

# READING OBJECTS: A PARADOX OF INTERPRETATION IN MALAYSIAN CONTEMPORARY ART

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In Malaysia, there is a paradox of interpretation in the context of visual epistemology. Therefore, this study aims at unlocking the problems in the production of knowledge in the art. In addition, Malaysian contemporary artists appear to have insufficient intellectualism values and no shared vision. The lacks of scholars in the field of visual arts create a gap in the visual arts scene in Malaysia. The question of this study was to uncover the main problems in Malaysian visual arts that led to the problem of interpretation. This is a qualitative study that uses a triangulation method to gather multiple data sources for validation purposes. Furthermore, face to face interviews and document studies conducted in the respondents' perception of the problems. The analysis is supported by evidence obtained from observation of the several art discourses. Findings of this study revealed the importance of world knowledge and perception of art based on the critical interpretation. In addition, findings of this study also presents the awareness of the valuable contributions in the visual art not only physical object but also brought the knowledge that can develop further to enhance the communication in the art object.*

**Keywords:** *art object, idea, art knowledge, interpretation, perception, contemporary art*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In Malaysia, the object of visual art has a paradox interpretation. In my opinion, interpretation of art object is merely superficial and descriptive. Thus, it is a solely presentation or documentation of descriptive. This problem arises due to the lack of research or the influx of artists rather than the intelligent writer and curator. According to Badrolhisham (2003) there is imbalance between arts graduated and art publication in Malaysia. Their justification of art never mentioned except the existence of them in the arena of contemporary art as continuity chain. Comments, criticism, explanation, description, analysis, and any other matters on the corner of intrinsic and thoughts should be plenty rather than stripping on the technical aspects, skills and the elements and principles of art. This scenario gives an indication that the lack of interest of young generation to the art theory and philosophy. Thus, it can be insufficient intellectualism documentation in Malaysian contemporary art. In this case, it is clear that knowledge of the arts is very important to be developed especially on the interpretation part. However, Malaysian contemporary visual arts have yet to arrive at this point. As states by Badrolhisham (2003) that our art scene now in a crisis of arts knowledge. He believed that the 'mysterious' phenomena of the art are able to offer more of what we expect. It turns out the progress of the visual

arts in Malaysia will be located on the intellectual artists. Knowledge of art should be explored further in the work of art in order to create the impact in terms of thinking. However, not many studies about the knowledge of art made by artists, academicians, curators, or any person involved in the art fields.

Indeed, the interpretation problem will lead to the weakness of institutional thinking in the community of Malaysian visual art. Thus, it raises a paradox to the Malaysian visual art development. In Malaysia, we also have the potential of art objects and have the ability to continue to reach new paradigm. Openness we claimed in the realisation of an empire of critical thinking in our art scene. In the western world, the study of art objects has been happening and we should also continue to make our art objects as subjects to be explored. Through the discipline of anthropology and philosophy, we may be able to widen the study of knowledge in the art. Savedoff (1989) states that we can see an object as a work of art because of the ideas that hover around it and these ideas also determine the direction of interpretation that can be taken from the work of art. In other words, an idea is knowledge in the art that will serve the community, audiences, researchers and the owners. However, these art objects are best viewed as something that is not art, the status of art cannot be purely physical. Therefore, it certainly emphasises on the importance of theory, context and knowledge of art. So, do we ever produce our own art theory and use in institutional thinking in Malaysia? There is research that dwells on the role of art objects in offering knowledge in the west. Diamond (2004) considers the role of art objects with contemporary world is confusing paradox. The emphasis that we provide may only be bound to the technical skills.

Finally, the importance of knowledge in the art particularly in Malaysia seems ignored by our community. Production of art objects as a product of culture has been more and more produced. However, it is not yet giving a strong impact in terms of thought or the birth of a new paradigm. Therefore, the present study sought to examine the problem that we have in visual art that cause to the lack of critical interpretation and the lack of visual art research. The intentions of this paper are: i) that variety interpretation will benefit the viewer in term of art knowledge; and (ii) that will gather some

issues and problem that led to the paradox of interpretation. The first section gives a brief about the meaning of art; this is followed by a section concerning relations between that art objects and thought.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *The Meaning of Art*

As Dutton (2009) explain, "Art" is a word in English, the history and vagaries of which can be usefully studied. "This might be an interesting semantic exercise," Moravcsik says, "but it is not directly related to the many phenomenon we can examine" by broadening attention to the concept of art as universal category (p.47). Artist too universal to define. Although in general it is said to portray a beauty, or aesthetic skills delivery, there are no clear guidelines in principle. In addition, Goguen (2000) stated that the essays of Paul Gauguin had stressed the importance of the question 'What is Art?' "A trip to the dictionary (noting also cousin words such as "artefact," "artisan," "artificial," and "article") can show that "art" refers to something composed by men as an artist. However, the artists themselves pushing the boundaries of the definition, challenging prejudice and to leave most of the philosophers, psychologists, and critics are very far behind. As (Pooke, 2008) explain a broader definition of art encompasses global activity, which produces work with aesthetic value including performance, visual art, architecture and film making. "For example, architecture has always had a close connection to painting, sculpture and drawing, two instances being classical revival in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the Bauhaus aesthetics of the 1930s which frequently integrated fine art with design, craft and architecture" (Pooke, 2008, p. 5).

