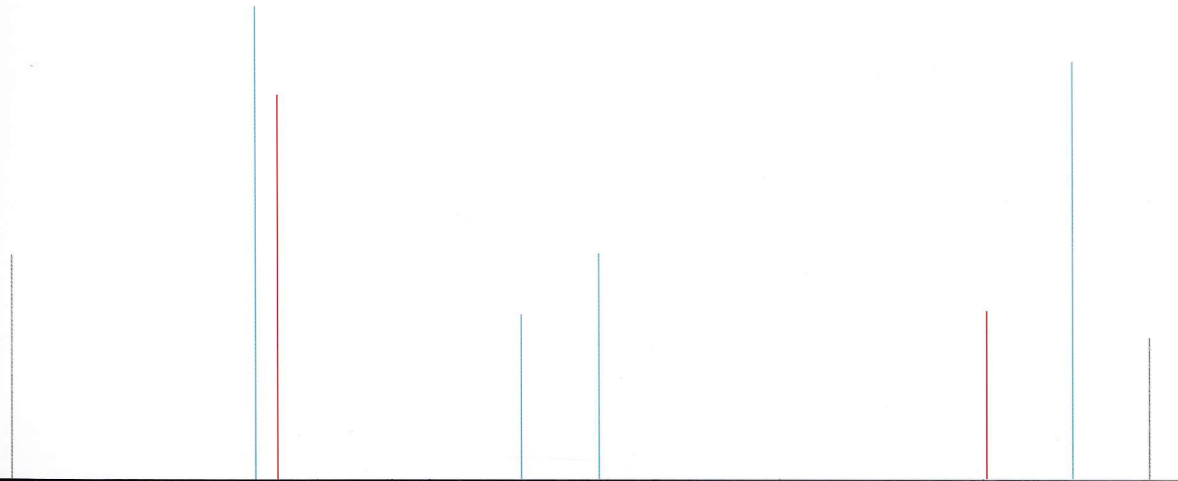


RELOCATIONS

electronic art of hasnul jamal saidon & niranjan rajah

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Relocations
Electronic art of Hasnul Jamal Saidon & Niranjan Rajah

Artists
Hasnul Jamal Saidon & Niranjan Rajah

Curator/writer
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Design Concept
Farid Zainuddin

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The initiative to present Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah as part of ISEA 08 comes from the need to highlight their contributions to the development of electronic art in Southeast Asia, as ISEA makes its regional debut. The exhibition is conceived under the ISEA 08 sub-theme of "locating media". This exhibition highlights the broad and concerted efforts of both artists in deconstructing and reconstructing the relationships of art, culture and technology in order to meaningfully locate new media within non-western art context; and inversely, to locate non-western electronic arts on the global platform. The exhibition is in keeping with the aim of ISEA to become a meaningful global symposium by engaging with diverse perspectives and narratives on electronic arts. The name "relocations" is conceived to characterize the critical repositioning inherent in the works of these artists, as well as to symbolize the challenge of curating new media in the constant flux of redefinitions and questioning that is necessary in contemporary electronic art.

I came to know of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah and their contributions in 2003 when I was a new lecturer at the Multimedia University (MMU) researching Malaysian electronic arts. At that time, they had both left the University Malaysia Sarawak. Niranjan had left for Vancouver and seemed to have vanished from the Malaysian scene, and Hasnul was teaching at the Center for Advanced Design (CENFAD) in Kuala Lumpur and about to move to Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang. I came to know Hasnul through an art camp called "Sonneratia" and was honoured to collaborate with him during his residency in Japan. The project was called Uploaddownload and the objective was to explore online graphical collaboration amongst youth across the Asian region. Then, when I went to San Francisco in 2004 to pursue my MA in curatorial practice at the California College of the Arts, Niranjan, who was working at Simon Fraser University, kindly accepted an invitation to serve as an external advisor on my thesis committee. My dissertation was titled 'Regionalism In Exhibiting Internet Art'. In studying their works and writings, learning from them, working with them, and in getting to know them in the broader areas of life, I have come to understand their values and their motivations.

As artists, theorists and curators in the nineties they endeavored to explore, understand and locate new media technology amidst the cultural and social realities of Malaysia and South East Asia. This exhibition recalls the efforts that the artists made by "relocating" their various contributions of this period within the current global narrative of electronic art. They have both done extensive work in such diverse disciplines as writing, production and exhibition curation. They have gained recognition in local, regional and global electronic art communities but their disparate efforts have not as yet been gathered and reviewed together in any substantial way. The focus of this exhibition is to highlight their personal artistic inquiry, supplemented by their diverse and well-known contributions in the electronic art and non-electronic art scenes through the broad overview presented in this catalog.

The exhibition presents both past and present works and it is not intended to prioritize any specific narrative order. This is central to the exhibition as the nature of New Media practice itself embraces a rhizomatic multiplicity and diversity. The arguments are presented in order to prompt further contemplation rather than to embrace a certain reading. In the broadest terms, the exhibition attempts to instigate further inquiry into the notions of 'artist' and 'curator' in an age of converging disciplines, and to explore the significance and the limitations of the post-modern ethos and of post-colonial theory. I hope that this exhibition does justice to the struggles and successes of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah in their attempts to re-locate themselves, their art, and the art of the region in so many different ways.



This exhibition would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost I would like to thank the Artistic Director of ISEA08 - Gunalan Nadarajah for inviting me to do this exhibition. Thanks to Shoosie Sulaiman for the support given on behalf of 12 (ArtSpace Gallery). I would also like to thank Shirley Soh Seok Kim from Singapore Management University and Swee Leng Teo, executive producer of ISEA08 for their dedication in this undertaking. I would like to extend my gratitude to Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, Universiti Sains Malaysia for the publication support and National Art Gallery Malaysia for other financial needs as well as Digital Arts & New Media MFA program, University of California, Santa Cruz for believing in my efforts. Not forgetting my parents and for the moral support and numerous others who have directly and indirectly contributed in making this exhibition a success. Finally, I would like to thank Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah for their inspiring contributions to new media art and for participating in this exhibition.

¹ Niranjan Rajah writing for the Unimas exhibition titled CIPTA states "Taking into account the ongoing convergence of disciplines, art institutions must aim to produce art professionals who are able to thrive in the dynamic and multivalent work environment that is rapidly emerging"

² Writing for 1st electronic art show, Niranjan and Hasnul claim, "In fact, multimedia is not new. It is only the modernist legacy of the purity of form that makes contemporary, technologically induced convergence appear so revolutionary. Pg. 26

³ Niranjan Rajah writing for the Unimas exhibition titled CIPTA states "Be it in Islamic geometry, Hindu sculpture or Chinese painting, the expression of individual personality or perspective is the least of the artist's concerns"

⁴ As the curator for an exhibition titled "Takung" organized by the National Art Gallery of Malaysia, Hasnul Jamal Saidon writes about the Malaysian art market as such "The ecosystem" in such a market has managed to attract art merchants, theory brokers and "habuan" hunters, respected for their brilliant and acute sense of sniffing and spinning profits.

⁵ National Art Gallery of Malaysia is established on 28 August 1958 by means of The National Art Gallery Act 1959, Act 516. The ordinance for forming the NAG Board of Trustees was entrenched by His Majesty the King in 1959. Presently, the NAG comes under the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage with the mission to collect, conserve, preserve, exhibit, promote, and create an awareness, understanding and appreciation of arts in all levels of society.

⁶ Hasnul writes about the Malaysian institutions as such "Compared to global media, the influence of the local government and its institutional instruments is miniscule. Perhaps such "silence" towards the detrimental power of representation in the whole political economy of global media is more pragmatic in order to secure competitiveness and brand value in the international platform. Or perhaps to maintain the trust and bigger bounty of potential sponsors and investors, especially in Britain and United States.

⁷ As Syed Ahmad Jamal has recorded "...the creators had been given full freedom to create, and that the country should now pay attention to arts as an element in the economic and political development of the nation.

⁸ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1935. p. 3

⁹ Niranjan Rajah argues that Malaysian artists are have resisted the Western framework of Modern art by stating "If modern art was thrust upon us, what is important to us is how we reconstruct it in our own world. Wave after wave of our modern artists have addressed international trends in terms of indigenous, traditions, forms and issues. It can be said today, in an inversion of early modernist appropriations, our artist occupy any Western category they see fit as they execute an art that is stridently determined on indigenous terms."

One might be puzzled when looking into the various efforts of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah. In their practices in the nineties, one encounters a diversified body of work that addresses various subjects pertaining to culture and society. They have taken multiform approaches in thinking about art and media technology, and have played a role in contextualizing and producing media art works. They compliment each other, constantly shifting and redefining positions that exist within the boundaries of the art practice and academic institutions. There is a constant shifting of roles, between the content creator and context provider - in short between artist and curator.

Indeed, Hasnul and Niranjan were well aware of the origins and functions of these roles, which have roots in the western understanding of art and aesthetics, as they artfully questioned and examined the function and its relevance of such roles within the practice of New Media art and the Malaysian scene at large. They also observed that the convergence of disciplines that was occurring due to the introduction of media technology within the arts, demanded that the artist take on a multidimensional approach towards art making.¹ The idea of convergence is perceived to be radical within the western framework of institutionalized art as the emphasis was placed on the distinct forms of art, but it was not a new concept within the traditional art practices of Asia.² Also with the convergence of art forms, the artist "ego" is diminished, as the attention shifts from the actual art object to the context in which the work is presented, demanding the artist to collaborate with other artisans and to consider the mode and purpose of the presentation.³ By articulating the traditional approaches of eastern cultures, Hasnul and Niranjan acutely developed their basis for an Asian reclamation of the new media paradigm.

Both the artist and the curator plays a vital role in the establishment of an art culture, especially as the mechanism of the art market relies upon the power relationship between them.⁴ The structure of an art institution came into existence within the Malaysian art scene along with the efforts of modernization after the independence of Malaysia in 1957. The National Art Gallery was established in 1958 as the official custodian of National contemporary art by becoming the foremost center for the development and collection of the country's visual art.⁵ The idea of institutionalized art was adopted from the western culture and ideology of art marketing, with the intention that Malaysian art would be connected closely with the global art scene as well as to expand the local art discourse.⁶ Synchronously this intention was perpetuated with the occurrence of ethnic violence in the sixties that shaped the national cultural policy whereby the idea of "Art for Art's Sake" was abandoned for "Art for society". Malaysian artists were encouraged to promote and produce works for the nation building agenda.⁷

When we examine the origin of art institutions, it leads us to the core of the Enlightenment project and their epistemological shift that, according to art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, "gave rise to an extroversion of human consciousness".⁸ This demarcates the dawn of our rational thinking based upon the understanding of the world through our sensory perception. Consequently this leads to the formation of science that deals with bare facts of the world and art that creates objects for pure aesthetic contemplation. Naturally these values are nested in our art institutions and emerge as these institutions become the means of a thrust for "progress". This understanding of art has been institutionalized beyond the west and has become an assumed methodology; it is one that does not fit coherently with the Malaysian cultural context.⁹ There is no doubt that these institutions are necessary for nurturing the Malaysian art scene and even more so, for Malaysia to compete in the global art market today. It is vital to realize that these institutions are also the gatekeepers that might help us withstand the strong current of western marketing and media.

In the Malaysian art context, the effort to understand contemporary art practice in relation to its local culture and politics is not something new. The struggle to locate local identity amidst the larger art world calls for constant negotiation and redefinition of meaning and context. This eventually led to a series of exhibitions by Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa called "Towards A Mystical Reality". The two artists teamed up to

¹⁰ Piyadasa, Redza and Esa, Sulaiman, *Towards a mystical reality*, National Art Gallery of Malaysia, 1974

¹¹ Ismail Zain writing about Reza Piyadasa's *Mystical Reality* states, "Piyadasa's approach in his artworks includes the Intellectual property versus the primitive experience that deals with spontaneous response. These two attributes differ as each has its own language and symbol to communicate.

¹² Piyadasa writing for Ismail Zain catalog acknowledges Zain as such "In these experimental works of Ismail Zain's, what comes through his celebration of vision of art and culture that transcends myopic and parochial visions and limitations. His is a more all-encompassing view of the world and of humanity in all its differentiated complexities and manifestations". This in fact reflects the postmodern approach that tends to critique a linear, single objective knowledge.

¹³ Ismail Zain interviewed by Noordin Hassan

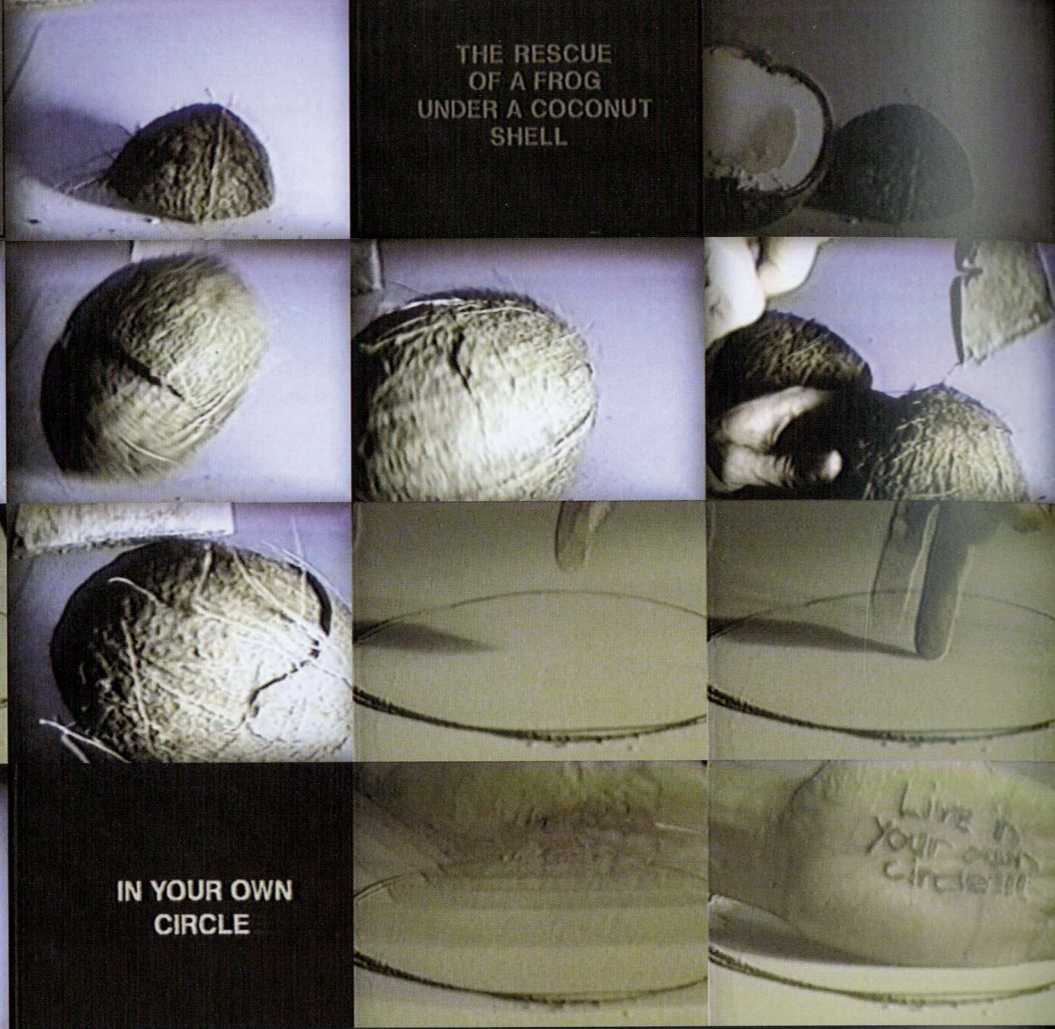
explore the issues of modern art practice as it is dominantly influenced by the western ideology of aesthetic study based on empiricism. Piyadasa and Esa raised an important issue that was lurking amidst the practicing artists in Malaysia during the seventies, when they stated: "Clearly, the link with a traditional culture is all but severed today as far as the plastic arts are concerned. What with 20th century scientific and psychological advancements, the serious Asian modernists have been left with little choice but to lean heavily on a modern art tradition that has its origin in the western scientific and intellectual climate".¹⁰ To address this issue, they started to explore some of ancient philosophical ideas from the east and came up with the concept of mystical reality - rejecting the materialistic reading of an object and returning to the eastern perspective of reality that deals with the mystical psyche.

In their critique towards the hegemonic reading of the modernist art, both Piyadasa and Esa were still placing emphasis on the forms that could possibly lead to an introduction of an eastern version of the conceptual art practice into the Malaysian scene. Both Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa were modern artists trying to customize the modernist movement to better suit the local Malaysian flavor.¹¹ They were referring to objective knowledge building based upon the response of an individual mind and with the assumption that such knowledge stands as truth. It was not until the efforts of artistic experimentation with computer technology by Ismail Zain that the shift occurred from the emphasis on the content to the context. He introduced semiotics through his body of digital works. Zain's artistic enquiry locates the postmodern theory within the Malaysian art scene.¹² Ismail Zain was a visionary who explored the possibility of computer for artistic practice. He was certainly the first media artist in the region to produce a strong body of work using computer technology. Surely his artistic enquiry is deemed relevant to any electronic art practitioner from Asia, particularly those who are emerging from contexts marginalized and constrained by different combinations of political, economic, geographic and cultural conditions. With his "Digital Collage series" and his writings, he built a critical framework to address the ways and means of adapting the new medium into the local art scene. Ismail Zain theorized a decisive measure to confront the constant flow of information accelerated by the speed of communication technologies. He argued "the kind of universalism which is the outcome of instant information calls for a greater challenge, particularly for the consumers of this information like us, to adopt a more critical and autocratic posture".¹³ He projected that New Media artists from developing countries such as Malaysia should adopt "critical regionalism" to operate within the rapidly emerging information society. Making a transition from the idea of art as being a form of expressing ones personal feelings and emotions, he ventured into the possibilities of art as a cerebral activity of complex ideas and inquiries. His enthusiasm at the policy level made him converge his artistic practice with administrative roles. He served as producer, curator and director at numerous National events and art institutions. Undoubtedly, Ismail Zain paved the path for the practices of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah addressed in the present exhibition.

POST-COLON

a series of video shorts by
Enzo J. Saldou

THE RESCUE
OF A FROG
UNDER A COCONUT
SHELL



IN YOUR OWN
CIRCLE

PostColon

Single channel Video

1993

MIRROR...MIRROR...ON THE
WALL



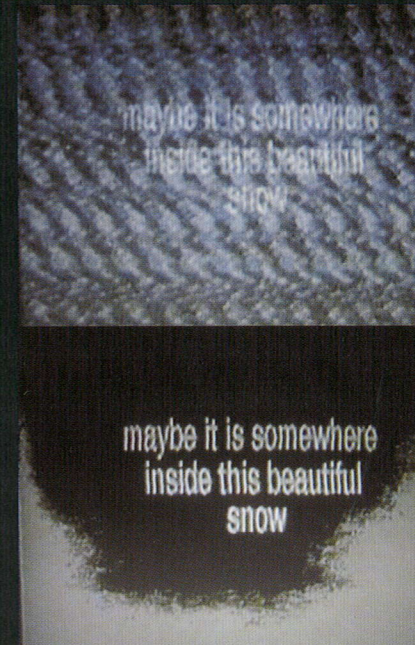
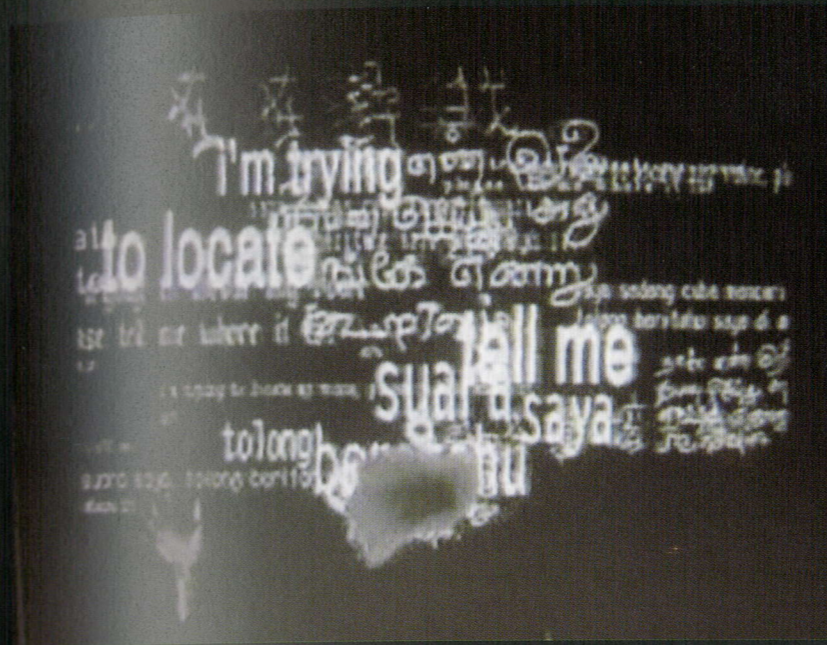
mirror, mirror on the wall

Single channel animation video

1994



The smiling Van Gough and Gauguin (Fashion Parade)
Computer animation on video, acrylic painting
1997



Fictional Dialogue
Computer animation in video projection on corner of a gallery wall
1997

JR : VANISHING POINT 1

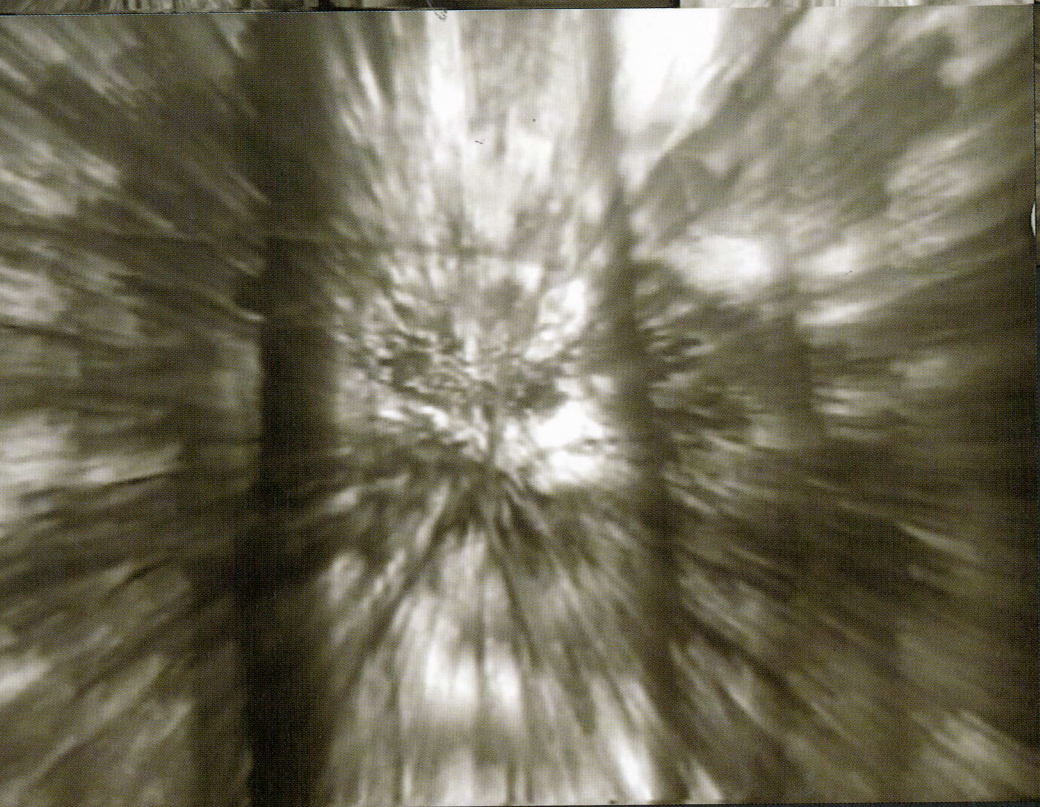
By Hasnul J. Saidon

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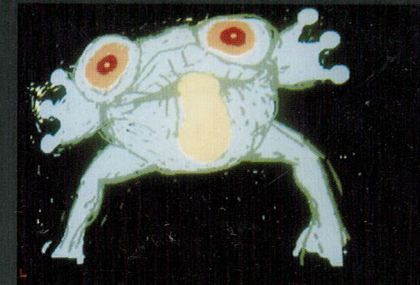
By Hasnul J. Saidon

