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Analysing Iconography in Contemporary Socio-Political Paintings of Malaysian Artists' Figurative Arts

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ABSTRACT

The figure images in painting are the core features illustrated by artist to convey specific ideas. The illustrated figure in paintings suggest and reflect artist response in certain issues political and social issues. Thus, this study aims to examine in-depth the in contemporary figurative socio-political paintings by Malaysian artists. The objectives of this research are to explain the process of analyzing iconographic elements related in contemporary figurative paintings and to describe iconographic elements related to socio-political issues in contemporary figurative artworks of Malaysian artist as iconography in addressing socio-political themes in the local visual art landscape. This study involves a qualitative analysis of figurative art by five Malaysian contemporary painters using descriptive analysis with five painting for each phase. The data collection includes images and catalogs of works produced on canvas and paper in various sizes. Subsequently, an in-depth iconographic analysis is conducted by year phase, using the collected images of figurative works as the main subjects to convey socio-political issues in Malaysian artists' contemporary figurative paintings. Based on the theme "iconography in contemporary socio-political figurative art by Malaysian artists," selected figurative paintings will be documented and described. This effort is part of enhancing the documentation process of figurative works by Malaysian painters and emphasizing its significance to society and the development of the Malaysian visual arts scene.

Keywords: Iconography, Contemporary Painting, Figurative Malaysian Artist

INTRODUCTION

The figure images in painting are the core features illustrated by artist to convey specific ideas. The illustrated figure in paintings suggest and reflect artist response in certain issues political and social issues. In addition, it can convey the message and expression of the artist in conveying ideas. Studying the use of figures to be used as iconography to describe inner feelings frankly when responding to socio-political issues through paint media. Through this study, the use of figures as iconography in the work of painting refers to several aspects of diverse art and the individual himself in conveying a network of meanings and intrinsics. In addition to the education received by the figure painters, the development of various styles in Malaysian modern art is also related to the awareness or cultural sensitivity of the painters as well as the cultural policies outlined by the government. The diversity of styles, media, techniques and art iconography play an important role in creating a pluralist era in the world of modern Malaysian painting (Mulyadi, 1992). The development of figurative art in Malaysia shows the presence of Western influence where the development of art trends and western art ideas are constantly changing according to time and place. Is the reality of contemporary painters in Malaysia afraid and careful to

produce works that are frank when it comes to the Malaysian political Act by using figurative paint to symbolically represent the issue? Whether in a symbolic way, the representation of figurative art, the expression of the painter himself is limited in conveying the meaning of iconography to express feelings and emotions. This study is aimed at the idea of the main subject of the figure in the work, among which is the expression of the face in the image of the figure. The figurative art produced by who artists of contemporary painting is selected throughout the production of the work. Researcher will analyse in detail the works of painting related to socio-politics that use images of figures to represent an issue. The analyses are based on the analysis of contemporary figurative art in several years, hence the works have significant changes. The analysis is conducted in order to identify what elements are produced from this iconography which gave viewer or individual and emotional inner effect. The objectives of this research are identifying iconographic elements in socio-political issues in contemporary figurative paintings, analyzing works of figurative art in the socio-political issue of the development of local visual art and evaluating the importance of figurative art as iconography in the socio-political issue of local visual art. While the research questions outlined are what are the iconographic elements in socio-political issues in the figurative artwork of contemporary painting? How is figurative art in the socio-political issue of the development of local visual art and what is the importance of figurative art as iconography in the socio-political issue of local visual art?

