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ISSUE AND PROBLEMS IN ART CRITICISM IN MALAYSIA: A NEED ASSESSMENT ANALYSES

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ABSTRACT

The importance of art criticism within the domain of visual art cannot be overemphasized since it has considerable significance and presents significant possibilities. Art criticism involves the systematic examination and assessment of artistic creations. Art criticism frequently intersects with theory, as it entails the interpretive endeavor of comprehending a specific artwork through a theoretical lens and ascertaining its historical importance within the realm of art. The primary aim of this study is to identify and address the issue and problems surrounding art criticism in Malaysia. The art criticism scenario in Malaysia is still green and new. However, the role and its importance are crucial. This study integrates observation and documentation as its main methods of investigation. The utilization of observation and documentation facilitates a more extensive comprehension of the underlying potential inherent in the realm of art criticism, specifically with regards to the prevalent concerns and challenges encountered within the context of Malaysia. The outcome of this study introduces a framework that establishes the foundation for future investigations into the obstacles and issues and problems surrounding art criticism in Malaysia. This study examines several crucial characteristics pertaining to art criticism, including its societal significance, the educational background and training of art critics, the accessibility of art criticism periodicals, and the level of public knowledge of art criticism. The framework additionally recognizes potential antecedents, including the historical, cultural, political, economic, and art world circumstances of the country.

Keywords: Art Criticism, Issue and Problems

INTRODUCTION

According to the philosopher Arthur Danto, art is embodied meaning or meaning embodied in sensuous form (Carroll, 2021). In other words, art is a way of expressing ideas or emotions through a medium such as painting, sculpture, literature, or performance. This definition emphasizes the idea that art is more than just an aesthetic experience, but also involves the communication of meaning and ideas (Adajian, 2022). However, it is important to note that there are many different perspectives on what constitutes art, and this definition is just one among many. Art is a multifaceted and complex concept that has been defined and redefined throughout history by philosophers, art historians, and artists themselves. Art's most potent impact is felt by its viewers, often in a social or cultural context, through unique metaphors, analogies, and narratives (Roosen et al., 2018). Art criticism helps audiences

understand and appreciate physical artworks, serving as a link between artists and society, as it helps them appreciate the artworks and helps them appreciate the artist's work. Art criticism is a bridge between artist and society (Mohd Johari, 2011; Nooryan, 2017). In Malaysia, the field of art has witnessed significant advancements since the early 1930s. Over the past few decades, the realm of Malaysian art has witnessed a series of favorable advancements, characterized by artists engaging in innovative forms and techniques, as well as delving into a broader spectrum of thematic explorations. Nevertheless, there are several factors are constraining the comprehension and admiration of Malaysian art. This is due to the lack of art critics writing in Malaysia (Mohd Faizuan & Nasir, 2016).

Art Criticism

The appreciation of art involves knowing, perceiving, comprehending, and appreciating, in addition to the literal meaning of appreciation. Art criticism is a critical writing style that analyzes and evaluates art works to understand their meaning and significance (Barrett, 2003; Tayac S, 2023). It uses knowledge of art history, aesthetics, and theory to interpret and contextualize artworks. Art criticism serves multiple purposes, including informing the public, sparking debate, establishing art value, promoting new art, and confronting the status quo (Shalgin, 2023). It provides information about the artist, the work, and its historical and cultural context, fostering critical thought and opinion formulation (Dumitru, 2019). Art criticism can take various forms, including written reviews, oral commentary, and visual analysis, with objectives such as elucidating the significance of a work, evaluating its quality, situating it in a historical or cultural context, or fostering dialogue (Alashari, 2021). Art criticism can play a significant role in shaping our comprehension and appreciation of works of art by offering insights and perspectives that can enrich our encounter with visual culture (Tuán T et al., 2022). In this research, our focus is solely on the issue and problems in visual art criticism in Malaysia.

