabled by computer, video and digital manipulation, for example, have attracted several artists such as Liew Kungyu, Hasnul Jamal Saldon, Niranjana Rajah, Wong Hoy Cheong, Emil Goh, Nazim Esa and Yee I-Lan to explore these technologies in their artistic pursuit. Some of the early works include Liew Kung-yu and Raja Shariman Raja Aziddin's work in "Two Installations" (1991), the usage of video in Wong Hoy Cheong's "Sookching" (1990), and the emergence of E-Art (electronic-art) and cyber-art as promoted by Hasnul Jamal Saldon and Niranjana Rajah in the late 1990s. Subsequently, the usage of digital photos and photo manipulation have been used by artist like Yee I-Lan in her various series of works (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Yee I-Lan A Rousing Account OF Migration in the Language of the Sea (2010). Digital c-type print, 61cm x 61cm x 3 (Triptych)

Secondly, the figurations have been well embraced by Malaysian artists. The 1980s witnessed the reduction of figuration in Malaysian artists' work. The Malay/ Islamic artistic interest in abiding Islamic tenets simply focused on producing non-figuration artworks or if

they still produce figuration, the works are simply abstracted. The issue of direct representation of the figure occupies an uneasy position within Malaysian fine art practice and has polarized the viewpoints and actions of artists, especially within UTM. However, since late 1980s and early 1990s, it is found that the attitude in relation to figuration in the arts has changed. Both Malay and non-Malay artists have begun to oppose the rigid approach to figuration in paintings and started to produce figures in their works. This could be seen in the works of Wong Hoy Cheong, Eng Hwee Chu, Bayu Utomo Radjikin (Figure 3), Shia Yih-Yiling (Figure 5), Ahmad Fuad Osman, Jalaini Abu Hassan, Ahmad Zakii Anwar and the more recent artists such as Lee Swee Keong, Chong Siew Ying, Kow Leong Kiang (Figure 4), Chan Kok Hool, Noor Mahnun Mohamed, and Chong Ai Lei.



Figure 3 Bayu Utomo Radjikin Let Me Fly (2005), akrilik atas kanvas, 78 x137 cm

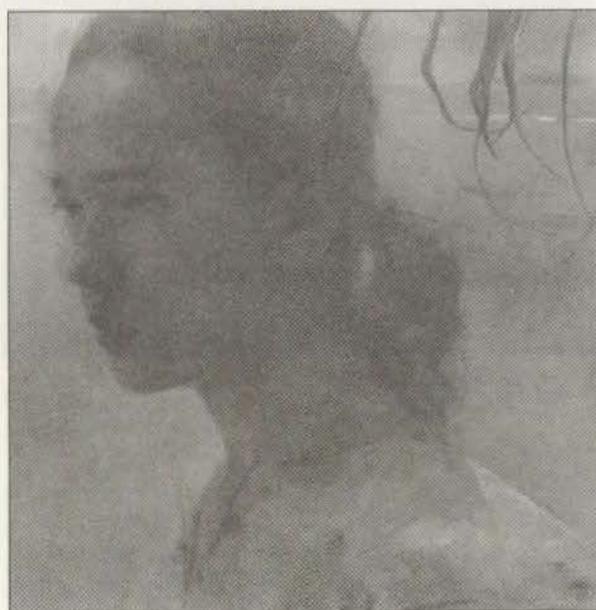


Figure 4 Kow Leong Kiang "Melancholy" (2005), oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm



Figure 5 Sylvia Yih Yling *Mother Nature 1* (1999), acrylic on canvas, 160 x 190cm

Besides those two significant changes in terms of artistic and aesthetic interests that had significantly marked the turning point of Malaysian art development, we could observe that in terms of thematic and subjects that these artists have brought forth since then have diversified. This could be seen in an altered direction that began to emerge subtly since the end of the 1980s as an indirect result of the engagement of Malay-Muslim artists on subjects based Malay culture and Islamic arts/aesthetics. The late Redza Piyadasa observed, "As if in reaction to the Malay-Muslim artists' new preoccupations with abstract works dealing with Malay-centered motifs and decorative sensibilities, a number of Chinese abstract artists incorporated Chinese-derived motifs and other artistic influences into their abstractionist products" (Piyadasa 2000: 35). The Chinese elements used initially as noted by Piyadasa are more obscure and appear to be more inconspicuous. The elements introduced do not directly relate to the Chinese Malaysian situation or refer to Chinese Malaysian culture in particular. For example, the usage of philosophically related themes—such as the Yin and Yang relationship, ideograms derived from the I-Ching, and more universal Chinese cultural shapes and symbols—are more dominant. Works by Lim Eng Hooi, Tan Tong, Tan Hon Yin, Chew Teng Beng and Choong Kam Kow during the 1980s, according to Redza Piyadasa,

responded to the mainstreaming of Malay-Islamic artistic approach by conveying traditional and philosophical interests of Chinese civilization to assert their own cultural identity (Piyadasa 2000: 35).

