

**EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARTWORKS
FROM TWO SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHERS IN
MALAYSIA**

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2020

**EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARTWORKS
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MALAYSIA**

by

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**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts**

March 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Although it took much determination, thought, and hard work on my part to complete this thesis, I owe gratitude to my supervisors, friends and family. First of all, special thanks to my main supervisor, Dr. Jasni Dolah who shared his knowledge, expertise and experiences for the advice on my thesis. I appreciate his willingness to work on a tight schedule and help me to graduate in a timely manner. His professionalism and courage are indeed exceptional and give me a strong ethical support in completing this research. My appreciation also goes to my co-supervisor Dr. Husaini Yaacob who was there by giving me support in terms of knowledge and the research flow. He guided me in terms of brainstorming new ideas, sharpening my knowledge in theories part and the proper way of conducting the research effectively. I would like to extend my appreciation to Soraya Othman Talismail and Patrick Low who dedicates her time for me despite their busy schedule. Besides information for my research, they have personally given me lots of ideas and guidance to improve my knowledge and skills in photography and their view towards Malaysia's artistes. Last but not the least, I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved family who was always be there to give me moral support and in financially as well. Not to forget my colleagues and friends who was very helpful whenever I'm facing any problem in completing my thesis. Without all of them, I wouldn't have completed this research successfully.

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ANALISA EMPIRICAL TERHADAP KARYA SENI DUA JURUGAMBAR PROFESSIONAL DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini berfokus kepada analisa empirical terhadap karya seni dua jurugambar-artis terbaik Malaysia, Soraya Yusof Talismail dan Patrick Low. Dalam bidang fotografi, terdapat beberapa jurugambar yang sangat ghairah telah menghasilkan imej-imej Malaysia yang mengagumkan tetapi kurang dihargai dalam dunia seni. (Subhadra Devan, 2013). Kaedah kualitatif digunakan untuk kajian ini kerana penyelidikan ini lebih mendalam dalam menganalisis karya seni fotografi berdasarkan teori yang telah dipilih. Diana Eftaiha (2010) menyatakan bahawa unsur utama yang menyumbang kepada karya fotografi yang berjaya adalah warna, corak, tekstur, garis dan bentuk.. Soraya Yusof Talismail telah memberi tumpuan lebih kepada potret dengan konsep “Diri Sendiri”. Soraya tidak hanya mengambil gambar potret para seniman, tetapi juga mewujudkan semula Malaysia di mana identiti, budaya, agama, keturunan, atau jantina adalah penting. Gambar-gambar beliau menampilkan A.Samad Said, Amron Omar, Aziz Sattar dan S.Shamsuddin, Ramli Ibrahim dan lain-lain. Potret Patrick Low lebih kepada konsep kerja kumpulan yang terdiri daripada para profesional. Ia melibatkan artis solek profesional terutama dalam potret bergaya untuk meningkatkan penampilan model, profesional model dan Patrick Low sebagai jurugambar profesional. Kedua-dua jurugambar mempunyai gaya mereka yang tersendiri dalam proses pengambilan gambar. Pada akhir penyelidikan, satu permulaan baru akan dijana di mana tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti unsur-unsur dan prinsip-prinsip reka bentuk dalam

fotografi potret terpilih, meneroka makna dalam fotografi potret terpilih dan menghasilkan garis panduan untuk jurugambar potret amatur.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARTWORKS FROM TWO SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHERS IN MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

The research focused on empirical analysis of the artworks from two selected finest artist-photographers, Soraya Yusof Talismail and Patrick Low. In the field of photography, very few passionate photographers who have produced marvellous images of Malaysia which were under-appreciated in the world of Art. (Subhadra Devan, 2013). Qualitative method was applied for this research since the research goes deeper in analysing the selected portrait photography. According to Diana Eftaiha (2010), the main key elements that contribute to a successful photography are color, pattern, texture, line, shape and form. Soraya Yusof Talismail has focused more into portraits with the concept of “Be Yourself”. She captured not just the portraits of creative Malaysian artists, but also reflecting Malaysia’s context in terms of ethnic identity, culture, religion and ancestry. Her portraits including A.Samad Said, Amron Omar, Aziz Sattar, S.Shamsuddin and Ramli Ibrahim and others. Patrick Low’s portraiture is more towards conceptual which is focusing on a team work. It involves a professional makeup artist especially in portrait stylish to enhance the model’s appearance, professional model and Patrick Low as a professional photographer. Both the selected photographers have their own styles in taking pictures. At the end of the research, a new beginning will be generated whereby the aim of this research is to identify elements and principles of design in the selected portrait photography, explore the meaning in the selected portrait photography and to produce a guideline for amateur portrait photographers.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The research focused on empirical analysis of the artworks from two selected photographers in Malaysia namely Soraya Yusof Talismail and Patrick Low. Artworks from Soraya Talismail features selected black and white portraits of Malaysian artistes from different fields which includes dance and choreography, literature, film, design, music, photography and visual arts. Meanwhile, artworks from Patrick Low are combination of professional make-up artist, professional model and Patrick Low as a professional photographer. Numbers of photography artworks are selected based on the photographer's interest.