Art Criticism: Malaysia Situation

In Malaysia, visual art has continued to evolve and diversify (Khayril Anwar K et al., 2022). Contemporary Malaysian artists are influenced by a wide range of cultural traditions and global art movements, and their work can be seen in galleries and museums both in Malaysia and around the world. The Malaysian artists styles from 1930 to presence has been in vast form of themes and specify context (Sarena Abdullah, 2018). They are mainly influence by the national and local political scene, cultural, education, economy, and Islamic influence (Mohamad Kamal & Rahman, 2016).

In the contemporary era, the visual art scene in Malaysia has exhibited a notable progression in its development, characterized by the assimilation of foreign artistic traditions and the integration of internet-based information. In the present era, the notion of artistic expression has surpassed geographical limitations, as artists progressively assimilate themselves into cultural customs. The integration of technology in the realm of Malaysian art has significantly influenced the exploration of ideas, artistic mediums, and research approaches related to identity and the pursuit of self-identification (Abdullah & Siti Khadijah E, 2019). As a result, a significant paradigm shift has occurred within the realm of Malaysian art. The ongoing discourse pertains to the extent of documentation surrounding the artwork. The field of art criticism in Malaysia, namely in the realm of visual art, is perceived as an immature and underappreciated discipline by certain artists and members of the community (Issarezal & Humin, 2020). The inactive advancement of art in Malaysia can be attributed to two key factors: the dearth of esteemed authors and the community's hesitance to acknowledge its influence on the evolution of art. The artistic production in Malaysia has had notable advancements, but the scholarly research and analyses in the fields of art history and criticism have not kept pace with the evolution of Malaysian art (Sarena Abdullah, 2010). The insufficiency in both number and quality is generating dissatisfaction among individuals engaged in the art community in Malaysia.

Art Criticism: Issue and Problems in Malaysia

While research on issue and problem on art criticism in Malaysia has been greatly reported in the literature, gaps still exist in several areas. The insufficient study and art criticism endeavors in Malaysia exert a substantial influence on the creation of artistic artifacts, resulting in a dearth of progress in the

realm of modern visual arts (Mohd Faizuan & Nasir, 2016). There remains a significant dearth of research pertaining to art criticism in Malaysia. This phenomenon restricts the scope of information retrieval. This study is limited due to the limited literature. A significant proportion of scientific literature mostly exhibits a publication date exceeding five years.

This study examines the challenges of art criticism in Malaysia, focusing on three factors: lack of source, lack of education, and underdevelopment. The authors argue that there is a lack of intellectualism documentation in Malaysian art, limiting its understanding and appreciation. Additionally, there is a lack of training and education in art criticism, limiting the skills of art critics to critically analyze and evaluate art. The underdevelopment of art criticism in Malaysia also limits opportunities for critics to practice their craft. The authors propose a framework to identify and address these issues, as well as develop strategies to improve the quality of art criticism in Malaysia. They call for further research on art criticism in Malaysia to better understand the problem and develop effective solutions.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to identify and examine issues and problems in art criticism in Malaysia using observation and documentation methods. Data is gathered from scholarly articles, research papers, and a scholarly web database, with key phrases like art criticism, visual art in Malaysia, and issue and problem chosen. Key phrases are chosen from catalogs, publications, and internet-based digital data and most scientific literature has a publication date exceeding five years and is very limited. The study directly addresses current issues and problems in art criticism in Malaysia, using data from document studies as validation and literature review. The database significantly impacts future research fields.

The analysis of observation data is like interview data, using Microsoft EXCEL for categorization and triangulation. (Ganesha & Aithal, 2022) emphasizes that data should be analyzed qualitatively, regardless of systematic observation or participant observation, to find similarities and differences, facilitating the process of finding similarities and differences. Content analysis is a method that involves coding raw data and creating media that captures relevant content features (Page et al., 2022). The process involves discernment, examination, comparison, contrast, and interpretation of significant patterns or themes. The data is inputted, comprehended, and documented utilizing the Microsoft Excel software. The data was analyzed using the triangulation method to gather and prepare for a constructive description, with the researcher's main goal being to identify similarities between the data from each of the evaluators. 22 eligible studies were selected for systematic review, and a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was created to extract key details for content analysis, including author, title, aim, findings, and limitations. The findings of the content analysis revealed three primary themes that can be utilized as variables in constructing the framework to identify the issue and problems in art criticism in Malaysia.

