



An Element of Culture on Printmaking Artworks

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Abstract

This paper examines the elements of culture in printmaking artworks. The objective of this study will analyse artworks that will show the stimuli of culture in artworks. Therefore, as to enhance this study, selected artworks were identified, analysed and determine their formulation of artworks. The process of categorization was based on the culture elements through the observation of the artwork. The outcome of this study showed that the artworks significantly illustrates how an artist appreciates the cultural aspects through the printmaking artworks. Most artworks raised the aesthetic appreciation for this country and shared the uniqueness of Malaysia's culture into artwork.

Keywords: Artworks, Culture, Printmaking, Malaysia

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1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, the reflection of the culture in artwork makes meaningful, and it has adapted towards various approaches either in painting, sculpture or another medium that the artist explored (Yahya et al., 2016; Sharan & Legino, 2018). Therefore, it is an initiative where the artist introduced culture as their inspiration for artwork creation. The artist believes that culture is a way of life that has been developed and shared in any community, and later it will be passed to other generations (Lowe, 2000; Philip, 2020). Culture is made up of many elements, including religious and political systems, customs, languages, tools, clothing, buildings, and artwork. Culture is what shapes our identity and represents who we are, and at the same time, every development will interweave together with culture (Sparks, 2020). Culture is both an enabler and a pathway to the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Culture does not exist on the sidelines of society; neither is it independent of it. It is an organic part of the community and interacts with it. On the other hand, the term of culture always occurs in an ordinary daily conversation, we often think of society as the same to the "higher things of the mind" like art, music and literature. The concept of culture includes such activities, but also far more. Culture can be conceptually distinguished from society, but it has very close connections between these notions (Haghi and Zabihi, 2012). As stated by them, they said that culture also refers to lifestyle, habits, customs and together with the stuff they produced. Culture itself cannot exist without society, and no community can be without culture.

On the other hand, the Malay Pantun (Malay poetic form) reminded us in how the traditional custom needs to be practised and sustained into the living culture as explained "*yang lama dikekak, yang baharu didukung, tak lekang dek panas*", which means the traditional practice will always be maintained, while the modern way of life will be embraced (Said, 2015; Bibi et al., 2019). So, this kind of phenomena, of course, the artist had made an initiative to manifest the idea through] creative artwork. Therefore, the subject matter from the culture elements has been used as an inspiration towards artworks. Also, the culture elements have been highly emphasised due to the National Culture Congress in 1971, which influenced the motivation and even the spirit of the artist (Mahamood, 2007; Yahya et al., 2015). In the era of post-independence, artists are searching for the direction towards artmaking. The importance of these factors

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is undeniable in influencing the paradigm shift in their perceptions of their meaning, their nature and function from the western modernist ethos to something more suited towards traditional norms and values (Basaree et al., 2015).

Cultural elements such as traditional and indigenous art, myths and legends, cosmology, spiritual values and regional history were once seen as light and have become a subject matter of their artwork (Bongsu & Legino, 2018). Three themes can be recognized through the artist as the first source of inspiration, whereby they handled the impact of modernism towards tradition. The second feature is on how the subject of study delivered the spiritualistic and metaphysic in the essence of Malay traditions. Finally, the ideas usually were related to the issues on culture and tradition; the mythos and legends have become the focus in their artworks making (Legino et al., 2016). Even the study in visual art through the anthropology platform was called as considering art as an aspect of culture. Thus, when taking into consideration many things, and when someone needs to know who made the art? Where has the art been made? What art is it for? The use and the function, and what does it mean to the person that uses it. Therefore all this also refers to the cultural context (Hatcher, 1999). In original visual artwork formulation, it has been a way to communicate or relate with beliefs, and express the ideas about human experiences, throughout all stages of civilization in any region in the world. All those possible sources, were essential, in order to understand how the other communities have lived and what they have valued, where the works of art have given critical insights through past time and also through the existing cultures.

In Malaysia, printmaking is not a different branch in fine art disciplines, like printmaking, there are four basic printmaking techniques include relief print, intaglio, lithography and serigraphy, which still explored and practised among artists in any country. Every artists or printmaker is not only familiarized with particular printmaking methods, but they also explore the other variations techniques such as monotype and collagraph (Benson, 1995). The integration with technology is also significant, few artists in Malaysia is also explored and used digital print, which utilized as a primary medium, contributed as a mix media approach and alternative printmaking. Not only taking opportunities with digital, the combination medium like Abidin et al., (2013) highlighted was about the aid of electronic exploration that strengthens the artwork, and foremost, the outcome of the artwork shows significant ideation, which brought attention to audiences. Thus, the impression of the globalization process over the context is always linked with the information age. The printmaking speciality in this country was related to how the world of visual art development and also show the relationship of culture with art. Printing has the privilege of producing some of the same pieces called editions. Prints are also popular in many ways as the price is not as high as other artwork. It is simple and allows it to be a collection of people. Nowadays, the printing industry that combines sophisticated techniques through computer software support and high-quality graphics has succeeded in making it a unique art drain. The print art in Malaysia continues to grow with the creation of masterpieces for printmaker such as RedzaPiyadasa, Juhari Said, Ismail Zain and Ponirin Amin.

