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AN APPRECIATION OF ART IN MALAYSIA: THE PROBLEMS AND BENEFITS IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on the problems and benefits of art in Malaysia. An Appreciation of art is not just appreciation as the meaning of the words, but the appreciation of art includes knowing, recognizing, understanding, and appreciating. Theoretically, these four scopes of appreciations are required to be mastered in order to appreciate an artwork and to make an artistic criticism accurately. The critical issues regarding art scene in Malaysia is categorized into three groups, namely, the group of traditional artwork (artwork whose form and function is still "pure"), the group of modern artwork that has been "adapted" or given "new breath" of traditional art (art traditional that has been combined with modern elements includes either in form or function), and a group of modern works that use the Western approaches (forms of modern works from the West which has been brought into Malaysia). This makes the method of art criticism in Malaysia become exceptional and unique.

INTRODUCTION

A work of art is perfected by someone who understands it. In order to appreciate a work of art we must have a deep knowledge of the background of the art itself. The word "appreciation" comes from the foreign words "*appreciatie*" (Dutch), "*appreciation*" (English), and according to English dictionaries, "*to appreciate*", which is the form of the verb, means: to judge the value of; understand or enjoy fully in the right way (Oxford, 2010); to grasp the nature,

worth, quality, or significance of; to value or admire highly; to judge with heightened perception or understanding : be fully aware of; to recognize with gratitude (Webster, 2020); and there are still those who add it... to be sensitive to the aesthetic value of (Sudarso,1990).

According to Bandem (1996), the above quotation can be understood normally that the understanding of art appreciation is, knowing, evaluating, appreciating and sensitive to aesthetic values. The understanding of appreciation of art is wide and deep, and even to appreciate a work of art, it is not enough only with formal knowledge of art but also includes knowledge of the background of a work of art. This statement is further reinforced as follows;

(...) Appreciate more or less means: fully understand and realize to be able to evaluate properly; being in relation to art becomes: fully understanding and realizing the intricacies of a work of art as well as being sensitive to its aesthetic aspects, so as to be able to enjoy and evaluate the work properly (I.M. Bandem, 1996).

Agreed by Mamannoor (1999), that to appreciate a work of art, one must be able to master and know the background of the work of art appreciated and also be able to immerse the feelings and desires of artists. The observers who appreciate a work of art must have a wide level of knowledge in the field of art, in fact they are also composed of art critics or in other words, they are composed of people who are "art literate". If the word appreciation is only taken from English, Appreciation means appreciating, so an understanding of appreciation is not only knowing, appreciating and being sensitive to aesthetic values, but also appreciating. Mamannoor says:

(...) The meaning of appreciation can be interpreted as an attitude or action of a person towards something after being able to achieve understanding. Therefore, if the term appreciation is used as an introduction to understand, it must have experienced misinterpretation. Because appreciation is not something that is to convey a person to understand, but to mark the existence of understanding with an attitude or act of appreciation. New expressions of appreciation can be expressed when something is already understood and worthy and worthy of appreciation (Mamannoor,1999).

The statements above are showing that, if the understanding of appreciation of art is clear, hence, the process of appreciation of art can be done perfectly. However, it must be kept in mind that there is no confusion that we must limit ourselves to the form and field of art that will be appreciated. Generally, art has a great aptitude and scopes of appreciation. Usually, when we talk about art appreciation, most people will focus their views on visual art, but keep in mind that the scopes of art appreciation are wider (Van Geert & Wagemans, 2020). Art is not only limited in the context of visual arts only, but also includes other branches of art such as, music, dance, theater, literary, record media and other fields related to art (Alexander, 2020). This paper discusses on how to achieve a level of perfection in art appreciation which required the observer not only know but it is required to master the main elements associated with the work of art. The main elements are focused on the beauty, the aesthetics and the artist

itself. Further by additional elements related to the community environment such as, traditional elements, economic elements, political elements and so on.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Relationship Between Beauty, Aesthetics and Artists in Art Appreciation.