LITERATURE REVIEW

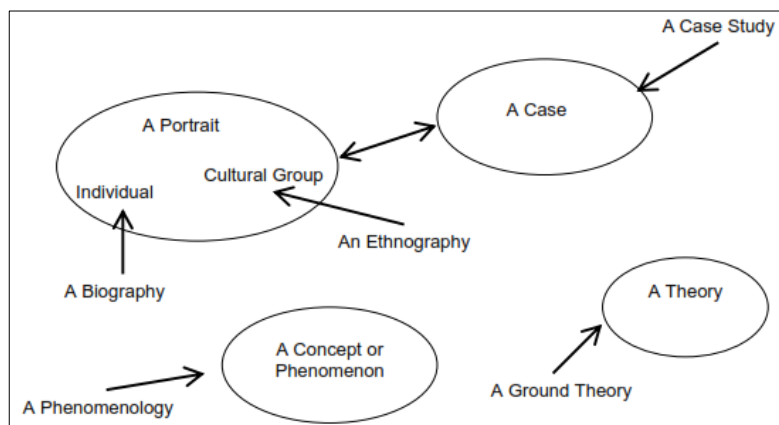


Figure 1: Cresswell's Theory (1998)

From figure 1 it is clear that the focus of biography design is on the life of an individual, and the focus of phenomenology is on the understanding of a concept and phenomenon. In grounded theory, the main purpose is to build a theory, while the ethnographic approach is more focused on getting an in-depth picture of something deep within a cultural group or human being. Case studies usually examine a specific case in depth. (Othman, 2017). Based on Cresswell's Theory (1998), in accordance with the title of the study which is iconography in contemporary figurative socio-political paintings by Malaysian artists', the researcher chose a biographical and phenomenological approach to obtain clear and smooth data.

Iconography: The theory of Iconography was introduced by Erwin Panofsky. Iconography and iconology are approaches to studying images. Although it dates from the renaissance era, this approach as an organized and systematic way of examining images began in the early twentieth century and in the Warburg School. Erwin Panofsky is a prominent figure of the Warburg School, and his methodological studies are associated with the titles of iconology and iconography. The history of the study of icons and iconography is examined and then the differences between iconology and iconography are discussed. Then, Panofsky's opinion on reading images and the three phases of this type of reading are discussed according to his views. Panofsky calls these three phases "pre-

iconographic description", "iconographic analysis", and "iconological interpretation". These three stages are explained separately. (Kathleen, 2012) as illustrated in figure 2.

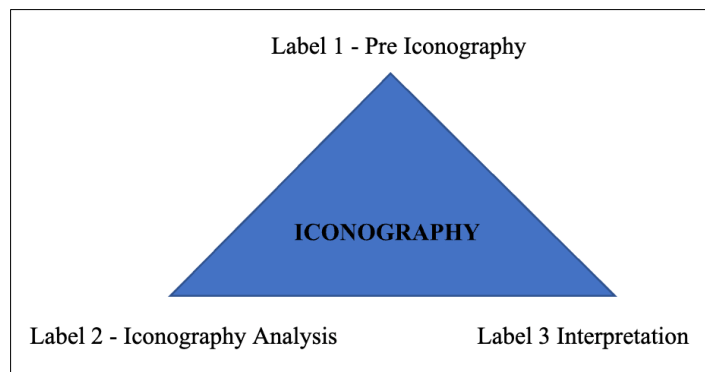


Figure 2: Iconography by Panofsky

Thus, a theoretical framework of iconography is based on by Panofsky (1978), is used as the theoretical foundation of this research. The *Figure 3* illustrated the conceptual framework. Researcher ideas of conceptual applied in this research and explanation.

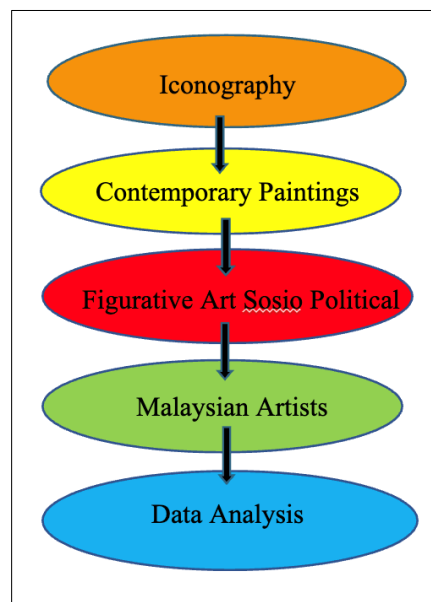


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



Figure 4: The work is titled “Aaarrghh... Get Your Filthy Hands of Me!!!” produced by Ahmad Fuad Osman in 2000 using the medium of Oil on Canvas.
Source: The Star