It is only in the 1990s that non-Malay artists began to assert their own cultural identity noticeably in terms of subject matter. During this time, works that portray Chinese culture, celebration or lifestyles began to enter the Malaysian art scene, as manifested by Liew Kung-Yu's "Chinese Festival" (1996) and "Cheng Beng Celebration, Kedah" (1996). The Indians and Indian aesthetics and Hindu as a subject has been a recurring theme that was brought forth by Jeganathan Ramachandram and J. Anurendra—although romantic treatment of subject matter and the rich colors influenced by the Indian medieval paintings of Rajasthan and of the Mughal have appeared in Syed Tajudeen Shaik Abu Talib's works earlier. Jeganathan's "The Indian Migration" (1996) artworks for example, depicts the elephant-headed god, Ganesha. In his more recent solo series, "Membrane Nature: A Moment with Ganesha & His Family" (2012). Jeganathan highlights Hinduism ideals through his series of paintings. J. Anurendra's work however, is not as highly religious in terms of its subject matter in comparison to Jeganathan's. Although J. Anurendra dealt with a more varied universal theme, but he chooses mostly to paint those close to him such as the stories of the Indians and Indian culture in Malaysia that are familiar to him. This could be seen in the works such as "Looking Forward" (1997) that depicts the annual Thaipusam festival, "Letters from Home" (2008) and "We Dance Alone" (2008) (Figure 6).



Figure 6 J. Anurendra *We Dance Alone*, 2008, oil on canvas 137 x 230 cm.

The fascination of one's own culture and heritage could even be traced through the works of Sylvia Lee Goh who rediscovers the fading Baba and Nyonya culture and portrays it in her figurative, still-life and

landscape works. "If Dreams Come True" (1987/1990), "Nyonya's Secret Recipe" (1990) and "Red Bride" (1996) (Figure 7) are among her works that exude strong emotional content and nostalgia of the Baba and Nyonya culture. Bayu Utomo's early works such as "Bujang Berani (Bujang the Brave)" (1991) and "Lang Kachang" (1991), Kelvin Chap Kok Leong's first solo exhibition "Belawing And The Great Mamat" (1996), as well as Shia Yih Ying's and Awang Damit Ahmad's works are among those who introduce the subjects, themes and viewpoints of those from Sabah and Sarawak.



Figure 7 Sylvia Lee Goh *The Red Bride* (1996), 36 x 48 in
Source: Sylvia Lee Goh, *Two Decades of Art "From The Heart" 1976-1998*, BSLN

The 1990s also witnessed the shifting interests of subject matter among Malaysian artists. More artists have looked over one's own cultural boundaries as the main source of their artistic inspiration and moved into interest-oriented issues as their subject matter. The growth of the Malaysian middle class that cuts across various races can be attributed to a more class-based concern as a source of artistic inspiration. The interest-oriented thematic concerns raised by these artists occupy a more universal and liberal position. Several artists have begun to produce works that deal with issues such as politics, political

events and their political observations, consumerism and capitalism, environmentalism, social issues as well as women and children's issues.

Early works by Wong Hoy Cheong, for example, were influenced by political events such as his early painting entitled "Detention Oct 1987 (Tahanan ISA)" (1989) and his "Lalang" performance/installation of 1994. Since then, quite a few numbers of artists have started to produce works within such angle. Ahmad Fuad Osman, for example, has produced a series of four gigantic canvases of self-portraits as part of his response towards the political developments in Malaysia at the end of the 1990s to reflect the confusion, annoyance, and anger of average Malaysians on the Malaysian politics during the Reformasi movement in 1997. Samsudin Wahab's "Enough!" exhibition in 2008 and Saiful Razman "Pelan-Pelan dan Bilik Gerakan" (Plans and Operations Room) (2008) (Figure 8 and 9) also works within the same political theme. Artist like Noor Azizan Rahman Paiman's, however, has used a more subtle way to address his observation on Malaysian politics, political events and people in power by using parody as his main artistic technique. His works such "Code Series" (2006), "Challenger Series" (2007), "MALAYSIA 365 days of 2008" (2008) and his more recent work of "Ali Baba And The Forty Thieves" (2012) epitomize this approach.

