REACTIONS – NEW CRITICAL STRATEGIES

NARRATIVES IN MALAYSIAN ART

VOLUME

(2)

EDITED BY NUR HANIM KHAIRUDDIN AND BEVERLY YONG, WITH T.K. SABAPATHY

REACTIONS – NEW CRITICAL STRATEGIES

NARRATIVES IN MALAYSIAN ART

VOLUME

(2)

EDITED BY NUR HANIM KHAIRUDDIN AND
BEVERLY YONG, WITH T.K. SABAPATHY

Contents

Malay Artists and the Postmodern Situation: Thematic Approaches since the 1990s

SARENA ABDULLAH

The original version of this essay was published as the paper, 'Thematic Approaches in Malaysian Art since the 1990s', in the journal *JATI*, 16 (December 2011).

This essay discusses thematic approaches taken by Malay artists in Malaysia since the 1990s. Malaysian art has become increasingly diverse in terms of its approaches, subjects, themes and media. This growing artistic diversity is discussed within a postmodern framework and is representative of a shift in tendencies away from a purely Malay/Islamic-centred artistic tradition to a more postmodern approach. Since the 1990s, works produced by Malay artists have taken a more critical perspective aligned with the postmodern situation or *situasi percamoden*, in accordance with Malaysia's leapfrog into modernisation. Through their works, Malay artists raise concerns and issues pertaining to the consequences of development and modernisation, and explore themes ranging from social problems, to the environment and urbanisation, and other contemporary issues, employing postmodernist approaches in their art. What is obvious is that Malay artists are concerned with the immediate and near future, rather than looking back or glorifying the past. These artistic tendencies epitomise the challenges, divergences and shared perspectives that define the growing Malaysian middle class especially in the context of the construction or even deconstruction of Malaysian society.

The late Redza Piyadasa observed in his papers, 'Modernist and Post-Modernist Developments in Malaysian Art in the Post-Independence Period'[1] and 'Modern Malaysian Art, 1945-1991: A Historical Overview'[2] an increasing tendency towards postmodernism in Malaysian modern art. These marked the first instances in which he employed the term "postmodern" in relation to developments in Malaysian art and in both papers he traced several isolated artistic shifts that he argued could be considered postmodernist – from his and Sulaiman Esa's post-formalist *Towards a Mystical Reality* in 1974[3] to Ismail Zain's *Digital Collage* exhibition in 1988 [16, 27]. In both essays, he also provided examples of performances, installations and video art works such as Wong Hoy Cheong's and Marion D'Cruz's performance-type presentations and Wong Hoy Cheong's video

composition *Sook Ching* (1990), installation-type art-cum-performance *Two Installations* (1991) by Liew Kung Yu and Raja Shahriman Raja Aziddin, and Zulkifli Yusof's *Power* series installations as illustrations of this early shift [32, 33; p. 191].

Malaysian art has become increasingly diverse in terms of its approach, subjects, themes and media since the 1990s. I have argued elsewhere that developments in Malaysian art should be discussed in light of the social and cultural changes that the country has undergone since the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the subsequent New Development Policy (NDP), and not merely within the framework of postmodern art.[4] Therefore, the shift from a Malay/Islamic-centred art to a postmodern artistic approach since the 1990s, as noted by Redza Piyadasa, will be discussed with respect to Malaysia's burgeoning middle class that the NEP and NDP have produced, especially among the ethnic Malays. This essay focuses on Malay artists' concerns and issues in terms of thematic approach, which are closely related to the interests of this new Malaysian middle class from which they have evolved.

Economically, the goal of the NEP was to increase Malay economic ownership from around 3% in 1971 to 30% over a 20-year period through direct government intervention and economic support, aggressive training and educational strategies aimed at bringing the *bumiputera* (i.e. ethnic Malays and other indigenous natives in Malaysia) into the modern urban economy.[5] This has resulted in the creation of a multitude of bureaucrats, company executives, technocrats, academics, accountants, computerchip engineers, information technology specialists and other professions which demand specialist education and training.[6] Consequently, the NEP produced a marked paradigm shift among the middle classes, especially among the Malays. Studies of the middle class, especially in the Malaysian context, have been discussed by several researchers.[7] While these studies will not be discussed here, it is worth noting that many of the Malay artists discussed in this essay were graduates of Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM, now known as Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM) and are the by-product of the NEP. This is because ITM was one of the earliest tertiary institutions designed to support the economic, social and cultural engineering policy of the NEP. The focus in this essay will primarily rest on those artists who graduated from ITM from the mid-1980s, born after Malaysia's Independence from British rule and reflective of the burgeoning Malay middle class that the NEP produced.

