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Assessment of Objectivity Characteristics in Visual Art Value

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Abstract

The work of art is considered a relic of history. Art also serves as a documentation of history. It contains meaning, which is intrinsic and extrinsic at the same time. The value of art is subjective, depending on the inclination of each connoisseur's taste. The value is the essence, the fundamental principle, which can eventually become the normative basis. This paper discusses the objectivity characteristic of visual art value based on a survey done with 407 participants. The outcomes highly help the audience/public in appreciating any visual arts.

Keywords: objectivity, characteristics, visual art, value.

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1.0 Introduction

Art is defined as a work-related to the sense of the human soul that fits his natural disposition or fitrah (Al-Ghazali, 1997). Al-Farabi (1967) claimed that art is an invention and the design of beauty. Similarly, Quraish Shihab (2000) defined art as a work related to the sense of the human soul that fits his natural disposition or is commonly written as fitrah. Art is equal in beauty and subjective in nature. Art can be foreseen, heard, and touched by refined souls but may not be expressible by words and language. It isn't easy to define art accurately, and it is even more challenging to explain the concept of particular beauty and loveliness.

Even though Read (1959) defines art as an attempt to create pleasant forms, the acceptable form shall be construed as a form that designs beautifully. Art is an essential element in society; hence, without art, a particular community's development can be considered incomplete, including human evolution. In 1971, the first National Cultural Congress was set up to encourage artists to project a sense of internal pride and identity in their oeuvre.

The national cultural policy developed by the Malaysian Government can unite the Malaysian people, especially from a cultural aspect. Mohamad Ali Abdul Rahman (2002) noted that the National Cultural Congress, held from 16 to 20 August 1971, had started a new phase in Malaysian society. In addition, Mulyadi Mahamood (2002), Islamic art in Malaysia was initiated by two critical factors. The first factor was the National Cultural Congress that the National Cultural Policy set (Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan) in 1971, and the second factor was the global Islamic revival.

Every human being has a different level of understanding depending on the relativity of knowledge they possess. The story of intelligence in learning depends on the cultural background and level involved in cognition. Undeniably, the most significant challenge faced by researchers in art history is handling the research materials, which requires thorough attention in selecting, filtering, and adjusting the theoretical framework.

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2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Art

Art by Suzanne K. Langer is a symbolic form of human feeling who faces a transformation from a universal experience and not just from a specific occasion.

In art-making, subject, form, and content are the ingredients in producing a work of art with subjects concerning persons, objects, or themes. A subject matter also refers to an express agreement of the art elements. The form is commonly understood as the use of elements in constructing an artwork. Meanwhile, the contents can be referred to as a statement, expression or mood read into an artwork's emotional or intellectual message. It also refers to the sensory, subjective, psychological, or emotional properties felt in a piece of art.

In transforming the experience or feelings, an artist selects or uses the material to be processed into the medium. The use of different material mediums and layers has developed a variety of disciplines or branches in the art field. As expressed by Suzanna K. Langer below:

The interrelation among all the art, painting, sculpture and architecture, music, poetry, fiction, dance, film, and any other you may admit has become a venerable old topic in aesthetics. It has lately become acceptable again to assert that all the arts are just one 'Art' with a capital A; that the apparent differences between painting and poetry, for instance, are superficial due only to the difference in their materials. One artist paints with pigments. The other with words or one speaks in rhyme, and one in images and so forth.

In understanding an artwork, we have to realize the existence of two significant aspects: "formalistic" and "iconography," or in other words, "form" and "content." The characteristics of the formalistic aspect include elements like colour, tone, lines, shapes, forms, levels, space, rhythms, movements, and so on. The capability in analyzing these characteristics of formalistic aspects will make us look closer to the question of iconography in the particular artwork. Usually, iconography involves questions regarding literature, sociology, psychology, history, belief, and others.

Even though Read (1959) defines art as an attempt to create pleasant forms, the enjoyable form shall be construed as a form that designs beautifully. Art is an essential element in society; hence, without art, a particular community's development can be considered incomplete, including human evolution. This would be magnified if the issue was viewed in the Islamic context. As for Islam, the arts correlate with human reason development because Islam is a way of life emphasizing beauty and artistry.

While the concept of visual art, as mentioned by Tolstoy (1924), taken from Beardsley, art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously using external signs, hands-on to other feelings has lived through and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them.

2.1 Value

Axiology means a theory of value relating to the use of gained knowledge. According to Bramel in Amsal and Bakhtiar (2004), axiology is divided into three categories. The first is moral conduct, which is the act of morality that produces ethics. Second, aesthetic expression, which is beautifulness in expression, and third, socio-political life produces philosophy in socio-political.