Figure 1 depicts the proposed paradigm for evaluating the issue and problems in art criticism in Malaysia.

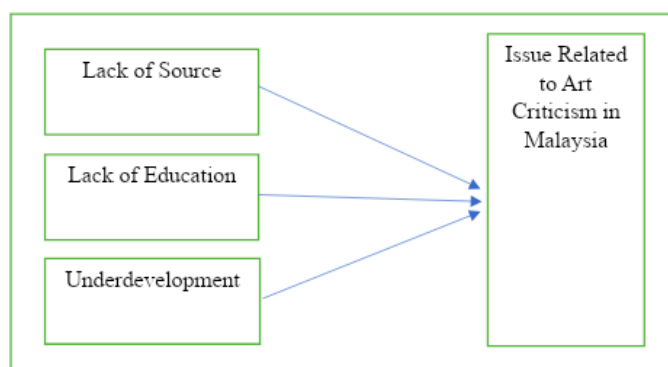


Figure 1: Variables affecting issues and problems in art criticism in Malaysia.

This study identifies three main variables affecting issues and problems in art criticism in Malaysia, there are lack of resources, lack of education, and underdevelopment. These variables act as independent variables that influence art criticism in the context of Malaysia. Research on art criticism in Malaysia has revealed three primary concerns: lack of sources, lack of education, and underdevelopment. The current state of scholarly inquiry in art criticism writing in Malaysia is marked by a lack of substantial scientific research. Despite the country's significant creativity and invention, the lack of art criticism contributes to the dullness of the artistic landscape. Further investigation is needed to address this deficiency and improve the quality of art criticism in Malaysia.

RESULTS

Numerous reviews on art criticism in Malaysia have been published to understand the current state of the topic. A systematic literature review identified three major themes such as 'Lack of Source', 'Lack of Education', and 'Underdeveloped', highlighting the need for further research.

Lack of Source

The field of Malaysian art writing encounters various obstacles, including the absence of comprehensive historical narratives, limited critical examination of exhibitions and artist biographies, and a dearth of scientific studies pertaining to visual arts. Writing in the field of visual arts in this country is also heavily focused on popular criticism. In general, the writing in this country is more related to journalistic writing. The prioritization of popular criticism over academic discourse has the potential to result in superficial conversations, whereas the application of formalistic analysis may impose constraints and hinder critical thinking. These factors impede our comprehension of the nation's artistic landscape and its evolution. Exhibition catalogue art writings are generally uncritical, using formalistic analysis to appraise artworks, aiming to appeal to a general readership, with essay content varying based on curatorial approach or theme (Sarena Abdullah, 2016). Therefore, scientific studies in various forms of new discourse are very necessary to contribute to the progress of the field of visual arts. Scientific writing in the field of visual arts is quite limited (Issarezal & Humin, 2020).

Art writing in Malaysia faces challenges in historical narratives, exhibition themes, and artist biographies, as well as the publication of a catalog accompanying an art exhibition (Siti Nur Balqis & Sarena Abdullah, 2020). Limited research papers on contemporary art make exhibition catalogue essays and writings crucial for Malaysian art reference and writings. According to Sarena Abdullah (2016), Malaysian critical and historical writings are only primarily found in catalogues, articles, and reviews, with little focus on the making, production, and staging of Malaysian art works. This refers sources very limited. Without scholarly studies and analyses, it is difficult for people to learn about the history and development of Malaysian art, and to appreciate its unique qualities.

Malaysian art criticism often overlooks the creative processes of making, producing, and staging due to inadequate training, funding, and public interest (Khoo, 2003). This neglect is attributed to issues such as inadequate funding for critics, diminished public interest in art criticism, and an emphasis on formalistic analysis in art education. This lack of attention limits our understanding of art, hinders its recognition, and obstructs the evolution of new artistic expressions. This results in a limited understanding of Malaysian artists' creative processes, hindering appreciation for their significance and limiting the development of new art forms. This leads to artists being less likely to experiment with new ideas and techniques, contributing to stagnation in the art world. To address these challenges, comprehensive training for art critics, increased funding for art criticism, educational initiatives and outreach programs, and reforming art education to include a broader range of analytical approaches beyond formalistic analysis is essential.