The economic aspects of Malaysian artists' lives are seldom discussed, but here Hasnul J. Saidon offers some insights into the economic context of artists participating in *Takung*, an exhibition he curated in 2005:[8]

> "The political and economic backgrounds of the participating artists are difficult to probe and explicate due to the fact that the subjects may perhaps be a bit sensitive and private for many artists. Six members of the whole gang including the one who writes this essay are government 'servants' with stable income, therefore can be technically defined as part-time artists, double-act, semi-pros... Others are self-employed, or define themselves as full-time artists, while a few work full-time whilst soliciting the greener pasture of private sectors as well as residency programmes.
>
> ....
>
> Generally, one may assume that all the participating artists in TAKUNG are 'not poor' and many are committed in acquiring 'financial comfort' from the midst of the local 'art market'. Other than a fortuitous spill-over from the public sector (National Art Gallery), the economic setting for this exhibition was shadowed by an entrepreneur stance erected by the 'newly-revised' UMNO-oriented corporate and business class. The shadows of private sectors as well as NGOs (other than YKP) are blurry, perhaps intended [sic]."[9]

If the artistic interests of Malay artists during the 1970s and the 1980s were mostly rooted in Malay and/or Islamic aesthetics or what could be termed as "Malay/Islamic-centred art," shifting artistic approaches in art since the 1990s reflect the changes in the structure and feeling of the "new" middle class in Malaysia to which these artists belong. Abdul Rahman Embong has highlighted that the country's "new" middle class tripled; in 1970 it comprised 5.9% of the population, increasing to 15.2% in 2000.[10] The salient characteristic of this "new" middle class, according to Abdul Rahman, is its dramatic generational upward mobility over the past three decades, largely as a result of heavy state-sponsored investments into higher education. This "new" middle class comprises the most educated sector of Malaysian society, its economic basis reliant on a salaried income, dependent on financial systems of credit and loans, and increasingly consumer-oriented.[11]

I have used the term "postmodern situation" or *situasi percamoden* to describe the social and cultural changes among the Malays who form the "new" Malaysian middle class.[12] The term denotes how Malay society seems to be both fragmented and rooted in multifaceted cultural influences such as tradition, Islamic beliefs and modern or progressive ideals at the same time. The drastic modernisation efforts imposed since the NEP have faced the Malays with a situation in which traditionalism, Islam and modern ideals coexist, sometimes peaceably and sometimes discordantly, and these contestations are reflected through new symbols, and social and cultural practices. This dialectic has initiated a subsequent shift in thematic approaches to art as will be discussed in this essay. Farish Noor's views on contemporary Malay society in this regard are enlightening:

> "The Malay of today is a product of modernity in every respect, living in exile from the past. He is the inheritor of a tradition of secular Modernity as taught to him by the West, and also an inheritor of the tradition of Modernist Islam as taught to him by his elders. Living as he does in a thoroughly modern world, he cannot help but share the prejudices and fears of the Modern age. Beguiled by the charms of Modernity he places his faith in science and rationality, hoping that they would in turn shed light upon the darkness. A convert to positivism, he looks ever forward to the future, certain that it will bring him closer to enlightenment and safety. His dialectical approach to all that is Other ensures that he can only view the past as a dark world full of irrational and incomprehensible forces. A solipsist who lives in a monochromatic moral universe, he regards all that goes against his modern Islamic values as *khurafat, syirik*, inferior, bizarre, chaotic, irrational, and/or contaminating."[13]