According to Chris Lambeth (2012), portrait photography means the photographers are trying to express a story within a single image. Portrait photography is an also a part of conceptual art, which the photographers to convey the message in a very abstract way using random objects and props.

According to Sara Barnes (2017) taking a photograph has become second nature. Technology had developed over the years which gives opportunity for the photographers to record different kind of photography in a creative way. When elements and principles of design are absorbed into photography, the viewer will get an opportunity to understand the meaning behind the photographs. There are many possibilities based on how people look at the image. It may lead them to certain interesting ideas, memories, feelings and others.

The first chapter starts with a background of the study, research objectives and followed by the chapter's outline.

1.2 Background of the Study

A photograph was created when the process of creating the images happen. The issue here is why the artist creating an art? They should be a reason that inspired them to create an artwork. It might be personal or something related to the environment and society. Hence, the artist will automatically start to think out of their box. Making a photograph creating a solution to the work that an artist wanted to make, combining their ideas with knowledge, compositional elements and practical skills. According to Nur Khairudding (1999), art is an expression which related to a human's real-life experiences that an artist communicates through objects, events cultural aspects and other elements.

A single photograph can represent several senses of words as a proverb goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words". The elements to be highlighted in a photograph related to answer the for questions: Who? What? When? And Where (Shatford 1989:48). This is where Panofsky's theory comes in to fully understand a work of an art.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

A research problem is an area of a concern or a gap that exist which needs a further understanding and investigation. According to Anthony Mendoza Barlan (2017), beginner photographers are still lacking in taking good photographs using correct fundamental of photography.

He stated that:

“Photographers nowadays prefers fast track. There is not short cut when comes to learning process. The correct usage of props, lighting setup, selection of model and make-up artist, and the fundamental of elements of design are all very important to produce a good artwork.”

Jonathan (2013) stated that with the march of technology, the gap between professional and amateur photographer are still wide in the aspect of technicality and professionalism. With the rise of social media software’s like Facebook and Instagram, photographs become a symbol of communication via online. Due to this, photographs seem to be temporary just like text messages and Facebook status. The pictures, once said to be worth of thousand meaning have slowly lost its perception of artistic value.

According to Sarena Abdullah (2011), the contemporary arts and its relation to Malaysian identity is still less. Malaysia is well known for its cultural aspect. Art-student, especially international student who have not knowledge about Malaysian artists and also culture, society and region of Malaysia is also an issue that should be resolved.

Subhadra Devan (2013) stated that there have been a few passionate photographers who have produced marvelous images of Malaysian vignettes that are rather under-appreciated in the art world.

It seems that many photographers go through a certain cycle of mistakes throughout their entire journey.

Some of these mistakes can be identify by looking at their recent works. One of the examples when the photographers having problem with their gears and the technical part as well. The moment they don't have a proper knowledge with the gear, they have no idea to yield sharp photos or get the exposure right. Photography is not only about capturing the moments, but it's also about analyzing the pictures. Analyzing pictures is an essential aspect to the development of any photographer. This leads to identity the mistakes and that identification will leads one to improve their work in future.