2.0 Methodology

This research is conducted using selected artworks, whereby the data was gathered via text and visual data analysis. The study is enhanced with the appreciations of printmaking artworks through the chosen artist, especially one that uses the cultural themes as inspirations in the artworks making. Most of the images will be recorded from photos and artworks that use culture as being an inspiration in artworks making. The printmaking artworks selected were categorized to determine how the artwork was adapted culturally as a theme in the artworks. The analysis contributed to helping the researcher to examine the elements of culture in printmaking artworks. The researcher will be able to analyse data, and this methodology will help the researcher to give insights to his research positively. Indeed, the method used will help the researcher to examine the elements of culture on printmaking artworks especially one that will show emphasis on printmaking and indirectly, exposes the printmaking field more towards the artist to explore in artworks making and studies. Besides, this study will prove the audience on how culture can be preserved even it is in the shape of art.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The selected artworks for this paper, RedzaPiyadasa has been chosen to analyse the artworks due to its related artworks culturally. As an early modern visual artist in Malaysia, his works are seen as stressing the integration issues among Malaysians, thus honouring the formation of the values of the east and traditions in the artwork (Piyadasa, 1993). This work illustrates two women in the *baju kurung* and *kebarung* of 1909 (traditional Malay dress). This traditional outfit is entirely worn with accessories such as *cucuksanggul* (traditional Malay hairpin), brooches and jewellery while introducing the cultural influences of local cultural privileges. Redza's knowledge of Malay culture can be seen in traditional Malay clothing and accessories used by both women. The emotions and expressions of the two-woman show the hidden meaning behind their reaction. There is a woman who sits full of decency, while another stands alongside her partner showing the close friendship between these two women. The artwork of Hajj Family in 1990 showed the character of Islam and the Malay culture that describes the family members who practice and follow Islamic religion. Every aspect shows different meaning and style through the costumes and the position of each one that reflected Islam as one of the elements in cultures. In his writings and his artworks, Redza Piyadasa examined the context of art, the reorganization of traditions and the value of art (Sabapathy and Piyadasa, 1983). Indeed, the artworks remind us about the diverse cultures of Malaysia, about migration, cultural assimilation, tradition and heritage, political history and so on. Among his works are "Two Women" in 1982, "The Haji Family" in 1990, "The Baba Family" in 1986, and the "Seated Malay Girl" 1991. Most of the works by RedzaPiyadasa is based on mixed media and collages presented in photographs with images facing upfront. Photos have become one of the ways on how events were recorded and by looking through RedzaPiyadasa's artworks, it makes the researcher think on how the people in the artworks are seated and how the situation looked alike like all times when they were taking the photographs. Mostly the Redza Piyadasa artworks the position people of people themselves that are facing in front as the pictures were being made. The early modern visual artist in Malaysia is seen as stressing the integration

issues among the Malays, appreciating the formation of the values of Asian and traditions in the artwork. In this context, for example, his work "Two Malay Women", produced in 1982 was categorized as one of the works in the National Art Gallery. The theme used in his show was based on women in the traditional Malay costume fashion in 1909.

4.0 Conclusion

To sum up, the printmaking field still needs to be explored than the other fine art discipline such as painting and sculpture neither from exploring studies and approach in artworks making. This study contributes to art, especially one that focuses on printmaking and indirectly, has to be exposed towards the printmaking field and more towards the artist to explore the artworks and studies. This study proved how culture could be preserved even if it was in the shape of art. Cultural elements such as traditional and indigenous art, myths and legends, cosmology, spiritual values and regional history that were once seen as light have become a matter of the Malaysian's artist work after the National Culture Congress and Islamization. The artist inspiration showed how the artwork was developed from the tradition and modernism. Besides, many artists have adapted and used culture as their ideas and context in the making of artworks. With this, the appreciation of culture through the artworks can make the artist feel deeply appreciated in the particular circumstance of artworks, which relates to traditions and indirectly becomes the source of inspiration and appreciation to the national identity.

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