During the 1970s and the 1980s, with the proclamation of a national culture through the 1971 National Cultural Policy and the parallel resurgence of Islam, Malay artists began to channel their interests in Malay culture and the Islamic religion into art as ways of expounding their identity.[14] This was especially true among the Malay artists studying or teaching at the School of Art and Design at ITM such as Sulaiman Esa, Khatijah Sanusi, Ruzaika Omar Basaree, Ponirin Amin, Mastura Abdul Rahman, Raja Azhar Idris and Jalaini Abu Hassan, to name a few.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, such aesthetic approaches in art have declined, and we see a significant shift from Malay/Islamic-centred art to a postmodern art approach as a direct or indirect consequence of *situasi percamoden*[15] at a time when Malaysian artists, as part of the new Malaysian middle class, were beginning to reiterate the concerns and interests and even champion some aspects of their class' concerns rather

than aligning their artistic interests along limited racial demarcations. As Johan Saravannamuttu points out:

> "Evidence from various studies shows that middle-class political actors have been driven to champion various causes connected to social democracy, human rights and the environment. The argument is advanced that middle-class politics of this sort provides an alternative discourse to ethnic-centric, as well as class-centric perspectives. Further it is contended, that middle-class political actors on the Malaysian scene have developed a multi-ethnic, multi-class praxis of sorts galvanising civil society to resist excessive state surveillance, dominance and outright repression over the citizenry".[16]

With the widespread adoption of postmodern artistic techniques by many artists, Malay artists began to question their social and cultural position in a wider historical, social, and cultural construct of the nation and global context. In *Al Kesah* (1988) by Ismail Zain, the images of the Ewing family of the hit TV drama *Dallas* are juxtaposed in front of a traditional Malacca house [27]. The work might seem playful, but it evokes a response to the penetration of global mass media, reaching deep into traditional villages and affecting Malaysian local culture and consciousness. In discussing the response to the exhibition, the artist appropriates various contemporary images from local and foreign contexts, mostly from mass media, and confronts the audience with a new reality of modern Malaysia. In regards to this appropriation strategy, Krishen Jit asserts that:

> "The juxtaposition of images also put Ismail in the forefront of postmodern thinking. What fascinates and instructs most of all is Ismail's sentiment toward his chosen images. I find him to be entirely free from criticism. One image is not pitted against another in a posture of heroism, surrender, despair, or alienation. Both realities are palpable, dappled in light, and effusive in sentiment. The strategy of the blocking of the images, I am tempted to say, the mise en scène, lends a performative dimension to the production. They are performances that create juxtaposed moods: of horror and farce, tragedy and comedy, sense and nonsense. This kind of performance strategy raises them from the mundane and the sentimental and places them in a reflective realm."[17]

Not only did Malay artists begin to adopt postmodern artistic strategies such as appropriation and the use of multimedia in art. The thematic concerns raised by these artists also started to reflect more universal in-

terests and a more liberal position than before. The ideas and ideals raised by works since the late 80s and 90s advocate values such as rationalism, individualism, democracy, and secularism, and manifest a concern for human rights, the environment and the rule of law, ideals usually associated with middle-class interests. Among the thematic subjects popular among these artists are social and moral misdemeanours and issues pertaining to the environment and urbanisation. Though several artists remain inspired by Malay culture, history, values, myths and legends as well as literary sources, their artistic forms, aesthetic principles, techniques and sensibilities are somewhat different. Their works are no longer restricted to the purely aesthetic aspect of such elements, and are infiltrated with subtle nuances of contemporary issues.

Bayu Utomo Radjikin in the early 1990s shocked viewers with confrontational images addressing the issue of child abuse and abandonment. In *Newspaper* (1995), real objects such as tubes and drips are stuck onto the figure of a child with burnt hands and a bandaged face drawn onto a collage of newspaper cuttings [35]. The collage of newspaper headlines implies that the suffering of these abused children is known only through the media.