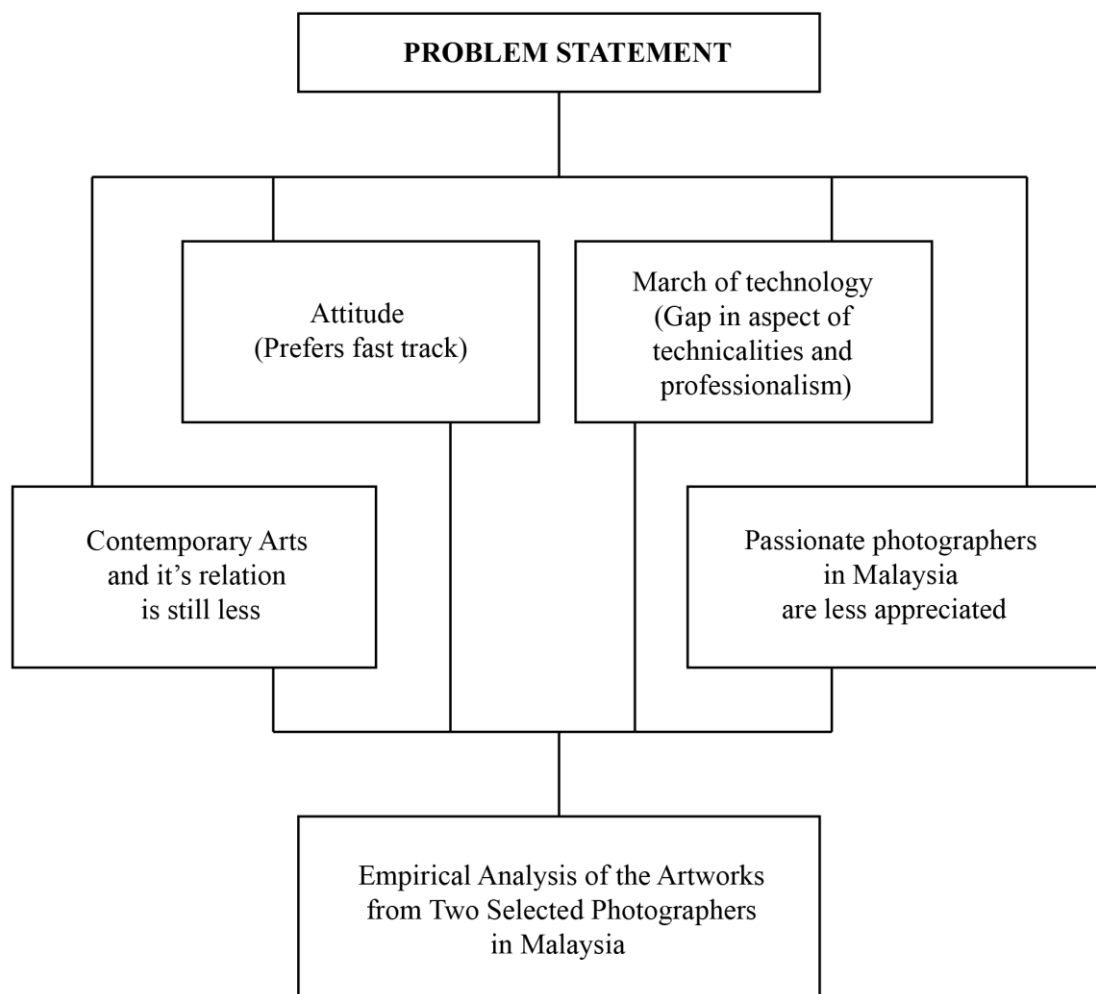


Table 1.1 Summary of Problem Statement

1.4 Aims of the study

Photography must include, ideas, thoughts and emotions in each picture must all be connected to the viewers. Photographers should realize that they couldn't rely on words alone to explain every single picture they took. Therefore, they must be able to convey their messages through the image itself.

Based on the problem statement, the main purpose of study is to identify the elements and principles of design in the selected portrait photography. Besides, the research has also been conducted to explore the meaning from the selected portrait photography. Through this, the aim is to produce guideline for amateur portrait photographers specifically in Malaysia.

Zuliantie Dzul (2015) quoted a Malay proverb, "melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya". The literal meaning here is to bend a bamboo, it should be started from the shoot itself. Basically, when a person wanted to develop a sense of appreciation, they must do it from the beginning.

By this research, it will generate new beginnings whereby the added knowledge through their artworks will trigger more Malaysians amateur photographers to conduct in-depth research in future regarding photography, inspire more collection of Malaysian artistes by appreciation they contribution towards nation by taking photographs of them using proper elements and principles of art.

1.5 Research Objectives

The research objective here is to analyze the selected photography artworks from Soraya Yusof Talismail and Patrick Low. In another word, this study attempts to understand the following major issues in their selected photography artworks from both internal and external evidences. The research objective for this research were:

- I. To identify elements and principles of design in the selected portrait photography.
- II. To explore the meaning in the selected portrait photography.
- III. To produce a guideline for amateur portrait photographers.

1.6 Research Questions

Research question is very important to stay focused throughout the overall research idea. This study will attempt to answer the listed research objectives:

- I. What is the aim in selecting portrait photography?
- II. What is the significance in selecting portrait photography?
- III. What is the purpose of this research?