According to Md. Nasir (2013), axiology is a philosophical branch that refers to the value of good and bad, right or wrong, beautiful and ugly. Ethics is one branch of axiology that emphasizes practical and relevant matters that one should do. Ethics also focuses on the quality of moral and human attitudes of individuals, society, and life.

Louis O. Kattsoff (1996) states that knowledge of axiology is a fact of research, which is generally viewed from the standpoint of philosophy. Many branches of knowledge are concerned with the problems of value, such as epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Epistemology is concerned with the problem of truth, ethics is concerned with issues related to morality, and aesthetics is concerned with the problem of beauty.

Meanwhile, Drs. Uyoh Sadulloh (2007) mentioned several characteristics associated with the theory of value, which is objective or subjective. The objective is if it does not depend on the subject or consciously assessment. Still, if the value is a subjective existence, meaning and authenticity depend on the subject's reaction to the evaluation, whether it is psychological or physical. While the absolute value of change is said to be a definitive or eternal value, it will occur over time when value is happening now or has happened since the past. It will happen to anyone regardless of race or social class.

According to Tefko Saracevic, and Paul. B. Kantor (1997), the theory of value, or axiology, is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of value and valuation. Philosophers consider value as the worth of something and the process of valuation as an estimate, appraisal, or measure of its cost. In their works, it is what seems to be an undefined primitive term. They consider values related to, but not synonymous with, "good," "desirable," or "worthwhile," which can be positive or negative.

Value can be defined as a 'character height' (of thought, religion, and other social life). According to Abdul Rahman (2005), the theory of the study of the use of which is either valued or not valued, important or unimportant, and good or bad, and every human has their value system in determining the merits of something, which is based on a measure (yardstick) and their respective interests. Furthermore, there are two aspects of value: material and spiritual.

Abdul Rahim Abdul Rashid mentioned Jules Henry. (1993) states that the value of being is seen as 'something that is considered to be good as loving, kind, to a sense of faith, joy, honesty, politeness, quietness, and simplicity. While Nik Hassan Basri Nik Ab. Kadir (2007) said that value is the act, conduct or action, quality, degree, class, or it should be good examples and role models.

Values are subjective when receiving the existence and the truth of the feeling or attitudes of a subject. They consider subjective value, calculating that value statement shows feelings or emotions like it or not. Subjective views assume that the value does not depend on the object but is contained in the subject, and there is no value outside of the entity's subject.

2.3 Characteristic Assessments

The assessment should also be regarded as a combination of science and art in estimating the value of interest which is contained in a property for a specific purpose and at the appointed time and taking into account all the characteristics that exist on the property, including the types of investments that are on the market. Meanwhile, the assessors are the individual who did the assessment activities by their skills and professionalism. They become a member of the Appraisers Association, a profession recognized by the Government and other relevant skills standards with the assessment activities.

The value should be interpreted as meaning or sense (worth) on something (goods or objects). It means it will have value to someone that, if anything, it gives purpose or meaning to someone. To provide value (rate) might be construed as considering activities to connect something with something else and then making a decision, or in other words, giving value to something.

Objective or subjective value highly depends on the results emerging from the view of philosophy. As for the definition of metaphysical value, for example, it is how it values the relationship with reality. In objectivism, the logical value is the rational essences of substances, independent of their being known, yet not the existential status of the action. And the metaphysical objectivism, values or norm, or ideals are an integral objective and active constituent of the metaphysical realm.

In the context of art appreciation, art is often seen as a very subjective relationship. The products of art are termed an object. Meanwhile, art lovers are termed as the subject. Art appraisal in due consideration and decision, the subject as always the subjective nature lovers, since it often departs from personal experience. Observing, enjoying, and even interpreting the art lovers, such as knowingly or unknowingly, always brings the perspective of personal experience.

Wan Abdul Kadir (2000) explained that the value system provides a framework to analyze the norms of society, excellence, confidence, and behaviour. Value has become a measure and a principle in determining the good or bad and pretty or ugly behaviour based on prevalence or commonness in a society. In addition, S.M. Zakir, in his writing titled Alam Budaya Melayu, explained that values from the Malay perspective refer to the Malay world's view and philosophy, which encompass social values (ethos), and emotional values (pathos), and the logical values (logos).

Since Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural nation, its constancy and social cohesion depend on harmony, reason, and tolerance among all members of all communities. Without these elements, a word like 'harmony' is impossible to possess. A social community needs to respect other social gatherings. Hence an impressive multiracial and multicultural country still exists on this planet.

3.0 Methodology

The quantitative study on 407 respondents was conducted using an online survey (closed-ended) within three months. The main survey questionnaire was divided into four sections, Section A, Section B, Section C, and Section D. However, the purpose of this paper is only about the respondents' opinions on art (Section D). The questions include: which art medium do they like most; when they look at the artwork, what do they like to see; which is or is more important in the production or making artwork.