A decade later, Hamir Soib continues to remind us of life's grim realities in as confrontational a manner. His installation, *Tak Ada Beza* (No Difference At All) (2002) addressed the subject of abortion. Using imagery that would be regarded as especially disturbing within conservative Malaysian Muslim society, the installation featured a huge painting of a family of pigs sitting together in harmony, pigs being regarded as *haram* (unlawful) and Muslims not allowed to touch or eat them. Underneath the painting was a mass of "umbilical cord"; at the end of the cord, a papier-mâché sculpture of a stillborn human baby was deposited in a toilet bowl in another corner of the installation. His work suggested that those who abort babies have a far worse character than even pigs, with no faculties of reason or compassion. The work formed an allegory of society's moral decay. As Nur Hanim Khairuddin explains:

> "The serene ambience projected by the pig family portrait appeared to be incongruous with the wicked inhumanity taking place on the floor and in the washroom. The contrasting impression presented an allegory concerning mankind's moral decay in comparison to the animal sense of family bonding. Hamir's clever application of the beauty of pigs in composing a pictorial

sermon moreover was motivated by his desire to subvert the politics of Malay-Islamic art and its pious adherence to a non-figurative, 'halal' iconography."[18]

The titles of a number of other works by Hamir Soib from the early 2000s reflect similar criticisms of moral and social degradation in the Malay community, among them *Haruan Makan Anak* (Haruan Fish Eats its Babies), *The Rempit* (illegal motorcycle racers), *Telur Buaya* (Crocodile Egg) and *A Board Game*, and each serves as a visual narrative to express his concerns for what he observes to be a failing society.

Zulkifli Yusoff is also critical of the reality of a certain section of Malay society, highlighting social ills and issues regarded as taboo in Malay culture. In *Ahmad Pulang Bawa HIV +ve* (Ahmad Came Back HIV +ve) (1997), he narrates the plight of Ahmad, who contracts HIV from an airline hostess. Unlike Malay/Islamic-centred artworks that invite audiences to appreciate their aesthetic elements in a comfortable gallery setting, works by Zulkifli Yusoff, Bayu Utomo Radjikin and Hamir Soib are deeply confrontational and disturbing to the general public. Zulkifli even displays huge expletive words across the canvases of his graffiti-like paintings.

With drastic development and urbanisation taking place in the last 30 years, a few Malay artists have also begun to address issues pertaining to the environment and urbanisation. For example, *Insect Diskette* (1997) by Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, is a mixed media assemblage composed of over two hundred computer diskettes [see also *Insect Diskette Series II, 40*]. These are arranged in a grid across four Plexiglas panels and are overlaid with representations of butterflies, palm trees, beetles, and other "specimens". He does not criticise or abstain from the technology brought by modernisation and development, but rather advocates balancing technology and nature. To illustrate, images of a fragile butterfly are repeatedly painted on parts of the diskettes, reminding us that nature and technology are not necessarily in opposition, and can actually merge to provide for and contribute to the progress of humankind in the present or for subsequent generations. Gregory Gilligan explains that:

> "*Insect Diskette* is no simplistic sermon on the ills of technology and the glories of nature. On the contrary, the work holds both technology and nature in balance, suggesting how elements – flora, fauna, humanity, and its collected data – are equally situated in the world, and perhaps co-dependent on each other."[19]

10 years later, Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, together with his wife, ceramicist Umibaizurah Mahir, again addressed the nexus between development and nature in the couple's 2007 exhibition *Warning! Tapir Crossing [76]*. This exhibition was inspired by their discovery of five dead tapirs in the newly developed area of Puncak Alam, located outside of Kuala Lumpur on the way to Kuala Selangor, where they had just set up their home and Patisatu Studio, an alternative art space, and its title refers to the encounter between development and the tapir, as a metaphor for nature.[20]

Johan Marjonid, meanwhile, does not dwell on or lament the depletion of Malaysia's tropical rainforests, instead promoting nature and the environment through his realist paintings of these sprawling tropical forests captured from various angles. He has produced several series of works since 1994, such as *Preservation Series*, *Arca Alam* and *Melebu Alas Jelebu*, drawing inspiration from visits to favourite locations such as Stong Mountain, Tahan Mountain, the National Park in Pahang, the Endau-Rompin area, and forests around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. These beautiful forestscapes entice viewers to immerse themselves inside the deep Malaysian rainforest and to appreciate the tranquility of nature.