1.7 Scope of Studies

Soraya's artwork mainly focusing on portraits of Malaysian artistes from different field. Patrick Low's portraits is an artwork produced by a combination of professional make-up artist, professional model and Patrick Low as a professional photographer. Both of them have produced a different theme.

Soraya's theme is about "Being Yourself" which is more towards casual shot, but Patrick Low's portraiture are more towards using latest technology with proper lighting setup and so on. Both this theme is very important for the upcoming amateur photographer to produce an artwork which have feelings, mood and also with proper usage of elements and principles of design.

1.8 Significance of Studies

This research focused on the importance of elements and principles of arts in photography and the ways of applying it in Malaysian context. Patrick Low have produced several International Award-Winning artworks by applying this technique with a professional team which consist of professional model and make-up artist. Among the awards he has won includes Wedding Photojournalist Association (WPJA) and also Former Malaysia Ambassador of MPA (Master Photographers Association). Besides, Patrick Low is also the First MPA Certified 3D Portraiture Master Photographer in the world. Soraya on the other hand was appointed as a personal photographer to Permaisuri Agong during that era, Tuanku Bainun in the year of 1989. Besides, she has organized few solo exhibitions both local and international level. Soraya's artwork is more towards casual concept focusing more about Malaysian artistes. Both of them have their own creativity in taking good photographs. These two elements used by both photographers are important to the upcoming amateur photographers whereby they can conduct more in-depth academic research regarding photography, and they can use this method with latest technology to produce more artworks in Malaysian context.

1.9 Limitation of Studies

Limitation of this research including

- I. Case study will be based on selected portrait photography from Soraya Yusof Talismail and Patrick Low.
- II. Limitation of collection because only six artworks are selected from Soraya and two artworks from Patrick Low. Numbers of artwork was selected by the photographers.

1.10 Operational Definitions

Portrait Photography - According to William (2017), portrait photography is taking a person or group in order to capture their personality using lighting, backgrounds and posing that suits the subject. Different type of approach should be played in order to capture the personality of the subject.

Artist - An artist is someone who creates art (William, 2011). They use different techniques to create art, for instance weaving, painting, glass blowing or sculpting. They work towards creating new ideas of making art.

Amateur Photographer – Alex (2013) stated that an amateur photographer is someone that takes photos for fun and passion. They enjoy the art of photography and appreciate the ability to preserve the moments.

Art - Art is about creating something creative by imagination (Lisa, 2018). It might be digital art, performance art, conceptual art, electronic art or environmental art.

Colour - According to Maryam (2016), colors are one of the most important aspect when comes to principles of arts. Every color used will create a different mood and deliver a specific story behind it.

Panofsky's Theory - According to Watson (2012), to understand the full structure of this theory, formal analysis together with cultural context is needed. Panofsky stated his three level of iconographic/iconological analysis. The First level is “pre-iconographic analysis” whereby to identify the existence of elements of arts in the particular image and state the formal analysis only. Iconographic analysis is the second level of relating the image with a character and lastly is “iconological analyses to decide the meaning of the artwork.

Compositions – Matt (2018) stated that composition is important in how the artist's work are viewed and experienced by the audience. The arrangements of the elements in the artwork will effect on how a viewer communicate with the artworks that have been created.

Shapes – (Gatto, Porter, & Selleck, 2011) stated that shapes are two-dimensional object which is created by lines. Shapes can be divided into two types which are geometric and organic. Geometric shapes are circles or squares while organic are irregular shapes.

Photography - Photography is not an art that stands on it own, but it has been significant in culture, which provides the future generations to witness through images. (Alex Moh, 2004)

Culture Heritage – Cultural heritage is all about legacy of passing down an identity which includes objects, places or any artistic expressions and values to another generation. (ICOMOS, 2002)

Observation - Marshall and Rossman (1989) defines observation as gathering data by watching people in their natural settings. It involves collecting data by looking and listening in order to understand the phenomenon.

Interviews - According to Oakley (1998), qualitative interview is not only about recording their data, but it provides a greater detail and depth information from the interviewee. Interviews can be categories into structured, semi-structured or in-depth interview. (Mason, 1994). For this research,

1.11 Organization and Dissertation

This research consists of total five (5) chapters. The first chapter explained in detail about the topic of research, problem statement together with the objectives of the research conducted. The second chapter revealed at different types of literature review that is relevant to this research. For instance, this chapter will discuss about Erwin Panofsky's theory and its details together with Soraya's bibliography. Chapter three will be on methodology whereby the researcher will discuss further about the methods used to complete this research and the relationship with the theory selected. Chapter four will discuss about the result obtained with a detailed analysis and finally chapter five will present the conclusion and recommendation for future research.

