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## **Exploring the Evolution of Video Arts in Malaysia Contemporary Arts Scene**

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### **Abstract**

"The Evolution of Video Arts in Malaysian Contemporary Arts Scenes" critically examines the development of video art in Malaysia, tracing its origins, current practices, and future directions. The research highlights video art's role in shaping national identity, reflecting contemporary sensibilities, and bridging creativity with technology. Through analysis, interviews, and case studies, it identifies key challenges, the influence of digital platforms, and the medium's cultural impact. This study offers valuable insight into the transformation of Malaysia's cultural landscape and the evolving practices of its contemporary artists.

**Keywords:** Video Art, Malaysia Contemporary Arts, Cultural Identity

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### **1.0 Introduction**

In Malaysia's contemporary art landscape, the evolution of new media art has been marked by key milestones reflecting the intersection of technology and artistic innovation. The integration of computers into local fine arts began in 1983, when Kamarudzaman Md. Isa utilized the Apple platform's BASIC programming language for graphic creation. This was followed by Ismail Zain's 1988 *Digital Collage* exhibition, which featured computer-generated prints that blended text and imagery. As digital technologies became more accessible, the term "new media art" emerged, capturing a wide spectrum of practices including digital, computer-based, multimedia, and interactive forms (Mat & Baharuddin, 2016). Mumtaz Mokhtar (2013) highlighted its diversity across Malaysia's artistic output. Significant developments include the 1994 Video Art Festival at the National Art Gallery, where artists like Baharuddin Arus employed remote controls and kinetic sculptures, and the 1997 Electronic Art Exhibition, which presented works using video, computer, and light-based media. Artists such as Syed Alwi and Kamarudzaman Md. Isa experimented with programming and illumination, while Liew Kung Yu and Wong Hoy Cheong integrated video projections and TV monitors into their work. These developments, rooted in the rapid growth of computer technologies since the 1970s, have opened new temporal, spatial, and conceptual possibilities. This study aims to analyze the technological influences that have shaped video art in Malaysia, explore the contributions of key figures in the development of video art and examine how video art navigates the challenges of digital practice in Malaysia.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Time-based Media in New Media

In the realm of New Media art, artworks that utilize digital technology as a mode of expression and incorporate temporal elements are categorized as time-based media. These artworks often manipulate motion, duration, and time to provide viewers with an immersive and dynamic experience. Formats such as computer animation, performance art, interactive installations, and video art fall under the umbrella of time-based media. According to Mark Tribe and Reena Jana's book "New Media Art," time-based media is defined as follows: "Compared to traditional visual art forms, time-based media—such as video, animation, and sound art—require viewers to engage with them in a fundamentally different manner as they unfold over time. Time-based media prompts viewers to contemplate not only what they see but also how they perceive it—through a blend of sounds, images, and moments in time."

In the context of New Media art, this term underscores the dynamic and interactive nature of time-based media artworks, underscoring their ability to engage viewers over an extended duration and provoke critical discourse about the medium itself.

### 2.2 Time-based Media

Time-based media artworks use technologies like computers, video, film, slides, and audio, unfolding durationally for audiences. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., highlights the importance of technology in these artworks, where gradual perception by viewers is essential. Unlike static forms, they require specific installations and storage, such as audiovisual rooms or digital archives when not on display. Custom-built components and collaborations with gallery staff, assistants, and partners are vital for accurate presentation (Amy, 2018). Digital art, including computer-generated and video media, appeals to young artists for its expressive potential but is often limited by technical complexities, which historically confined exploration to artists invested in technology (Fadly Sabran, 2019). Time-based media integrates elements like music, dance, and movement, revealing itself through slideshows, movies, software, or online platforms. Technological obsolescence presents conservation challenges, requiring careful definition of the artwork's essence and addressing risks like damage or misinterpretation (The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University). Despite these complexities, time-based media's dynamic nature and adaptability offer innovative opportunities for artistic expression and viewer engagement (Giselle, 2002).

### 2.3 New Media in Art

New media art encompasses diverse disciplines like media and performance, video art, video installation, and digital art, merging new technological platforms with cultural forms to explore political themes and artistic concepts innovatively. This dynamic field has profoundly influenced global contemporary art, inspiring artists to explore new realms of creativity. In Malaysia, emerging artists are pivotal in this movement, using time-based media to innovate within creative practice. Over recent decades, Malaysian new media art has flourished, becoming a fertile ground for integrating technology, digital platforms, and interactive elements into artistic expression. Mumtaz (2013) notes Wilson's observation that art advancements are reshaped by new media applications, influencing artists to experiment across different styles and media. From early use of mineral-based paints to contemporary explorations with holography and video, Malaysian artists have embraced diverse materials and techniques. This evolution mirrors global trends where artists continually push boundaries with cutting-edge technologies. Malaysian art history reveals a rich blend of traditional and modern influences, evolving alongside global artistic advancements.