Raja Shahriman Raja Aziddin's sculpture provides an example of an artist's work inspired by Malay cultural values and forms which has moved away from the aesthetics and sensibilities of earlier Malay/Islamic-centred art of the 70s and 80s. His early sculptures temper the movements of traditional Malay self-defence into the mechanical construction of wedges of raw iron: the past and the new coalesce. The strength of Raja Shahriman's *Gerak Tempur* series (1996) lies not in the romantically *bersilat* poses of these aggressive-looking figures but in their careful anatomical detailing. Raja Shahriman's depictions of the Malay *silat* warrior have been depersonalised and dehumanised and his sculptures are stripped bare of pretension, creating the impression of strength, yet soft and gentle in their movements in the moment captured before the figure strikes. In the series *Langkah Hulubalang*, each sculpture has a strong individualistic character, while every form also displays elegance and grace, calculated to demonstrate precision in form and balance. In Nur Hanim Khairuddin's description, "he strives to wed thoughtful perception and ascetic contemplation to construct an awareness of the order of things cloaked by postmodern metanarratives, paradoxes, ironies and metaphors."[21] Hasnul J. Saidon, meanwhile, describes Raja Shahriman in terms of his battle with his "self-enigma" as an artist:

"This enigma is riddled by contradictions, paradoxes, and clashes. Intended or not, it epitomises the crisis of the third millennium – parody and abnormality, pluralism and the crisis of identity, ethnocentrism and globalism, popular culture and virtual ecstasy, consumerism and spiritualism, mainstream media and the Internet, Sufism and fetishism, media fiction and subversive semiotic [sic], high (bourgeois) art and low (proletariat) art, socialism and individualism and many [sic] more."[22]

If much Malay/Islamic-centred art is celebratory in nature, certain artists have broached themes which do not sit so comfortably with contemporary Malay-Muslim identity. Jalaini Abu Hassan, for example, has addressed the animist aspects of Malay traditional practices in his *Mantera* series (2004), drawing on various rites, special prayers, words, and charms. *Mantera Buka Gelanggang*, for example, refers to a ritual preceding traditional performances or games to appease the spirits, or to ensure a smooth run of the event and the safety of participants. It shows an elderly *bomoh* performing the ritual of "opening the stage or court" before the commencement of a game or performance. *Bomoh Hujan* (2004) features a rain doctor who is sometimes called upon for big events and gatherings, such as major sports competitions or *kenduri* (gatherings for either religious or non-religious festivities, often to celebrate important life events such as birth, circumcision and marriage) to ensure dry weather.

Works by Malay artists have also begun to deconstruct or question official historical and even political narratives. Several issues raised in the media have invited interpretations and perspectives from artists' points of view. In 1999, Hamir Soib produced *Jawi*, an installation work that questions *jawi*, an Arabic alphabet adapted to the Malay language, as an embodiment of Malay identity. As part of the installation, framed silkscreens of *jawi* script were hung throughout the exhibition space and circular texts written in *jawi* script covered the floor. The audience's first impression coming to the installation was that the artist was raising the issue of our needing to do more to revive the usage of this Malay script. However, upon further scrutiny of the texts in the installation, they found that the *jawi* script read, "Ini Cuma Tulisan Jawi" (This is Only *Jawi* Writing). As Nur Hanim Khairuddin suggests, through this work, the artist is actually addressing the alienation of *jawi* script in (Malay) society, whilst simultaneously contesting the script's aesthetic idealism and its alleged sacredness: "by installing his *Jawi* series in a secular context, especially in scribbling *jawi* graffiti' on the floor, [he] wrests its cultural values from

the domain of 'holy' discourses and altogether 'blasphemously' nullifies its religious undertones".[23]

Nadiah Bamadhaj's *147 Tahun Merdeka* (2005/2007), a series of digital prints made in collaboration with Tian Chua, meanwhile, posits a possible future trajectory for Malaysia *[65]*. The artist juxtaposes images using digital manipulation to imagine what Malaysia's institutions might be like 100 years from now. The series features nine large format digital prints of major Malaysian institutions or buildings such as Istana Budaya, Angkasapuri, Putrajaya, Tugu Negara, and commercial buildings like IKEA, as well as a commemorative arch along the highway and newspaper frontcover headlines.