JR : VANISHING POINT 1

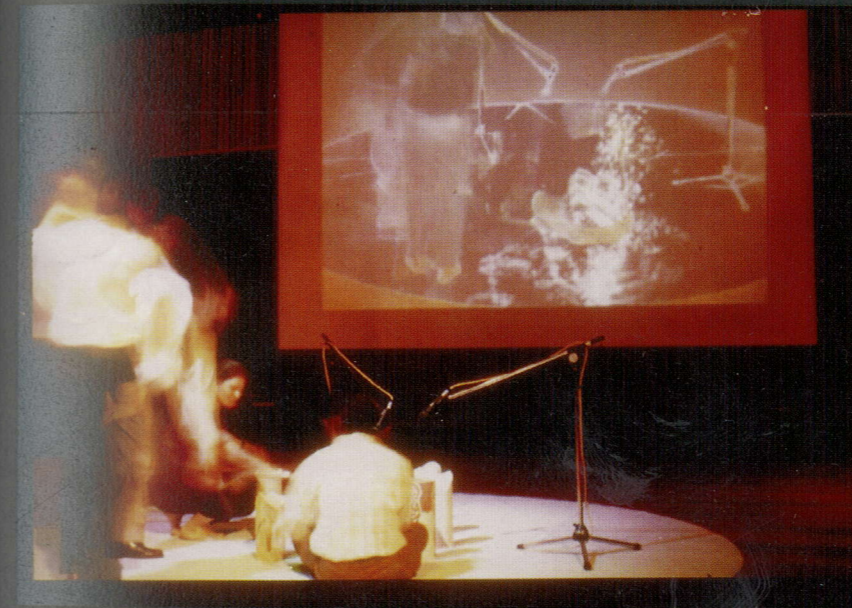
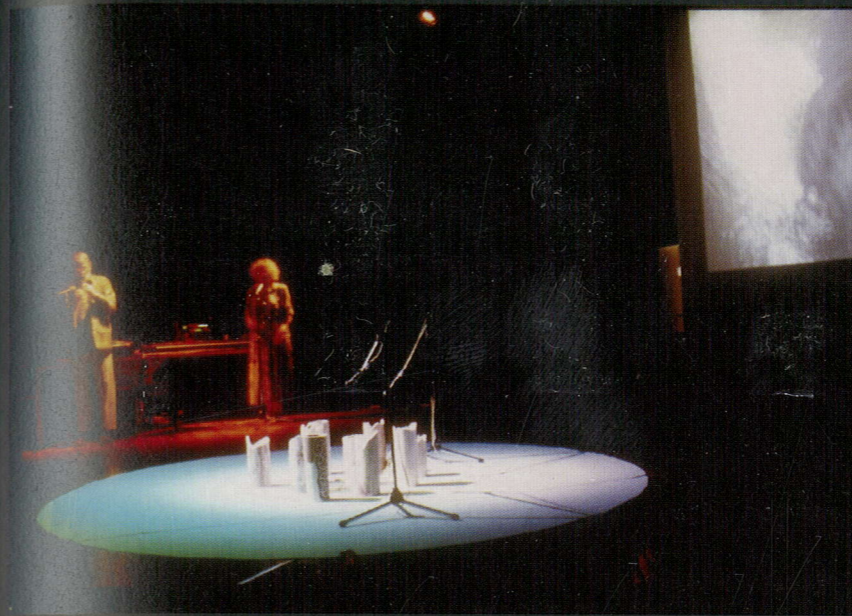
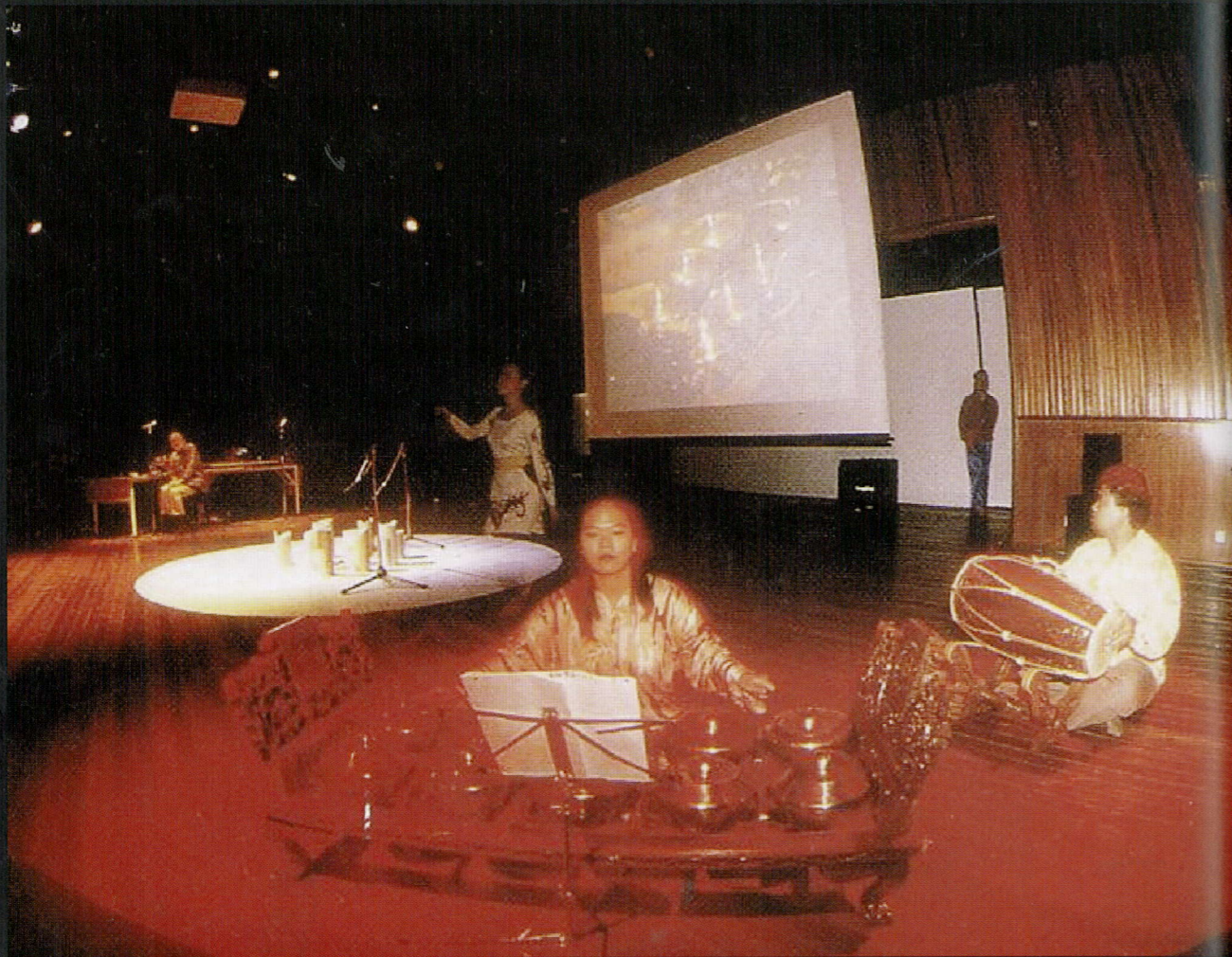
By Hasnul J. Saidon



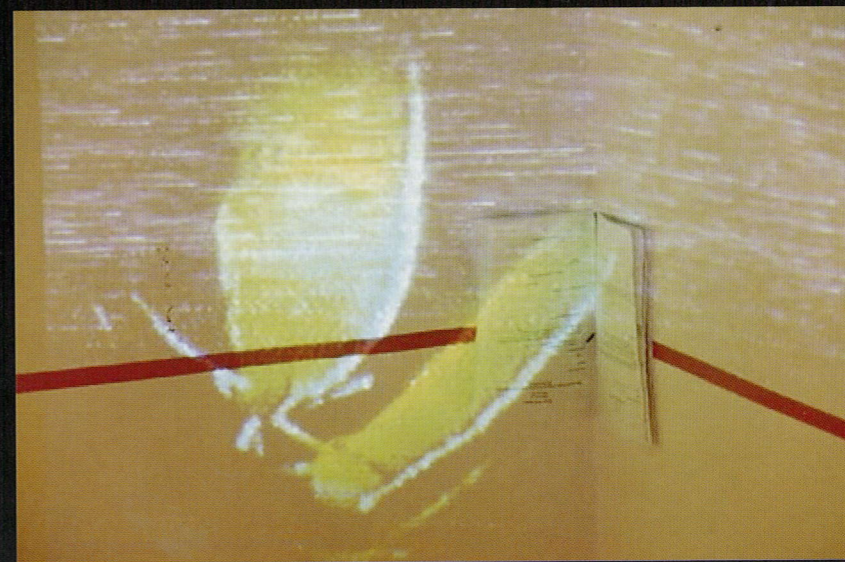
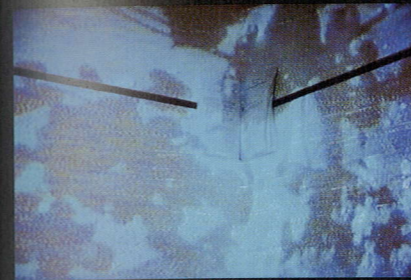
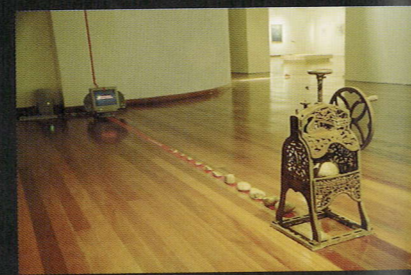
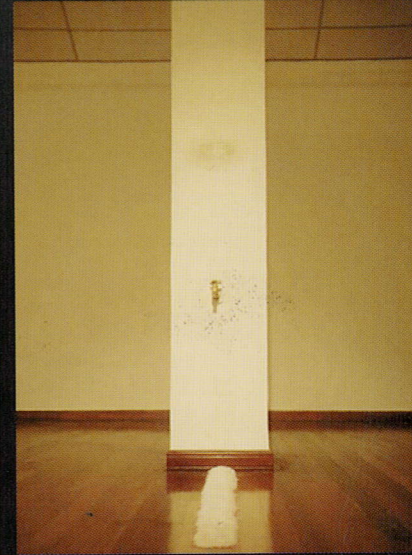
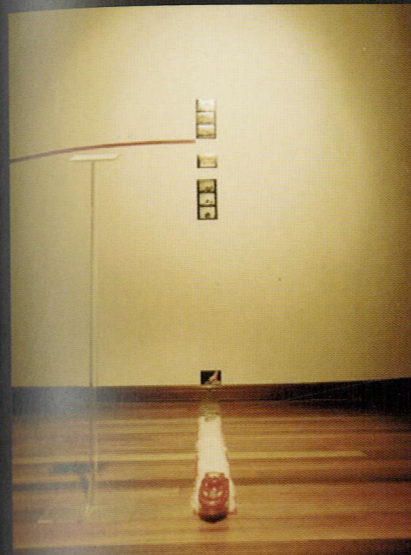
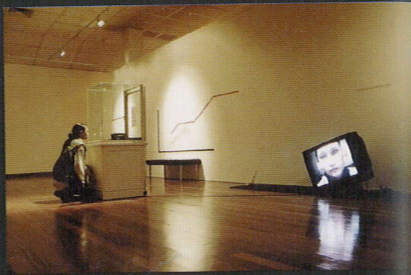
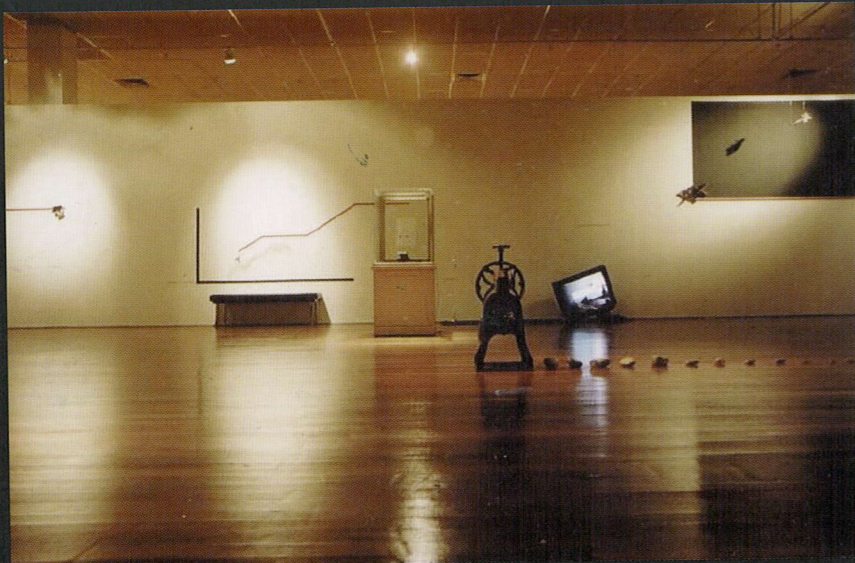
Vanishing point
Interactive video installation
1997



Ong
Interactive CD-ROM
1997



Jambori Rimba
An Audience-interactive installation
1997
in collaboration with the Mclean Mix (Barton & Priscilla McLean)



Lang-Ke-We?
Multimedia Installation
1999



UUploadDownload
 ↗ ↘

Upload-Download (UD) is an experimental online project presenting a collaboration between peoples around the globe. Central to the project is the theme of global communication and cross-cultural encounters.

Essentially, the project explores the impact of globalization, free market capitalism, consumerism, and information/communication technology on the young artist, especially in regards to the notion of self, identity, nationality, spirituality and cross-cultural experiences.

The participants will engage in a series of collaborative online art activities related to the above-mentioned issues.

Log in and collaborate

Username

Password

Not yet a member, [click here to join](#)

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS:
 -Deep Interest in new media arts
 -Creative and fluent with new media related technologies
 -Moderate level of both spoken and written English
 -Interest to engage in the collaborative project

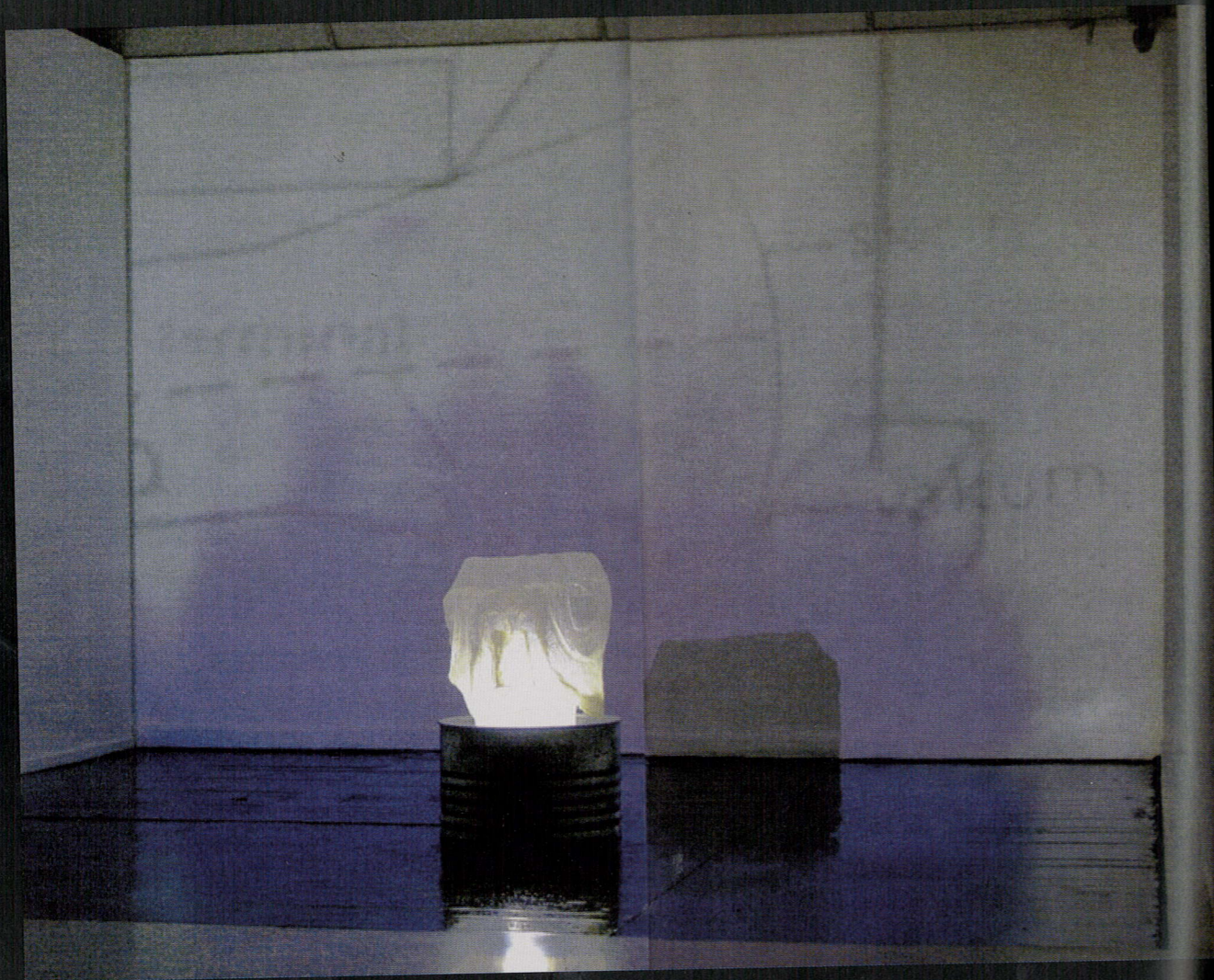
[Intro](#) | [History](#) | [Participate](#) | [Contact](#) | [View Works](#)

Uuploaddownload website



Hasnul describing the uploaddownload project to Japanese students

Interfaces (Component of uploaddownload project)
 Internet, Video projection
 2003/04/05
 In collaboration with Roopesh Sitharan



Siri Hijab Nurbaya (Veils of Nurbaya) - Tanggung (Abide)
Clear Resin and Mixed media installation
2003
in collaboration with Kamal Sabran and Chia Meow Ling

[Could you briefly share your early years as an artist?](#)

I was initially trained as a fine artist. During my college years at UiTM, I was initially interested in photo-realism. My first entry into art exhibition was in 1986 in the Open Show organized by the National Art Gallery. I sent my photo-realist paintings. I remember feeling so proud and high when one of the works was printed in the color section of the catalogue. It was even mentioned by Ooi Kok Chuen in a review of the show. I was a second year student at that time.

I began to experiment with myriads of non-traditional media and found objects when I was studying at UiTM. I chose to refer to microscopic objects as my subjects, mostly through books on biology with pictures taken by the use of microscope. I copied the images and blew them up into painting sizes. They appeared abstract, but I argued that they were actually 'realistic' (taken or captured by a non-emotional, non-expressive man-made machine or instrument). Perhaps it was my form of 'expanded realism' in which the notion of 'reality' has been extended through scientific instruments (technology). We can shrink ourselves to the size of an atom (or now, even a particle) or blow ourselves to the size of galaxies. Our 'scale' or reality has expanded beyond 'middle distance' as exposed by landscape artists.

For me, my realism was more real because they represent our microscopic selves (unseen by our naked eyes). This form of microscopic reality for me, was a step closer to our 'real' selves where all our 'petty' differences totally disappeared (no more the individual Hasnul or Roopesh or whatever) but just a bundle of atoms, molecules etc (now - energy in myriads of frequencies/waves). I also began to read about 'creation' from both scientific and religious sources (not just Islam). Several surahs in the Quran mention about the creation of humans and the process of human formation in a woman's womb, in which women hold a very special place. I was basically asking 'who am I?' or 'who are we?'. In retrospect, when I looked back at my early works, I thought that they were rather ugly, and perhaps naive, in terms of techniques and formalistic exploration.

On the other hand, they were my 'genesis' or became the seeds of my personal journey as a person and as an artist. My interest in science (quantum physics, brain/mind studies, energy), technology (new media, computers, network system), women (always intrigue me) alternative media, alternative medicine/therapy/healing, Eastern philosophies, spiritual sciences (especially from Islamic sources), cross-discipline approach, etc, began in UiTM. I was also into music composition, performances, theater and film. I created my first animation film (super 8mm) when I was waiting for my SPM results in 1983 (I lost it when I was in UiTM). I was obsessed with learning and experiencing, and challenging my creative impulses, which were nurtured and provoked when I was in UiTM. I was blessed with good lecturers. For me, they were the best and were at the top of their form then.

[You have worked on several other areas of art production such as theater, painting and sculpture before venturing into the Electronic art, what made you to make such transition?](#)

I believe that creativity has no boundary. Electronic art is one of many forms that I wanted to explore since we are living in the electronic age. I also believe in being 'in the moment', being a creature of today. I think, the transition was 'meant to be'. It happened when I was in the USA, looking for a place to do my MFA after completing my BFA in Painting in Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. My applications to several painting schools were rejected. I was told that my diverse portfolio did not reflect me as a painter. Even my paintings were too 'experimental'. I was asked to apply for a more 'cross-discipline' program. Then I saw a poster for MFA in Integrated Electronic Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York on a notice board in the SIU art studio. Even though it was not a painting program, I felt a very strong urge to apply. I felt that this would be the best place for a person like me as it was interdisciplinary and cutting edge, even though I was rather apprehensive about computers then. I prepared a portfolio and sent my application. The rest -- is history.

[How did you overcome your apprehensiveness?](#)

It could be because I was desperate to get into an MFA program. Secondly, because I got a bit bored of doing painting. I wanted to learn something new, something current or on the cutting edge. I wanted to explore and challenge myself.

[Do you find that Electronic art is very similar to other modes of artistic expression such as painting and sculptures?](#)

Different. It has its own principles, such as bits, pulse, frequencies, non-linear, interactive, inter-connected, modular, etc

Could you elaborate on these differences that you have mentioned?

I think my take on e-art or now new media art has become more and more spiritual and cosmological. One fundamental is that e-art (or digital or new media art) is based on coded binary language even though its working environment and system may mimic a particular existing physical setting. We work in a 'virtual' context. What appears to 'exist' is actually a set of complex combination of codes. The appearance of existence or presence may change and fluctuate as the codes change. They are merely 'shadows' or manifestations, or projections of the codes. Of course we can output part of virtual domain into a physical realm such as print, 3D model and others but what is more important is the coding.

Similarly, from the quantum point of view, the physical realm itself is actually complex combination of energies in myriads of interconnected frequencies, vibrating in infinite combinations of patterns or codes that can't be seen and sensed by our naked 5 senses. What we assume as our reality is merely a shadow of the vast interconnected patterns of energies, working infinitely, which we are a part of, not separated from. In elaborating, the best analogy is the working of our brain and the energy of our mind. The mind is where our quantum state is - you can't see the mind but all the physical things that you see are the result of the human mind - the projection of human mind - the result or accumulative consequences of human mind.

Mind is energy - in myriads of codes.

I see e-art as an instrument step closer to engage with the notion of my own mind, human mind, in a virtual sense. It is different from painting - which probably reflects my engagement with my own body, physical and locally. The terms non-linear, interactive, inter-connected, modular etc are reflective of our state of mind, the working of mind.

You always tend to refer to Malay parables in your work, why is it important for you?

Because I like to think that I am Malay, or even question why I am referred to as Malay.

[Such questioning seems relevant to any Asian artists, do you think this might be an important question to confront the waves of globalization? If so, why and how in your opinion?](#)

Yes, but not because I am against globalization. Perhaps because I want to know what the heck is this animal called globalization?

[The video technology has changed drastically since the early nineties, how do you perceive the changes?](#)

Yes, very fast. We are moving towards quantum speed or speed of the mind.

[Please explain the speed of mind, and how would you evaluate such situation within the current state of social, political and cultural climax of Malaysia and the region?](#)

You get results as fast as your can think. You see things a long distance away in real time. You interact in real time, even with people who may not be physically accessible. People can connect openly on mind level and bypass the physical. Current states of social, political and cultural climax are based on classical physics, material sciences - form, not state of mind. As more and more people are engaging with each other 'virtually' (on mind level), all the previously constructed 'forms' of captive thinking are beginning to deconstruct and unshackle. Those who have formed their 'reality' based on a fixed (given and constructed) state of physical appearance, may panic. The concept of race for example, can be argued as more of a state of mind, the result of years and years of conditioning (hardwiring of mental coding).

Malaysia is experiencing changes from a highly physical-based paradigm to a virtual-based paradigm - in which the 'actual' (not fictional) individual and collective states of mind of its people will be made more and more visible. No more hiding under certain nice forms (policies, appearances, images etc) anymore. The transition from form to mind (consciousness about our consciousness, instead of cheating our mind) may take some time, and may not look nice. We may not like seeing what we are thinking. Imagine seeing people's mind openly - may frighten us like hell. I think we are in this transition period. We have to be cool, not to get over-excited.

[Do you see your painting works and electronic art practice as being relevant to each other?](#)

Yes.

[How and why?](#)

In a complimentary way, almost like between physical and virtual, between static and dynamic, like a binary code between 1 and 0. Between spirit and body.

[Is technology crucial for your artistic practice and why?](#)

Yes. They are means to manifest the intangible side of human experience. I have my own definition of technology, which is not bound by a very linear concept of time and progress. Technology is an extension of our mind and emotion.

[You have put in a lot of effort in building and shaping the electronic art scene in Malaysia, why and how do you see the e-art being important for the nation?](#)

I was not really into shaping electronic art scene in Malaysia before. I was more interested in knowing and exploring. I was also not really that interested in any particular kind of national agenda, even though I have to admit that I found that it can be practical when it comes to applying for a project grant or financial support. I was more into researching, knowing, exploring and making sense of changes that are taking place and how it would affect the local contemporary art practice.

[Exploring changes and effects seems important to your practice, why might that be?](#)

This is because change is constant. We change everyday. Our cells change everyday. Not accepting change is denial.

[Nowadays you are much more into the art administration \(curator and director\) than production \(artist\), do you see this as part of your artistic practice? And why?](#)

Yes. My administrative duties involve directing many projects. I have to work with many people, groups, teams etc. I look at my engagements as a form of becoming a part of a larger whole, a larger experience that encompasses both the arts and sciences. I became less selfish, greedy and self-centered.

[This seems very much of a holistic approach, does this stem from your cultural roots?](#)

I hope so.

[Where do you get your inspiration?](#)

Love of life and all living beings.

[Do you have any advice for the younger generation of electronic artists?](#)

Depends on what they ask.

[Asking from a perspective of: firstly as a human being and secondly as a new media artist!](#)

New media is an extension of our mind and emotion. So, use it to understand the state of our mind and emotion. Who knows, we may then reach and discover the true nature of our soul.