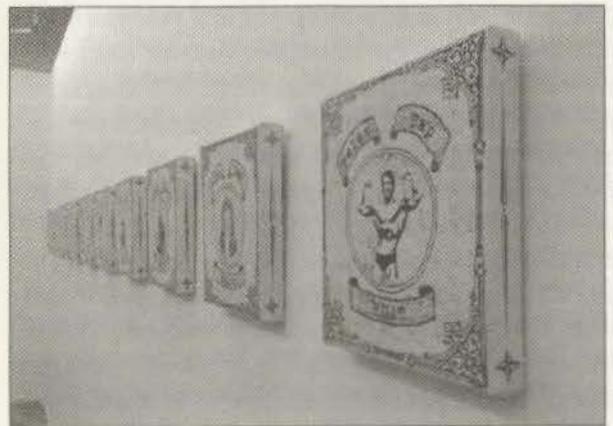


Figure 8 Saiful Razman *Pelan Cap Baru*, 2012; 33.5 cm x 30 cm
Silkscreen print on canvas

Even though the usage of mixed media/collages by infusing images and elements from different sources can be traced in Malaysian artists work such as Latiff Mohidin's "Pago-Pago and Full Moon" (1967), it is only since the 1990s that the conflation, collision, and fragmentation of high and low culture imagery were used to comment on Malaysia's capitalism and consumerism have become the persistent approach



Figure 9 Detail

of works by Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, Umibaizurah Mahir, Roslisham Ismail (ISE), Liew Kung Yu and artists such as Ahmad Fadzul Mat Yusof and Koh Cheng Kuan. Furthermore, since the 1990s, works that deal with themes that comment on the increasing capitalism and consumerism among Malaysians make significant appearance. These are evident in Wong Hoy Cheong's "The Nouveau Riche, the Elephant, the Foreign Maid, or the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (1991) that criticizes the obtuse materialism of the Malaysian middle class and the seductive powers of consumerism. Umibaizurah Mahir, for instance, has produced ceramic works linked to her idea of consumerism and used toys as a metaphor in her ceramic works. Liew Kung Yu's "Cemerlang, Gemilang, Terbilang" (Excellence, Glory, Distinction) (2007) (Figure 10) juxtaposes icons such as Petronas Towers, the first Malaysian astronaut, Malaysian-owned Proton motorcars arranged in the shape of a *pohon beringin* or 'tree of life' used in *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre) performances. The collages of modern kitsch juxtaposed with elements of the traditional *wayang kulit* have perhaps indirectly asked us to reflect on our never ending consumerist and modernist drive.

The environmental degradation in the country due to far-reaching development projects has inspired many artists. As early as Nirmala Shanmugalingham's "Do Not Log Carelessly Last Misfortune Befall You" (1990) and Ismail Hashim's "Hebat Juga Pemandangan Pulau



Figure 10 Liew Kung Yu Cadangan Cadangan Untuk Negeraku (Proposals for My Country) Series: Bandar Sri Tiang Kolom, 2009, photo collage.

Pinang!... Dengan Jerubu Lagi!!" (What a View of the Penang Bridge... and with the Haze as Well) (1996) the environment has been a persistent and fascinating subject to many Malaysian artists. This is evident in the works of Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, Ilham Fadhl Mohd Shaimy, Phuan Thai Meng, Choy Chun Wei and Yeoh Kean Thai, to name a few. Ilham Fadhl Mohd Shaimy's work such as "Dog, Father, One, Two and Tree" (2010) (Figure 11) and "Collapse 2" (2010-2011) were produced with somber mode of dark grey and twisting scenes that portray the disturbing scenarios insinuating the indirect result of ecological abandonment. Ahmad Shukri Mohamed's colorful images usually depict his personal observation on the urbanites, their lives and their environment by forming multi-layered collages of popular culture with oil paint, industrial crate plank, aluminum foil, canvas, paint and paper (Figure 12).