The appreciation of art is best that we understand the connection between works of art and the artists (Leder, 2010). Theoretically, it has been mentioned by the scholars that in artwork itself, there are a value of beauty and an aesthetic value (Leder, Gerger, Dressler & Schabmann, 2012). The elements found in the artwork can be said to be an "internal" element where it merges in the work. Both elements, coupled with the artist's creator, are the basis for achieving a more perfect appreciation of art. which I have mentioned before, these three elements are inseparable when appreciating art, even observers should also examine the "external" elements that characterize society such as, social, economic, and political elements.

Appreciation of Beauty

In appreciation of beauty, Malaysian's famous artists and art philosopher, Syed Ahmad Jamal stated that the value of beauty exists in observation and it is considered the ultimate noble for the formation of interest (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1992). Art is beauty. Agreed by Ibrahim Titus Burckhardt, that the essence of art is beauty, and the beauty of its own original nature is the inner reality and the external reality of something (Ibrahim Titus Burckhardt, 1989). Moreover, in the context of art appreciation, the beauty of a work is not essentially the work of beauty. The beauty in a work of art is not physical or visible to the naked eye, but the real beauty is the pleasure enjoyed from the nature and function of the work. The favor of this beauty creates satisfaction and from this satisfaction there is an aesthetic assessment in the observer. Appreciation of beauty here is a pleasure and inner satisfaction stimulated by works of art. Observers must empathize and understand the meaning and background of the work. To appreciate the beauty of a work depends on the emotions and experiences of the observer. An ancient work studied not in its time is clearly not beautiful in the context of physical beauty. The work becomes beautiful if we empathize and understand the meaning of the work in its time.

Aesthetic Appreciation

Aesthetics mean something related to the sense of observation of a thing or atmosphere that emphasizes the artistic or beauty aspect, not emphasizing the usefulness aspect (Herbert Read, 1971). According to Herbert Read, in making aesthetic observations we must perform three levels of activity;

(...) First, is the observation of material qualities, - color, sound, attitude, and other physical reactions; Second, is the arrangement of the results of the observation into a soothing shape and pattern...third, that is, when the order was made, his creation related to the emotions or feelings he had felt before. So, it can be said that emotions and feelings are expressed (Herbert Read, 1971). [sic.]

The observation of art in the context of aesthetic enjoyment is something that requires the observation of feelings and emotions in the observer. Moreover, the process of aesthetic enjoyment we must isolate the work of art with its environment or its physical use. This is because something that is not beautiful can be accepted in a beautiful way in aesthetic observation.

The taste theory introduced in India in the 4th century A.D. to the 5th M AD which has tried to combine aesthetics with taste or “rasa” and emotions (Pollock, 2016). In the theory of taste, emotions become 'feelings', that is, a state of pure happiness (Fingerhut & Prinz, 2020). One of the Malaysian’s famous artist, Syed Ahmad Jamal (1992) stated that; “*It is a state of ordinary being extraordinary - as if the soul is contemplating something final*”. In this theory, props will focus their emotions and feelings into the desired atmosphere. When his feelings and emotions have empathized with the atmosphere, his feelings can appreciate the aesthetic value of the atmosphere, here the props themselves have been dominated by emotions and feelings as if hypnotized. This can be seen in the Taipusan festival for the Indian tribes, they penetrated their bodies and tongues with needles and iron without feeling pain, in fact it was a satisfaction to the test in showing a deep sense of loyalty to their deity. Here the feeling of props has appreciated aesthetic values according to their beliefs (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1992).

Appreciation of Working Artists

Appreciating artists as artists, as well as study the anthropology and sociology of artists. Artists are cultural beings who are inseparable from the life of society. The artist will express his ideas and experiences into the work he created. Here the artwork is the medium of communication between the artist and the community. In other words, whatever an artist draws, his work will surely reflect his personality, will be a result of his special observations (Sudarso, 1990). In the process of appreciating artists, we cannot be limited to the personal aspects of the artist alone, for example the level of knowledge of the artist (science and technique), the level of expression and the level of imagination, instead we must also include "external" elements such as social and cultural aspects of artists, districts residence, economic status of the community, beliefs and so on. Here we can appreciate a work of art from an artist and his environment and we can also appreciate an artist from his work. The real difference, in appreciating the artist’s work by appreciating the work of art is a form of appreciation. The artist's appreciation of the artist can vary according to the artist's emotions and personal circumstances, while the appreciation of the artwork is static (unchanged) because the work is the ultimate embodiment of the artist's ideas.