From Post Colonialism To Critical Regionalism

The nineties witnessed a strong tide of change in Malaysia and in the region in general. Malaysia came to realization of the need for developing a knowledge-based society as a key to survival need to confront the emergence of global capital and information technologies. The change was initiated by the proclamation of "Vision 2020" by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tun Dr. Mahatir Mohammed. It denotes the efforts of Malaysia to be transformed from a third world to a first world nation. As explained by Tun Dr. Mahatir, "the ultimate goal for Malaysia was to be a fully developed country by the year 2020".¹ Being a strong advocate for developing countries, he had a very Asian² view of the term "development", in which the emphasis was placed not only on the economic but also on the political, social, spiritual, psychological, and cultural characteristics and values of the region.

This vision led to the launching of many mega plans and projects, notably, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) that stretches from the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur to the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, a development that includes the towns of Cyberjaya³ and Putrajaya⁴. Various government bodies worked in collaboration with both local and foreign corporations and agencies to implement several flagship programs to accelerate the socio-economic development of Malaysia. With the sudden explosion and accessibility of information and communication technologies (ICT), Malaysian society became more exposed to the world-at-large and expanded its vision of itself, claiming for Malaysia a place in the global information society.

Malaysian citizens were confronted with an alarming pace of cultural transformation. Moreover, with the interjection of ICT, new needs and requirements emerged, causing a sudden wave of cultural, political and economic change. This new phenomenon led to a paradigm shift as the nation quickly absorbed advanced telecommunication technologies in a short period of time.⁵ The new infrastructure of communication enhanced and improved the quality of communication and its accessibility to every citizen of Malaysia.⁶ The whole transformation was augmented with the unification of the national identity card, driving license and bank card to one single chip-embedded smart card called "MyKad"⁷ that made every citizen of Malaysia adopt, understand and utilize the technology that had been introduced to them.

It is at such a transformative time that Hasnul Jamal Saidon returned home from the United States, after completing his MFA in Electronic Arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). At RPI⁸ he was an outstanding candidate among his peers. His clear articulation of ideas and arguments together with his creative approach in art making, is attested to by his teachers and peers. The social and professional networking that he had established during his time abroad inspired some of his future undertakings. Upon his arrival in Malaysia, he started as an academician by becoming a lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in 1993. After a year of serving UiTM, he moved on to contribute to the development of a newly established program at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) where he remained for the next 6 years. This became the most vibrant years of his artistic endeavors as UNIMAS became the perfect ground for his research and personal development.

Hasnul is a multi-talented artist and his artistic capabilities extend not only to technological media, but also to painting, drawing, animation, music composition and theater production. He epitomizes the new breed of Asian artist- multi-tasking, confident, far-sighted and intellectual. Hasnul has represented Malaysia at several regional and international art exhibitions, symposiums and biennials.

Meanwhile, Niranjan Rajah arrived in Malaysia from London. He earned his MA in Fine Art from the Goldsmiths College and had been actively exhibiting his work in the London art scene. His early years of undergraduate studies in Economics and in Law came in handy upon his return in 1995, a little after the return of Hasnul from the United States. Indeed this seems like a synchronized assemblage of nature to bring these two bright and vibrant people together for the greater good of Malaysian art. In 1995, Niranjan joined UNIMAS and remained with the institution

¹ Mahathir Mohamad, "The Way Forward" Vision 2020, [http://www.pmo.gov.my/website/webdb.nsf/\(ALLDDC/BA7051FF90767AD848256E84003129CA\)](http://www.pmo.gov.my/website/webdb.nsf/(ALLDDC/BA7051FF90767AD848256E84003129CA)

² I am referring to the concept of "Asian values" by Kishore Mahbubani, Permanent Secretary of Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that came into vogue in the 1990s, based on the belief in the existence of Asian countries with unique set of institutions and political ideologies which reflected the region's culture and history. Kishore Mahbubani "Can Asians Think?" (Marshall Cavendish publication, 2004) p.35

³ BBC online news reports "Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammed, has opened a new multimedia garden city known as Cyberjaya which he says will be the nerve centre of the country's high-technology development. The latest of Malaysia's prestigious mega-projects will have cost an estimated \$15bn by the time it is completed in the next millennium. Designed to be the Malaysian answer to Silicon Valley, it will be intelligent, high-tech, low density and environmentally friendly." "Cyberjaya opens for e-business" BBC News, UK-World: Asia-Pacific, 8 July 1999 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/388795.stm>>

⁴ Putrajaya is the Administrative Capital of the Federal Government of Malaysia. Termed as Malaysia's first Intelligent Garden City, Putrajaya is a vital development catalyst - as the nerve centre of the nation and an ideal place to live, work, conduct business and engage in sports and recreational activities. Situated within the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), the development of Putrajaya marks a new chapter in the history of modern city planning in Malaysia. It is set to be a model garden city with sophisticated information network based on multimedia technologies. "About Putrajaya" i-putra.com - Putrajaya community portal <http://www.i-putra.com.my/about_putrajaya.cfm>

⁵ Writing for a technical paper as part of Asia-Pacific Development Information program, Amitabh Kundu explains, "Malaysia obtains the top position in both skill-independent and skill-dependent ICT categories. The value of its skill-dependent ICT index is unity as it secures the highest value in all the indicators belonging to this category. More importantly, Thailand and China, which follow Malaysia are way behind." Amitabh Kundu, "ICT and Human development: Towards building a composite index for Asia" United Nation Development Program, (Reed Elsevier India Private Limited, 2004)

⁶ Jo Timbuong reports for star newspaper online that Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM) and the Government are spending a total of RM15.6bil to ensure that the country will have a top-notch, competitive high-speed broadband infrastructure in the next decade. The benefits of having such a facility for the people and the nation are expected to be worth many times that amount. Jo Timbuong "Billion-ringggit boost for broadband" thestar.com.my, 16 May 2008 <<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/5/16/nation/21272341&sec=nation>>

⁷ Will Knight wrote "The world's first national smart card scheme to store biometric data on an in-built computer chip has been introduced in Malaysia. The cards are compulsory for Malaysia's citizens and are encoded with a copy of the owner's fingerprints" Will Knight, "Malaysia pioneers smart cards with fingerprint data" New Scientist Print Edition, 21 September 2001 <<http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn1331>>

⁸ For more information on Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, refer website <<http://www.arts.rpi.edu/>>

⁹ Redza Piyadasa in his catalogue essay in the National Gallery retrospective exhibition, 'Rupa Malaysia', acknowledges the efforts by Hasnul and Niranjan. In the essay he states, "The roles played by two electronic artists, Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah, both teaching at the UNIMAS, in articulating the need for experimenting in electronic art in this country, have been most significant indeed" Redza Piyadasa, Rupa Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, National Art Gallery, 2001), p.61-62.

¹⁰ The exhibition presented video and animation works, computer installations, print media, CD-ROM projects, VRML and virtual works, real-time performance and Internet art. Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah, Pameran Seni Elektronik pertama [catalogue]. (Malaysia: National Art Gallery of Malaysia, 1997)

for the next 7 years. His dedication to art theory and education was very apparent from the very beginning, as he did some extensive writing and curating in an effort to establish the emerging artistic practice of the region as a whole, particularly the electronic arts. This was surely aided by his early education in law and economics as his creative and curatorial approaches are inclusive of social, political, economic and cultural perspective, contrary to the conventional curating process based purely on art history and theory. Niranjan's theoretical effort was accompanied by his Internet artwork that became a key reference point, as it was the first significant body of artworks produced in the new medium of the Internet in South East Asia. These pioneering works became the marker for the critical engagement and inquiry into New Media in the Malaysian art scene and even for the region of South East Asia.

Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah were persistently seeking a place for critical art inquiry amidst the technological developments that were happening all around them. Operating from their base at UNIMAS, they explored the latency of art within the new technological vision that was transforming Malaysian society. The national technology agenda was set to achieve commercial and administrative ends. However, both Hasnul and Niranjan were determined to form a space for electronic art practice⁹. This became a reality during the manifestation of the First Electronic Art Show at the National Art Gallery of Malaysia in 1997¹⁰. It marks a new trajectory in Malaysian art. Before this, media works were scattered across the historical chronology of a local modernism. In this exhibition, the works were reorganized to construct a new lexicon centered on new media; one more aligned with local art practices and most importantly, shaped according to the social, political and cultural history of the region. In this narrative, both Hasnul and Niranjan argued for a critical approach to examining the "New Media" paradigm, beyond a techno-centric outlook. This was to be achieved, they proposed, by finding Malaysia's own roots and cultural traditions that underpin the potential understanding of the New Media phenomena. Undeniably, this exhibition stands as a monumental event in shaping and locating electronic art in the Malaysian art narrative.

Their effort in articulating electronic art practice stretched beyond the Malaysian borders as they ventured into the realm of online media. The borderless world of the Internet in ASEAN remained as an unexplored terrain, especially in the realm of art and media discourse. Moreover, by proposing a research project to UNIMAS under the title of "E-art Asean Online, offline & in between the lines", they initiated an online portal to serve as a comprehensive, interactive resource for electronic art in South East Asia. The main objective of the portal was to serve as a hub for virtual artifacts that would be crucial to reading the regional art as the ASEAN artists become more and more intertwined through the induction of the World Wide Web. E-art ASEAN was meant to promote social activities such as sharing information, text, video and image and to produce an archive of the intangible cultural relics that are constantly being reconstructed and reiterated in the virtual context of local, regional and global electronic art.

E-art Asean Online (EAO) (illustrated) was trying to encounter, explore, understand and augment the meaning of time and space in accordance with the current state of technological progress. Hasnul and Niranjan realized the existing definition of curatorial time and exhibition space needs to be critically examined and deconstructed as the region's art prepared to face strong tides of globalization, accelerated by instantaneous communication. The existing cultural memories safely encased by the tangible "object-based" artifacts as being collected by the institutions seemed incapable of accommodating the new demands and needs of artists working with technology. EAO consisted of a comprehensive database of new media art including profiles of artists and samples of artworks, a Journal dealing with the historical development of electronic art in South East Asia, theoretical and critical issues related to the use of electronic media in the visual arts, reviews and analysis of electronic artworks and a Forum for on-line discussion as well as Links to related web sites worldwide. It must be noted that the first phase of their effort successfully gathered electronic art from Malaysia as well as developed a network of electronic artists and media practitioners in an online interactive manner, simultaneously creating a global platform for art and technology ventures.

¹¹ For further information on 1999 Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, refer website at <http://www.ap3.net/ap3/>

¹² Founded in the Netherlands in 1990, the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA) is an international nonprofit organization fostering interdisciplinary academic discourse and exchange among culturally diverse organizations and individuals working with art, science and emerging technologies. For further information regarding ISEA, refer website <http://www.isea-web.org>

¹³ Nirnanjan Rajah, *Towards a Southeast Asian Paradigm: From Distinct National Modernisms to an Integrated Regional Arena for Art*, 36 Ideas from Asia [catalogue] (Singapore Art Museum, 2002)

¹⁴ This is an immersive, interactive exhibit is inspired, in part, by the evolution of Bhangra music and Bollywood films. Using the strategies of DJ and VJ and what Nirnanjan terms YouJ artistry, combined with viewer-activated technology, this work takes the form of a mashup or remix installation. The work is a collaboration between the Surrey Art Gallery's Remix Project, Tarun Nayyar, Lady Ra, Suez, Leonard Paul and Nirnanjan Rajah.

In 1999 the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art was held at Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.¹¹ Both Hasnul and Nirnanjan were invited to participate, collaboratively as well as individual artists. The theme of the Triennial was "Beyond the future" and it included works of over 77 artists from 20 countries across the Asia-Pacific region. A "Virtual Triennial" component presented Internet works together with screening of film, video and animation under. The focus of the Third Triennial was to bring together artistic collaboration across regions, cultures and new forms of artistic practice, with the hope of developing a critical inquiry into the placement of tradition in the rapidly changing societies of the Asia-Pacific region. Hasnul and Nirnanjan were invited to represent new media art and to engage in a critical discourse regarding regional art practice. Hasnul screened his video work, including one collaborative piece with Nirnanjan and Nirnanjan showed his Internet art. Nirnanjan was also invited to curate a new media section of works from UNIMAS to represent that contribution of that Institution to the New Media scene at large.

From 2000 to 2002, Nirnanjan Rajah was an elected member of the Board of Directors for Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA)¹² and made a strong contribution in voicing Asia's perspectives and concerns regarding the current discourse of electronic art. He insistently addressed the issue of diversity within the mainstream of e-art discourse. He made strong mediations enabling the international electronic art community to comprehend the complex ethical, institutional, logistical and cultural conditions faced by artists of developing Asian countries and as well as the necessity to engage with the powerful media art scenes in Japan and Korea. His efforts bore fruit as ISEA 2002 was held in Japan, making its first appearance in ASIA.

Nirnanjan has been involved in several important international curating projects such as "36 Ideas for Asia", a project developed by the Singapore Art Museum in 2002 that toured Europe and Japan. In his essay for this exhibition, Nirnanjan clearly articulated the shift from nationalism and modernism to a more integrated regional outlook in South East Asia.¹³ He was also part of a collaborative team effort between Malaysia and Australia that organized the "Between Remote Regions" exhibition. This was a touring exhibition that was presented in several venues in Malaysia and Australia. Meanwhile in the local scene, he made a major contribution to the narrative of Malaysia art history by curating "Insyrah" the first major Sulaiman Esa retrospective, and "Bara Hati, Bahang Jiwa", in which Nirnanjan theorizes the cultural specificity of abstraction and expressionism in Malaysian art.

Nirnanjan has participated as an artist in many exhibitions locally and internationally, always exploring and critiquing his medium and its context. His early woven/wax resist paintings (illustrated) reveal exploration of gestural expression and ritual immersion while his computer generated drawings questioned the authorial hand of the artist. His installations in public spaces as well as in the gallery - "Visvakarman" (illustrated), "A Fish in Formaldehyde is Fine" (illustrated), "Untitled Installation (three white paintings)" (illustrated), "untitled installation (photographic print)" (illustrated) and others explored the readymade, the unconscious, the institutional context and the site itself. His photographic print titled "Telinga Keling" (illustrated) examines the racial stereotyping that lurks under the shadows of multiculturalism in Malaysia.

His recent collaborative work "Cultural Mashups: Bhangra, Bollywood + Beyond" (illustrated) continues his deconstructive and critical approach, this time applied to the open and unlimited video resource of YouTube.¹⁴ Working on this project with programmers, DJ's and VJ's, Nirnanjan presented himself as a YouJ. Nirnanjan has also been working on bringing new media to the traditional sacred arts. In 1996, his colleague in India Dr.Raman Srinivasan and he theorized and built a virtual temple to Lord Nadarajah (illustrated) based on a real physical structure in Tamil Nadu that, according to its history appears to be the mythological temple of heart built by the Nayanar (Saint) Poosalar. Nirnanjan is continuing this collaboration with various projects at the meeting place of technology and theology.

Hasnul has extensive experience in dealing with diverse disciplines of artistic practice and research. His excellent leadership skills enabled

¹⁵ For detail description of Jambori Rimba, refer website at <http://members.cisbec.net/mclmix/page3.html>

¹⁶ For further information regarding Hasnul's residency at Fukuoka Asian art museum, refer website at http://faam.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/cgi-bin/eng/residence/residence_act.cgi?rid=10018&f=0

¹⁷ Refer Yayasan Kesenian Perak website for the curatorial essay and documentation on "Takung" exhibition <http://www.rumahykp.org.my/aktiviti/2005ykp1.html>

him to lead several initiatives in Media arts in the region. 1997 is a crucial year in Hasnul's career, as his solo show was held at the National Art gallery Malaysia (NAG). As revealed by the title of the exhibition "HYPERview", Hasnul stirred a rude awakening in the local art scene by looking at the technological development and its impact on the social, political and cultural milieu. Many important artworks such as "ong" (illustrated) and "smiling Van Gogh and smiling Gauguin..fashion parade" (illustrated) were presented and became part of NAG's permanent collection. HYPERview is perceived to be the first solo exhibition in Malaysia to showcase video and interactive artworks. He was also a participant of "Art Inspired Science" (ALAMI) camp held on the island of Langkawi where he presented an artwork titled "Lang ke We? (Eagles are we?) (illustrated). The work carries several layers of meaning. It questions the nation's capabilities and even its relevancy in the effort of leaping ('langkah' in Malay) from third world to first.

In the spirit of collaboration, Hasnul invited his mates from the United States "The McLean Mix" Barton and Priscilla McLean, to participate in a research project at UNIMAS. Hasnul shaped the research to probe into the dichotomy of technology existing in parallel universes with traditional practice and culture. The project was called "Jambori Rimba"¹⁵ (illustrated) and the outcome was presented in an interactive installation multimedia format whereby it allows participants to actively engage in creating sound, movement and artwork. The sound, image slides and videos for the production are inspired by exploring the Borneo jungles and its people. The work critically examines the absorption of technology into local culture.

In 2003, based upon his outstanding achievement in theorizing the current state of Asian mediascape, Hasnul was awarded a Grant from Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan to research the use of New Media in the Japanese Contemporary Art Practices.¹⁶ During this residency, he produced Uploaddownload (UD) in collaboration with Roopesh Sitharan (the author). The project explored the creative potential of the Internet for Asian youth, while developing notions of self, identity and nationality in the context of the cross-cultural encounters of contemporary global telecommunication. "Interfaces" (illustrated) is a video based on documentation of Uploaddownload.

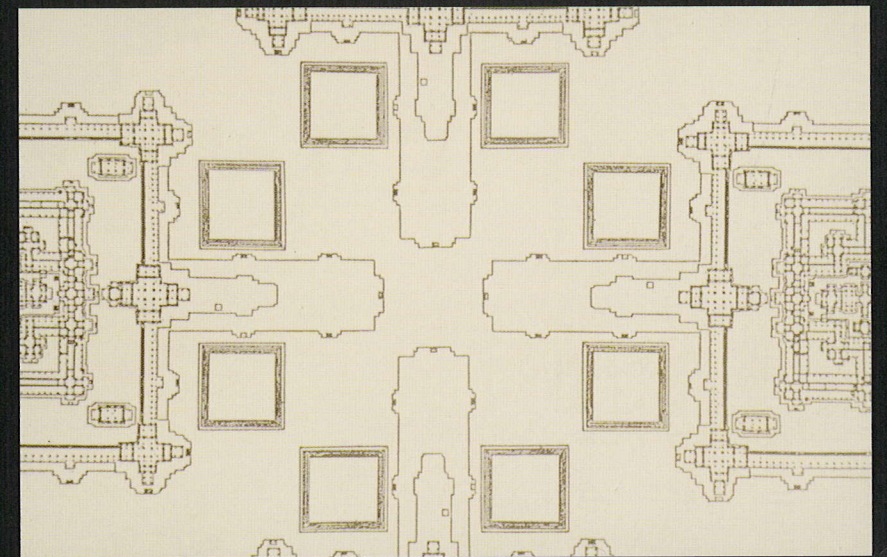
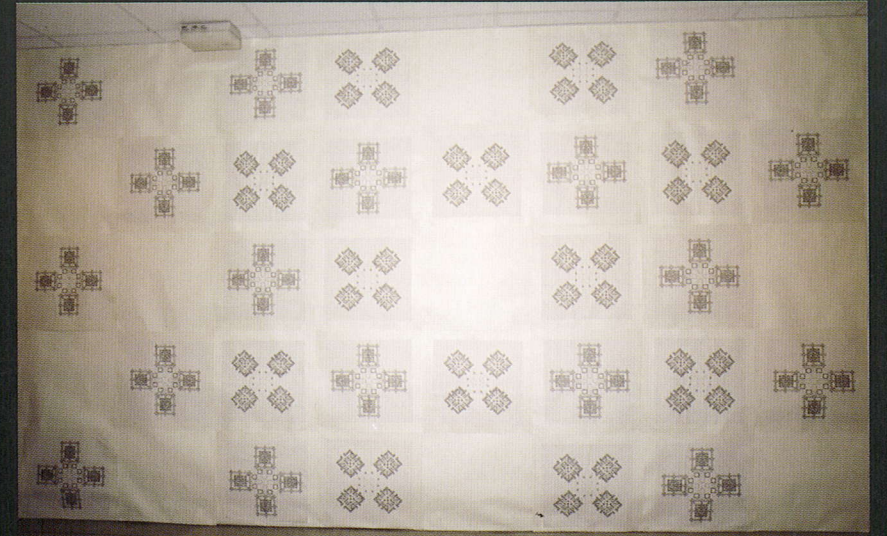
"Siri Nijab Nurbaya" (illustrated) is a video installation. It is collaboration with Kamal Sabran (video artist) and Chia Meow Ling (sculptor). It is also part of a larger body of work by Hasnul that includes paintings and drawings. A sculpture of a woman made out of transparent foam is placed half immersed in a barrel filled with black oil as a video is projected in the background. This work attempts to examine the semiotics of gender identification as the transparent sculpture signifies a "gender nakedness" that arises as the codes of mainstream media identity representation are stripped away. The transparent female form of the sculpture may also stand as a metaphor of Hasnul exploring the metaphysical and emotional "Yin" of himself.

Further, Hasnul was involved in several local and regional curatorial projects; the "Takung" or "Contained" exhibition being his latest venture.¹⁷ This was a research exhibition that reviewed the contextual premise of contemporary art practice in Malaysia post 1990's. The exhibition took place at the National Art Gallery of Malaysia in 2006 and was perceived as a landmark in contextualizing the current state of Malaysian art. He also served as a panelist and a judge for several prestigious art competitions such as the Malaysian Young Contemporaries, Oita Sculpture, Philip Morris Art award and Tanjong Heritage Contemporaries.