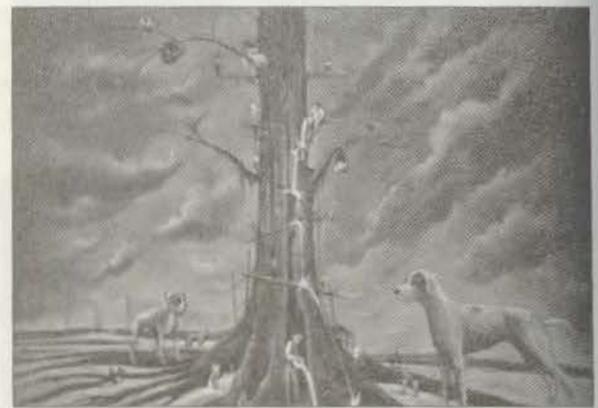


Figure 11 Ilham Fadhl Mohd Shaimy Dog, Father, One, Two and Tree (2010), oil and collage on linen, 213 x 213 cm.

The rising social problems in Malaysian society were addressed in the early works of Bayu Utomo Radjkn such as "Newspaper" (1993). In his works, the artist confronts the viewers with collages of real objects such as tubes and drips attached to the figure of the child drawn on newspaper collages to portray the image of an innocent child who suffers from child abuse. In the late 1990s, Zulkifli Yusof also began to



Figure 12 Ahmad Shukri Mohamed *Lost Diamond* (2007), Mixed Media on canvas, 183cm x 244cm

highlight the current social reality especially of those for the middle upper class (Figure 13). About a decade later, Hamir Saib also revisited the issue of moral degradation especially among Malay youngsters. The titles of his works such as "Haruan Makan Anak," "The Rempit" (Illegal Motorcycle Race), "Telur Buaya" (Crocodile Egg) and "A Board Game" insinuate the dark reality of certain sections of the deteriorating morals of the Malay society.



Figure 13 Zulkifli Yusoff *Seorang Menteri Yang Sombong* (The Arrogant Minister) (1996), akrilik atas kanvas, 122 x 122 cm

Since the 1990s, a few female artists have resorted to highlight the women and children's concern in their work. Artists such as Eng Hwee-Chu, produced her works derived from her personal experiences as a woman in her work such as "Cry Freedom" (1995), "Black Moon" (1995), "The Great Supper" (1999) and

"My Childhood Memory." (2001). Shia Yih Ying's "Homage to the Ordinary Life Series" (1998) and "wOm (b) Series" (2004) also dwell with the artist's observation on the ordinary things that surrounds her life and the universal theme of mother and child in her later show. Umibalzurah Mahir (Figure 14), Sharmiza Abu Hassan and Yuen Chee Ling have also used the experience of growing up, being a woman, a wife and a mother as the major source of their inspiration in their work.

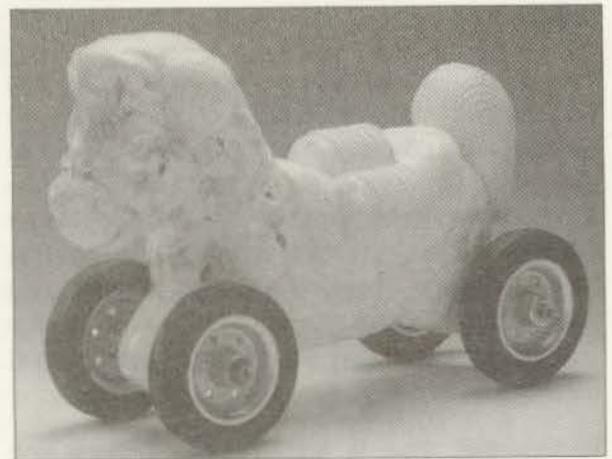


Figure 14 Umibalzurah Mahir *Small Endeavour 1* (2007), White stoneware, crackle glazed, decal & roda atas-konkrit, 59 x 100 cm x 16 cm

Besides the diversifying themes and subject matter in the Malaysian arts since the 1990s, the supporting structures of the Malaysian art world have also expanded. The 1990s also witnessed the appearance and participation of art graduates from not only UiTM, but also by those who graduated from private art institutions such as Malaysian Institute of Art (MIA), Kuala Lumpur College of Art (KLCA), Dasein College of Art and others. The graduates and teaching staff of these colleges have persistently entered the Young Contemporaries Award or Bakat Muda Sezaman organized by the National Visual Art Gallery. Among the names of artists associated with these private colleges (as graduates, academic members or former academic members) are Wong Hoy Cheong, Tan Chin Kuan, Chang Yu Chia and Yap Sau Bin. The winners for the recent 2011 Malaysian Emerging Artists Award (MEAA Awards) are graduates from these local private art colleges such as Ng Swee Kiat (MIA), Sun Kang Jye (KLCA) and Chong Ai Lei (Dasein Academy of Art).