Figure 5: The work titled "Tales of The Heroes" produced by Jalaini Abu Hassan in 2010 using Acrylic Paint and Bitumen on Canvas measures 137cm in height and 183cm in width.
Source: ArtAsiaPacific



Figure 6: The work entitled "The subtitle" produced by Suddin Lappo in 2016 using the medium of Acrylic Paint on Canvas measures cm in 122cm height and 183cm in width.
Source: <https://m.malysiakini.com/hiburan/369011>



Figure 7: The work entitled "Tak Ada Beza" produced by Hamir Soib@Mohamed in 2002 using the Mixed Media Installation measuring 143cm in height and 415cm in width.
Source: The Collection at +n by UR-MU - Hamir Soib@Mohamed



Figure 8: The work titled "Word at the Louvre, Paris" produced by Bayu Utomo Radjikin in 2006 using the medium of Acrylic Paint on Canvas measuring 64cm high and 139cm in width.
Source: <https://padlet.com/yaakobazrin1997/bayuottomoradjikin/wish/252021902>

METHODOLOGY

This ongoing research employs a qualitative methodology with descriptive analysis. The data collection includes images and catalogs of works produced on canvas and paper in various sizes, as well as interview transcripts, descriptions, official records, recordings, and personal documents. Subsequently, an in-depth iconographic analysis is conducted by year phase, using the collected images of figurative works and interview results as the main subjects to convey socio-political issues in Malaysian artists' contemporary figurative paintings.

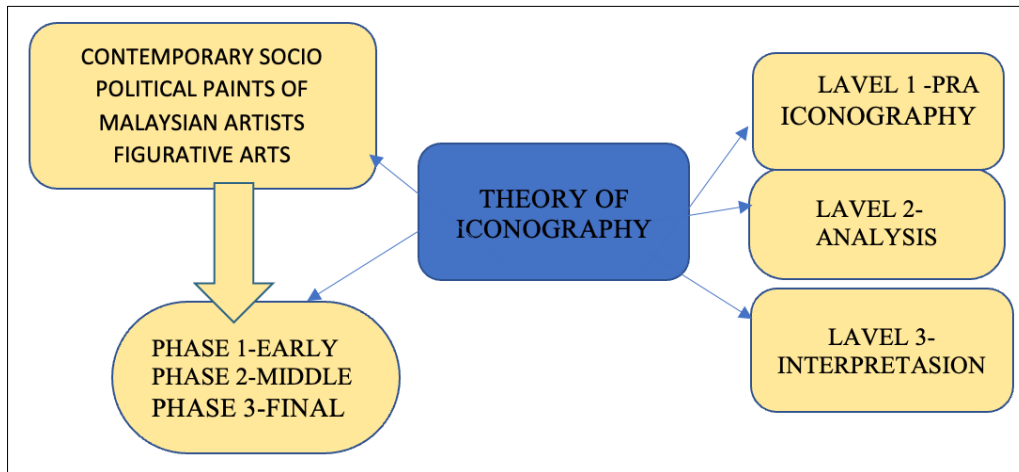


Figure 9: Research framework

Phase 1: Early In the study, this will also be studied theoretically and practically about the steps that support the research study. Some of the closest and appropriate literature will be used as a basis for the formation of methodological studies. Literature studies related to figures as iconography from Western and Malaysian painters will be clearly seen. In addition, graduate studies regarding figures as iconography are also referred to to strengthen the objective study, research questions, research problems, study limitations and the importance of the study. Among them, it started with a sub-topic regarding the study of the literature of the earliest figures who produced works of figures and iconography. The sub-topic will explain in detail about iconographic terms that are implemented theoretically and practically including diagram examples.

Phase2: Middle Next, the next sub-topic will focus on graduate studies related to figures and iconography in the West. These studies are referred to in order to find out the latest methods of using figures as iconography in painting that have been implemented in the West.