Untitled Painting, wax and
water colour on packing tape
5'x6'
1989

Untitled Painting, wax and
water colour on packing tape
5'x6'
1989

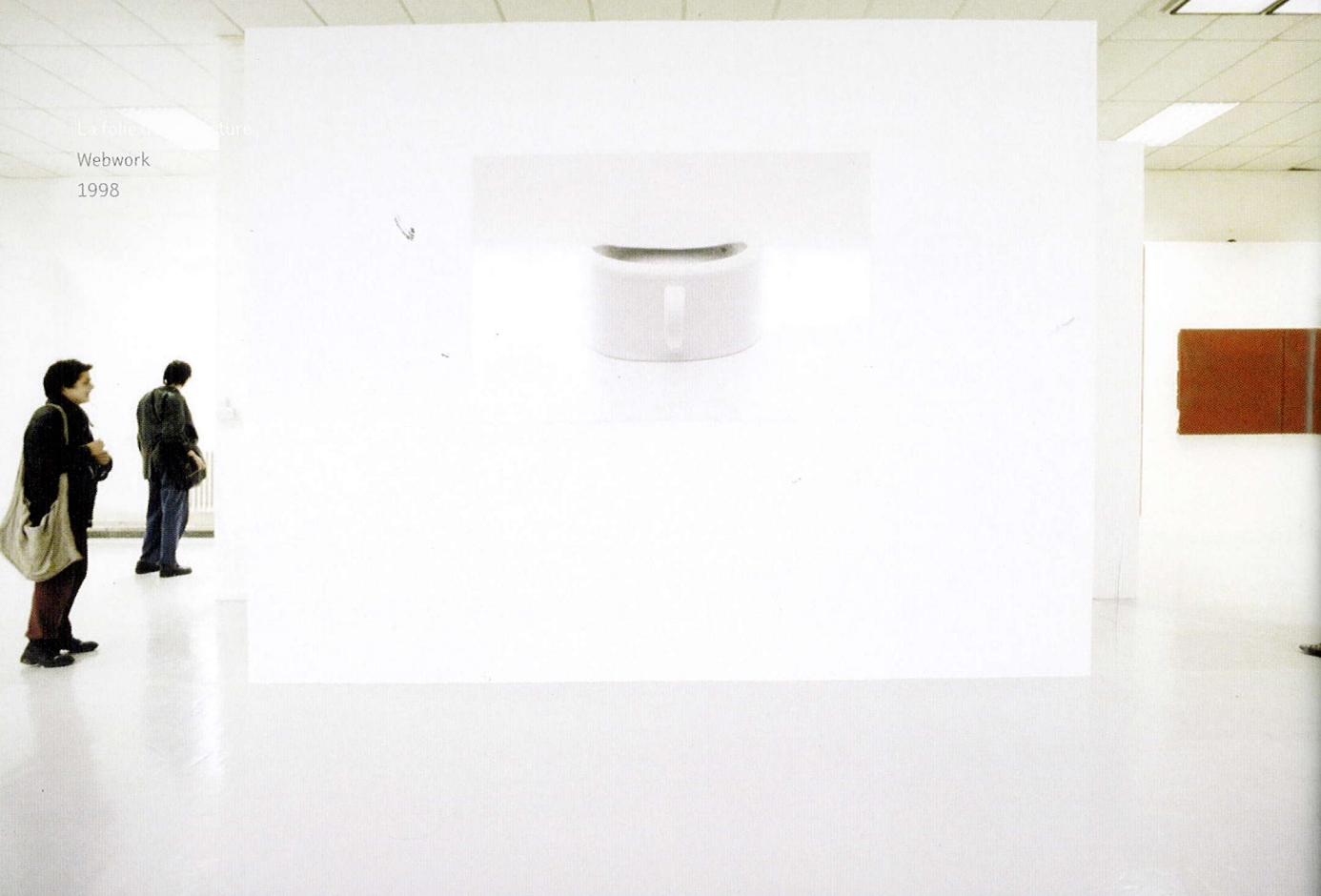


Visvakarman
Installation
1990

La folle architecture

Webwork

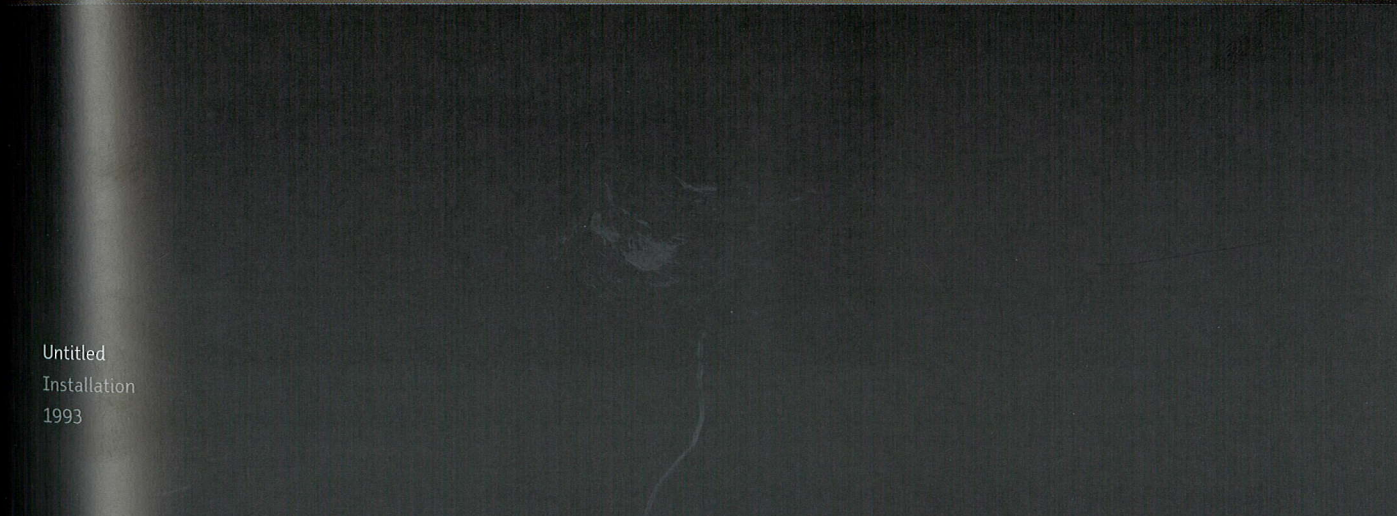
1998



Untitled
Installation
1993

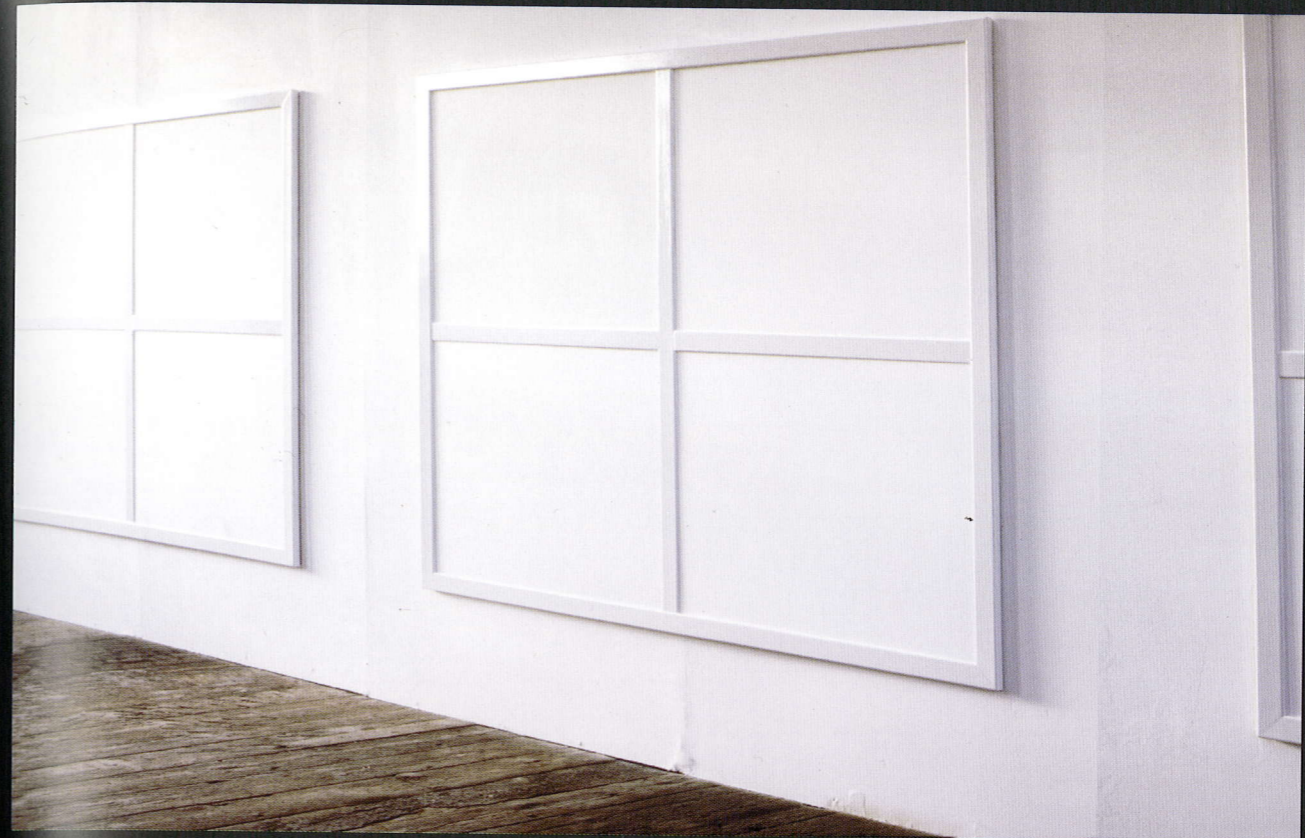


Untitled
Installation
1993





A Fish In Formaldehyde Is Fine
Found objects installation
1995



Untitled
Installation
1992

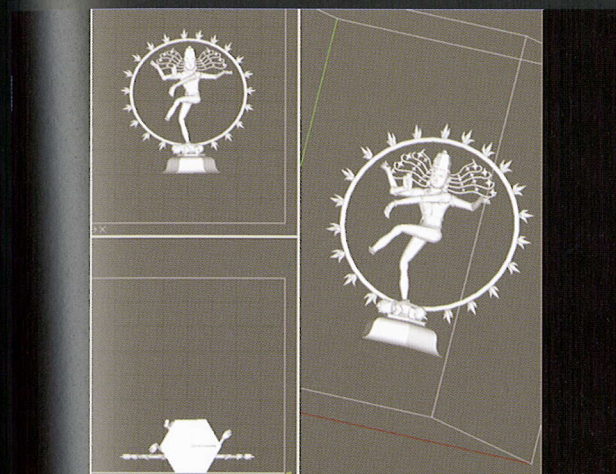
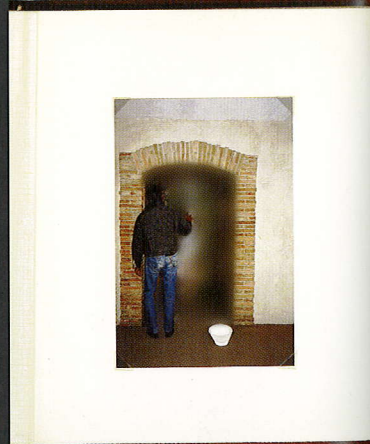
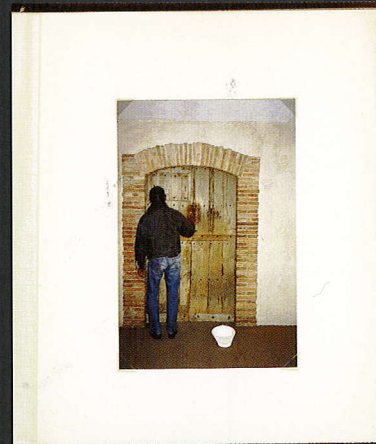
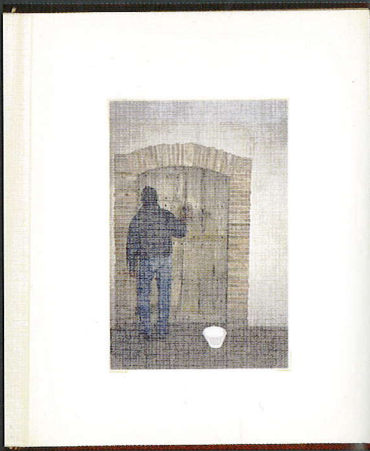
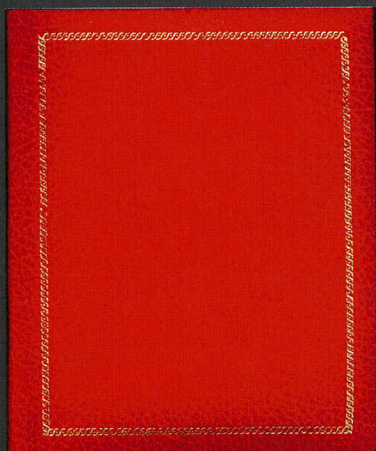
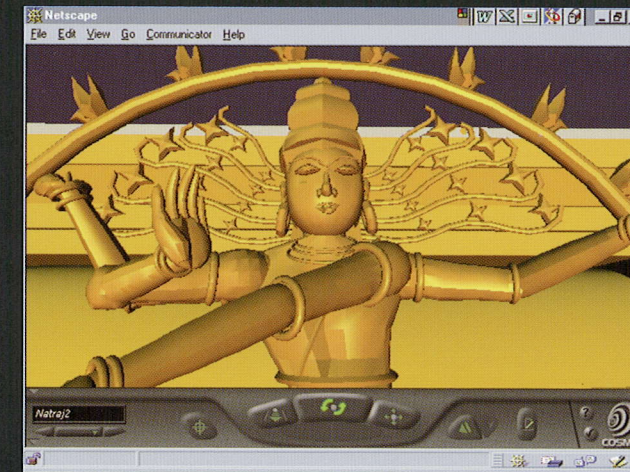
In the great mystical poem of Persia, the "Masnavi," it is told how the Greeks and the Chinese disputed as to which were the better artists. Their dispute was brought before the Sultan; a contest was arranged, and a house allotted to each party for them to embellish in their own way. The poet tells how the Chinese covered the walls of their house with paintings, while the Greeks contented themselves with cleaning theirs till the walls shone bright and clear as the heavens. The work of the Chinese was greatly admired, but it was the Greeks who were adjudged the prize.

PAINTING IN THE FAR EAST
LAURENCE BINYON



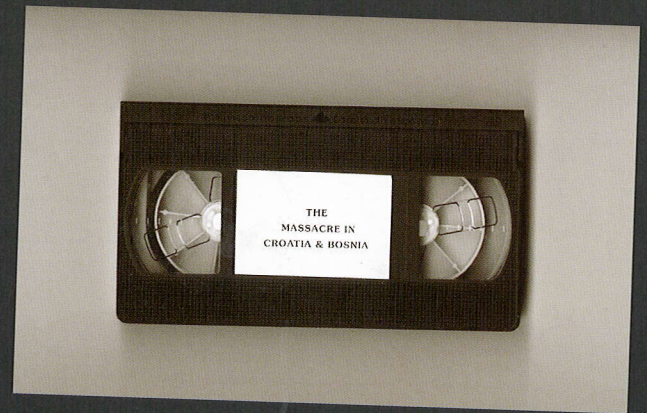
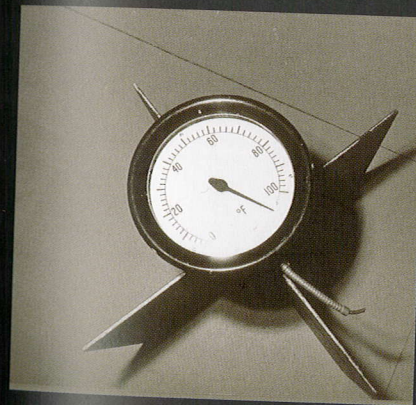
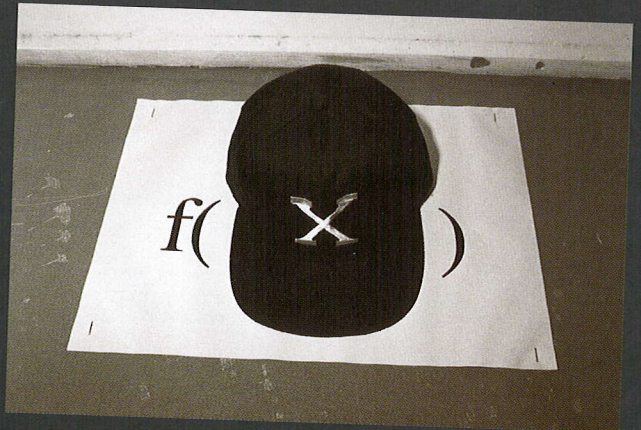
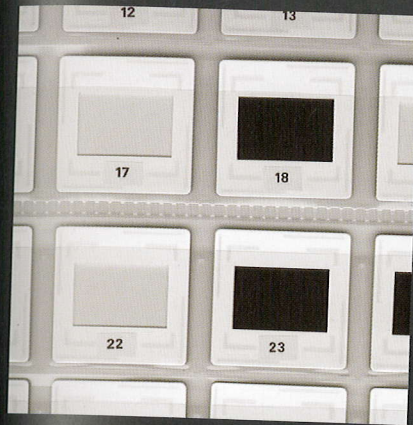
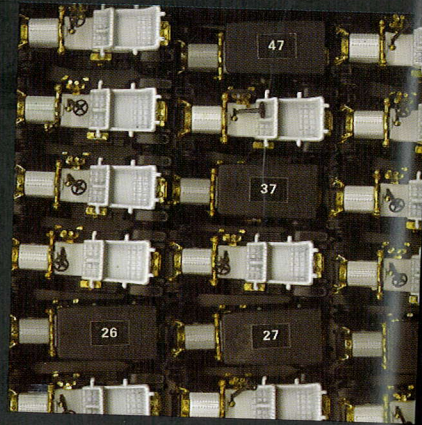
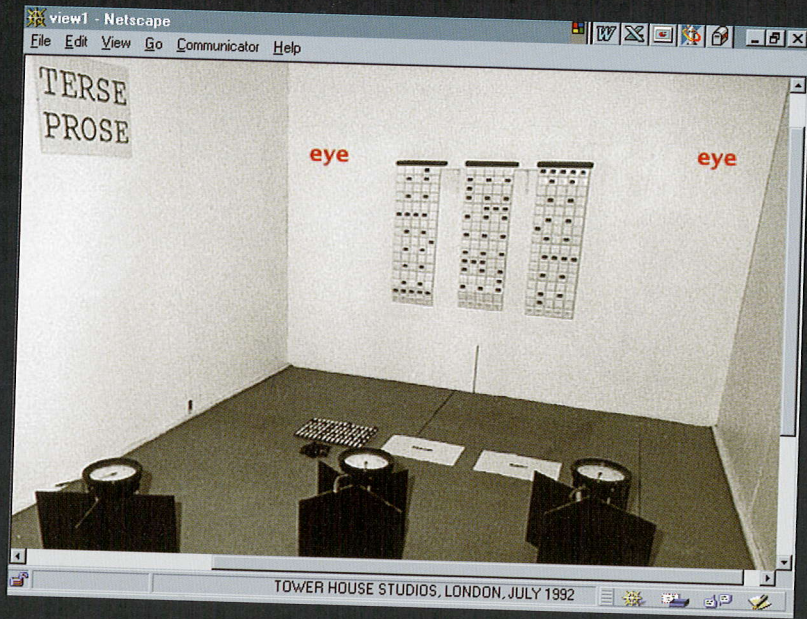
Anyone with a taste for traditional architecture must agree that the Japanese toilet is perfection. Yet whatever its virtues in a place like a temple, in an ordinary household it is no easy task to keep it clean. No matter how fastidious one may be or how diligently one may scrub, dirt will show, on a floor of wood or tatami matting. And it turns out to be more hygienic and efficient to install modern tile and flush sanitary facilities. There is no denying the cleanliness; every nook and corner is pure white. Yet what need is there to remind us so forcefully of the issue of our own bodies.

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS
JUN'ICHIRO TANIZAKI



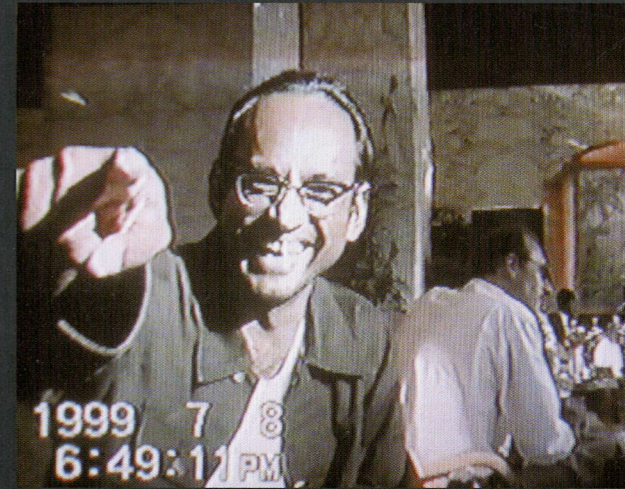
The Failure of Marcel Duchamp/ Japanese Fetish Even!
Webwork
1996

Virtual Temple Project
Webwork, printable model, 3D print
1997
In collaboration with Dr.Raman Srinivasan





Telinga Keling
Photographic Print
1999



How to explain Malaysian Art to a Kwangju commissioner while slowly getting drunk
Single Channel Video
1999



We're not allowed
inside temples



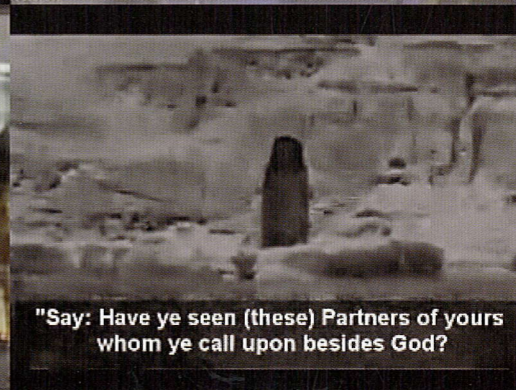
australia
at Turbine



LiveLeak



malaysiakini



"Say: Have ye seen (these) Partners of yours
whom ye call upon besides God?"



Could You Briefly Explain How Did You Start Your Career As An Artist?

I had always loved drawing but it was during my time studying law in the UK, that I developed a deep attraction to the visual arts. I spent more time going around art galleries and reading books on fine art history and technique than anything else. I drew and painted late into the night and watched Open University programmes on art in the early mornings. I travelled extensively in Europe with the sole purpose of visiting galleries and studying art. By the time I had completed the academic portion of my law studies, I had realized that I would not be suited to or excited by a professional training and career in Law. I went back home to Malaysia and took a teaching position at Stamford College, and in time I became involved with some artists from ITM (Institut Teknologi Mara). I still remember with relish my long conversations with Ahmad Shukri Elias at his fledgling Kiara Gallery in Subang Jaya. I was thrilled to find that my knowledge of art was adequate to engage these professionals. Riaz Ahmad Jamil, Tengku Sabri Tengku Ibrahim were amongst those that I engaged deeply. I wrote the exhibition notes for Kiara Gallery's ITM retrospective, Pameran Motivasi and eventually showed them my own work that I had been pursuing. I had woven huge canvasses out of ready gummed packing paper and incorporated a wax resist watercolour technique. It was important for me to create the very material substrate of my painting. I was delving deep into Asian philosophy and responding to the Malaysian contemporary Art whose work I was studying and contextualizing in my writing. I was attempting a rather improbable merger of the detached spirituality of the Asian tradition with the personal expression and psychic extroversion of Western modernism. Serious though this engagement was, I still did not see it as a professional activity. I just did it as a necessary aspect of my life, and of my very being. My artist friends persuaded me to submit some of this work to the National Gallery's Annual Open Exhibition and to my surprise a drawing was accepted. I didn't look back after that. Although my work was steeped in the Malaysian idiom - the regional abstractions of Latiff Mohiden and the humanist ethos of Zulkfli Dahlan, I felt I needed to expand horizons. I packed up to go back to London to pursue my newfound ambitions in art.

What Made You To Adopt The WWW As A Medium For Your Artistic Practice?

This is a long story - Within two years in London I had worked up to a successful two man show at the Horizon Gallery an important Indian Art venue in London run by the Indian Arts Council UK an organization set up by James Thurairajah Tambimuttu. I was on the verge of embarking on the path of becoming a successful Indian painter in the UK, but despite everything I felt dissatisfied with the institutional response to my work. My work was being contextualised in a way I didn't like. I refused to let out any further works without an accompanying statement defining its context - naively, I had become a conceptualist. I applied and was accepted into the Goldsmiths College MA in Fine Art. Completing this program I found myself identifying closely with critical practice and installation art wherein context became part of the work. I incorporated text, appropriated images, themes, history and the site itself into my work. The

text accompanying the work was no longer explanatory but became part of the work. I had taken a very radical position at Goldsmiths and while I produced strong work that derived a lot from that genre, I was clearly not willing or perhaps not able to engage with that particular market system. I had taken a Nationalist position resisting not only the hegemonic Western modernist narrative but the deceptively liberating postmodern usurpation that equally smothered the Asian narratives that were so hard fought in each individual context. I had become enamored with the art and theories of Redza Piyadasa - a Malaysian Conceptualist whose seminal work "What is a Model, And what Models are we talking about" (titled after Kubler), I championed in my final dissertation. Finishing the MA, I returned to Malaysia taking a post as lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in Kuching. This was an IT oriented University created as a part of then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's technology agenda. I was introduced to the WWW, and most significantly, I met Hasnul who was already teaching there and in the early stages of developing an art and technology agenda initially envisioned by the visionary artist and theorist Ismail Zain. Hasnul encouraged me to consider the new media and I quickly realized that the new user friendly, ubiquitous, hypertextual, multimedia Internet was a medium that I had been waiting for - more and more my installation works had been yearning for a transcendence of materiality, geography, narrative hegemony and context - and this transcendence is what the WWW appeared to offer, even embody in its very ontology. I made Failure of Marcel Duchamp in 1996 it was exhibited at the Petronas Gallery and also presented at the ISEA conference in Rotterdam in that year.

Do you consider WWW as central to your work now?

No not now, and in a way it was never the main thing, even in the late 1990's I was curating non media art and making photographic work like Telinga Keling, now in the Balai's (National Art Gallery) permanent collection. More than making art, I had been theorizing the junction of art, culture and technology. I have always seen art as a deeply meaningful, even a sacred and rejuvenating practice. I have taken more of an interest in traditional sacred art forms and have from the beginning worked at the junction of tradition and technology. I am about to embark on some new research with my long time collaborator in India, Dr. Raman Srinivasan of TATA Consultancy services. The Internet is a part of this engagement. Still, I believe that what I once saw as a potentially socially revolutionary medium has been so only in the sense that human civilization has had to adapt to its potentials - it has not as yet had an impact on the fundamental human values. Certainly I had a utopian vision of this medium, all entangled with mid 1990's Malaysian hubris but the post financial crisis landscape put to rest this technological nationalism. I acknowledge some of the criticisms of my posturing on the Internet in the 1990's. I remember the biting critique of my and Hasnul's views of this new medium by artist, theorist and friend Ray Langenbach. He wrote to us questioning what he saw as a missionary desire to romanticize or redeem digital communications - a medium which he implicates with historical ties with Taylorist and Fordist modes of modern mass commodity fabrication and the development of American military communications. He saw our arguments as mimicking Mahathir Mohammed's strategy of appropriating the rhetoric of the local centre-left to

criticize the very global capital markets to which he was nevertheless committed. While we have always called for a critical approach - indeed, I had written about continuing to apply Ismail Zain's interpretation of 'critical regionalism'; Ray is right about our early enthusiasm and about the Internet. Today I feel that the significance of this new medium is not so much that it has brought progressive social change but that it has set a new bar for adaptability and survival in the political economy. Anwar Ibrahim's Reformasi movement, the Obama campaign and the Indian outsourcing industry all being outstanding examples of the successful Internet adaptation of politics and economics! So I work with the internet but it is not central to my work.

Now that WWW has changed some much since its early days of conception, how do you see the development of technology influence your practice?

I continue to keep up with the social and ontological implications of the technology. In the 1990s, the open structure of the Net as well as the increasing affordability of Internet access made participation possible on an unprecedented scale. This is where I entered the scene with my analysis and enactment of the virtual geography and the multimedia remediation potentials of the WWW. As the net has developed, web pages have turned into collaborative annotation and editing systems, often implemented as weblogs, which enabled mass collaborative authoring. This is what is called 'Web 2.0'. This term represents a change of thinking about how the web applications of the future should be developed. Web 2.0 applications involve the ability to get updates of fresh, useful multimedia data and an openness to external applications of that data. Web 2.0 consists of RIAs (Rich Internet Applications) like AJAX, Flash technology bring desktop functionality to internet and SOA (Service Oriented Architecture) has enabled mashup feeds, rss, web services, and the consequence of the change in technology is the harnessing the collective experience and a shift of the focus to open participatory publishing from proprietary authored publishing. I now work with You tube video, recycling this wealth of readymade media. There are huge intellectual property issues and the corporate media is closing down the republishing of proprietary content but for now YouTube is a ubiquitous and annotated archive of world media from the 20th century. Just look for something and it is most likely there. I wanted the train scene from Satyajit Ray's Pather Panchali as I remembered some interesting audio around the electric pylon encounter that precedes that scene - It was there. Check out an old pop star you used to like in your younger days and you will find footage that you would have loved to have viewed in those days but never got the chance, particularly in a trans-geographical situation. Its like a back to the future ontology - memories you would love to have had but never knew were possible come alive - it is very personal and nostalgic. Indian mythological cinema and saint films from the 1970's - they are all there. I see this as an intriguing phenomenon rich with possibilities. Video reflex is an application built on the You tube resource in terms of 2.0 possibilities. This is how I am thinking these days.