### 2.4 New Media Art

Janez Strehovec (2008) posits that New Media Art, within contemporary art, diverges from traditional modern art by asserting aesthetic modernism and art's autonomy from societal realities. Simon Biggs defines it as utilizing emerging mediating tools, distinct from traditional processes, emphasizing originality. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean (2009) describe new media artists adopting new theoretical tools like software, remixing, and hybridization, within a post-industrial creative framework. New forms like net art, software art, and digital installations challenge traditional cultural studies. They integrate technology openly, unlike traditional art. In Malaysia, art-science integration and experimental media lead to diverse hybrid artworks by artists like Fadly Sabran, reflecting a shift towards process-driven, problem-solving activities and software experimentation. Modern new media art increasingly intersects with commercial sectors, often unnoticed by artists and the public.

### 2.5 Development of Video Arts

The development of Video Arts style in Visual Arts can be categorized into several distinct genres, each contributing uniquely to artistic expression and engagement:

1. **Narrative Video Arts:** Narrative video art focuses on storytelling through interconnected events driven by intentional actions or agency (Todd et al., 2005). This style has evolved to condense events and capture developments in the current age of abundant data (Carlos, 2010).
2. **Video Installations:** Video installations offer immersive experiences challenging traditional sensorimotor perceptions (Morse). They range from single-channel projections to interactive multimedia settings, evolving alongside installation art and video technology (Gosse, 2020).
3. **Performance Video:** Video art intersects with performance to address social issues and dynamics between artists and viewers (Wagner, 2000). Contemporary shifts include spatial montage influenced by technological advancements and intertextual narratives (Elle, 2020).

4. Interactive Video Art: Interactive media explores user control versus artistic intent, defining interactive art through technological mediation (Aaron, 2009). This genre critiques definitions and categorizations within interactive media (Ryan, Saltz, Lopes, Murray).
  5. Single-channel Video Arts: Originating from analogue experiments, single-channel video art has transitioned to digital multimedia expressions (Kate, 2006). It engages audiences through aesthetic techniques like scale and metaphorical content.
  6. Abstract Video Art: Abstract video art distills lengthy video documents into concise summaries using still or moving images (Li, Zhang, Daniel, 2001). Originating in New York in the 1940s, abstract expressionist moving images emphasize improvisation and process (Emmaline, 2023).
  7. Found Footage: Found footage repurposes existing film material to convey new meanings, challenging authorship and copyright (Horwart).
  8. Video Sculpture: Video sculpture blends video elements with physical objects or settings, exploring narrative and spatial dimensions (Google Search).
  9. Time-lapse Video Art: Time-lapse video captures slow processes over time, compressing them into shorter sequences for various applications (David, 1995).
  10. Digital Animation Video Art: Digital animation merges technology with cultural expression, enhancing animation quality and dissemination (Yao, 2019). It incorporates motion capture and virtual reality for interactive and generative animation (Li, Zhuge, 2022).
  11. Documentary Video Art: Documentaries use recorded visuals and audio to depict real-life events or people, offering perspectives on social issues and personal narratives (John, 1996). They blur the lines between fiction and reality, adapting to digital advancements in filmmaking (Moure & Bing, 2020).
  12. Language Video Art: Language video art explores the intersection of verbal and visual expression, utilizing language as a tool for conveying artistic messages (Parikh, 2001).
  13. Cinema Video Art: Cinema video art integrates cinematic techniques with contemporary art, pushing boundaries in storytelling and thematic content (Balsom, 2009). It encompasses avant-garde experimentation and digital innovations (Rees, 2019).
  14. Video Performance Documentation: Video technology captures and disseminates live performances, raising questions about authenticity and representation in performance art (Anne, 2008).
- These categories highlight the diversity and evolution of Video Arts, demonstrating its broad impact on visual arts and cultural expression through technological advancements and artistic experimentation.