4.0 Findings

Section D (Questionnaires) includes four questions. The first question is, which medium of art do you like most? The second question, look at the artwork; what do you like to see? The third question is, which is more important, the production or making artwork, and the last question is, do you understand what the artist is trying to express or the meaning of the artwork?

The following Figure 4.1 explains the medium of art the participant likes most.

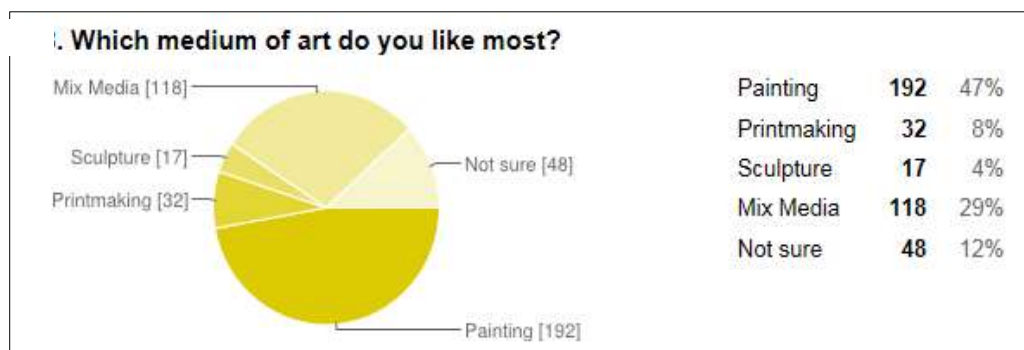


Figure 4.1: Frequency of respondents based on the medium of art they like most.

By referring to what the participant most liked to see on the artwork, the survey revealed that painting scored 47% (192) as the medium of art the respondents liked most, followed by mixed media 29% (118). Also, 12% (48) were unsure which medium they liked most. Printmaking was 8% (32) and only 4% (17) of the respondents picked sculpture as the medium of art they wanted most.

Meanwhile, Figure 4.2 explains the type of artwork they choose to see.

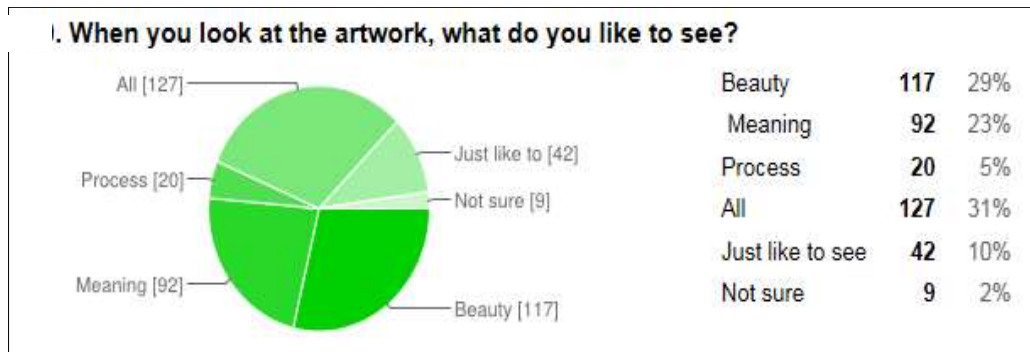


Figure 4.2: Frequency of respondents based on what they like to see in an artwork.

This shows that 31% (127) of the respondents like to see all the elements of an artwork. However, 29% (117) like to see beauty, 23% (92) like to see the meaning, 10% (42) like to see the artwork, and only 2% (9) of the respondents were not sure of what they like to see at the artwork. This is a clear cut: people preferred to see the blending of an artwork's beauty, meaning, and process.

Figure 4.3 explains the importance of the production or making of the artwork.

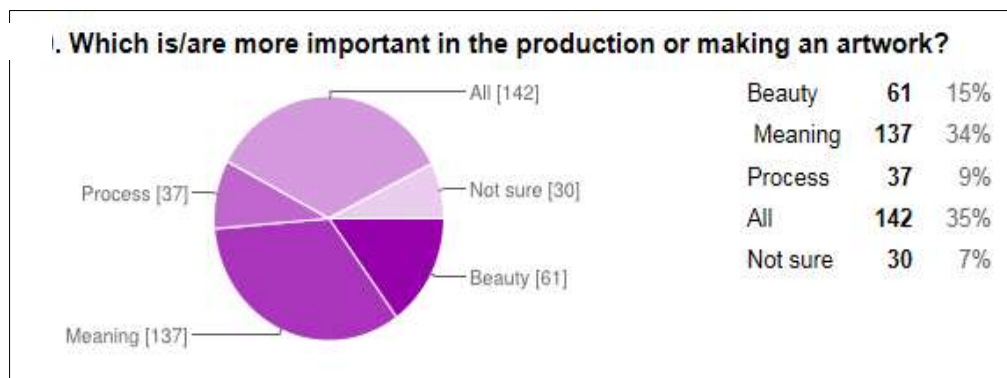


Figure 4.3: Frequency of respondents based on the important element in the production of an artwork.