You are based in Vancouver currently, do you still see yourself as a Malaysian artist?

You know this is a very difficult question. The best way to answer this is to say that I do - simply

because I am a Malaysian citizen and I am an artist. You know Neil Diamond is doing some good work again and topping the charts these days. I used to be a huge fan of his early work "I am I said ... I am said I" KL is home but I guess "it aint mine no more". You know I had this problem well before coming to Vancouver - which by the way is very "fine" though its not a "sun shines all the time" kind of place. Sorry I cant help this Neil Diamond stuff Ha!... I am KL "raised" but not "born" - Though my father was born in Seremban, I was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. I came to live in Malaysia at age 2. Then I left for London the age 17 and spent many years as a student there. My early adult life and career as an artist were forged there. And then when I returned to Malaysia and did all the important internet and theoretical work, I was based in Kuching, Sarawak - where West Malaysians like me need a work permit and are never allowed to really feel at home. Identity is a complex thing but while my identity as an artist is connected to this complication, I think the answer to your question is a little more practical. While I worked as an artist in the late 1990's, I certainly was a Malaysian. I literally dropped out for the last 6 years while striving to set up in Vancouver - but now I am settled as an assistant professor at the School of Interactive Arts and Technology (SIAT), Simon Fraser University; and am in a good position to reconnect with my former identity. You know, Canada is my home now and circumstances have not allowed me to return for six years but now thanks to your curatorial endeavor and art historical memory - I am back on the scene - My old work is remembered and my new work is being recontextualized - relocated even - as Malaysian - Yes I am happy to announce that I am still Malaysian artist!

Why is the "context" so important to your work?

I have begun dealing with this in answering your question on how I moved to the WWW as a medium for my art. The artist operates within an ecology - a context. And I was not happy with the way the context I found myself in was locating me. First of all, I saw myself as a Malaysian Indian, but in the UK it was difficult for me and my work to maintain this identity. I was too quickly cast as an Indian artist. More pertinently, what I hadn't understood was that I had been directed to a very specific 'Indian' platform or avenue of success while other arenas had remained closed to me. More than being marginalized as an Indian Artist, I was upset by the naivety or complicity required of the artist in terms of the institutional placement of his or her work. I wanted to understand this better - I found that postmodernist discourse had started dealing with this conundrum and found the criticality, reflexivity and self consciousness of thought very much to my liking. Still this was yet another defining context and I realized that if I settled in this one it would be a resignation of sorts also. I realized that for my work to remain alive, it would have to start indexing its contextualizing parameters. At SIAT, SFU I am developing a Post Traditional Media Lab that investigates and develops a framing mechanism that will deal with what I hail as the end of postmodernism. This will enable a better reading of the kinds of hybrid cultures that have emerged throughout the world in the 20th century. Cultures than merge tradition with technology in weird and wonderful ways - but that have been misplaced and misunderstood by the framing discourses of modernism and post modernism. I am developing a 'post-traditional media theory' that enables the indexing of

moments of change, while at the same time, enabling the recognition of the persistence and plurality of traditions. This theory treats modernity as yet another tradition and enables media technology to be seen as moving across all cultural contexts freely, engaging with them on their own terms. In my art work this primacy of context remains a given.

[You have served as a curator for several important exhibitions in Malaysia and abroad, how do you negotiate your role as a curator and artist?](#)

This is a good question for me, one with artistic and ethical implications - I do not see the any difference in the way I work to produce my art from the way I bring together a show. I guess this is the post modernist legacy that I buy into - I see fragments and I build wholes, flows and possible movement and readings - so a found object and another artists work are the same except that as a curator of the works of others you are obliged to negotiate the placement of the element with its creator. With an object you are a little bit freer to do what you will - but on a more metaphysical level - an inert object has its insistence - its ontology and like an artist - it wont work with you unless you satisfy its preconditions! So yeah, different but the same from a creative standpoint. From an institutional view there are problems of curators including their own work in exhibitions! You know what I mean - you are a pro - there are certain conventions and ethical boundaries - yet in practice artist/ curators select their own work, work of their protégés, work of their predecessor and so on. Hasnul and I did this in the 1990's - it is a bootstrap kind of thing - you are pulling the thing together and you are a part of the thing itself - what do you do - leave the main elements of a narrative or pattern out simply because its you - perhaps one should - all I can say is that this is about curatorial culture - artists collectives work very differently from grand museums of record where big money is exchanged! Still in the middle there is a grey area - I think the separation is very much a function of maturity of the particular art ecology. When there is a good pool of curators, theorists, historians and critics to understand and engage with artists the separation happens naturally.

[Your works sometimes tend to be very intellectual and demand some basic knowledge of art history and theory for an audience to read your piece, how do you see this scenario?](#)

This is where the postmodern defragmentation of categories comes in again - to me the elements of history and theory are my medium - if you don't know this stuff you are left out. In view of this I always present modes of access to the context - I was doing this in my installation work with take away texts - quotes, statements and so on - the thrill of the early WWW for me was that this new hyperlinked medium lay all contexts open to connection. I moved my installation practice to the Internet. I believe that all art requires some work and what I offer is the opportunity for the viewer to engage directly with the contextual knowledge. The modern artist presents an alienated or esoteric form that is given a place in art culture by remediating critical texts. These are very specialized and difficult but the wider public does not have to look into it. They simply accept the status of the work and accept or reject its presence in the gallery as a signifier of its value and meaning. This mediatory structure has, in my work been dispensed with - no offence to you as my curator - but to gain a presence in the internet

the work must be self locating - easy to achieve with hyperlinks. That is how I looked at it in the 1990's - today I am not so sure - you cant escape the gallery if you are making 'art' and work always benefits from interpretation and contextualization. So I appreciate any readings and placement of my work outside of the net. I am not today going to say - you just need a wiki and the interpretations will all happen online - but perhaps I should!

[Where do you get your inspiration/ideas for your work?](#)

Well this is a deep question and a difficult one for me, as I have huge dry spells when it comes to inspiration - it seems to well up and erupt in cycles for me. Ultimately I feel that all expression is a question of finding or connecting with what is already there - The traditional model of art and artistry is founded on this understanding. While there is no doubt that particular artisans were recognized for having greater ability - the intellectual property was collectively owned, not just by the craft community but by the community at large. I could not proceed with my work without Ananda Coomaraswamy, Marcel Duchamp, Ismail Zain and Redza Piyadasa. Also, with the Internet, there is someone whom I failed to acknowledge in the pioneering days of E-ASEAN and the 1st Electronic Art Show - simply because I did not connect his contribution to my Internet art concerns. This is the father of the radical Internet journalism in Malaysia - Sang Kanchil or MGG Pillai. I have come to realize now in the blogger era, that his contribution to Malaysian Internet culture was a significant enabler for a lot of the Internet scenarios that have followed, including my early works. These guys have done all the important work and I am just picking at the edges, coming up with readings and applications. You know I think art must be deep and yet I love the popular and the immediate - it is a contradiction that has been quite productive for me. One of the parameters of my work is the rejection of big 'Art'. While I support the need for national and regional narratives and heroes. I do this as a form of resistance to more powerful and overwhelming perspectives that have impinged on our local scene. As an artist I am inspired by small things - throw-away way things even, things that are ready made, that come together and come apart and dissolve into the context from which they emerged. One of the guiding creative principles I apply is something I heard as a child. We used to have some kaathaprasangam (musical story telling) records by the great Tamil musical discourses Thiru Muruga Kirubanantha Vaariyar. And somewhere between a joyfully mocking song about Neil Armstrong's calling to the moon and the retelling of some portion of the Rayamana - he gives the most profound expression of creation and dissolution - a structural mode that has crept into my bones, my being and my practice as an artist - ondrum ondrum seanthal osai varum; ondrum ondrum pirinthal osai varum! If one thing and another come together there will be resonance, If one thing and another come apart there will be resonancel! That's it!

[Do you have any advice for artist who might be interested in exploring the WWW as a medium for artistic practice?](#)

No I do not. I really have, throughout my career, been skirting the issue of art as a professional practice - always turning on to a new form or medium just when I had found my groove and broached the threshold of recognition in the old one - there must of course be deep

psychological readings of this trait but at the conscious rationalizing level - I would say that ultimately art for me is a kind of sacred quest and not a mode of production. In traditional culture this was the institutionalized function of art. Today personal genius and expression are part of a modern or postmodern secularization of that sacred flow. I see all my work in this light, as expressions on a personal path of discovery. Though I seem overly theoretical and socially oriented at times, the formative process is located deep within. So while I still do champion the WWW medium as a rich vehicle for critique, expression and communication - I think setting out to make art with the Internet undermines true potential of both art and the internet - its social and ontological possibilities. Think of it as the whole 'picture' not just as a medium! Learn from non art uses of the Internet and even try to bring an artist's perspective to these non-art situations. Artfully or critically construct a communications scenario. Bring art to the Internet, don't put the internet on a pedestal - in the gallery. This could be a critique of my own attempts at Internet art and of the present show even ... and there you go - I said no but have given some advice none the less!

Reflecting upon the artistic inquiry of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjana Rajah, it must be noted that in spite of all the critique and questioning of Western aesthetics, it was done through the canons of Western art history and theory. Both Niranjana's and Hasnul's works seem so relevant today because of the wide acceptance of western art history and philosophy by our academic institutions. Furthermore, their educational background highlights that both the artists were taught in the West - Niranjana from Goldsmith College, UK and Hasnul from Rensselaer Polytechnic, US. One might wonder about, the reason for such reliance on Western history and theory, when in fact the very core of their artistic gestures reflects resistance towards such a dominant discourse. On the contrary, there are several reasons for using the Western cannon to locate the non-western view within the Malaysian art and the region of Southeast Asia. Such reasons are found amidst the very foundations of New Media arts practice.

Ismail Zain, writing about Malaysian art institutions, notes "A feature which has become a universal norm today, in respect of the administration of Art, is to adopt a feasible philosophy and device an organizational structure...The set-up is now standard in developed countries as well as in some developing countries."¹ Clearly institutions have come to a universal consensus towards governing the art world. Such standardization in art administration is based upon a specific aesthetic understanding that stems from a religious crisis of the west.² Although such crisis is irrelevant to Malaysian society, the resultant aesthetic has had its imperial influence on the Malaysian art scene.³ Further, the cultural policies and modernization efforts of Malaysia are adopted from the West, to keep pace with the world at large. Through the penetration of such an alien understanding to the realm of Asian art practice, non-western artists are compelled and sometimes are even required to adopt the modernist values that seem to be the gatekeepers for fame and success in the global art market. This western aesthetic has become a prerequisite even for a simple discourse in art and the prevalence of such aesthetic values in the Asian society can sometimes be dispiriting.⁴

Indeed, this paradoxical situation forced Hasnul and Niranjana to constantly relocate their positions and roles within the institutionalized structure of the art world. How does one reconcile such a dichotomy? The efforts of Redza Piyadasa and Ismail Zain shed light on this apparent paradox. Piyadasa in his attempt to create a manifesto for the Asian artists rejected Western aesthetics and probed into Eastern values. This initiative landed with his and Sulaiman's "Mystical Reality". Jolly Koh has criticized this as being "an Asian version of conceptual art". The theoretical nuances make the connection between "Mystical Reality" and "conceptual art"⁵ seem either obvious or extremely debatable. In this viewpoint, such arguments seem relevant, given the circumstances of the Malaysia art scene being shaped under the rubric of modernist values. As clearly stated by cultural theorist Debjani Ganguly, as she concludes "There is no Archimedean point outside the discourse of modern European philosophy that is available to the post-colonial intellectual as a site on which to situate his or her critical concerns with the contemporary."⁶ The knowledge of modernism has become a fundamental requirement to become an artist, a credential and a tool for critical articulations, and a voice with which to be heard or even a basis to be considered. The academic qualifications of Hasnul and Niranjana had become a necessity, a shield for them to be able to engage New Media practice and discourse as non-western artists.

From such a formulation, it cannot be concluded that global art discourse is unsuitable to negotiate non-western perspectives. Rather, Ismail Zain sees such imbrications as asserting in terms of differences while participating in the commonalities engendered in the new medium.⁷ Ismail Zain's approach is aligned with the ways in which computer technology operates and functions. The computer allows for the convergence of several media elements such as sound, text, video and animation into one single aesthetic experience and experimentation.⁸ This flexibility is evident in the manifestation of his digital collage series as he brings together several images from different sources, overlaid with text and other graphics to produce a series of printed artworks. By looking at these works, one is confronted with the juxtaposition of values and cultures, thus forcing the viewer to be critical of one's own value judgment in relation to the other. In fact, Ismail Zain proposed a "critical regionalism" for the

⁹ The dogmatic role of the curator in determining the career of an artist by being the gatekeeper of the culture economy implies the authoritative power of the curator, as described by Hans Dieter Huber "Generally, specific curators are associated with a more or less definable group of artists, who are taken along from one exhibition to the next in the tow of individual curators. Curators thereby increasingly occupy and define the interface between artists, institutions, and the public"

¹⁰ Sadhu Ram "Mythology of the Rig-Veda" Essays on Sanskrit Literature, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal oriental booksellers and publishers, 1965, P.15

¹¹ This dimension is parallel to the worldview of Islam as mentioned by Dr. Syed Muhammad "What is meant by 'worldview', according to the perspective of Islam, is then the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting."

¹² Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, "Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction", Islamic Philosophy Online, Inc, 2003 < <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/journal/is-01/attas1.htm> >

¹³ Vannevar Bush in his well-known essay "As we may think" conceived the idea for the first desktop computer called "memex". Describing the "memex, he writes, "Man cannot hope fully to duplicate this mental process artificially, but he certainly ought to be able to learn from it. In minor ways he may even improve, for his records have relative permanency. The first idea, however, to be drawn from the analogy concerns selection. Selection by association, rather than indexing, may yet be mechanized. One cannot hope thus to equal the speed and flexibility with which the mind follows an associative trail, but it should be possible to beat the mind decisively in regard to the permanence and clarity of the items resurrected from storage."

¹⁴ I am referring to the paper presented by Niranjana Rajah titled "Asian Art after the Internet: Transcending the Regional Arenas of the Late 20th Century" during the 1999 Asian Art symposium that was held in Tokyo, Japan. In this paper Niranjana argues for an expanded art discourse, one that transcends the indigenous art reading.

¹⁵ The notion of Malaysian multiculturalism consisting of three main races, namely the Malay, Chinese and Indian, that signify the Malaysian society is a constructed identity. As Charles Hirschman writes, "modern race relations in Peninsular Malaysia, in the sense of impenetrable group boundaries, were a byproduct of British colonialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." Charles Hirschman argues about the construction of Malaysian race identity in his paper titled "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology" Thinking about the Mega projects launched by the Malaysian government in an attempt to establish a developed, modern, first world nation - the term "Modern" brings little meaning outside its context of origin, referring to the words of Ursula Sharma "...when it came to defining the nature of modernization outside the West, the modern has too often been defined in such a way that there was no particular value in using this term rather than simply talking about Westernization"

Asian artists to wrest a conceptual category and secure a space within the rapidly emerging new media art practice.

Simultaneously, in thinking about the strategic maneuvers of Hasnul and Niranjana, critical regionalism is extended in a peculiar form of correlation that seems rather obvious between "newness" of the New Media phenomena and Eastern philosophy. Such correlation is first and foremost seen in their relocating their functional roles in an institution. These acts of relocating, converge the authoritative role of the curator with the experimental nature of their personal artistic inquiry.⁹ The distinction between an artist and curator is relevant for the modernist hierarchy. However such merit is deemed impertinent to tradition practices in eastern institutions, as described in traditional Rig-Veda hymns, "The priest-poets were keen observers of the great facts and acts of Nature. They had also made a great deal of advance in spiritual conceptions... the personification has advanced sometimes quite sufficient to make distinct personal gods of them, yet we can have a glimpse of the original from which they had sprung."¹⁰ The spiritual and material or, in modernist terms, context and content is intertwined in the worldview of eastern paradigm where any distinctions of artist-curator could not exist.¹¹ This critique of the secular modernist distinction is made to reveal the inability of such categories to contain the artistic ventures of Hasnul and Niranjana.

Returning to Ismail Zain's Digital Collage, the ability of computer technology to converge several media elements is perceived as radical and new by the modernist tradition. This convergence is reaffirmed through the acts of cultural relativism of Hasnul and Niranjana - by looking towards the east. Indeed, the new media experience resonates with the intellectual orientation of eastern philosophy that deals with the mind and material alike. Dr. Syed Muhammad explains the methodology used by the Islamic theologians, philosophers and metaphysicians, "They combined in their investigations, and at the same time in their persons, the empirical and the rational, the deductive and the inductive methods and affirmed no dichotomy between the subjective and the objective."¹² The very idea of eastern tradition based on the wholeness of the mind's perception differs from the creation of pure aesthetic contemplation of modern art. The current state of information flux reinstates the leap from material culture to an immaterial association of thoughts.¹³ This leap causes us to draw parallels between the New Media theory and the Eastern Philosophy.

Hasnul and Niranjana realized such a parallelism between the New Media and the Eastern traditions. This is prominent as they address the issues of regional identity in the global art discourse that is currently being dominated by the Western perspective, simultaneously being critical of the claims to indigeness being made.¹⁴ "Relocations" by Hasnul and Niranjana create a paradoxical condition, whereby one cannot completely escape the grip of modernism while posing critical inquiry through the canons of the postcolonial theory. Niranjana extends this pursuit by possibly being the first to suggest a post-traditional theory in the realm of New Media. Niranjana offers a completely new framework for analysis of diverse cultural engagements with technology, one that is outside the modern and post-modern paradigm. Perhaps such effort will establish an alternative ground for the articulation of Asian New Media theories on their own terms.

By opening up the question of modernism that does not fit simply in the cultural history of Asia, Hasnul and Niranjana are questioning the process of modernization itself, as it is experienced by developing countries such as Malaysia. This vision evokes a reflexive and self-determining society as technology premeditates the emergence of a new social consciousness that calls for the relocation of the conception of mind - from "object" (material) to "thought" (spirit). As the region marches towards a global networked consciousness there is an increasing cultural perplexity surrounding terms such as multiculturalism¹⁵ and modernism.¹⁶ The early works of Hasnul and Niranjana serve as a prelude to addressing such "relocations". Their integrated efforts have laid a foundation for critical inquiry by future New Media practitioners from the non-western part of the world - be it in the form of artistic practice or intellectual inquiry.

¹ Ismail Zain (ed.) Redza Piyadasa, Art: The New ministerial Portfolio - A boon to future cultural heritage, Ismail Zain Retrospective Exhibition 1964 - 1991 [catalogue]. Malaysia: National Art Gallery, 1995

² The influential anthropologist Alfred Gell writes "We have to recognize that the aesthetic attitude is a specific historical product of the religious crisis of the Enlightenment and the rise of the Western science, and that it has no applicability to civilizations, which have not internalized the Enlightenment as we have."

³ Niranjana Rajah writing for CIPTA catalog states "Indeed, nationalist economic and cultural policies, the world over, are rapidly giving way to the imperatives of transnational capital and aforesaid media"

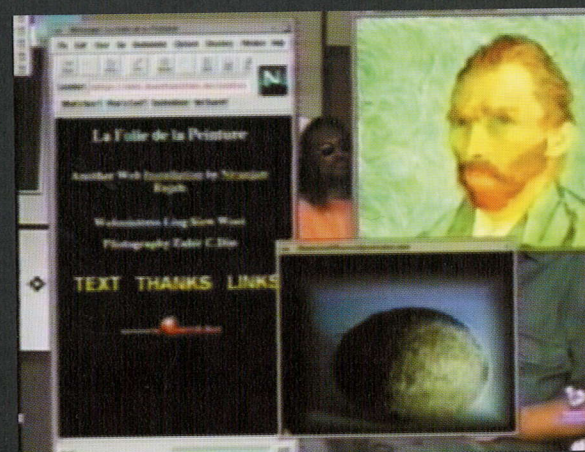
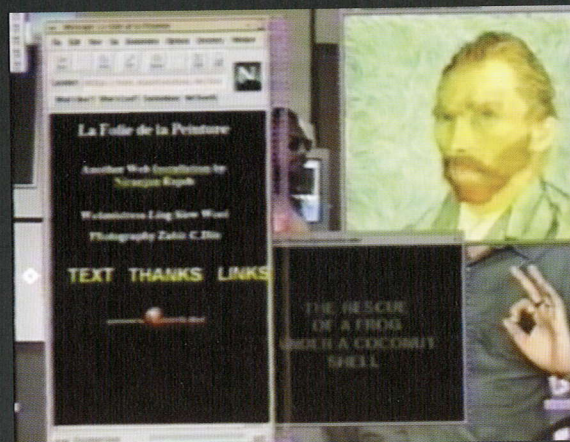
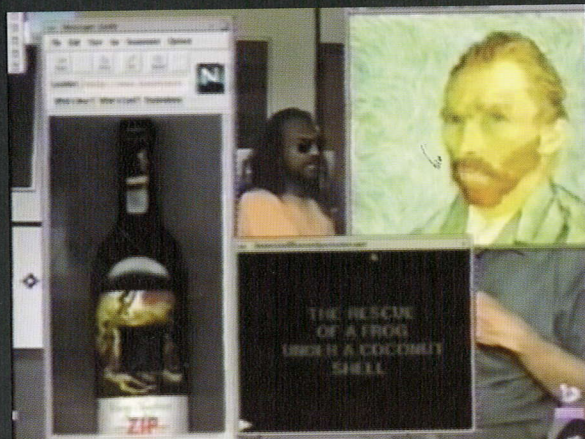
⁴ This argument is based upon an observation by Veronica Shammugam where she talks to K.Saraswathy who sweeps dry leaves at the foot of huge sculptures at Asean Sculpture Park in Kuala Lumpur. As Veronica explains "Saraswathy's only idea of art for the common folk were the temple sculptures seen on her daily journey from and to her home in Jinjang, Selangor"

⁵ Dr. Jolly Koh writing about Mystical Reality states "They were imitations of conceptual art of the kind produced in Hippy California with all the trappings of Zen Buddhism and Eastern spiritualism"

⁶ Ganguly Debjani, Caste, Colonialism and Counter-Modernity, Routledge publisher, 2005, P. 23

⁷ Zain's perspective was even recognized by Piyadasa himself as he describes, "In these experimental works of Ismail Zain's, what comes through is his celebration of a vision of art and culture that transcends myopic and parochial visions and limitations. His is a more all-encompassing view of the world and of humanity in all its differentiated complexities and manifestations."

⁸ Christiana Paul writing about Digital Arts mentions "The digital medium's distinguishing features certainly constitutes a distinct form of aesthetics...the art itself has multiple manifestations and is extremely hybrid."



How to Explain the Folly of Painting to a Winking Van Gogh
 Single Channel Video
 1999

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 3/01/2002 ISEA 2002, Nagoya - The deadline for entries for papers, panels, roundtables, posters, institutional presentations, workshops, and tutorials has been extended until March 20 2002. Please check out the symposium website at <http://www.isea.jp/>

Welcome to the new site for E-ART ASEAN ONLINE - the interactive resource for electronic art in Southeast Asia. E-ART ASEAN ONLINE now consists of the E-ART ASEAN Database of electronic art containing profiles of artists and samples of artworks and the E-ART ASEAN Journal which deals with the historical development of electronic art in the region, theoretical and critical issues related to the use of electronic media in the visual arts as well as reviews and analyses of electronic artworks.

LINKS

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HOST

UNIMAS

MANAGEMENT

Founding Team 1999 - 2001 2001 - Present
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E-ART ASEAN ONLINE was founded in 1999 by Niranjan Rajah and Hasnul Jamal Seldon as an extension of the agenda they set as curators of Malaysia's 1st Electronic Art Show for the Malaysian National Art Gallery.

E-art Asean online
 Online database
 1999

¹ The work was first presented in an exhibition titled 'Explorasi' at the Gallery Petronas, Kuala Lumpur in 1996 and then in 1997 in the '1st electronic Art Show' at the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. The work was also presented in a paper titled 'Locating the Image in an Age of Electronic Media' (Rajah, 1996) at the Conference of ISEA 1996 in Rotterdam.

² By cultural constituencies, Niranjan is marking the bounded areas of cultural and social practice. In Malaysia these are shaped by markers such as Islam and Asian values and reflected in cultural policy and even in legislation.

³ The work was first exhibited at the Virtual Triennial, Third Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane, Australia. Later it was exhibited as a gallery/ internet installation at the Substation, Singapore in the year 2000.

⁴ Unpublished artists notes "Studio Performances & Video Camera as a Witness: Post-Colon: A series of Video Shorts", 1992.

⁵ Originally presented in a Student Exhibition, RPI, Troy, New York, 1993.

⁶ This work won a minor award at the Malaysian Young Contemporaries, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

Exhibition Thematics

This exhibition consists of nine art works - four by Hasnul, four by Niranjan and one done collaboratively by both of them. The exhibition includes online (<http://www.12as12.com/relocations/>), video and projection works.