Ahmad Fuad Osman's *Recollections of Long Lost Memories* (2007-2008) deconstructs dominant historical narratives of the Malaysian nation *[66]*. This body of work consists of two parts – a series and slide projection of 71 historic photographs taken between 1860 and 2003, into which the artist digitally inserts a modern-day figure, and a series of large paintings on canvas using images of old photographs into which are painted contemporary figures. Ahmad Fuad's manipulations question, in a visually literal fashion, images of Malaysia's history and their relevance to contemporary life, as well as the nature of historical memory:

"History is false memory because history is selective; the saying that history is written by the victors is certainly true in our own nation. Why do we remember Tunku's 'Merdeka' cry but not the bombing of the Tugu Negara in 1975? What deal did the ruling elites strike with the British to gain independence? Those of us who lived through the events of 1957 remember it very differently from those of us yet to be born. But discrepancies exist, even among those who experienced similar events. Humans are adroit at forgetting details they'd rather not remember. Who preserves our nation's memories and to what end? And do younger Malaysians really care?"[24]

As discussed in this paper, a major paradigm shift in the artistic approach of artists in Malaysia can be observed since the 1990s. While Malay/Islamic-centred art is inwardly and aesthetically focused, Malay artists since the 1990s who have adopted a postmodern perspective are outwardly focused on and address ongoing social and political concerns. They do not work or live in a vacuum, but are dependent and inextricably included in Malaysian society as reiterated in the thematic approaches

of their work. Unlike works pertaining to Malay or Islamic ideals, these works of art do not need to be beautiful, representational, or realistic. They conflate images from high and low culture and from traditional and modern life. Innovative applications of media and techniques such as collage, montage, photographic imaging, and digital manipulation, resist rigid formal and structural conventions. The use of collisions, collage and fragmentation opens our eyes beyond the limited perception of art and its role in society. By denoting this shift in Malaysian art develop- ment with the term "postmodern situation" or *situasi percamoden*, it is argued here that this paradigm shift has little to nothing to do with the discontinuity with the earlier phases of the modern period as implied in the term "postmodern" or "after modern". The "postmodern situation", as being used here, describes a cultural condition, especially among the new Malaysian middle class, which is the result of Malaysia's launch into the modern economy engineered by the government through the NEP and NDP. This cultural condition is not only fragmented but most importantly has pulled the Malay middle class in various directions, creating a very conflicted and even contradictory society, which can be seen reflected in the works by the artists discussed above.

1   Redza Piyadasa, 'Modernist and Post-Modernist Developments in Malaysian Art in the Post-Independence Period', in John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art*, Sydney: Wild Peony, 1993.

2   Redza Piyadasa, 'Modern Malaysian Art, 1945–1991: A Historical Review', in Caroline Turner (ed.), *Tradition and Change*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press 1993.

3   See *Towards a Mystical Reality: A Documentation of Jointly Initiated Experiences by Redza Piyadasa & Suleiman Esa*, Kuala Lumpur 1974.

4   Sarena Abdullah, 'Postmodernism in Malaysian Art', unpublished thesis, University of Sydney 2009.

5   Cheah Boon Kheng, *Malaysia: The Making of a Nation*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2002, p. 141.

6   A.B. Shamsul, 'From Orang Kaya Baru to Melayu Baru', in Michael Pinches (ed.), *Culture and Privilege and Capitalist Asia*, London & New York: Routledge 1999, p. 100.

7   For example, see Abdul Rahman Embong, 'Malaysian Middle Classes: Some Preliminary Observations', *Jurnal Antrologi dan Sosiologi*, 22 (1995); Abdul Rahman Embong, *State-Led Modernization and the New Middle Class in Malaysia*, London: Palgrave 2001; Joel S. Kahn, 'Constructing Culture: Toward an Anthropology of the Middle Classes in Southeast Asia', in *Asian Studies Review*, 15: 2 (1991); Joel S. Kahn, 'The Middle Class as a Field of Ethnological Study', in Muhammad Ikmal Said & Zahid Emby (eds), *Critical Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Syed Husin Ali*, Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Social Science Association 1996.