PROBLEMS OF ART APPRECIATION IN MALAYSIA AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ART FORMS.

In general, the appreciation of art is universal, but when it comes to the appreciation of art of our country from the local artists it can be utterly special. The appreciation of art in Malaysia are based on the patterns and characteristics of art itself. Siti Zainon Ismail (1977), Malaysian woman artist, a poet and a philosopher stated that the artworks in Malaysia can be categorized into three groups, namely, groups of traditional works of art (works of art whose form and

function is still "pure"), groups of modern works of art that have been "adapted" or given "breath" of traditional art (traditional art that has been combined) with modern elements either in form or function), and a group of modern works that use the Western approach (forms of modern works from the West brought into Malaysia). When we talk about the appreciation of traditional art that is regional in nature it will be special. It is less appropriate if we use the method of theoretical knowledge with a Western perspective to appreciate traditional art that is regional in nature, this is because the "climate" of art in Malaysia has its own characteristics, for example traditional art forms related to beliefs and religions. In the appreciation of traditional art in Malaysia, the regional culture of the community that places the nation's cultural art belongs to each other (Siti Zainon Ismail, 1977).

The concept of art and culture of shared culture has formed a harmonious society towards the formation of unity and unity of society. However, the main reasons that hinders the appreciation of traditional art are the nature of regional cultures and tradition that formed an art which oftenly cannot be accepted by the society. For example, the traditional Mak Yong dance in Kelantan. Most of Malaysians did not appreciate the dance as work of art except by the Kelantanese, the local community its surroundings (Hardwick, 2020). Therefore, to overcome this problem of appreciation, an organization or association needs to be formed to counsel or give the Malaysians awareness regarding this traditional heritage needs to be known, admired and appreciated. Furthermore, to encounter these problems, we need to construct its own method from the nature of its regional culture and traditions. One of the suggestions is, the Western perspective but should be adapted to the local situation e.g., to appreciate the traditional work of art with the Western approaches. In this case, the traditional arts that undergo changes as a result of changes in the function or creativity of the artist.

Another good example, Prof. Dr. I Made Bandem (1996)'s mentioned in *The Evolution of Balinese Dance*, and he underlined that the people of Bali have classified Balinese dance based on its nature and function into Wali dance (sacral dance), bebalidance (dance for religious ceremonies), and balih-balihan (for viewing and entertainment). Mamannoor (1999) further discussed on this topic that these examples show that to appreciate the dance wali and dance baby for the Balinese people of course do not have problems, but to appreciate the dance alternately will face obstacles due to dance alternately is a dance for viewing and entertainment (either tourists or the local community) that has abandoned the original function of the dance (dance that is magical or religious). This statement has agreed by Ismail (1977) that when an art that has magical elements or beliefs for a society is transferred to function, appreciation in the context of appreciation will decrease and this will be one of the problems in appreciation of art. In the appreciation of modern visual art (which has received western influences), knowledge is an obstacle in the appreciation of art (Siti Zainon Ismail, 1977). Obviously, the modern visual art that is usually individualistic in producing works will form the distance between works of art and society. This is because art is not entirely a way of life in Malaysia. Observers will have trouble appreciating works of art due to lack of knowledge to appreciate such works. To appreciate the modern visual arts of Malaysian

society must be given a guide that is appropriate to the field of art to be appreciated. Mamannoor reveals:

(...) Because the basis of understanding and method of enjoyment as well as the benchmark of fine art in Indonesia embraces the principle of equality with fine art in the world, then the dependence of Indonesian art on matters related to the basis of knowledge always tends to be in the shadow of the West (Mamannoor, 1999)