Phase 3: Final Next, the sub-topic of graduate studies on the method of using figures as iconography in Malaysia was also studied to explore the extent to which this field was initiated and implemented in Malaysia. Therefore, from here will arise about the problems that need to be studied in this study. Finally, I will focus on literature studies involving contemporary figure painters in Malaysia that include the painter's background, flow, style and the works that have been produced. The researcher has also conducted a interview with a Malaysian contemporary figure painter Samsuddin Lappo to find out the figure as iconography found in himself and the works produced by him to support and strengthen this study. In addition to painters, researchers have also interviewed experienced academics, Prof Dr. Zakaria Ali to provide insight and further strengthen this study. However, the research in this chapter will continue from time to time throughout the period of this research.

Instrument

The researcher will make a data collection method Iconographic Analysis report of each picture of works selected from commercial works, Group Exhibition works, Duo Exhibition works and Solo Exhibition works that have been carried out. The process of analyzing is according to Iconographic Analysis which is divided into three levels which are Pre Iconography (Primary), the second is Iconographic Analysis (Secondary) and the third is Iconographic Synthesis / Interpretation. At each level or level is divided into four, namely the object of interpretation, the act of interpretation, the interpretation equipment or medium used in making the analysis and finally the control of the principle of interpretation which is the context of the analysis and discussion of the subject. This analysis method will also be held on the works of five selected Malaysian contemporary figure painters.

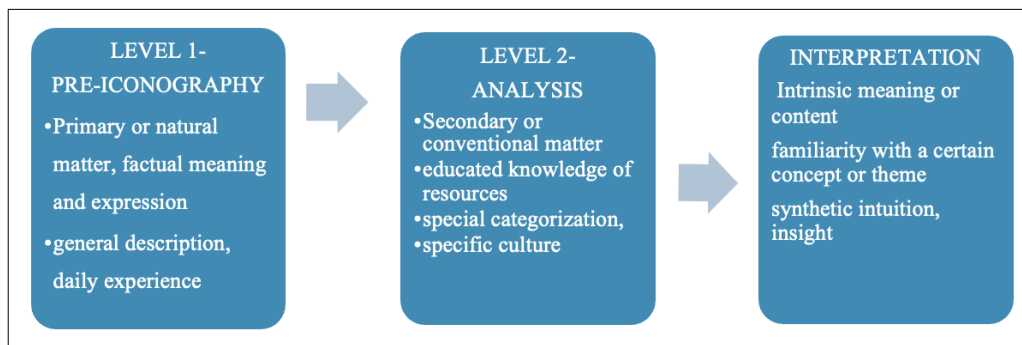


Figure 10: Instrument Of Iconography Analysis

RESULTS ONGOING

This ongoing research can improve the understanding of the issue of "iconography in the contemporary paintings of Malaysian artists' figurative art" and its characteristics. This awareness is important to trace the appreciation and evaluation of the impact of the works of figurative painters in this country to the socio-political issues of local visual arts. Awareness of the uniqueness in the work to attract connoisseurs and society in general as a push for understanding about the art itself. The researcher looks for a direction that is compatible with the personality and self-identity of the community. This research examines the sensitivity of the community in order to encourage understanding of the value and concept of the figure painter's art. The understanding and acceptance of different concepts is felt to be important because it will foster awareness and respect for painters who dare to express the sensitivity of feelings and ideas.

CONCLUSION

Iconography in the contemporary paintings of Malaysian artists figurative art , seen as having potential and relevance for use in the field of fine art and art education. In Malaysia it is suitable to be used as a guide and it is hoped that it can be continued in the future by researchers and also students in related fields. The use of figures as iconography apart from the emphasis on symbolic elements and meaning, there is still much more that can be explored in terms of ideas, subjects, descriptives, messages, techniques, styles and media produced. Therefore, this study will be carried out to analyze the works of figurative painters who produce contemporary paintings in Malaysia. This figurative artwork is related to the socio-political issue of local visual art development.

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