Since the late 1990s, alternative spaces or artist-run-spaces have emerged and proliferated, especially in Kuala Lumpur. It must be noted that

successful professional artists who have struggled and eventually succeeded in their artistic practices, and they have been the forerunners of these spaces. Among them - Hamir Soib who owns Gudang, Ahmad Shukri Mohamed and Umibazurah Mahir who own Patisastudio, and print artist, Juhari Said who owns Akal di Ulu. There are also various collective that provided alternatives or independent art spaces such as Matahati's HOM, The Annexe Gallery, Rumah Frinjan, Rumah YKP, SICKL, Findars Space, 12 Art Space, Rumah Air Panas, and the Lost Generation Space.

The art galleries landscape have also proliferated since then - besides the support of the National Art Gallery (NAG), now known as the National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG); Petronas Gallery, Islamic Arts Museum and Bank Negara Malaysia's Money Museum and Art Centre and a few institutional collectors such as Sime Darby, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) and Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB) have further supported the Malaysian art scene by purchasing and collecting art works produced by Malaysian artists.

Besides that, there is also immense interests and growth in terms of art sales and investments by the private sectors through private art galleries and private collectors. Private galleries that have been in business since the 1990s include Pelita Hati (1995), Valentine Willie Fine Arts (1996), Taksu (1989), NN Galery (1996) and Shalini Ganendra (1998). In the last ten years, we could see the proliferation of other galleries that have become a major playing field in Malaysian arts such as Wei-ling Gallery (2002), RA Fine Arts (2007), Galeri Chandan (2008), CORE DESIGN Gallery (2010), and MOMA Fine Arts (2011). Among the private collectors are Farouk Khan, Steve Wong, Pakaruddin Sulaiman and Ng Sek San. The market of the arts has been further supported by the International Art Expo Malaysia (AEM) since its inception in 2007. The expo received various participation, not only limited to Malaysian galleries, but other international galleries as well. There is a huge increase in terms of sales - the AEM 2008 for example, registered a sales turnover of RM5.3 million, the AEM 2009 - a sales turnover of RM5.6 million, the AEM 2010 - a sales turnover exceeding RM11 million (Chuen 2011).

The Internet also offers a very significant platform especially in terms of networking and promotion. Gallery websites consistently post content from their current or past exhibitions, artists can easily look up art residencies and artists exchange programs, especially those held abroad. Art events can be easily

promoted through mailing lists, web groups, and social networking websites such as Facebook as well as blogs. These social networking sites have made it possible for many collaborative initiatives and opportunities among artists and the public.

Due to the Internet and the recent interest in art from non-Western countries, various biennials and triennials in the Asia Pacific region, art developments in Western countries have been followed closely by Malaysian artists. More Malaysian contemporary artists have made their mark on the international art scene since the early 1990s in terms of selection of their works in international biennales and triennials. These include artists such as Zulkifli Yusof, Wong Hoy Cheong, Liew Kung Yu, Nadiah Barnadhaj, Simryn Gil and Yee I-Lan. More recently, Nor Azizan Rahman Paiman, Bibi Chew Chon Bee, Kah Bee Chow, Yap Sau Bin, Chang Yoong Chia, Azliza Ayob, Shooshe Sulaiman, Hayati Mokhtar and Dain-Iskandar Said have made regular appearances in the international art biennale/triennial circuits.

Conclusion

The changing tendencies in art since the last two decades needs to be contextualized and discussed not only within the Malaysian art context, but Malaysia, in general. This is important as we need to understand that not only the past but also the immediate present and the future as history, culture and art constitute the very fundamental aspects of our understanding of who we are in life. Malaysian art in the form of the artworks and various visual elements since the 1990s have proven to be a consistent form of reference or reflection of the changing reality of the Malaysian society.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and USM's Short Term Grant for the fund given that enables the author to complete the research.

Biodata

Sarena Abdullah is an Art Historian and Senior Lecturer at the School of the Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia. She obtained her MA (Art History) from the SUNY Buffalo, N.Y. (2004) and her Ph.D from the University of Sydney, Australia (2010). Her research interests are contemporary Malaysian and Southeast Asian Art.