Niranjan Rajah started exploring the Internet as a medium for artistic practice in 1996. He was the first person in Malaysia, and it appears even in South East Asia, to critically engage the Internet as a medium for art. In 1996 he produced "Failure of Marcel Duchamp/Japanese Fetish Event"¹ In this work he attempts to pinpoint the cultural ordinance in the supposedly unbounded terrain of the Internet. Niranjan flips the utopian view of the Internet as being a democratic and global platform and proposes that it is made up of bounded cultural constituencies.² He presents content that is unacceptable to Malaysian society in a Malaysian exhibition space, via a geographically remote server. The intention is for the audience to deal with the possibility of accessing culturally inappropriate content in public space, transgressing cultural taboos and even perhaps the national obscenity legislation. What becomes obvious is that the reading of an online image is bound by the context of its appearance and contingent upon the audience in the physical site of reception.

In 'La folie de la Peinture',³ Niranjan extends a similar inquiry to the sphere of site-specific installation art. Installation art addresses the immediate experience of the viewer in the actual space and place of the exhibition. Once the work is taken down, one can only access the piece via documentation; photographed images, video documentation and so on. The images stand as evidence in validating a historical or 'eccentric' presence of the piece as documentation supports the "object-hood" of the installation and even becomes the art itself. In 'La folie de la Peinture', Niranjan examines the ontology of installation art by reinvesting photographic documentation of past site-specific work with an online interactive presence.

Hasnul Jamal Saidon has been rigorously exploring the video as a medium for artistic practice, integrating the medium with other technological and non-technological media in diverse artistic productions. He notes of his early period, "My initial studio performances were "mediated" by the language of the video camera: the video camera became my witness, my audience. Video became a mediated representation of my journey across borders - within and without. The borders suggest multiple reading and meanings - such as artificial demarcations or boundaries within my thoughts and memories, within my own body, within my emotion, between various artistic disciplines, between nation-states, race and ethnicity, religion, culture, history and even gender."⁴

He continues, to explain that his encounter with post-colonial theory and Said's Orientalism had an impact and set him on a deconstructive journey. His response was to produce a series of video shorts combining studio performances, computer graphics, computer music improvisation and analog audio/video editing improvisation. "Post-colon"⁵ presents an anthology of short videos addressing cross-cultural encounters as the artist's comfort zone and his identity are challenged. Hasnul turns to traditional Malay proverbs to express his position.

His video work titled "mirror, mirror on the wall"⁶ deconstructs the supremacy of Western art history, in a very humorous and personal manner. In this piece, a video-loop transitions between an animated self-portrait of Van Gogh winking and scenes of the artist apparently struggling with impinging red lines around him. It explicitly addresses the struggle of dealing with local modern art while the discourse is hinged upon the Western history and theory.

Similarly in "Vanishing point", Hasnul deals with both the theory and technique of art production. The work consists of two videos screened one on top of the other - the upper one zooming into a jungle view and the lower video zooming out on a floor level shot showing signs of human life. In traditional western painting, all perspective lines converge to a single point. On the contrary Eastern traditional painting can carry multiple

⁷ This video installation was presented in the HYPerview-Solo Exhibition, Creative Center, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, 1997

⁸ This piece was screened at the 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane in 1999

⁹ This piece was presented in the 1st Electronic Art Show, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, 1997

perspectives. Hasnul comments on the singular perspective of art history and theory.⁷

Niranjan's video work titled "How to Explain Malaysian Art to a Kwangju Commissioner While Slowly Getting Drunk", consists of a 'ready-made' video, recontextualized from curatorial documentation to an art work for exhibition. It discloses the background negotiations of the selection process typical of the regional curatorial scenario of the late 1990's, with regional commissioners from powerful centres like Fukuoka, Kwangju, and Brisbane and with local curators acting as compradors and mediators. This video presents a drawn-out dialog punctuated by translations. Niranjan explains the national art scene, while sipping beer and steadily getting inebriated. To a background hotel muzak, Niranjan drones on - promoting media art but we know with hindsight that his recommendations were ignored in final selection.

Meanwhile the collaborative piece, "How to Explain the Folly of Painting to a Winking Van Gough"⁸ is a blue screen remix demo presenting and explaining the artists work from the late nineties. This video presents both the artists in partially scripted and partially improvised dialog. It explores the computer screen as a presentational space with a non-linear, hypertextual format wherein video works of Hasnul as well as Internet works by Niranjan are opened in multiple windows over the screen simultaneously. Hasnul is seen having a discourse with modern art by appropriating the image of Van Gough. Note Niranjan's signature urinal object in the background - in this piece it is his daughters' plastic potty.

"Fictional Dialogue"⁹ by Hasnul consists of a video loop projected in a corner of the exhibition space. The corner distorts the projection thus shifting the attention from the work towards the format of display, revealing the importance of display in shaping the perception of media. Hasnul extends this understanding by questioning his own identity and self-awareness. His question seems to be "do we shape media or does media shape us", as his image attempts to find and hold his ground in a saturated media landscape.

Niranjan's "Video Reflux" responds to the massive accumulation and circulation of video caused by the new ability to share, recycle and appropriate this medium over the Internet. This work also revisits Nam June Paik's video wall structures. Niranjan points to a quote from Nam June Paik, "Beautiful. Like video wall paper". Niranjan speaks of readymade video content for a portable video wall. This work presents a flow of YouTube downloads, beginning with a set of images of destruction and dissolution that signify the end of the modernist/ postmodernist paradigm. In contextualizing his work Niranjan notes, "Just as the monumental presence of sculpture dissolved in the negative ontology of post modern installation, today an analogous dissolution has afflicted the figurative power of video. The sharing, recycling, appropriating, annotating and recontextualizing of video has become both a disseminative and a dissipative force in contemporary visual culture."

Niranjan's technical collaborator on "Video Reflux", Caleb Buxton, has developed a database-driven YouTube sample library manager. The database and sample library are built using open source tools. They are hosted online on a server running free and open software. However, the video file format, sample editor and gallery presenter are developed in a proprietary format - Flash. "Video Reflux" situates itself within a climate of increasing copyright controls, as a proposed amendment to Canadian copyright law, would, if passed, turn circumventers of Technological Protection Measures (TPM) into criminals. Niranjan plans to offer the "Video Reflux" video wall service freely and Caleb will release the code he has written. If Adobe, or even YouTube devise a TPM that requires circumvention for the normal operation of what is currently a legal tool, both the service and the release will be criminalized.

Hasnol Jamal Saidon

Niranjan Rajah

Collaborate

Inter Society for Electronic Art

EXHIBITION:
 "PPM Perdana Show" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (painting)
 "Inspirasi Pahang" Australia High Comm, Kuala Lumpur (painting)
 "Diploma Show" School of art & Design, MARA Institute of Technology, Shah Alam, (painting)

AWARD:
 Best Student, School of Art & Design, MARA Institute of Technology, Malaysia
 Best Student, Fine Art Department, MARA Institute of Technology, Malaysia

1988 FISEA Utrecht, Netherlands

Lecturer, Law (London External LL.B.), Stamford College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

EXHIBITION:
 "Young Contemporary" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (painting)
 "Four Perception Group Exhibition" Creative Centre, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (painting)

EXHIBITION:
 1989 Open Exhibition, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Drawing)

PUBLICATION/ CONFERENCE:
 Modern Art in Malaysia, Pameran Motivasi, Kiara Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Catalogue essay)

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY:
 Joined Unit 7 Studios, Artists Collective, Camberwell, London

EXHIBITION:
 "Open Show" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (painting)

1990 SISEA Groningen, Netherlands

EXHIBITION:
 Unit 7 Studios, Whitechapel Open Studios, London (Paintings)
 Two Painters, Horizon Gallery, London (Two man show with Javid Alvi, Paintings)
 Visvakarman, Centre 181 Gallery, London (Solo Installation)

Earth Signals, Omphalos Gallery, London (Paintings in Group Show curated by Paul Freidlander)

EXHIBITION
 "2 man Show" Carbondale, Illinois, USA (painting)
 "In Your Outer Space" Carbondale, Illinois, USA (mixed media installation)

1991

EXHIBITION:
 Artists Against the Gulf War, Kufa Gallery, London (Group Exhibition)

EXHIBITION:
 "Students Show" Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York (digital collage & video installation)
 MFA Tour Show, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire USA (Return of A Native, Post-Colon...)

1992 TISEA Sydney, Australia

EXHIBITION:
 Untitled, Tower House Studios, Goldsmiths College, London (Installation)
 Untitled, Unit 7 Studios, Whitechapel Open Studios, London (Installation)

APPOINTMENT:

Lecturer in Electronic Arts & Integrated Media, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

EXHIBITION:

3M VHQ Malaysian Video Awards, Kuala Lumpur (Proclaim), Video Art Festival, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Post-Colon - A Series of Video Shorts) SEAMUS Conference (Society of Electro-acoustic Musicians United States), Vermont, USA (Jambori Rimba) SONY Video Art Festival, Lot 10 Kuala Lumpur (Rainforest Images)

PUBLICATION/ CURATED EXHIBITION:

"Culture in Context" Australia High Comm., Kuala Lumpur SEAMUS Conference (Society of Electro-acoustic Musicians United States), Vermont, USA (Jambori Rimba) "Dari Mata Hati" in Mata Hati Group Exhibition Catalogue, Matahati Group, Kuala Lumpur "Video Sebagai Medium Seni Halus" in UKM Film & Video Festival, Bangi "Komputerisasi KSSR" in ITM's School of Art & Design Academic Conference, Cherating.

APPOINTMENT:

Lecturer, Drawing & Painting, Fine Art Department, School of Art & Design, MARA Institute of Technology, Shah Alam

EXHIBITION:

SEAMUS Conference (Society of Electro-acoustic Musicians United States), Vermont, USA (Aotearoa) Amiga Artists on the Air, cablecast tv series, USA (Return of A Native) New Vistas, North Carolina, USA (Aotearoa & Hill Country Birds)

AWARD:

Best Student Video, 17th, Atlanta Film & Video Festival, USA

1993 FISEA Minneapolis, USA

EXHIBITION:

Untitled, Unit 7 Studios White Chapel Open Studios, London (Installation) Untitled, MA Show, Goldsmiths College, London (Installation)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

White Modernism Black Modernity, Facts Magazine, Paris

1994 ISEA Helsinki, Finland

EXHIBITION:

Paintings, Financial Law Panel, London (Permanent collection) Unit 7 Studios, Whitechapel Open Studios, London (Installation)

1995 ISEA Montréal, Canada

APPOINTMENT:

Lecturer, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

EXHIBITION:

A Fish In Formaldehyde Is Fine, Mayfair Library, London (Solo Installation in Public Space)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

'Beyond Art History', ASEAN COCI Conference on Aesthetics, Singapore (proceedings pp.46-45)

EXHIBITION:

"2nd. Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art" Brisbane, Australia (video installation)

PUBLICATION/ CURATED EXHIBITION:

Jambori Rimba - An Audience-Interactive Video & Musical Installation & Concert, UNIMAS Experimental Theater, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak (Project Leader, Video Director) "UNIMAS creates - Computer-Related Experiments in Art & Technology Studio" in ISEA 96 (International Symposium of Electronic Art), Rotterdam, Holland

1996 ISEA Rotterdam, Netherlands

WEB WORKS:

The Failure of Marcel Duchamp/ Japanese Fetish Even! (hosted by Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

'Who do you represent?', Present Encounters Conference, 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane (proceedings pp.62-63) 'Locating the Image', Seventh International Symposium on Electronic Art, Rotterdam (proceedings pp.116-117)

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

Planning and Acquisitions Committee, National Art Gallery (Malaysia)

APPOINTMENT:

Head, Fine Art Programme, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

EXHIBITION:

"HYPERview" Creative Center, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (computer animation, interactive cd-rom, video installation, digital collage, drawing & painting) Composers' Forum, Manila, Philippines (Jambori Rimba)

PUBLICATION/CURATED EXHIBITION:

Co-curator, First Electronic Art Show, National Gallery, Kuala Lumpur Co-curator, Explorasi, Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

1997 ISEA Chicago, USA

EXHIBITION:

Drawing Exhibition, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Computer Generated Drawings in National Overview curated by Zanita Anuar & Jalaini Abu Hassan)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Co-curator, First Electronic Art Show, National Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (catalogue publication) Co-curator, Explorasi, Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (CD catalogue published)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

'Sacred Pictures Secular Frames', issue 17, ART-Asia Pacific Journal, Australia (pp.66-71), 1997 'Art After the Internet', INET97: The Global Frontiers, 7th Annual conf. of the Internet Society, Kuala Lumpur (CD-Rom) 'Prosthetics for the Mind', 1st Consciousness Reframed Conference, Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts, University of Wales College Newport (Unpaginated, 4 pages). Also published in Digital Creativity Reader, ed. Colin Beardon and Lone Malmborg, Intellect Books, Bristol/ Portland (pp. 34-40), and in Volume 9 Number 1, Digital Creativity Journal, Swets & Zeitlinger, Netherlands (pp.48-52), 1998

EXHIBITION:

"Visual Echoes" Republic of Czech (interactive cd-rom & video) 1st. World Music Festival, Sarawak Cultural Village, Santubong, Sarawak (Voice in the Wilderness) McLean Mix USA Tour, several locations in USA (Jambori Rimba) 1st. World Music Festival, Sarawak Cultural Village, Santubong, Sarawak (Singer-Songwriter, Musician, Group-Leader, Live Performance)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Co-Curator, CIPTA98, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

1998 ISEA Liverpool/Manchester, UK

EXHIBITION:

Apa? Siapa? Kgnapa?, Apa Apa Fest, Kuala Lumpur (Fax Art in Group Show curated by Wong Hoy Cheong)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Curator, Gema: Resonance (Contemporary Malaysian Art), Manes Gallery, Prague (catalogue publication) Co-Curator, CIPTA98, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

WEB WORKS:

La folie de la Peinture, (Internet Art Work, Sponsored and hosted by Contrib.net)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

Coauthored with Raman Srinivasan, Sacred Art in a Digital Era, 2nd Consciousness Reframed Conference, Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts, University of Wales College Newport. Also published in Reframing Consciousness, ed. Roy Ascott, Intellect Books, Bristol/ Portland (pp.56-61), 1999 'Towards a Universal Theory of Convergence', INET98: Entering The Mainstream, Eighth Annual Conference of the Internet Society, Geneva (CD-Rom), 1998 'The End of Geography', REVOLUTION 98, 9th Internl. Symposium on Electronic Art, Liverpool John Moores Uni. (CD-Rom proceedings) 'Beyond the Site: Installation Art at the End of Geography', ISEA TERROR 98, Ninth International Symposium on Electronic Art, Manchester Metropolitan University (CD-Rom proceedings) Postmodernism and the Art of the English Speaking Peoples, Commonwealth of Art exhibition catalogue, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (pp.12-16) 'Re-Centering Art Education in a Climate of Technological and Cultural Convergence, Tradition, Modernity & Identity Seminar', 3rd International Ipoh Art Festival (proceedings pp.21-27)

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

International Programme Committee (IPC), ISEA 1998, 9th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Liverpool/Manchester, ISEA Judge, ASEAN Art Awards 1998, International, Modern Art Museum, Hanoi. Essay titled 'From Social Realism to Abstraction and Beyond', in catalogue(Unpaginated, 10 pages), 1999

APPOINTMENT

Deputy Dean (Education & Training), Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

EXHIBITION:

3rd. Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art – Screen Culture Brisbane, Australia (video)
Antologi-la A Multidimensional Performance, UNIMAS Experimental Theater, Kota Samarahan, Sarawak (Concert Concept, Singer-songwriter, Musician, Group-Leader, Live Performance)
2nd. World Music Festival, Sarawak Cultural Village, Santubong, Sarawak (Singer-Songwriter, Musician, Group-Leader, Live Performance)
Multimedia Art Asia pacific festival, Brisbane Online exhibition of International Web work.

WEB WORKS:

Co-founder, Co-author/Co-editor, "E-ART ASEAN ONLINE", Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts UNIMAS & National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

PUBLICATION/CURATED EXHIBITION:

"Reinventing Content and Constructing Interface" in AKU - 99 Potret Diri Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"Epilogue for the 20th. Century" in SAKSI Online # 6 at <http://WWW.saksi.com>
"The B-Side : Refleksi Dari Pinggiran" in The B-Side Exhibition, Pelita Hati

Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

"An Overview of Hyperview" in Crossing Boundaries - 9th. International Conference of Asia Pacific Confederation for Arts Education, Singapore

"Converging Art & Technology - UNIMAS's Experience" in ALAMI - Art Inspires Science Camp, Langkawi

"Luminous xxxx-Video Art Online, Offline, In Between the Lines" in Malaysian Video Awards

"UNIMAS Creates - Computer-Related Experiments in Art & Technology Studio" in Leonardo - Journal of Art & Science, MIT Press, USA, March

APOINTMENT:

Head, Communication Design & New Media, Center for Advanced Design, Kuala Lumpur

EXHIBITION:

"LIFA 2000" Langkawi International Festival of Art, Ibrahim Hussein Foundation & Museum, Langkawi, Kedah (video installation)
"Flow/Arus" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (video installation, online art, found objects)
"Dimensi" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (painting & video installation)
"Malaysian Art Online" Pekan Seni Ipoh, Ipoh (online art)
Jati-An Experimental Musical Creative, directed by Hamzah Tahir, Auditorium Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang, Kuching, Sarawak
Media City Festival, Ontario, Canada (Jambori Rimba)
Ohio International Film Festival, USA (Jambori Rimba)
(Multimedia & Technical Director)

PUBLICATION:

"The Evolution of Electronic Art in Malaysia" (Co-writer with Niranjan Rajah), in Art Asia Pacific, Special Issue on New Media (July), Australia,
Co authored, "Eart ASEAN Online", Flow | Arus: Contemporary Electronic Art from Australia & Malaysia, National Art Gallery

2000 ISEA PARIS, FRANCE

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Curator, Internet Section, 4th International Ipoh Arts Festival, Yayasan Kesenian Perak
Co-curator, Between Remote Regions, Traveling Exhibition, National Art Gallery/ South Australian Country Arts/ Adelaide Festival (Touring: New Land Gallery, Adelaide, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur & 8 other venues in South Australia and Malaysia)
National Consultant (Malaysia), Asia Section, 'Man + Space', Kwangju Biennale 2000, Korea. Essay 'Malaysian Art In The 90's/ Wong Hoy Cheong' published in (pp.72-73)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

Session Chair, Art in an Age of Multimedia Borderless Transactions: A Critique Annual Conference of the College Arts Association, Los Angeles . (Papers: Machiko Kusahara, Joachim Blank, Rozalinda Borcila)
Co authored, 'The Evolution of Electronic Art In Malaysia' in Special Digital issue No. 27, ART-Asia Pacific Journal, Australian Humanities Research Foundation, Fine Arts Press PTY. LTD. Sydney Australia (pp.64-69)
'Two Portraits of Chief Tupa Kupa: The Image as an Index of Shifts in Human Consciousness', 3rd Consciousness Reframed Conference, Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts, University of Wales College Newport (in proceedings, Unpaginated, 6 pages). Also published in Mind&Large: Reframing Consciousness II, ed. Roy Ascott, Intellect Books (pp.78-83), 2000
Co authored, 'Eart ASEAN Online', Flow | Arus: Contemporary Electronic Art from Australia & Malaysia, National Art Gallery/ Art Gallery of New South Wales, Kuala Lumpur
'Between Art and Science: Internet Technology and Web Based Art', Art and Science International Exhibition and Global Symposium, Academy of Arts and Design, Tsinghua University, Beijing (proceedings pp. 213-215)

Nation, National Culture And Art In An Era Of Globalization And Computer Mediated Communications, Conference of 4th International Ipoh Arts Festival, Yayasan Kesenian Perak

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

Invited Lecture 'The Image as an Index of Consciousness', EDA, Department of Design/ Media Arts, UCLA, Los Angeles
Committee for Cultural Diversity Committee, Inter Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA)
Member, Board of Directors, Inter Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA)

APPOINTMENT:

Director, Sonneratia, Youth Art Camp and Exhibition, National Art Gallery 2001

EXHIBITION:

"Rupa Malaysia" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (video installation)
Klue, Grappa Soho, Kuala Lumpur

PUBLICATION/ CURATED EXHIBITION:

Spirit of the Iron-Retrospection of An Enigma" Solo Exhibition of Raja Shahrman Raja Azidin, Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"Tentang Ekspresionisma, Polemik Mencari Diri dan Hikayat yang Melingkarinya" in Diri : Bayu Utomo Radjikin
Tentang Ekspresionisma, Polemik Mencari Diri dan Hikayat yang Melingkarinya" in Diri : Bayu Utomo Radjikin, Solo Exhibition Catalogue, 2001
Writer/Curator, "Semangat Besi - Retrospection of An Enigma", Petronas Gallery Kuala Lumpur

2001

APPOINTMENT

Associate Professor, Faculty of Applied & Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
Visiting Assoc Prof, International Studies and Overseas Programmes (ISOP) Fellowship, Joint Appointment at Department of Design|Media Arts /Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, University College Los Angeles

EXHIBITION:

Layers...Reality...Memory, Substation, Singapore (Two Man Show with Joe Lewis)
"Rupa Malaysia" National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Internet Installations in major National Retrospective curated by Redza Piyadasa)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Co-curator, 36 Ideas from Asia, Traveling Exhibition, Singapore Art Museum/ Association of Southeast Asian Nations Committee on Culture and Information (ASEAN-COCI). Essay 'Towards a Southeast Asian Paradigm: From Distinct National Modernisms to an Integrated Regional Arena for Art', (catalogue pp.26-37)
Curator, Insyirah: The Art of Sulaiman Esa, major retrospective of Malaysia's leading Islamic Modernist, Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (full catalogue publication)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

'Online Pooja: The Internet as a site for the Contemplation of the Divine', Extreme Parameters:New Dimensions, Universitat Obreta De Catalunya/ CaiiA-STAR, Barcelona, 2001
<http://WWW.uoc.edu/artnodes/eng/art/rianoan0302/rianoan0302.html>
From the Aesthetics of Perceptual Objects to the Metaphysics of Interactivity, XVth International Congress for Aesthetics, International Association for Aesthetics/ Japanese Society for Aesthetics/ Science Council of Japan, Tokyo (CD-Rom proceedings),

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

Invited Lecture, "Southeast Asian Media Art in the Contexts of Politics, Economics and Religion", EDA, Department of Design | Media Arts, UCLA, Los Angeles
Artsite Reviewer for N-Space Art Gallery (Online), Siggraph 2001, ACM SIGGRAPH, Los Angeles

AWARD:

Asian Scholars Award, 15th International Congress of Aesthetics, Tokyo, International Association for Aesthetics/ Japanese Society for Aesthetics/ The Science Council of Japan

CURRENT APPOINTMENT:

Lecturer, Painting, Cross-cultural Design, Design Theory, History of New Media, New Media Theory, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

APPOINTMENT:

Researcher in Residence & Research Grant, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan

EXHIBITION:

Co-produced with Roopesh Sitharan, "Upload-Download" Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan (video, internet art)
"Of Shadows & Images" Malmö., Madrid, Sain, Barcelona, (video)

PUBLICATION/CURATED EXHIBITION:

"Cabaran Praktis Seni Elektronik Dalam Era Maklumat" in Persoalan Seni Rupa Sezaman Yayasan Kesenian Perak, 2003
"Mencari Pahlawan" Bayu Utomo Solo Exhibition, Kuala Lumpur
"Kocak di Fukuoka 1 & 2" in WarKah Seni, Laman Web Yayasan Kesenian Perak, Disember 2003
"Media Art In Malaysia : An Overview" Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
"Transcending Boundaries : Media & Performance in Malaysia" Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan
"Upload-Download : Concluding Report" Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Japan

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

Judge, Malaysian Young Contemporaries, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

2002 ISEA Nagoya, Japan

APPOINTMENT:

Visiting Scholar, University Scholars Programme, Interactive Arts, Cyberarts Research Initiative (CRI), National University of Singapore

EXHIBITION:

Identities: Who We Are, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Photo Conceptualist Work in group show curated by Valentine Willie)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Curator, Bara Hati Bahang Jiwa: Expression and 'Expressionism' in Malaysian Art, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (catalogue publication)

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

International Programme Committee (IPC), ISEA 2002, 11th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Nagoya, ISEA

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

'Cinematic Soteriology: Techniques And Effects In Tamil Bakthi Films', 5th International Consciousness Reframed Conference, Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts, University of Wales College Newport (proceedings). Also published in Ascott, R, editor, Engineering Nature:Art and Consciousness in the Post Biological Era, Intellect Ltd.
'Between Art And Science: Internet Technology and Web Based Art' in Art and life in the 21st Century: technology, science and creativity, ed. Diana Domingues, Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), Sao Paulo
'Liminality In Recent Malaysian Art: Political And Networking Interventions In A Transnational Scenario', Locus 2: Interventions in Art Practice, Pananaw ng Sining Bayan, Inc./ The Eugenio Lopez Foundation, Japan Foundation, Rizal, Philippines

1999

EXHIBITION:

Virtual Triennial, Third Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane (Video and Web works in Group component of Major Regional Exhibition)
Missile Launch, 2nd Multimedia Art Asia pacific festival, Brisbane (Online exhibition of International Web work)

CURATED EXHIBITION:

Section Curator, Virtual Triennial/ Screen Culture, Third Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane. Essay titled 'art@faca.unimas.my' in (pp.242-243)
National Curator (Malaysia), 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. Essay titled 'The End of Globalization'in catalogue (pp.142 -153), 1999