## 2.6 Kapallorok Artspace

In 2014, Fadly Sabran launched the "Kapallorok Art Space" in Malaysia as an autonomous venue dedicated to experimental art activities such as cinema screenings, exhibits, performances, and art talks (Kapallorok, 2017). This platform plays a crucial role in fostering upcoming artists' expression and views on experimental art, according to Valerie and Khairul Aidil. They emphasize the importance of supporting art projects that involve hybrid practices and providing artists with a conducive workspace (Valerie & Khairul Aidil, year). Kapallorok Art Space also contributes significantly to art discourse in the realm of time-based media. This category encompasses New Media or Time-Based Media Art, which involves artistic expressions with a durational aspect created or modified using new technologies. These forms of contemporary art unfold over time and utilize technologies such as computer-based, audio, film, slide, and video (Valerie & Khairul Aidil, year). Similar initiatives in Malaysia include the Museum and Gallery of Tunku Fauziah (MGTF) at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), which collects artworks spanning fine art, video and media art, modern technologies, and traditional art. Additionally, Gallery Serdang at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) has supported art-science exhibitions like 'NYAWA', focusing on the theme of Nature's Yield and Wonder of Art in 2012 (Valerie & Khairul Aidil, year). These examples illustrate how institutions like Kapallorok Art Space and others contribute to Malaysia's art scene by nurturing experimentation and dialogue in contemporary art practices, particularly in the realm of time-based media and interdisciplinary art forms.

## 2.7 New media Theory

The concept of art in new media has expanded to include 360-degree productions alongside traditional two-dimensional works, reflecting an expansive scope that resonates with human consciousness and intellect. This evolution underscores the integration of multiple senses, such as sight and hearing, particularly in contexts where viewers engage with both past and present narratives (Mumtaz, 2009). Lev Manovich (2003) introduces the concept of space in the digital era, emphasizing how technological advancements have deepened our understanding of spatial materiality, concept, and imagery. His exploration of "dataspace" in the 2000s, encompassing domains like GPS systems and sensor networks, underscores the transformative impact of electronic media on modern society (Mumtaz, 2012). While not explicitly using the term "time-based media," Manovich's research delves into various forms within new media theory, highlighting their modularity, variability, and transcoding capabilities. He illustrates how digital technologies enable novel temporal expressions in mediums such as computer animation, video art, and interactive installations, reshaping cultural and social frameworks (Manovich, 2003). Moreover, the rise of new media, as described by Bolter and Grusin, exemplifies remediation—where traditional and digital media interact dynamically, challenging conventional notions of media and communication while expanding artistic boundaries (Bolter & Grusin, year). In conclusion, the study of new media through McLuhan's insights illuminates the dynamic interplay between traditional and contemporary communication channels. This perspective emphasizes the ongoing transformations in media environments, underscored by digitalization and refunctionalization processes, and calls for a nuanced understanding of their societal implications (Mark Poster, 2010).

## 3.0 Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

In the case study "The Evolution of Video Arts in Malaysian Contemporary Arts Scenes," this chapter delves into the research methodology employed to examine the practice of time-based media artworks within the framework of Kapallorok Artspace. Time-based media art, characterized by its temporal and technological dimensions, offers a dynamic lens through which to explore contemporary artistic expression in Malaysia. This research methodology is designed to provide comprehensive insights into how artists conceptualize, create, and interpret time-based media artworks, focusing particularly on the curated collection housed at Kapallorok Artspace.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research project adopts a qualitative case study methodology, chosen for its ability to facilitate a detailed exploration of phenomena within their natural setting. Central to this design is the immersive investigation of time-based media artworks within Kapallorok Artspace, aiming to uncover the intricacies of artistic production, curatorship, and audience engagement within this specific cultural context.

#### 3.2.1 Interview

Semi-structured interviews with artists, curators, and the head of Kapallorok Artspace form a cornerstone of this research methodology. These interviews employ open-ended questions to delve deeply into how artists conceptualize and execute time-based media artworks, informed by theories such as those of Lev Manovich and Marshall McLuhan. The selected artists for this study include Afiq Romi, Izzat Zurrin, Zulkefli Jais, Nur Ezlyn, and Suhaila Saleh, chosen for their contributions to the Antara exhibition held at Kapallorok Artspace in 2021.

#### 3.2.2 Observation

Close observation and analysis of experimental techniques, thematic concepts, and expressive potentials embedded within the time-based media artworks housed at Kapallorok Artspace are integral to this methodology. This observational approach captures subjective impressions, technical details, and spatial dynamics, providing contextual richness to complement interview data.

#### 3.2.3 Document Analysis

Complementary to interviews and observations, document analysis involves systematic examination of textual, visual, and audio materials related to the time-based media artworks at Kapallorok Artspace. This methodological component aims to extract underlying themes, artistic forms, and narrative structures, enhancing the interpretative depth of the study.