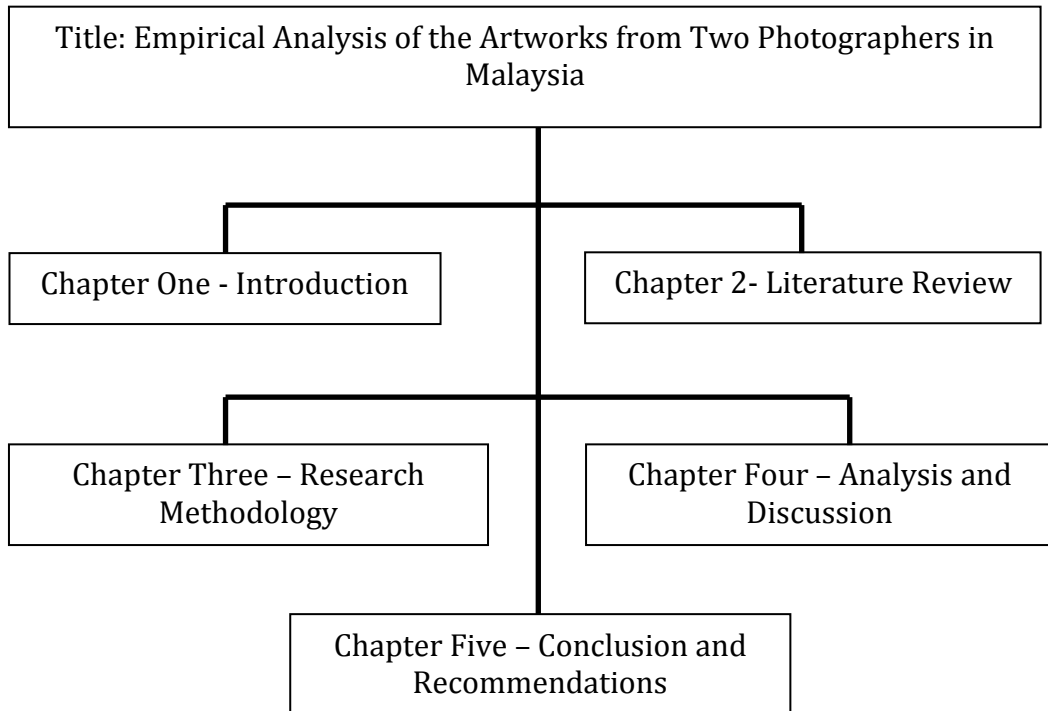


Table 1.2 Dissertation of the research

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Literature review will provide how the study will fill the “gap” that exists. Besides, the literature reviews also important to highlight the rationale of the research and to set a limitation or certain scope of the research. This chapter on literature review concerning the research topic that covers different areas related to the selected photographer’s artwork. The first section of this chapter focusing on the status of contemporary art in Malaysia. This followed by elaboration of photography history in Malaysia and elements and principles of art. Panofsky’s theory will also be reviewed in details.

2.2 The Birth of Modern Malaysian Art

Research shows that since the 18th century, Malaysia, then Malaya, had already been depicted by the European traveller’s ad Chinese traders. Few write-ups revealed that modern art in Malaysia started since 1920s with pioneers such as Yong Mun Sen, Abdullah Ariff, Lee Kah Yeow, Khaw Sia, tai Hooi Keat, and Kuo Ju Ping. They not only affected each other’s impressions but also were affected by British art given that Malaysia was colonized by Britain over that time (Redza Piyadasa, 1993).

After 1950s, Malaysia’s contemporary art movement shows a rise with the Chinese traders and other communities came or stayed frequently in Malaysia.

During that period of time, Malaysia was facing substantial changes and growth in the scene of the social and political. After the independence in 1957, art

become an important element in delivering expression and Malaysia artists could freely produce their works based on the subject of interest.

Redza Piyadasa (1993) stated that Malaysia modern art having a steady growth over the years and improve immature visions for the future. The development of modern Malaysia art can be identified by associations and groups that focused on the artist's artwork, the motif of their artworks and the usage of style and iconography.

Syed Ahmad Jamal (1982) who was the director of National Art Gallery stated that one of the responsibilities of artist is to sharpen sensitivity the world around and within the society. The key development of the Malaysian contemporary art was dues to public-related issues, for instance as the New Economic Policy as well as the Congress National Culture in 1971, which began to directly affect thinking in the field of art. For Malay artists, an emphasis on ethnic consciousness made them seek for revealing apparent origin and their cultural heritage. As a result, in the end 1970s and early 1980s, the artist's propensity towards portraying religious issues becomes greater (Redza Piyadasa, 2000).