WEB WORKS:

Co-Founder, co-director, co-editor, E-Art ASEAN Online: A Networking Hub for Southeast Asian Electronic Art - Journal, Forum, Database, Art Space and Links Section. Hosted by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (catalogue published)

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:

Reflections of the 'Self' in Painting, Aku: 99 Self Portraits Catalogue, Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (pp.14-16)
The Representation of A New Cosmology, Invenção: Thinking the Next Millennium, ITAÚ CULTURAL, CaiiA-STAR, ISEA, LEONARDO/ISAST, Sao Paulo, 1999
'Slow Download!', 'Slow Download! Annual Conference of the College Arts Association, Los Angeles. Published in Digital Issue, 3rd text Journal, Kala Press, London (pp.87-94), 1999
'Asian Art After the Internet: Transcending the Regional Arenas of the Late 20th Century', Globalism Forum, Asian Art: Prospects for the Future, Asia Center, Japan Foundation, Tokyo (proceedings pp. 83- pp.168-170)
Conference Keynote, 'MAAPing a Virtual Geography', Collapsing Geographies Forum, 2nd Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (MAAP) Festival/ 3rd Asia-Pacific Triennial, MAAP/ Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. (proceedings pp.118-121),

'Curating Southeast Asian Art Today: A Malaysian Perspective', Asian Art Seminar - Towards 21st Century, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum (proceedings pp. 78-82)

'Crossing Over: The Entry of Internet and Electronic Art from Asia into the International Mainstream', New Models/ New Art/ New Century Panel, Beyond the Future Conference, Third Asia-Pacific Triennial, Brisbane (proceedings pp. 155-156)

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY

International Programming Committee (IPC), ISEA 2000, 10th Int. Symposium on Electronic Art, Paris, ISEA

APPOINTMENT :
Deputy Dean (Arts & Cultural Development), School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

EXHIBITION:
"Takung", National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"Continuities : Contemporary Art Of Malaysia At The Turn Of The 21st Century",
Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China (video installation)
"Getaran Jiwa - PRamlee Merentas Zaman", Dewan Budaya, USM, Penang (Scriptwriter & Director)

PUBLICATION/ CURATED EXHIBITION:
Writer/Curator, "Takung", National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Writer/Curator, "Visual Invocation", Daud Rahim Solo Exhibition, Artspace Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Writer/Curator, "Lorek-Lorek", Keroncong - Sabri Idrus Solo Exhibition Townhouse Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"The Use of Internet for an International Collaborative Project" in Leonardo Electronic Almanac. Vol. 12, No. 8, August 2004

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY
Chief Judge, Malaysian Young Contemporaries, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

CURRENT APPOINTMENT:
Director, Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang

EXHIBITION:
"In Between The Lines - A Retrospective of Drawing Works" Adiwarna Gallery, USM, Penang
"Hasnul J Saidon - Private Viewing" Artspace Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"Link : Penang-Beijing Contemporary Art Exhibition", USM ABN-AMRO Arts & Cultural Center, Penang (painting)
"Takung", National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (sculpture, installation & video)

PUBLICATION/ CURATED EXHIBITION:
Curator, writer, editor, translator "Between Generations - 50 Years of Modern Art in Malaysia, UM, UM & Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur & Penang
Writer/Curator, "Ahmad Fuad - Dislocated", Ahmad Fuad's Solo Exhibition, Artspace Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Writer/Curator, "Northern Exposure - Two Women Artists Working in Penang", Tetriana A. Fauzi & Rozana Mohamed's Group Exhibition, Pelita Hati House of Art, Kuala Lumpur
"Notes on Eng Tay's Recent Sculptures" in Sha-A'Ya : The Roots of Asia - The Asian Sculpture Exhibition, Bidadari Art Gallery, Ubud, Indonesia
"A Letter to Noor Azizan Paiman & Roslisham Ismail" in Lightweight vs Heavyweight, Maya Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"The Use of Internet for an International Collaborative Project" in Sentap, Issue No.2, Teratak Nuromar, Ipoh

2005

CURRENT APPOINTMENT:
Assistant Professor, School of Interactive Arts & Technology, Simon Fraser University

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:
Convener, Eco Systems: Towards the Convergence of Natural, Cultural and Technological Systems in a Post-traditional Ecology, New Forms Festival, New Forms Society/ Museum of Anthropology, UBC, Vancouver;
"Beyond Translation: Locating the idiom in Asian Art - OK Lal Asian Media Art Event" MUTATIONS\leftrightarrowCONNECTIONS: Conference Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art
"Definitions of Knowledge, Art and Research", AURA Artist University Research Alliance Roundtable, Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa.
"Alife as Representation, Artificial Life Roundtable", Surrey Art Gallery
Efolk: Locating The Folk In An Era Electronic Art', Electronic Folk Art Roundtable, Surrey Art Gallery

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY:
Board of advisors, Media Arts Programme Advisory Panel, Canada Council for the Arts

PUBLICATION/CURATED EXHIBITION:
"Cross-Cultural Design As An Introductory Course For First year Students in USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia)" in Contemporary Southeast Asian Art Seminar, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
"Community-based projects as a part of Audience Development Strategy for Art Museum" in Asia Art Museums Directors' Forum, National Museum of China, Beijing, China.

"Cross-Cultural Design As An Introductory Course For First year Students In USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia)" in Contemporary Southeast Asian Art Seminar, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
"A Non-Objective Review of Kamal Sabran's Heaven & Earth", in Sentap, Issue No. 5, Teratak Nuromar, Ipoh
"Community-based projects as a part of Audience Development Strategy for Art Museum" in Asia Art Museums Directors' Forum, National Museum of China, Beijing, China
"Revisiting the Lone Voice in the Wilderness" in Nirmala Shanmughalingam's solo exhibition
"Tsunami 2005", USM Museum & Art Gallery, Penang
"Journey Across Borders" in Humind - Solo Exhibition by Shamsul Bahari, USM Museum & Art Gallery, Penang

AWARD:
Best Entries Design for Demi Masa - Outreach Activities (Coordinator & Creative Director)

2006 ISEA San José, USA

APPOINTMENT:
Visiting Faculty, First Ambassador Core Programme, TATA Consultancy Services, Trivandrum, India
Researcher in Residence, Sacred Spaces Project, Tech Lab, Surrey Art Gallery

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:
Roundtable Convener, Post-Traditional Media, BarCamp Conference, New Forms Festival (2006): Transformations, Vancouver

PARTICIPATION WITH ACADEMIC AND ARTISTIC COMMUNITY:
Advisory Board, BANFF New Media Institute, Banff Centre

EXHIBITION:
"Island to Island", University of Tasmania, University of Hawaii & USM Penang (Video)
"50 Merdeka" Islamic Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur (Digital Print)
"50 Ways to Live in Malaysia", Petronas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (Digital Print)

PUBLICATION/CURATED EXHIBITION:
"Random Order - Rozana Mohamed Solo Exhibition", Ghara Seni Tanjung, Penang

Curator, writer, editor, translator "Between Generations - 50 Years of Modern Art in Malaysia, UM, UM & Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur & Penang
Writer/Curator, "Ahmad Fuad - Dislocated", Ahmad Fuad's Solo, Exhibition, Artspace Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
Writer/Curator, "Northern Exposure - Two Women Artists Working in Penang", Tetriana A. Fauzi & Rozana Mohamed's Group Exhibition, Pelita Hati House of Art, Kuala Lumpur

"Journey Towards Abstraction", in Journey, Ch'ng Huck Teng Solo Exhibition, Penang
"Fauzan Omar-Resonance - Introductory Note", Fauzan Omar Solo Exhibition, Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM, Penang
"Converging Art & Science Under One Roof in USM", in Sentap, Issue No. 5, Teratak Nuromar, Ipoh
"A Filtered Overview of Artworks by 11 Contemporary Malaysian Artists" in Filtered, Wei Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
"Negating Paradox" in Hamidi Abdul Hadi Solo Exhibition, Wei Ling Gallery, Kuala Lumpur

AWARD:
ASEAN New Media Awards (Second Place, Interactive Category), Jakarta, Indonesia

2007

CURRENT APPOINTMENT:
Co-curator/Associate Researcher, 'Boundaries and Translation' Exhibition, Museum of Anthropology, UBC

EXHIBITION:
Bollywood/ Bangra Mashup Project (Interaction Database Installation), Collaboration with Lenord Paul, Suez, Lady Ra, Tarun Nayar, Media Lab, Tech Lab, Surrey Art Gallery

PUBLICATION/CONFERENCE:
"Post-Traditional Media: Art Culture And Technology In The Wake Of Postmodernism", 1st International Art Tech Media Congress, Madrid, 2007 (in proceedings)
Co author Karen Duffek, "Translating Cultures: Negotiating in Art and Culture from a Post Traditional Perspective", Indegenieties and Cosmopolitanisms, The Canadian Anthropology Society - American Ethnological Society (CASCA-AES) Conference, Toronto, 2007 (in proceedings)

2008 ISEA Singapore

"Relocations": The Electronic Art of Hasnul Jamal Saidon and Niranjan Rajah, ISEA 2008, Singapore

Hasnul J Saidon

Hasnul is a visual artist working in painting, drawing, installation, digital print and video. He also performs as a lecturer in painting, drawing, electronic art, new media theory and criticism, history of new media, cross-cultural design and experimental video. Hasnul's supplementary sidetracks involves serving as a guest curator for art exhibitions, writer and editor for exhibition catalogues or books, magazines, websites etc; producer, director and designer for numerous exhibitions, stage and experimental performances, video productions, art talks and art camps. In regards to his creative endeavors, Hasnul likes to dwell freely online, offline and in-between the lines, neither essentialized nor marginalized, center nor periphery, underground nor above the ground. When life is more forgiving, Hasnul can be seen tending his garden or decorating his home. He is also a full-time husband, blessed with a faithful wife and three beautiful princesses.

Hasnul is currently expanding his frequencies into the domain of obscured dwellers in the vicinity of USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) Museum & Art Gallery, Penang, under the pretext of his current position as the Director of the Museum.

Niranjan Rajah

Niranjan Rajah is an artist, theorist, curator and an educator. He is Assistant Professor at the School of Interactive Arts and Technology, Simon Fraser University, specializing in Culture & Technology and Contemporary Asian Art. Niranjan has practiced and exhibited as a painter, installation artist and as a new media artist in Europe, South East Asia and North America. He is a pioneer of Internet art and art networking in South East Asia. His work is included in various collections including the National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. He has also curated and co-curated numerous national and international exhibitions, including Malaysia's '1st Electronic Art Show' (National Art Gallery, 1997). Niranjan has been a Researcher in Residence at the TechLab, Surrey Art Gallery and is also a Research Associate at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia. He has previously been appointed distinguished visiting faculty, First Ambassador Corps Program, TATA Consultancy Services, Trivandrum. He has served as associate professor and associate dean for research at the Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak; as International Studies and Overseas Programmes (ISOP) Fellow at the Department of Design|Media Arts, UCLA; and as artist in residence at the Cyberarts Research Initiative (CRI), University Scholars Programme, National University of Singapore. Niranjan has served as a member of the Media Arts Advisory Committee for the Canada Council for the Arts, a member of the Board of Directors of Vancouver International Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (Centre A), Vancouver as well as a member of the advisory board for the BANFF New Media Institute (BNMI). Niranjan has served on the Board of Directors of the Inter Society for Electronic Art (ISEA).

1. Personal Account On Journey, Borders, Electronic Media & Performance

In our common notion of time-space, a journey necessitates a map (or perhaps vice-versa), with borders or boundaries and territories to abide to, to guard or protect, or to violate, to transgress, or to negate and negotiate or to mend, to blend and merge. As a visual artist, my personal journey is perhaps traceable on oftentimes overlapping maps, borders and boundaries (artificial and 'real'), marked by a web of crossing paths and occasionally blurred territories. Sometimes I found myself 'in between' borders or territories, flanked and suspended indeterminately by contesting territorial forces and overlapping discourses.

For me, performance is a mediated act, a form of language. To use the language of physics, and through my occasional 'transgression' into the territory of performing art, I perceive the synthesis of electronic media and performance as invoking a single white light that contains myriads of electromagnetic waves in various frequencies. If we take both electronic media and performance as subjects of analysis in which a combination of Taoism, Sufism and ICT are employed as the meta-language or the instrument of discourse, performance then can perhaps be taken as the moon, the 'al-Hillal', the software that illuminates the inward. In compliment, electronic media is the sun, the 'as-Sham', the hardware that illuminates the outward. Expanding on this binary compliment, and to appropriate the language of quantum physics, electronic media performance can perhaps be taken in as either a wave or a particle, depending on how our instrument of measurement interferes with and captures them.

This paper will focus on my personal account on electronic media and performance. I do so, I have decided to focus on my early encounters with performance, mainly for the reason that I have accumulated sufficient distance to be assured enough in using my own 'journey' as the object of discourse.

2. Primordial Journey Across Borders: "Proclaim" (1993) & "In The Precious Garden" (1993)

Winter 1993, Troy, New York, USA

During this season, I produced two artist's books, collectively entitled "Proclaim I & II"/1993. The books are off-springs of my multi-channel audio/video MFA thesis installation called "In the Precious Garden"/1993 (ITPG). By appropriating a 'path' taken by a 'chosen' human zygote to reach an 'egg cell' as a point of reference or departure, these works summarize my personal reading and interpretation of a 'journey' - physically, intellectually and spiritually.

The 'garden' in the title of the work, refers to a dimension before time-space in which each and every one of us was conceived, nurtured, multiplied in fractions, protected or concealed, and later 'revealed' or 'be born.' Central to these works is a 'text-poem', written or rather constructed from several textual sources - mainly Sufism and Taoism, and scientific materials on the fractal-like embryo stage of human formation inside the womb.

In regards to this 'garden', I asked myself, is it my primordial 'land' or 'soil' or 'tanah tumpah darah' (land of birth), or 'negara' (nation-state)? Is this a kind of primordial dimension in which my so-called personal 'journey' formed the 'history' (or shall I call it pre-history) of my life before time? Is this me in the larger whole of humanity at large?

This is a 'time-space' dimension that never fails to intrigue me, perhaps calling me back paradoxically to the dual nature of departure and return; reminding me of my original transgression across dimensions or borders or territories; a rupture; a catalyst: giving me a sense of place within the larger whole. My place in you, and you in me.

Allow me to share few excerpts from ITPG. (Slides & LCD - Excerpts from "Proclaim"/1993)

In the face of this garden

We see creation's mystery

As water doth appear

Within a crystal clear

In a day when there was neither we nor me

In the descending water that brings fruits of every kind

In the cause of pure water to descend in order to revive

Sown fields of different colors grow

Signs

A drop, mingled

As in a unified bright light

Pursuits of mingled colors

Each with its own fancy

In its own circle

Gracious and tolerance

In mixtures

Each a completion

Of 'others'

In the chosen one

From a pool of a perished population

Embodying what to be revealed

Pairs

Of opposite forces

From one mingled liquid

In successive stages

Well measured and balanced

In the receptive radiating garden

That displays the mobility of the Heaven

And the humility of the Earth

In a complete motion with grace

All in ONE light

In a round luminosity

Of a UNIFIED spirit

In a complete cycle

In its own orbit

"Abiding" (Proclaim: 1993)

3. Contexts: The Ruptures

I would like to take a detour from this 'recited journey' to enlist several contexts and theoretical frameworks that have in many ways shaped and influenced the early web of my cross borders artistic journey.

If the time-space dimension of our physical world can be neatly described as a linear progress from pre-modern to post-modern, or from pre-history to the 'end of history' as suggested by a mechanistic view of reality, then I suspect that the path of my cross-borders journey would be a jumpy progression towards a series of 'ruptures'- ruptures of the notion of a stable progression of 'time-space' dimension that I used to refer to as 'modern art', 'culture', 'history', 'identity', 'language', 'representation', 'sign', 'meaning' and even 'self'.

On the other hand, this linear reading imposes singular rupture rather than multiple, serial rather than simultaneous or concurrent. It implies singular progression rather than radiant expansion or multidimensional fractions, in which the fractions can be read as multiple ruptures. These ruptures are the results of multiple catalysts. Within this range of multiple ruptures, each rupture will eventually nurture and grow its own 'reality' only to expand to a certain extent that it will in turn spark its own peripheral catalysts, hence more fractions or ruptures. The pattern can go on and on and on (in multiple directions) until one is encapsulated in a multidimensional and overlapping network or web of multiple 'realities' (or to be intellectually hip - discourses)

Eastern mysticism reads such pattern as a downward mobility towards multiplicity - towards the world of shadows or Maya. Sufism called it the act of descending, as opposed to the act of ascending in which one struggles to free oneself from the complex webs of multiple realities to a singular Unity or Union. (See Al-Ghazali : 1997) Wayang Kulit or Shadow Play reflects its reading of such pattern through the dual nature of artificial/Real in its binary use of light and shadows, and the branching pattern of Pohon Beringin/Hayat.

Using similar notion of multiple networks of catalysts, branching and sub-branching, Quantum Physics coined the term multiple or parallel universes to explicate the paradoxically dual nature of subatomic elements or 'ghost in the atom' (see Davies & Brown: 1986). Using the language

of astrophysics, expansion of whatever system to a certain state is paradoxically countered by unseen, non-observable and radical (or irrational) forces on its periphery. In astrophysics, these forces, called 'strange attractors' and 'dark matters,' connote the "irresistible gravitational pull of the universe towards forces lying at its periphery." (Horrocks: 1999, page 74)

Cybernetic Paradigm offers similar pattern in which information in living organism is based on the concept of system and subsystem that are organized into networks of hierarchies. Cybernetic process relates to mental models of reality built through association of representations. It allows humans to create and recreate to form paradigms and new models of reality. Technological advances have accelerated contact of the individual with the external world through electronic media. Artworks and other creative disciplines increasingly reformulate models, due to efficient information flow and exposure. (Cox: 1989, page 7 -12) Cyberspace, as used by William Gibson in his novel "Neuromancer", describes a composite new space that encompasses both extremes of scale: the vast global network of telecommunications, and the minuscule quantum space in the microchip, with its ever increasing capacity to store and manipulate data. (Refer to Baker: 1993)

Studies on human cognition reveal similar 'tree-like' network pattern in the way human brain functions. Whole brain system as epitomized by the use of radiant mind-map in generating creative sparks reflects similar multidimensional fractal growth or expansion. (See Buzan: 1995)

This fractal or radiant pattern and their scientific as well as philosophical explications are perhaps the best graphic representation of the webs of ruptures throughout my 'journey across borders'. I would like to believe that it is the best representation for others as well. I used to refer to it as a shadowy matrix that forms the webs for my journey.

Can the so-called meta-language or meta-narrative and its peripheral counterpoints be equated into the above-mentioned pattern? If it could be, can each peripheral counterpoint functions as the meta-language or meta-narrative of its own peripheral counterpoints, on and on and on and on and on.....? If I need to set a purpose for my journey, it would be to transcend these multidimensional and overlapping webs of 'realities' or 'discourses.' The question is whether such purpose is achievable? What would be the prescriptions or devices or instruments for such purpose?

4. Contexts: The Catalysts

This particular section summarizes the catalysts of my ruptures. (Refer to the listed references used to help summarize my encounters with the catalysts)

My ruptures came through rather sporadic and flirtatious encounters (especially throughout the 90's) with an odd combination of postmodern condition and theories, Eastern mysticism especially Sufism and Taoism, cybernetic paradigm and Quantum Physics. I refer to them as my 'catalysts of ruptures' that have significantly shattered (among constructed notions of many things) my previously deepest held conviction in 'modern art'.

Through postmodern, I began to develop a suspicion in the repressive expansion of the 'meta-narratives' of history (read Western). As a result, I radiated towards 'little narratives' (even those so-called radical or irrational ones) and was keener in developing new 'knowledge' that could help to 'deconstruct' (or even destruct) the claim of power, hegemony, dominance and control in such narratives.

I became suspicious of the suppressive use of certain 'meta-languages' (as in the global media) as an instrument of analysis or 'objective' interrogation of lesser peripheral languages (object language or text -a community for example). I became more aware of the repressive role of certain sign systems in social formation, designed to control individuals through Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA, no pun intended). I became more sensitive to my own personal positioning in regards to the complex webs of languages and discourses, sign system and its apparatus, as I negated myself in complex webs of multiple binary contexts (as in local/global, Western/Eastern, White/Non-White, Me/Others, Malay/Non-Malay, privilege/non-privilege, Muslim/Non-Muslim and many more).

My perception of culture and tradition as a fixed or progressing phenomena was changed. By looking at culture as all things produced by human intervention, especially ideological, I began to perceive cultural space as an open arena of contestation and changes. I began to realize that the value of cultural object in the whole spectrum of cultural production was permeated by the conditions of economic exchange. From this realization, I took upon the notion that cultural production of objects (including arts and artists) has become 'myth creation' in the process of universalizing their significance and to make them seem natural to human experience. Meanings that myths induced were not necessarily natural, instead constructed to serve particular interests of a controlling culture.

I began to accept my reading of nature as a conception constructed by cultural conditioning, not absolutely natural all the time. I began to read ideology as a tool to naturalize everything that is economic, political and social in order to make its contingency appear apolitical and timeless - creating myths like 'common sense' and 'naturally given'. From such reading, ideology thus came to signify in me as a tool used to maintain and reproduce social power.

My stable perception of modern art and all that is modern as a commitment to a linear reading of history, material progress, entrepreneurial spirit and technological innovation began to crumble. I felt a strong dual sense of disappearance and simulation occurring simultaneously around me. I perceived technological domination of the world as an integrated, over-rated, saturated, simulated illusion of reality that grew on its increasing supply of more radical illusion, added paradoxically by fatal proliferations of viruses and crashes beyond the rationalist, progressive enterprises that instigated it. I read how gravitational pull of the universe towards forces lying at its periphery was seen as parallel to forces outside of rational, progressive, and humanist processes - the 'strange attractors' or 'dark matters' that functions as the counterpoints of global media and technological expansion.

Such notion of attraction to the peripheral forces brought me to Cyberpunk manifestos, noted for its diligent propagation of cult-like and do-it-yourself techno-subcultures, frontier spirit,

cybernetic utopia and total distrust of any suppressive claim of expanding central authority.

I was introduced to parallels between quantum physics and Eastern Mysticism - such as the notion of 'light', unity of all things, beyond the world of opposites, emptiness of form (or nothingness or 'fana', and 'Maya'), interpenetration, and cosmic harmony. (See Capra: 1991) In fact, my reading of Al-Ghazali and Al-Jailani probably sealed my own ruptures.

It would be impossible for me to explicate in details my encounters with these 'catalysts' of ruptures. Even the nature of the encounters itself is hard to summarize - be it actual or physical, mental or intellectual, experiential, emotional and spiritual. Furthermore, it is not within my keen interest to give a lecture on Postmodernism, or Taoism, or Sufism or Cyberpunkism. I'm far from being an expert in any of these 'discourses.' To persist, would be like trying to contain a flowing water inside a 'labeled' bottle, only to stagnate and contaminate it, rather than allowing it to flow, mingle, and seep indiscriminately into whatever surface that can soak it within the path of its flow or journey.

5. Back to winter 1993, Troy, New York, USA.

Allow me to continue with the recitation

"In this fashion of motion

We free our HORIZON

From the CHANGES of SURFACE

That never SPEAKS

We struggle to Remember

And adorn gifts

That we assumed

Can only be adorned

When stripped BARE and NAKED

For consumption and Greed

(Proclaim: 1993)

6. The Reading of "In the Precious Garden" As A Media & Performance Work

If a rupture can be taken as a pre-condition for a 'new birth', an opening, or a paradox of departure and return, the question is what lies beyond such paradox. This reminds me of the acumen of Taoism - the further and further one goes to the West, one will end up in the East (and vice-versa).

I perceive "In the Precious Garden" (ITPG) and "Proclaim" (1993) as a multi-dimensional space in which various sources were sought and brought together - a collage or fragments of insights inspired by and taken from different texts. The text-poem were inspired and taken from As-Sheikh Abdul Kadir Al-Jailani, Jallaluddin Rumi, Al-Ghazali, and Liu I-Ming, all of which were complemented by scientific readings of fetus formation inside the womb. I perceive the text-

poem as a co-mingling of multiple texts, with multiple entry points that presumably will lead to multiple readings and formation of meanings.

It was within the ruptures and slippery nature of language, signs, representation, forms and meanings that I wished for flashes or sparks of insights to appear, beyond the confines of my own notion of a stable reality.

In ITPG, members of the audience became the performers, the software, and the moon, al-Hillal, illuminator of the inner. The media installation functioned as the hardware, the sun, as-Sham, illuminator of the outer. In semiological term, they became both the signifier and the signified as their immersed themselves in the installation. The nature of their interactions (performances) defined the 'meaning' of their whole experience. The meaning of their collective performances then, became a constant flux of insights that kept on moving and changing like streaming water that flows in different tempos and rhythms.

Structurally, there were several formal devices used in creating ITPG, namely:

1. Modularity and cyclical formations - that eventually connotes inter-dependency, inter-linked and interlocking patterns, all of which create a sense of
2. Simultaneity and dynamism - as opposed to permanency/fixed view
3. Non-linearity - as opposed to sequence
4. Emphasis on multiple viewpoints that reject a monopoly of single focal point (as in the use of a vanishing point in a linear perspective system).
5. De-centralization, multiple options, open-endedness and flexibility, all of which relate to
6. User/observer-centered paradigm that allows the observer to decide his/her own pattern of perceptual experience according to his/her own option in a given confine of time and space. This leads to
7. Interactivity, participation, involvement and immersion
8. The use of mathematical and schematic principles, including fractal abstraction (time is compressed or expanded and divided into smaller or bigger fractions or units) (note)

(Slides and LCD)

The text-poem was constructed in a modular and cyclical fashion to negate linear logic of progression. It was written on a large white cloth in a spiraling fashion. The original version formed the base of the installation. Twelve smaller compressed copies of this original version were made and placed in equal distance at twelve separate points on the base. They functioned as the secondary physical branches. These secondary branches were then copied and compressed into twelve smaller units and placed in a similar manner to form the third branches.