8   An art expedition and exploration to Lake Banding in 2004 organised by the Perak Arts Foundation (Yayasan Kesenian Perak). The Malaysian participating artists were Saiful Razman, Ahmad Shukri Mohamed, Ahmad Azrel, Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Fairus Ahmad, Hamir Soib, Hasnul J. Saidon, Ili Farhana Norhayat, Masnoor Ramli Mahmud, Kamal Sabran, Mokhzaini Hairim Mokhtar, Nur Hanim Khairuddin, Nurul Aida Mohd Noor, Raja Shahriman Aziddin, Rozita Zakaria, Suzlee Ibrahim, Syahrul Niza Ahmad Zaini,

Tan Vooi Yam, Teoh Joo Ngee, Umibaizurah Mahir, Zaslan Zeeha Zainee and Zulkifli Yusoff.

9   Hasnul J. Saidon, 'Mengocak Takung – Stirring Takung', in *Takung*, Kuala Lumpur: Balai Seni Lukis Negara 2005, pp. 34–35.

10 The "marginal" middle class on the other hand comprised of 23.9% in 1970 and only grew to 28% by 2000, while the "old" middle class was estimated to be at 3–5% in 2000. See Abdul Rahman Embong, 'Beyond the Crisis: The Paradox of the Malaysian Middle Class', in Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.), *Southeast Asian Middle Classes*, Bangi Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia 2001, p. 86.

11 Ibid., pp. 87–90.

12 Sarena Abdullah, 'Postmodernism in Malaysian Art'.

13 Farish A. Noor, 'From Majapahit to Putrajaya: The Keris as a Symptom of Civilizational Development and Decline', in *From Majapahit to Putrajaya: Searching for Another Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish 2005, p. 60.

14 The 1971 National Cultural Policy was formulated on three principles: that the national culture must be based on the culture of the Malays, as the native people in the region; Islam as an important source in determining the form of national culture; and the acceptance of elements of other cultures as long as these do not conflict with the Malay culture or Islam. See Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan (National Cultural Policy), 1971, http://pmr.penerangan.gov.my/index.php/component/content/article/88-dasar-dasar-negara/238-dasar-kebudayaan-kebangsaan.html, retrieved 23 February 2013.

15 Sarena Abdullah, 'Postmodernism in Malaysian Art'.

16 Johan Saravanamuttu, 'Is There a Politics of the Malaysian Middle Class?', in Abdul Rahman Embong (ed.), *Southeast Asian Middle Classes*, p. 104.

17 Krishen Jit, 'Digital Collage', in *Digital Collage – One Man Art Exhibition by Ismail Zain*, Kuala Lumpur 1988, p. 19.

18 Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 'Hamir Soib: In Search of the Essence of Gothic-Fantastic Angst', in *Matahati*, Kuala Lumpur: Petronas 2008, p. 198.

19 Gregory Galligan, 'Asean Arts Awards', *Art AsiaPacific*, 18 (1998), p. 25.

20 Azman Ismail, 'Overview of Recent Works by Ahmad Shukri Mohamed and Umibaizurah Mahir @ Ismail', in *Patisatustudio: Warning! Tapircrossing*, Puncak Alam: Patisatu Studio 2007, pp. 18–19.

21 Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 'Nafas Asyik: The Reality of Aesthetically Ecstatic Self', in *Nafas: Sculptures of Raja Shahriman*, Kuala Lumpur: National Art Gallery 2004, p. 16.

22 Hasnul Jamal Saidon, 'Semangat Besi: Retrospection of an Enigma', in *Raja Shahriman: Semangat Besi Retrospektif Sebuah Enigma*, Kuala Lumpur: Petronas 2002, p. 32.

23 Nur Hanim Khairuddin, 'Hamir Soib: In Search of the Essence of Gothic-Fantastic Angst', p. 194.

24 Carmen Nge, 'Ahmad Fuad Osman', Rimbun Dahan, last modified 19 February 2008, http://www.rimbundahan.org/art/artists/ahmad_fuad_osman/, retrieved 4 June 2009.

—