There also less of interest among the young generation in art theory and philosophy in Malaysian contemporary art (Badrolhisham, 2003). This can be attributed to insufficient intellectualism documentation, as comments, criticism, explanations (Chon & Sim, 2019), and analysis should focus on intrinsic and thoughts, rather than technical aspects. To create a vibrant and dynamic art scene in Malaysia, there is a need for more books and articles on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of Malaysian art, exposure to international art theory and philosophy, and opportunities for young

people to travel and study abroad. The young generation in Malaysia is largely disinterested in art theory and philosophy in contemporary art due to several factors. These include a lack of intellectualism documentation in Malaysian art, a focus on technical aspects in art criticism, and a lack of exposure to international art theory and philosophy. To create a dynamic art scene, there is a need to produce more books and articles on the theoretical and philosophical foundations of Malaysian art, encourage art critics to focus on the meaning and significance of art, expose young people to international art theory and philosophy through scholarships and exchange programs, and provide opportunities for young people to travel and study abroad. By addressing these challenges, a more informed and engaged public for art in Malaysia can be created, leading to a more vibrant and dynamic art scene.

Lack of Education

The teaching and learning of art criticism in Malaysia has not significantly impacted the arts industry (Azman, 2008). There are still too many gaps that exist in the field of art education that need attention. The arts business in Malaysia is facing significant challenges attributed to many deficiencies in art education, encompassing the absence of a well-defined curriculum, an absence of trained art critics, insufficient resources, and inadequate public recognition of its significance. To effectively tackle these concerns, it is imperative to develop a complete curriculum, provide training for qualified art critics, allocate additional resources, and enhance public awareness. The implementation of this measure is expected to yield substantial enhancements to the arts sector in Malaysia.

The emphasis on science and technology in Malaysian life has pushed away the artistic and cultural realm from government policies and popular consciousness, leading to students majoring in sciences rather than arts (Sarena Abdullah, 2016). The prioritization of science and technology within Malaysian society has resulted in a disregard for the creative and cultural domain. Government policies tend to prioritize STEM education over arts education, while prevailing societal attitudes tend to undervalue the significance of arts in comparison to sciences. Consequently, students are increasingly choosing to pursue majors in the field of sciences, driven by the perception that such degrees offer greater prospects for long-term professional stability. Furthermore, the prominence of the arts in Malaysian society is diminished because of inadequate financial support allocated to arts education and organizations. To tackle this issue, it is imperative to modify government laws to provide greater support for arts education. Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance public awareness through educational initiatives and media promotion.

Mohd Johari (2013) said there is still no syllabus on learning art criticism specifically in schools and universities in Malaysia. The absence of a formal curriculum pertaining to art criticism inside educational institutions in Malaysia is a substantial challenge to its advancement. The phenomenon can be attributed to various factors, including insufficient education of educators, limited public engagement, and inadequate allocation of resources. By attending to these concerns, it is possible to foster a livelier and evolving artistic landscape inside the nation. Enhancing the comprehension and implementation of art criticism within the nation can be facilitated by the implementation of more training programs, heightened public awareness initiatives, and the provision of expanded resources.

Underdeveloped

Malaysia's lack of research and art criticism activities hinders the production of art objects, resulting in insufficient development in contemporary visual arts (Mohd Faizuan, 2013). The presence of research and art criticism plays a crucial role in the advancement of art since they establish a structured approach to comprehending and assessing artistic works. The absence of research and art criticism diminishes the likelihood of artists encountering novel ideas and approaches, hence reducing the visibility and appreciation of their work among a broader audience.