Time period of 90s can be considered as a period of growth for Malaysia art. This development was unsurprising since such a communal admiration was due to the economic condition of the country.

By having look at other countries, including developed ones, it can be seen that there are established circles of art collectors and art lovers that belong to different socio-economic states. In general, it can be implied that a dynamic

economy is susceptible to create a platform for the invariable growth of art industry in Malaysia. Soon (2013) quotes that:

“A Malaysian contemporary art suggests something characteristically unique, whether on stylistic or thematic grounds, to this nation, constituting a practice that is in essence also deeply connected to its special historical trajectory” (p.319)

2.3 Photography History in Malaysia

The earlier existence of photography was around 1840s. During that particular time, photography was used for expedition, to collect information and provides visual images or records. Different trade routes by sea and land that formed together with Kuala Lumpur which is the core makes its status as a center for economic and political agenda. C.V.Mennecken & Co. have created an advertisement in the year of 1845 regarding the sale of daguerreotype equipment which proved the growing of photography industry. The history of photography development in Malaya was actually developed further with the existence of photography studio. Among the famous destinations for European born professional photographers are Penang and Singapore.

Ming Chua (2009) stated that photography had been in Malaysia as early as the 1860s.

In fact, it was as early as 1867 when ten panoramic views were exhibited at Paris International Photographic Exhibition. That includes the street scenes and port views of Penang which was photographed from a tower in Light Street. Two westerners set up the earliest photographic studio by the name of K.Feiberg and

E.Ferman Sacthler along Beach Street, Penang in 1864. In around 1874, photographer John Thomson had already spent several years around Asia taking images before moving to Singapore in 1864, where he took photographs of Chinese laborers and street people, G.R.Lambert (of German origins), who started operating from Singapore in the 1880s, had opened a portrait studio at 39, Sultan Street, Kuala Lumpur in 1896. He also had the most comprehensive photographic documentation of Malays rulers and Malays scenes of that period.



Figure 2.1 “The Chuan Chow Company”, ca.1990.

Based on figure 2.1, this image was taken for ethnographic documentation. From this image, the Chinese immigrant family was photographed with a dirty white plain background. They dressed simply in a plain cotton without any decorative items on it.

Amateur photography in Malaya flourished by 1897 when Leonard Wray (who joined the Perak Public Works Department in 1891) established the first Perak Amateur Photographic Society. Similarly, the Singapore Photographic Society was founded in 1887. After the World War II, the increased popularity of photography

led to the founding of salon photographic groups. The local press had significantly helped in nurturing the amateurs from the late 90s – by extending the publicity with fully illustrated newspaper pages, featuring works from the masters and introducing the latest trend and news on photography especially when it comes to international awards. The birth of the Salon school played an important role in the development of Malaysian and Asian photography. Salon photography in Malaya gained momentum after the 1950s. Within the country's Salon n fraternity, there was a focus laid upon capturing beauty and atmosphere.

With historical events rapidly unfolding, many photojournalists were engaged in government departments for instance the information and public services as well as the press to educate and record these events. Newspapers such as Malay Mail, Straits Echo and Standard Tiger relied heavily on photographs to substantiate their new stories. Among them were Ng Weng Hong, Hong Weng Hin, Ng En Fook, Wong Kwai Weng, Wong Swee Lin and Yong Poh Seong.

In 1962, colour photography was available in Malaysia and it was only in the late 1960s, that color negatives became widely available. Polaroid photography became popular by 1970.

During that period of time, there were several types of multilayer emulsion film available and the most common categories were color positive film and color negative film. The most popular processes were those offered by Kodak, Agfa and Polaroid.

In 1976, “Seni Foto” became the first locally published photography magazine. Reduan Ahmah (Pak Wan) is the founding editor who contributed immensely to the advancement of photographic idea. Other publications by him include Sebelum Klip in 1980, Panduan Fotografi in 1983, Fotografi dan Teknik in 1985, Kamus Fotografi in 1994. On a more global level, the November 1974 issue of the Newsweek magazine was centered on photography. Therefore, benchmarking the importance of photography as an artistic form and historical documentation. The attention revealed the importance of education and publicity in a media that is continually experiencing new technical and conceptual changes.