The Figure shows that most of the participants choose all the elements, which is a total of 35% (142), inclusive of beauty, meaning, and process, that were important in the production or making of the artwork. In comparison, 34% (137) said that meaning is essential, followed by beauty by 15% (61) and the process by 9% (37). Only 7% (30) were not sure which element was important. This indicates that people were aware of the mixture of beauty, meaning, and process as an important element in the production or making of an artwork.

Figure 4.4 Frequency of respondents based on understanding what the artist is trying to express.

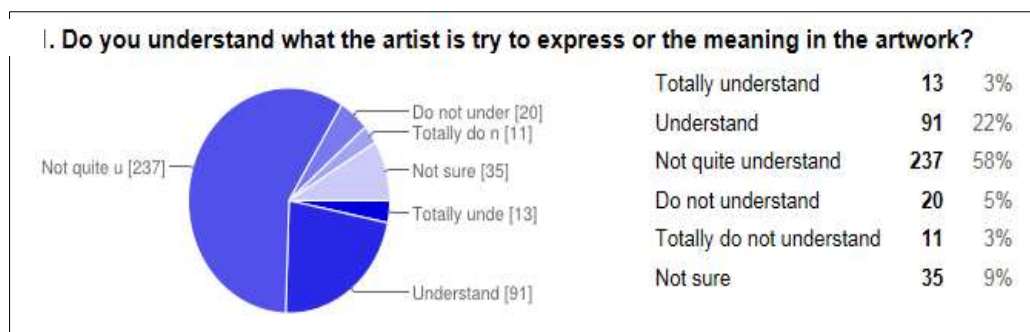


Figure 4.4: Frequency of respondents based on the understanding of what the artist is trying to express.

It shows that 58% (237) of the participants do not quite understand what the artist is trying to express, while 22% (91) do understand, followed by 9% (35) who were not sure and 5% (20) do not understand. However, 3% understand (13) and do not understand (11), respectively. This indicates that most public members do not understand the artwork's meaning.

Comparative Report

The following table 4.1 explains what the participant likes most or chooses.

Table 4.1: Comparative Report

The medium of art they like most		That they like to see an artwork		The importance in the production or making an artwork		The understanding an artist tries to express in an artwork	
Painting	47%	All	31%	All	35%	Not quite understand	58%
Mix media	29%	Beauty	29%	Meaning	34%	Understand	22%
Not sure	9%	Just like to see	10%	Beauty	15%	Not sure	9%
Printmaking	8%	Meaning	23%	Process	9%	Do not understand	5%
Sculpture	4%	Process	5 %	Not sure	7%	Understand	3%
		Not sure	2 %			Not understand	3%

The finding shows that the participant most liked art medium was painting, which covers 47%. People want to see the blending of beauty, meaning, and process in an artwork which counts for 31%. The participants viewed beauty, meaning, and process in artwork as the elements that are more important in the production or making of an artwork; 35%. The majority of the public, 58%, do not quite understand what an artist is trying to express or do not understand the artwork's meaning.

The finding of this study is very encouraging and provides evidence that proves the public has some understanding of Visual Art. The results supported the idea that the awareness of the existence of visual art is developing over time.

As people come from diverse backgrounds, whether in the aspect of education, family, culture, and experience, thus it creates different criticism. Therefore, ideas, opinions, and suggestions must be wise and based on truth and knowledge. Art criticism must depend on formal analysis, which is an existing explanation. It should not be like emphasis, which is not meant to evoke. On the other hand, it explains the visual structure in which certain visual elements are arranged and function in a balanced composition.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

Works of art are open to criticism. Most artworks contain the hopes and aspirations of the creator, which are not expressed or clearly described. Indeed, the works of art are exposed to detailed criticism, which defines and analyses their meaning according to individual ability and understanding. Art critics provide various interpretations of the meaning and make critical judgments about specific works of art. The more arrangements are made, the better the artwork would be with a variety of meaning and understanding.

Value involves thinking and then assigning meaning to the properties of everyday reality, while values are ideas that people stand for, believe in, and find meaningful. Giving value is the process people go through to arrive at their values. Axiology will study the value placed on the values, but not the actual ideas or beliefs.

Various elements can be used when we look at the aspect of value, such as views, customs, habits, etc., that can cause an emotional response towards a person or society. Value can also be subjective and objective, depending on the individual's intellectual and emotional state.

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