I employed the same fractal formulation in translating modularity into time-based fractions. A single sixty minutes tape consisted of both visual (images and texts) and aural materials related to 'a journey of life before time' was initially conceived. This sixty minute 'original version' was then compressed (in time) and divided into twelve smaller units, each with duration of five minutes. This secondary branches (or fractions) were then compressed and divided into twelve smaller units, each with a duration of sixty seconds. These smallest units formed the tertiary branches - three times removed or compressed from the original version in terms of time. They

appeared as flashes or sparks in relation to the original time version.

Members of the audience may interact with the installation in numerous ways. Among them are

1. They may read the text-poem by pacing their walk according to their own tempo and rhythm, progressively moving into the inner part of the physical installation
2. They may initiate and end their reading of the text-poem from any point of departure (and return)
3. They may stop and passively view the video
4. They may interact with each other or with how others interact with the installation
5. They may function as either the signifier or the signified or both

ITPG reiterated my early encounters with the reading of ruptures - my effort in searching for a temporal reconciliation with the ruptures in me. It became a much-needed cushion for me, as I was feeling trapped and suffocated by the radical relativism of Postmodernism.

7. Crossing Borders & Extending Media & Performance Work Through Collaborative Projects:

"Rainforest Images" 1993 & "Jambori Rimba" 1996

Some of the above-mentioned formal devices resurfaced in "Rainforest Images"(RI) /1993 a collaborative project with an electro-acoustic duo from New York, Barton and Priscilla McLean, also known as the McLean Mix. The project was produced in two formats - an electro-acoustic concert with video, and an experimental single-channel video piece. RI was a mix of rainforest's sounds and sights around the world, especially the Peruvian Amazon.

(Slides of "Rainforest Images" and "Jambori Rimba")

"Jambori Rimba"/ 1996 was a sequel collaborative project with the McLean Mix, with music and video that were set in an audience-interactive installation. Five musical 'stations' were placed within the installation setting, calling members of the audience to add and explore various sampled aural motifs provided by the stations. Their presence was captured, mixed with pre-recorded rainforest video and projected on a screen. Members of audience became the performers, while the artists (or perhaps the 'authors', to use Roland Barthes's term) became mere collaborators. If nature was perceived as a realm without human intervention, through this installation the 'audience-performers' were made aware of how their intervention in the whole setting effect their own collective aural and visual experience. Through simulated ambience in an open-ended setting, the conception of nature as a detached independent object was taken by an awareness of nature as a complex organic system in which the distinction between the observing subject (human) and object of observation (nature) was blurred. In short, the audience became conscious of their own contribution in the whole organic experience of listening and seeing. Taking a clue from Quantum Physics, the act of observing becomes an act of intervention that will influence the result of the observation.

(Screenings of excerpts from "Jambori")

I was privileged to engage in several other collaborative performance projects that involved the use of electronic media. Some of them like "Xpressi Xerimental"/1994, "Bernafas Dalam

Lumpur"/1994, "Skin Trilogy"/1994 and "Rama & Sita" / 1995 reminded me of my earlier collaborative ventures when I was attached to CenterStage Performing Arts in the late 80's. Recent projects such as "Jati"/2000, "Antara Semangat"/2001 and "The Borrower of Light"/2003 will perhaps form a body of materials for another paper, when I have sufficient artistic distance to discuss about them.(Slides & LCD)

8. Responding To My Initial Ruptures: "Listen to the Land" (1992)

Winter 1992. Troy New York U.S.A

I heard the sound of my daughter's heartbeats in her mother's womb, surrounded with what sounded like streaming water. I listened to the sound of this 'first land' - a land in which this 'little secret' is nurtured, protected and concealed, and later 'in appointed time' - revealed. According to her doctor, there will be a rupture - a sign of 'ready for departure' or 'revelation' or 'delivery' or simply 'my daughter is ready to enter this world.'

Prior to this rupture, I experienced my own ruptures - my own sort of crossing borders, of entering a new world, in which all stable reality seemed to be fractured.

One example is a rupture from an addicted and fixed attachment to the notion of a permanent or static subject confined by the x-y axis of a two dimensional space, to moving and flowing (visual and aural) subjects captured through a time-space recording device. I crossed over a crossbreed between a two and three-dimensional space that allows motion to exist in time. Time and all that can be contained by it became my canvas. The sound of streaming water, the melodic call of billal, self-whispering and various studio improvisational acts were performed and recorded to be treated like a clay on my audio/video mixer - fractured, compressed, prolonged, filtered, cut, sliced, pasted, reversed, forwarded, wiped, dissolved, faded, constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed.

"Listen to the land" (1992) - was perhaps my first sign of acknowledging the rupture of artificial borders within myself as well as without. I crossed over, but not without struggles. Everything became fragmented, blown into pieces only to be consolidated by the sound of my daughter's heartbeats in her mother's womb, as well as her eventual cries. The chorus of newborn babies in Troy Samaritan Hospital mesmerized me. They came in different hues and colors, sizes and shape but yet echoed primal human voices without the burden of language; free from the haze of doubt. (Screening of excerpts from "Listen to the Land")

9. Studio Performances & Video Camera As A Witness: "Post-Colon: A Series of Video Shorts" 1992

Jump cut to winter 1992. Troy, New York.

My initial studio performances were 'mediated' by the language of video camera; the video camera became my witness, my audience. They became a mediated representation of my journey across borders - within and without. The borders suggest multiple readings and meanings - such as the artificial demarcation or boundaries within my thoughts and memories, within my own body, within my emotion, between various artistic disciplines, between nation-states, race

and ethnicity, religion, culture, history, and even gender.

Adding (or perhaps confirming) the rupture of borders was my encounter with Edward Said's post-colonialism, his exposition of orientalism and exoticism (of which I discovered that I was a willing subscriber or 'actor'); his exposition of the writing of history and body of knowledge as an instrument of power and imperialist hegemony. (Said : 1978)

I never look at the proclaimed truth of history and the so-called objectivity of knowledge (with its extended footnotes) the same way again.

I responded by producing a series of video shorts that combined studio performances, computer graphics, computer music improvisation, and analog audio/video editing improvisation (Screening of "Post-Colon: ...")

Western's enlightenment ideas of progress that I had been faithfully subscribing (through 'proper' training, indoctrination and canonization of 'fine art') crumbled down, dethroned. Greenbergian dogma was mocked. The notion of modern art as constituted an autonomous, self-referential field of human activity was assaulted. Modernist faith in universality, artistic progress, shared meaning and quality was shattered to pieces. Plagiarism (or 'appropriation') prevailed and 'legitimized'. Academic painting once relegated to the dustbin of history were resurrected. Mass culture and mass taste flooded the once guarded high art scene. Post minimalism, body art, land art, performance, neo-expressionism, feminism, and multiculturalism began to flourish. (Heartney : 2001)

I fell into a post modern's rabbit hole, struggling to find my way back to my primordial transgression - the first rupture. But how shall I return?

I recalled Lao Tzu's abstraction of the notion of a journey in which "going far means returning."

10. The Return

Allow me to conclude with another recitation from my artist's book.

"We will remember the day when it was so easy to disclose disagreement in Pain and Poison

Than to strive hard in disclosing through Dignity and Grace

In HEALING

In patient expectation of relief

We will remember the day when forgiveness was a lavish fashion

On an empty glass doll

Ridiculed as an insult

In receiving and giving

We don't want to regret the time when we were to busy

To REMEMBER

We take a pause in action

Until its permissibility is clear

Free from the haze of doubt

We return to the First and the Last

The Outer and the Inner

The point of return and the point of origin

To whom all hearts belong

The sanctuary of spirits

The resting place of burdens

The giving of all gifts

And the bestowal of blessings

Night ends with the darkling of the day

Chill of winter takes its leave when summer comes around

We submit

Before we return to the state

OF A KERNEL WITH NO SHELL

Like a

BIRD FLYING FREE FROM ITS EMPTY CAGE"

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As East Asia accelerates from Medieval culture and consciousness, through a compressed period of industrial modernization, into the communications era, the convergence of living sacred traditions and information technology presents a deep ontological enigma. Starting from the premise that the 'image' is an index of the 'locus of reality', this text will attempt to 'locate the image' in an age of instantaneous communication, virtual reality and hypermedia. The word 'image' is linked in etymology with the Latin 'imitari', which is the root of the word 'imitate'. In the Medieval view the likeness between any thing and any representation of it must be analogical. Here, 'analogy' is 'similitude' in the sense of 'simile' rather than that of 'simulacrum'. Medieval representation imitates the idea of the thing and not its substance. The image of a Hindu devata, latent in canonical prescription, must be inwardly visualized by the icon maker in an act of 'non-differentiation'. This inner image is the model from which he proceeds to execute in a chosen material. The viewer in turn applies his or her own 'imaginative energy' to the physical icon, 'realizing' the devata within the 'immanent space in the heart'. All images are interior and reality itself is 'imaged' within consciousness.

From the Islamic standpoint, the law of all phenomenon can be symbolized geometrically in the way that space, seen as extension, is created by unfolding through the dimensions and can be 'folded up' again, leading back to the point of unity. It is the confusion caused by sculpture in the round, chiaroscuro, perspective and other illusionistic representations in the stages of 'folding up' that underpins the prohibition of images in Islamic art.

In modern consumer capitalism everything that was once directly lived becomes representation as images proliferate beyond the viewer's control. Guy Debord has described this 'spectacle' as capital accumulated until it 'becomes an image'. This is the 'televisual' imaging of our desires. The image of desire itself. It alienates us as it permeates our consciousness. In works like 'Theme Song' (1973), Vito Acconci assaults the limit of this image. He implicates the viewer and paradoxically compounds the alienation of a medium that promises interaction but does not permit it.

Today the 'alienation of the spectacle' has dissolved into what Jean Baudrillard has called 'the ecstasy of communication'. There is a 'loss of private space' and simultaneously, a 'loss of public space'. This is the ontology of Paul Sermon's 'Telematic Dreaming' (1992). With electronic interactivity, the body appears to be situated wherever 'its effect is'. Enabled by 'microtechnology', consciousness has left the physical body and merged with the image in an interactive 'outer-space'.

Email to Paul Sermon:- 'Telematic Dreaming'. Disembodied consciousness and contact across two and three dimensional worlds, between image and physical reality, between man and his own image. Remember Michelangelo's Creation of Adam. Contact. New ontology or old delusion. Electronic communion or physical alienation. Paul, do you have any comment on my understanding of your work.

Paul's reply:- Consciousness always seems to be the starting point of any discussion about Telematic Dreaming, the notion of the cause and effect situation, the rapid fire of consciousness back and forth between the remote and the local body. Without putting too much emphasis on the historical notion of a 'great artwork' or a 'masterpiece' the reference to Michelangelo's 'Creation of Adam' is an appropriate one. It's not my initial intention, however, when I install the piece I am always struck by its presence - watching the hands of two people move towards the point of touch is an event in itself. The senses of sight and touch are exchanged.

Email to Paul Sermon:- Help. I need to set up a home page in conjunction with ISEA96. The problem is that my work - 'The Failure of Marcel Duchamp/Japanese Fetish Event!' (1996) has an erotic element that is unacceptable on Malaysian servers. Part of the aim of this project is to address territoriality in the Net. Information that is globally accessible (instantaneously) is not universally acceptable (local laws and values). The work itself is a harsh parody of Marcel Duchamp's *Etant Donnes*. Could you possibly direct me to someone who can help by providing space.

Paul's reply:- We could certainly locate your web site on our server at the Art School in Leipzig. And judging by the content of the site, I would find it a very interesting possibility.

With regard to the 'reading' of images, Roland Barthes has asked if analogical representations or copies produce 'true systems of signs' and not 'simple agglutinations of symbols'. Is it possible to conceive of an analogical 'code' - a 'language' of the image, or is the image 'the limit of meaning'.

Etant Donnes cleaves from logos, an abyss of eros. It represents the culmination of the humanist trajectory in the philosophy of being. The perspective of the 'eye' is fused, or rather, confused with that of the 'I' in what must be the 'end game' of 'retinal art'. Sculpture and photography are reduced to indifference in this paragon of visibility. This parergon of reality. This 'hyperreality'.

In Hellenistic usage, aisthesis implies 'physical affectability' as distinguished from 'mental operations'. Ananda Coomaraswamy has remarked that the Greek origin of the modern term 'aesthetic' means nothing but sensation or reaction to external stimuli - what the biologist calls 'irritability'. With this observation the conventional dichotomy of pornography and art is dissolved. Fredric Jameson has even proposed that the visual image is, in itself, 'essentially pornographic'.

Today, Duchamp's 'delayed image' is no longer an esoteric encounter. It is democratically accessible (Given) as the slow download (Waterfall ?) on a personal 'illuminating screen' (Gas !). With this mass, interactive 'dilation' of desire, the meaning of the image has been displaced by its very presence. The image has become an absolute fetish. It is even argued that as a consequence of the limited spatial resolution in all physical systems, including the eye, and the nature of light as discrete quanta, every image is in principle a digital one. The image as sheer technology.

Paul Valery had prophesied that just as water, gas and electricity were effortlessly brought into

our homes to satisfy our needs, visual or auditory images would one day serve us 'at a simple movement of the hand'. Ultimately, in keeping with this utilities analogy, the current system of instantaneous use and retrieval of images on a mass basis is dominated by the circulation of capital. In the 'new order' of our fast homogenizing world, what is really at stake is the authorship and ownership of reality itself.

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THE EXPANDED FIELD

In her seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded field' Rosalind Krauss theorizes the dissolution of the Post-Renaissance 'monument' in the negative ontology of postmodern sculpture. She states her theory in terms of "a combination of exclusions" - the sum of the "non-landscape" and the "non-architecture". For Krauss, Sculpture is that which is not the landscape. Sculpture is also that which is other than architecture. To this pair of opposites she applies a Structuralist 'expansion' to arrive at the four categories of her 'expanded field' - 'marked sites' 'site-construction', 'axiomatic structures' and, of course, conventional 'sculpture' itself.

CONSTITUTING THE 'SITE'

The artist Robert Smithson offers a simpler theory in his opposition of 'site' and 'non-site'. Modernist sculpture 'occupies' the physically empty, semiotically blank and ideologically neutral 'non-site' of the gallery while postmodern work actually 'constitutes' its 'site'. Contemporary installation works extend beyond art's own objecthood into the space and the context of its presentation, encompassing thematic, architectural, social, political, historical, theoretical, critical and even market system concerns. Anne Rorimer notes that installation artists like Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers and Lawrence Weiner, "have played an important part in dispelling the notion of art's assured autonomy by pointing to its reliance on or involvement with its institutional circumstance".

DECONSTRUCTION DEIFIED

If the expansion of sculpture into 'site' specific installations has deconstructed the institutional 'white cube' of modern art, the construction of Bernard Tchumi's 'red cubes', his folies, at the Parc de la Vilette in Paris, articulate postmodernism's negative ontology on a architectural scale. This perverse monument to deconstruction, was conceived in collaboration with Jacques Derrida himself and erected under the reactionary auspices of the French state. Tchumi's folies epitomise and concrete the paradox of 20th Century avant-gardism. They epitomise the institutionalisation, the canonisation, the deification even, of the negative impulse. This ever accelerating cycle of destruction and construction has resulted in the terminal Oroboros of today's post-avant-garde, postmodern culture.

BEYOND REPRESENTATION

The avant-garde's radical impulse first manifests in art as painting's search for a more esoteric role, which in turn, began when the optical precision of the camera usurped its function as the medium of objective representation. Indeed, it can be argued that, modern art emerged as an esoteric painterly reaction, a diversion even, while the image lost its 'aura of uniqueness' in an era of mass photographic reproduction. In this 'light' the non-chromatic (black or white)

image of post-painterly abstraction can be identified as the culmination of two contradictory modernist critiques, two negations, of representation.

EMPIRICISM OR SEMIOTICS

According to Benjamin Buchloh the opposing critiques can be described as 'structural specificity' and 'random organisation' - "... the need on the one hand, for systematic reduction and or empirical verification of the perceptual data of a visual structure..." and "... the desire on the other hand, to assign a new 'idea' or meaning to an object randomly ... as though the object were an empty (linguistic) signifier." Ad Reinhardt can be said to fall within the first paradigm, John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg, within the other.

PURE VISUAL STRUCTURE

Reinhardt's manifesto for his 'Art as Art' principle states - "No lines or imagining, no shapes or representing, no visions or sensations or impulses, no symbols or signs or impastos, no decorations or colourings or picturings, no pleasures or pains, no accidents or ready-mades, no things, no ideas, no relations, no attributes, no qualities - nothing that is not of the essence". This is, of course, the 'essence' of his black square paintings.

THE EMPTY SIGNIFIER

John Cage writes of Rauchenberg's white paintings - "No subject, No image, No taste, No object, No beauty, No talent, No technique (no why), No idea, No intention, No art, No feelings, No black, No white no (and). After careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these paintings that could be changed, that they can be seen in any light and not be destroyed by the action of shadows."

THE INSTALLATION 'SHOT'

In the early exhibitions of colour-field painting, the placement of works on the gallery wall was treated as being integral to the presentation. Photographic documentation began to take on a new significance in the light of the transience of the emerging 'installation art'. As Brian O'Doherty has observed, "the colour-field installation 'shot' should be recognised as one of the teleological end points of the modern tradition". Indeed, with the impermanent and/or inaccessible qualities of 'site specific' art, photographic documentation has become the surrogate medium of postmodern art.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS

While the "installation shot" confirms the 'uniqueness' of the 'site', photographic documentation leaves its own massified condition unindexed. In fact, it can be argued that photographic reproduction has, quite surreptitiously, become the extended medium, the 'expanded field' even, of installation art. In her essay 'Photographic Conditions of Surrealism', Rosalind Krauss has observed that in spite of being 'the quintessentially realist medium' photography

became the vehicle of a dream-oriented documentation in the Surrealist movement. Indeed, not withstanding its apparent objectivity, the photographic image has, from its inception, had its own hallucinatory aura.

AN INTERACTIVE VIRTUAL REALITY

Today, the Internet enables photographic representation along with sound and text to be 'piped' into our homes, as easily as water, electricity or gas. As bandwidth increases and multimedia technology goes online, fluidly articulating the remote experience of image, moving image, text and sound in an interactive 'virtual reality', it will become increasingly difficult to differentiate the actual from the oneiric and humanity will begin to experience a new sense of being. As digital simulacra proliferate, the very distinction of an actual place, person or thing, from its image or representation, is being dissolved.

THE END OF GEOGRAPHY

By virtue of Hyper-Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP) all the representations contained on the multitude of servers on the Internet exist in virtual proximity. Here' and 'there' have been brought together in the palm top 'now' of fiber optic connectivity. With the instantaneous connectivity of this computer mediated communication, geographical distance appears to have been eliminated. As artists 'build' sites on the World Wide Web, they are developing a new ontology for art - one in which the distinction of 'site' and 'non-site' will no longer be meaningful. Indeed, they are reconstituting installation art at 'the end of geography'.

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While contemporary artists generally understand postmodernism in terms of the transatlantic discourse of the likes of Rosalind Krauss, it is architectural history that must be credited with condensing a symbol for the break into our present cultural era. Architectural historian Charles Jenks, locates the end of modernism thus - "Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final coup de grace by dynamite".

This was the demolition of a modern residential complex because it had failed society. Though the complex had been built in modernist idealism, it had become a horrific slum. Indeed, the destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe Complex has come to represent the failure of grand, monolithic design and the dawn of a fragmentary, referential and playful postmodernist manner. The 'fall' of Pruitt-Igoe was a central motif in Godfrey Reggio's film, *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out Of Balance*. Set to the music of Phillip Glass it is an awesome image of 'the end' - one of many in a film that forewarns of an impending apocalypse.

Uncannily, the architect of the Pruitt-Igoe Complex, was Minoru Yamasaki, the same architect who went on to build the sublime Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre - another architectural complex, whose destruction has entered into our collective imagination. This time the destruction appears to have been carried out by extremists who, despite acting from a completely different premise, also profess the failure of Western modernity. The event took place under the spotlight of the global news media. The image has been replayed, critiqued, interrogated and exploited. It has acquired the pathos of tragedy and the enigma of conspiracy. It has become an image that we cannot read with any finality, as the towers remain in perpetual free-fall in their media representation.

Echoing Jenks' symbolism, I propose that - postmodernism, along with its inherent modernism, both died in New York, New York, on September 11, 2001, between 9.59 am and 10.58 am, when the sublime twin towers, both of them, were given a double coup de grace by fundamentalism. These shining towers of light, these beacons of global capitalism, with their structural aesthetic and reflexive duality, were terminated by determined men with ordinary box cutters and a perversely traditional vision of the world.

With the recognition of this demise, comes an obligation to envision an alternative. I am confident that we are already in the formative stages of a new discourse - a traditional, not a post-traditional paradigm. This term 'post-tradition' is emerging in diverse discourses, including the following -

- in sociology (Giddens): to index contemporary society - unbound by tradition, reflexive and self determining, forward looking.
- in the history of technology (Srinivasan): to frame the poetics of technology in the context of development and traditional cultures - the way people in developing countries have rethought technology in the context of budgetary constraints, reinterpreting traditional systems - tractor wheels going on bullock-carts, bicycle wheels becoming satellite receptors etc.
- in theology (Bellah): to refer to critical inquiry in the context of contemporary spirituality and religion, where a direct relationship is developed with God, as opposed to going through the orthodox mediators of the church.
- in postcolonial theory (Graiouid): to articulate the realities and aspirations of developing and marginalized societies.
- in architecture: to address spaces that unsettle the historical relationship between place and meaning.
- in the media arts (Rajah): to articulate a framework for addressing the engagement of diverse cultural systems in the context of new media.

Anthony Giddens developed the term in the context of sociology. We have not been experiencing a post-modern condition, he says, simply a late modern one. All the characteristics of post-modernism are just aspects of a fully developed modernity. So post-modernism is a misnomer for late modernism. Giddens suggests that the modern era itself is, in fact, an era after the end of tradition or a 'post-traditional' era, wherein the traditional order of things is no longer significant. Giddens' 'post-tradition' suggests that we have embarked on a new era unfettered by archaic mores and modes.

Modernism is indeed continuing on; entering a different phase, developing, and in fact, becoming more of itself. However, Giddens' formulation of the modern as 'post-tradition', is flawed in its insistence that tradition ends with the birth of the modern. Tradition has, like modernism continued on. Traditions have engaged with the values of modernism and the systems and technologies of modernity in a myriad different ways; and just as the term 'post-modern' belies the continuity of the modern, 'post-tradition' signifies the continuity of tradition. The significant post-traditional moment is that same modernist point of inflection at the turn of the twentieth century.

Mike Punt notes how, in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, technologies that linked discrete spaces, such as radio, television, telegraph, photograph, phonograph, telephone, and film, excited the popular imagination. Within eighteen months of the launch of the Lumière brothers' cinématographe in 1895, around 800,000 performances had been given around the world. The Lumiere brothers not only invented the technology to capture moving images, they developed the infrastructure to shift these images around the globe. As a result, people from different cultures could reciprocally view moving images of others from all over the world at a significantly accelerated pace. This is analogous to YouTube today, or the Internet in the nineties,

A consequence of engagement with this 'new' media was an ontological shift. With the advent of the moving image the camera began to affect the human perspective and sense of being. The view of the camera becomes part of the viewer's own experience. Mike Punt observes that "cinema had the hallucinatory effect of uncoupling vision from the world, and relocating it in the body ... imparting a psychic experience in which the rationality of a Newtonian world-view was undermined." Punt argues that there was concurrently another tendency at play, as cinema served the imperialist imperative of reinforcing racial difference. As Punt explains "on the one hand you have this removal of the body, this ability to fly through space and time, and on the other, these documentary films of people marked by cultural differences coming from different locations bringing about a sense of difference and realism."

It is this technology-mediated complex of transcendentalism and materialism that characterizes the post-traditional moment. I suggest that these forces also challenged the comfortable insularity and ignorance of traditional worldviews as people began to recognize the living traditions of other cultures as palpable realities. From this point on, no culture could imagine or represent itself as a singularity. It is this sense of cultural plurality in the context of technological change that characterizes the post-traditional perspective,

I have shown elsewhere, how Indian cinema's engagement with the magical or transcendental potential of this medium in the mythological and devotional genres, exemplifies how modern technologies have served traditional modes of representation. Similar examples in diverse cultures have gone unnoticed, as the dominant modern and postmodern frameworks of analysis are more conducive to revealing how tradition is assimilated by modernity, or alternatively, how traditions have resisted modernism. Post-traditional theory treats modernity (including post-modernism) as one tradition amongst many. It enables media technology to be seen as moving across all traditions freely, and engaging them on their terms. If the modernist

view is that there was a great moment of change - a transition from pre-modern to modern culture; and if the postmodernist view is that sometime in the seventies, modernism ended and post-modernism began; my post-traditional proposition is that, while the modern/pre-modern distinction is meaningful, tradition continues on. We are 'post' traditional only in the sense that we acknowledge the mutability and relativity of traditions.

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