#### 3.2.4 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire supplements the interview process, aiming to gather detailed insights into the inspirations, challenges, and theoretical foundations underpinning the selected artworks housed at Kapallorok Artspace. Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary, ensuring privacy and confidentiality of responses.

### 3.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework employed in this study offers a critical lens through which to analyze the creation, reception, and transformative impacts of time-based media artworks within Malaysia's contemporary art scene. Grounded in new media theories articulated by Marshall McLuhan and Lev Manovich, this framework illuminates the technological, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of time-based media as both an artistic practice and a societal commentary.

## 4.0 Findings

The initiative studied was developed to inspire young artists and spark interest in the exploration of new media art forms. It aimed to introduce innovative practices that merge contemporary technology with artistic expression, thereby enhancing public awareness of new media art and encouraging emerging artists to expand their creative boundaries. Inspired by the concept of the "grey area". A metaphor for ambiguity and unexplored potential, the project emphasized artistic experimentation beyond traditional forms. Through this platform, young artists were encouraged to engage with digital tools, multimedia techniques, and interactive elements, producing contemporary works that reflect evolving creative practices. The initiative specifically targeted recent graduates and emerging fine artists, offering them an alternative venue to traditional galleries to exhibit and refine their work. It fostered an inclusive environment where experimentation and innovation were prioritized, helping artists develop their voice within Malaysia's contemporary art scene. By combining art and technology, the project promoted a forward-thinking approach to art-making while cultivating a deeper public appreciation for modern, technology-driven artistic expressions.


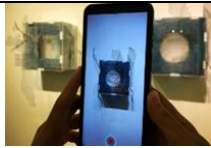



No.	Artist	Artwork	Title
1	Nur Ezlyn		<i>Apresiasi Abu</i>
2	Suhaila Saleh		<i>Mana Saya Tahu, Saya Kan Ikan</i> (How Can I know, I am Simply a Fish)
3	Izzat Zurrin		<i>Majnun</i>
4	Afiq Romi		<i>It's Just A Fever Dream</i>
5	Zulkefli Jais		<i>Project: Found Fossil</i>

Fig. 1: List of Artists and Artworks

## 5.0 Discussion

This paper study examines the dynamics of time-based media artworks exhibited at Kapallorek Artspace, focusing on audience interaction, artistic intention, and cultural context. It begins by introducing ANTARA, a 2021 exhibition showcasing experimental time-based media works that defy conventional art norms. The analysis is structured around qualitative data collected via interviews, observations, and artwork analysis. Four artists, which participated in the exhibition, was Nur Ezlyn, Afiq Romi, Izzat Zurrin, Suhaila Saleh, and Zulkefli Jais. They are the main case studies. Their personal histories and creative practices are dissected using Marshall McLuhan's media theory, particularly the concepts of *"the medium is the message"* and *hot vs. cool media*. These frameworks help decode how media technology shapes both the production and interpretation of their artworks. Each artwork is examined in terms of its technological execution, cultural symbolism, and temporal engagement. For example, Afiq Romi's video projections embody fluid identity, while Zulkefli Jais's interactive storytelling in *Project: Found Fossil* critiques media's influence on public perception. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the innovative and evolving nature of time-based media art in Malaysia, as seen in Kapallorek's exhibitions. It also highlights the need for improved audience engagement and contextualization to fully appreciate the complexity and cultural significance of these works.

## 6.0 Conclusion& Recommendations

This study underscores the significant role of time-based media in shaping Malaysia's evolving new media art landscape. From Kamarudzan Md. Isa's pioneering computer art in 1983 to Kapallorek Artspace's ANTARA 1.0 exhibition, Malaysian artists have continuously pushed artistic boundaries through the integration of technology. By applying Marshall McLuhan's media theory, this research demonstrates how these artists harness time as both a medium and a narrative tool, exploring digital culture, space, and identity. Despite the substantial progress, this study faced limitations, including restricted field access, a small sample size, and limited

local literature. These challenges highlight the need for broader engagement and deeper exploration into Malaysia's time-based media scene. Future research should expand artist representation, employ more diverse data collection methods, and explore audience interactivity, curatorial strategies, and regional comparisons to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the landscape. In conclusion, time-based media in Malaysia serves not only as an innovative tool but also as a powerful cultural lens. It reshapes how we perceive the intersection of art, technology, and identity in a rapidly digitizing world, offering new avenues for artistic expression and cultural dialogue.

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## Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

The paper "The Evolution of Video Arts in Malaysian Contemporary Arts Scenes" contributes to experimental art and design by documenting Malaysia's dynamic video art landscape, emphasizing cultural identity and technological integration.

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