Culturally, the beginning of this period (Later half of the 1980s) saw the blossoming of photography exhibitions and sponsored competitions across the country. Institutions and corporations for instance ASEAN and Shell Petroleum worked together to closer ties amongst artists in the region. Besides, many photographers with overseas fine art training like Chang Win Wun (Harrow School of Photography), Ken Yap (Salisbury College of Arts), Adamn Siow (Brooks Institute of Photography), David Low Weng Seng (New England School of photography) returned home. They activated a new direction of thought in Malaysian photography.

Notable photographers of this period include Arthur Teng, Belinda Siew, Gillian Tan, S.C.Shekar, Nirmala Karuppiah, amongst others. Soraya Yusof Talismail is one of the artists included in this era.

With the advent of fascinating inventions and advancements such as cyberspace, the Internet and virtual reality, the photographic medium has been affected. From pioneering artists such as Ismail Zain to today's younger contemporary artists, photography is constantly evolving.

2.4 Pioneers of Malaysia Art Photograph

2.4.1 The Late HRH Tuanku Ismail Nasuriddin Shah (1907-1979)

Being one of the prominent Salon photographers, he would spend his time photographing people and the landscapes of his home state of Terengganu. A talented photographer, he was also an accomplished printer by owning his own private darkroom, which was very well equipped and rivalled even the professional laboratories available at that time. He was installed immediately after World War II as the Sultan of Terengganu. He was also elevated to the throne as the fourth Yang Di-Pertuan Agong in 1965 to 1970. Today the entire collection of works is in the care of his grandson, Raja Mohd. Zainul Isan Shah, the owner of Elm Quay Fine Arts Gallery in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur.

2.4.2 The Late Dato Loke Wan Tho (1915-1964)

He was a man with diverse interests – besides holding several public posts; he was the Chairman of the Malaysian Airways, an active social and welfare worker, and even a director of the National Art Gallery during the 1960s.

In 1957, he published his first book on birds entitled “A Company of Birds”. Combined with his zoological interest in birds and his patience and talent with his camera, it is not a surprise that he won recognition as one of the finest bird photographers in the world during his time.

2.4.3 The Late Wong Kee Foo (1916-1998)

Wong Kee Foo, more popularly known as K.F.Wong, born into a family of 8 children in the Xing Hua Chinese settlement in Sibu, he was acknowledged as the “Father of Sarawak Photography”. His images of people and places in South East Asian in the mid 1940s are well known; in particular the photographs of the natives of Borneo that were published in the Strait Times in 1946. With a educational background in fine art from the Art Academy of Shanghai, China, he started his career in 1934 with a humble Kodak box camera that cost \$2.70. Later, he founded the Sarawak Photographic Society in the year 1954 and pioneered international participation and recognition amongst Sarawak photographers. In 1971, he has organised his solo photography exhibition in Samat Art Gallery at Wisma Loke entitled “K.W.Wong in Malaysia”.

2.4.4 Koh Eng Tong

Koh Eng Tong is the only living member from the group of four pioneers. He was one of the pioneers of view cameras in the country.

Having set up his own studio after a year as a chief photographer with the Straits Time in 1953, he specialized in portrait and documentary photography. A keen sportsman, Koh’s participation in the VII Olympics gave him the prime opportunity to take what is considered arguably his most famous picture – the black

and white photograph of Australian Ron Clarke carrying the Olympic torch at the opening ceremony of the 1956 Melbourne Games. Besides, he had photographed the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia extensively and now, had donated many of his photographs to the National archive.

The significance of these pioneer's works was more than mere record of social reality; these photographers strive to heighten the aesthetic qualities of their medium. They spent countless hours and efforts in mastering the essential technical proficiency, the rightness of in-camera view finding or framing, exploring vantage points, experimenting with contrast and compositions, textures and form and investigate in depth the nature of subject matter. The four photographers were also closely connected to the development of the salon school photography; having participated actively in the local and international photographic circuit.

2.5 Post - photography

In 1993, Liew Kung Yu and Soraya Yusof Talismail caused a ripple in the photographic community when their submissions for Dokumentasi Malaysia, a large-scale photo competition organised by the NAG, were rejected because their works could not be classified within the categories allocated. This incident prompted the judges, who included Ismail Hashim and Eric Peric, to recommend a category specially for experimental photography for future contests.