The dearth of research and art criticism in Malaysia can be attributed to several problems, namely inadequate financial support for these endeavors, insufficient training, and education in the field of art criticism, and a general lack of public engagement and enthusiasm for art criticism. These concerns can be effectively mitigated by the implementation of strategies such as augmenting financial resources allocated to research and art criticism, enhancing training and educational opportunities in the field of art criticism, and fostering more public awareness of the significance of art criticism. The dearth

of study and art criticism in Malaysia constitutes a significant issue that seriously affects the advancement of modern visual arts inside the nation. By examining the various variables that contribute to this issue, we may facilitate the development of a more robust and dynamic artistic landscape in Malaysia.

The country is confronted with difficulties pertaining to art criticism and writing because of the dearth of trained art critics and the multifaceted responsibilities assumed by writers, artists, historians, and gallery administrators (Sarena Abdullah, 2012). This lack of expertise makes it difficult to produce high-quality scholarship on Malaysian art. The shortage of art critics and art historians in Malaysia hinders the production of high-quality scholarship on Malaysian art. These professionals are crucial for the study and interpretation of art, as they have the expertise to analyze and evaluate works in a rigorous and informed manner. The lack of funding for training and education in these fields, as well as the lack of public interest in these fields, contribute to the problem. This makes it difficult to attract students and find publishers for books and articles on art criticism and art history.

The absence of art critics and art historians in Malaysia poses a significant obstacle to the generation of scholarly works of exceptional quality on Malaysian art, constrains the extent of public recognition and admiration, and impedes the advancement of novel artistic expressions. In a publication by Utusan Malaysia, Dr. Mohd. Najib Ahmad Dawa, the former director of the National Visual Art Gallery, as cited in Mohd Faizuan & Nasir (2016) expressed his viewpoint. that the issue arose due to a lack of a solid foundation in publications and institutions in visual arts criticism. To effectively tackle this matter, it is imperative to allocate additional financial resources towards the enhancement of training and education in these respective disciplines. Furthermore, it is crucial to augment the availability of scholarships for students pursuing these fields of study. Additionally, it is essential to foster public awareness of the significance of art criticism and history. This initiative is expected to contribute to the cultivation of a vibrant art scene and enhance the public's comprehension and admiration of artistic endeavors.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study introduces a framework that establishes the foundation for future investigations into the obstacles and issues surrounding art criticism in Malaysia. This study examines several crucial characteristics pertaining to art criticism, including its societal significance, the educational background and training of art critics, the accessibility of art criticism periodicals, and the level of public knowledge of art criticism. The framework additionally recognizes potential antecedents, including the historical, cultural, political, economic, and art world circumstances of the country. The framework has a high degree of flexibility and adaptability, enabling researchers to engage in quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research approaches, hence facilitating the examination of art criticism within many contextual settings.

The suggested paradigm is expected to generate attention among both practitioners and the academic community. The proposed model would provide practitioners with an enhanced awareness of the aspects that lead to issues and problems in the field of art criticism in Malaysia. The proposed model presents a significant research opportunity for the academic community to conduct validation studies, with the aim of either supporting or challenging the proposed framework. The incorporation of the findings from this study has the potential to enhance the art criticism curriculum. In the final analysis of this framework, it is pertinent to highlight a few noteworthy points. The present study aims to investigate the correlation between antecedent elements, namely the absence of source variables, and the field of art criticism in Malaysia.

Additionally, this research seeks to examine the impact of these factors on the advancement of art criticism in Malaysia, with the intention of further inquiry in this area. Furthermore, by comprehending the antecedent elements associated with a deficiency in education and their influence on art criticism education, institutions can develop insights that may enhance the quality of art criticism education and promote more effective learning outcomes in the future. Finally, given that the efficacy of art criticism has a direct or indirect influence on the progress of Malaysian art, an improved

understanding of the achievements of art criticism will undoubtedly contribute to a more lucid explanation of the success of Malaysian art.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to review existing issues and problems in art criticism in Malaysia, identifying gaps such as lack of source, lack of education, and underdevelopment. The researchers suggest a more detailed study using a qualitative approach, focusing on contemporary Malaysian environments. They will obtain opinions from experts in visual art through interview processes, and based on approved results, continue the research by providing interview protocols for data collection from art criticism experts. The study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary art scene in Malaysia.

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