In the context of modern visual art, artists are creators who use the knowledge and resources around them to create ideas in producing works. Modern art thus pursues novelty, pursuit of the new, different from the others. The boundaries of modern art know no bounds, except the limits of the artist's imagination (Sudarso, 1990). The statement of the attitude of modern artists who often pursue this novelty has led to the occurrence of "chase game" between artists and appreciation of art. Due to the dependence on the Western pattern by modern artists in Malaysia finally poses a problem in finding the national personality in artwork in Malaysia. Although there are some artists who try to show the national personality through the work produced. The adoption of traditional elements in works of art, especially modern art, has finally become a problem for the struggle of groups of painters who seek to display a national personality in their paintings (Siti Zainon Ismail, 1977). The obstacle they face is the deviation in the appreciation of art that they struggle with by art observers. The art observer community still uses Western patterns to appreciate the work that shows the national personality because to this day Malaysia does not have many Malaysian visual arts knowledge tools. When we discuss the appreciation of art in the context of art in Malaysia, the change in the flow of art in the field of art in Malaysia which is stimulated by the change of Western art has also made a "commotion" of appreciation and critics of the country's art, for example from Conceptual art to installation art has required in-depth knowledge of education to know understand it, what else to appreciate it.

In contrast, the art of music is an abstract art, where there is no element of imitation of nature. We use our ears as senses to enjoy and appreciate music. Appreciation of art in the field of music art fully uses one's sensitivity and responsiveness to the appreciation of the art of music. Appreciation of the art of music makes full use of aesthetic feelings. Someone who does not know about music can appreciate music. For example, a father forbade his son to play music because in response the father of his descendants did not inherit the talent to play music. But the fact is that the daily life of the father is always accompanied by music.

BENEFITS OF ART APPRECIATION

As it mentioned previously, the purpose of appreciation of art is to enjoy, appreciate, understand and appreciate the works of art. If the whole statement is summarized it can be said as knowledge and appreciation of art. Sudarso (1990) mentioned that the main purpose of maintaining the appreciation of art is to make the community "art literate", can receive art properly (Sudarso, 1990). When society has reached a level "art literate" society will be able to learn, appreciate and appreciate art more comprehensively. Human social life cannot

be separated from artistic activities, whether it be daily needs or emotional satisfaction. As a result, various forms of artwork were created from the time of our ancestors until now (whether it is an artifact or a culture). With the appreciation of art society will always appreciate the contribution of the ancestors and can create a love for the culture of the nation itself and also fellow human beings. In appreciating art, we are not limited to local artwork that is regional (traditional art) but we also learn and appreciate artwork from outside that is universal (modern art) (I.M. Bandem, 1996).

The result of this openness of knowledge can create enrichment of knowledge and soul of the nation and at the same time can create confidence and identity of Malaysia. By mixing the appreciation of art that is regional and universal in the artwork in Malaysia, then by itself can raise the dignity of art that is regional in nature that characterizes the nation's culture to the international level. An example can be seen from the pattern of appreciation mentioned earlier, where in appreciating art we usually use Western patterns but in appreciating art that is regional we must combine regional patterns with universal patterns. The combination of these two elements eventually elevated the art of regional nature to the international level. Finally, with the full appreciation of art in Malaysia will create a nation with a strong identity to be an example to the outside world in facing the era of globalization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the artworks in Malaysia undergo changes according to the "journey" of the creativity, taste and desire of artists and society which has created various forms of the artwork. As it can be seen, there are many works of art such as traditional works of art that are rational, traditional works that are influenced by external elements (modern), modern works that are influenced by traditional elements and external works (modern) completely. The changes occurred in the form of artwork in Malaysia is due to the openness of artists and the community in accepting and processing old and new art forms. The result of the open attitude of the artists and the community has made Malaysia some country rich in various forms of artworks.

RECOMMENDATION

As a result, the emergence of various forms of artwork which have been influenced by outsiders has made *commotion* "Appreciation of art and has finally led to the existence of a distance between works of art and society. To "shorten the distance" finally occurs the process of "changing" in the context of art appreciation between artists and appreciation. The more forms of artwork, the more obstacles were confronted in the appreciation of the artwork itself. To overcome this problem or to "shorten the distance" between works of art and society, education is a key role in realizing a society that cares about art that can appreciate art. As we all know, appreciating art is not an easy task, but if there is an integrated extension towards the appreciation of art, at least there is a society that knows art.

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