Liew Kung Fu started experimenting with photography in 1992, when he took up a non-graduate course in University Science Malaysia, Penang. Here, he becomes under the observation of Canadian photographer Fern Helfand and artist-critic Ray Langenbach. According to Langenbach (2009), the themes that Liew

produced had dealt with since the 1990s include “representations of perceived threats to Chinese cultural identity; threats to the traditional and modern Malaysian city; iconic representation of political leaders. A significant part of Liew’s Penang work revolves around the destruction of colonial shophouses in Georgetown to make way for the construction of Komtar Tower. For the colourful and camped-up collages that have become a feature of his work, Liew would take multiple shots of the landscape and collage them together to recreate the scene. Liew Kung Fu (2009) stated that:

“I’m putting my work in a different territory. How do I speak to my audience? I need to look at their sense of aesthetics, so that they can enter my work”.

Best known for her black and white portrait of Malaysian artists in *Imaging Self* (1993-2008), Soraya Yusof Talismail first studied photography at Institute Technology MARA during the late 80s. She found herself spending a lot of time in the darkroom, experimenting with the printing process and discovering herself.

Before Yee, Ismail Zain placed imagery taken from mass media and other cultural sources on his tiny Macintosh screen to create the ground-breaking *Digital Collage* series (1984-1988) (Redza Piyadasa, 1995). In *Sulu Stories* (2005), Yee travelled as a Sabahan in order to find her place in Sulu.

Affected by colonisation and globalisation since the 15th century and silent from the world for the last 40 years, the region serves as a metaphor for the fluidity of the Southeast Asian experience. She learnt about the myths, histories and memories from the region. From the record, she gets to know about the myths, histories and memories from the region. Buying images from these institutions, she

would Photoshop them onto her photographs of the Sulu Sea to tease out the “mood and nature” of the place. A published compendium of Yee’s work from 1993, there is a glossary at the end, which explains the historical and cultural details that appear in her Photoshop imageries. Her work has always required the focus of her text to bring out the hidden message from the artwork.

Besides, Wong Hoy Cheong (2010), a multidisciplinary artist that:

“Photography is not realistic. No medium has been able to reproduce reality. What photography does is that it allows you to steal a moment and create a notion of reality”.

2.6 Getting Over – The Gear of the Snapshot

In Malaysia, there has been a fear of the snapshot shared, ironically enough, by both the contemporary art community and the Salon photographers. Among the contemporary art community, there seems to be the assumption that conceptual artists who manipulate their work on Photoshop or set up photo shoots for their images are better than “straight” photographers who just “snap” on the spot, since they add-on more layers to create meanings for their work”.

Working from a different path, Salon photographers, in their Pictorialist pursuit of aesthetics, also have very little use for “snapshot” photography. They rely nowadays on Photoshop to enhance their photographs even though they shoot off the street.

In a 2010 group show at 2902 Gallery in Singapore, Minstreal Kuik presented a series of “snapshots’ featuring her left-hand holding objects that she had found, collected or made, photographed against the KL skyline. Exhibition co-curator Pang Khee Teik (2012) stated that:

“Without her hand, the image could be the worst, but she overcome it with the existence of photoshop which can remove any trances. She let her hand into the frame, which gives her a mark, retrieved the view. She challenges the form itself together with our expectations.”

Eiffel Chong also shoots all his personal work with medium or large-format cameras. His work is often an “honest” reflection of how he perceives the world. Eiffel Chong (2007) stated that:

“I prefers straight lines and I enjoy seeing things in order, even though they may actually be imperfect.”

Nostalgia (2007-2011) features a set of images took mainly in Kuala Lumpur with an old Yashica Mat – 124G. The lens has fogged but the focusing still works.

Tan does C41 processing for his slides and negatives that results in imperfect photographs. The image development is crucial since it destroys the “originality” of his images, making them hyper real. The work registers how he views, feels and thinks of his surroundings.

Bernice Chauly having shot photographic projects documenting the plight of refugees in Malaysia, and the country's dying traditional art forms. He decided to look inwards and tell her personal story with *in:sights:out* (2006). Frames broadly by the theme of love, she reflects her Chinese-Punjabi ancestry, her cross-cultural marriage, emotional failures and her love towards her children in what us perhaps the most introspective photographic work made by a Malaysian. The work generates her interests in photography and poetry in which combination of images and text. The photographs were shot with a manual camera under natural light, using her possessions at home and together with her personal memories. Each black and white image was then printed and attached to a piece of paper. One of her poems based on *Anatomy of a Marriage*, Chauly expressed:

How we prospered under the light

Shadows fillings in the spaces

Spilling forth in the spaces

Into that place where love once was

Between sheets

Between breaths

Between skins

That met in secret

Even though using different medium in expressing their views, these straight photographers are similar to those practitioners highlighted earlier, who have left their identity on Malaysia photography because of their interest to go against the grain, staying true to their practice without succumbing to the tastes of other photographers.