However, art is not just a matter of beauty but it is a medium of knowledge to be delivered to society. Various explanation of art that led to the idea of aesthetics has discussed by the art philosopher, art historian and art critic. As explained by (Danto, 1971) regarding Plato insinuates that art is a sort of perversion, a substitute, deflected, compensatory activity engaged in by those who are impotent to be what as a expedient they imitate. Plato fundamental assumption: that art is a form of mimesis, imitation. In contrast,

Hegel (1975) stated that by mere imitation, art cannot stand in competition with nature, and, if it tries, it looks like a worm trying to crawl after an elephant. In addition, art for Hegel is the expression to understand the spirit of itself. In Hegel's view, this sensuous expression of free spirits constitutes beauty. However, as stated by Kant (1790) that beauty lies not in understanding the presentation of objects to create a logical judgment or cognition judgment but an aesthetic one by which we mean determining a judgment whose basis cannot be other than subjective. He added that now art has always had a fixed intention to produce something. But if something is merely sensation accompanied by pleasure, then we would like this product in the judgment, but it only by means of the feeling of sense. If the intention is directed at producing a determine object we wish to achieved by the art, it is only through the concept.

Nevertheless, as explained by Harries (2009) that Heidegger tells us "The essence of art would be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work. But until now the limit of art has presumably to do with the beautiful and beauty, and not with truth. Heidegger claims that it is the artist, and not the scientist actually shows us the truth. These scholars see the creation of art is not merely producing art objects alone. But art has a specific definition that enlivens the knowledge about the art itself. Plato explained that art was mimesis (imitation) of nature. However, Hegel has its own definition that art is about the spirit of freedom. Heidegger also has his own interpretation and review by saying that art brings us to the revealing truth of Being. Furthermore, Kant's have the interest of the objects (work of arts) and subjects (thought) that lead to the study of beauty (aesthetics). In Malaysia, there is a lack of art publication that led to the knowledge of art. Thus, it shows the gap between art production (visual arts) and knowledge of art. In fact, there is no thought or theory proposed by pioneer artist or anyone else involved in Malaysian visual art scene. However, knowledge in the art was anchored when Redza Piyadasa and Sulaiman Esa proposed their critical efforts through *Towards a Mystical Reality*, (1974). Syed Ahmad Jamal was trying to suggest a way of Malays in the visual arts through *Rupa dan Jiwa* in 1979. As a result, there is no radical change in Malaysia after that. Therefore, we wanted something that disrupts the visual arts norms in Malaysia if we want to be called contemporary.

## 2.2 *The Role of Art Object*

The role of the art object in contemporary art there seems to be a confusing paradox. The art historian Charles Harrison states in 'Art in Theory' (1998) that the anthology be treated not solely as a resource to study art but that it be accompanied by 'first-hand experience of modern art' (Harrison, 1992). David Davies also stresses the importance of a 'direct experiential encounter with an instance of a work' (Davies, 2003). Yet despite this stress on the direct experience of artworks it seems that, as noted by Vickery, the conceptual or hermeneutic aspects of art seem to be those which are most valued within the contemporary art world (Vickery, 2004). The idea that the conveying of knowledge in art and design needs to be communicated via demonstration rather than via precepts was initially persuasive. The visual art object cannot communicate knowledge-it can. Instead, this knowledge is typically of a superficial nature and cannot account for the deep insights that art is usually thought to endow into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc. (Scrivener, 2002). The study recognises some activities of artists as research activities.

However, the lack of widespread agreement on the theoretical foundation of this position has engendered an on-going debate concerning the meaning and nature of arts research. The studies by Wexler (2006) examine how aesthetic meaning of objects develops as a result of individual, cultural, social, and political causes. Analysis of aesthetic meaning-making has its history in the century-old debate between nature and nurture, a debate still alive in the new century (Ridley, 2003). In the first part of the twentieth century, the behaviourism of psychology and education that located learning in nature, gave way at the end of the century to the environment as the constructor of human development. His study will is in a specific segment of this debate - the political nature of making personal and cultural meaning of objects (both ordinary and aesthetic) by which we are attracted, perplexed, or repelled. Objects cannot deliver knowledge, art objects and contribution, the role of art objects in art institutions; this is a starting point to the question discussed. The main object of art to question whether it can bring knowledge or it is merely an object of art that comes from the expression of artists

casually. Without such in-depth study of what he wanted to share, something that made the art objects in question about the meaning and contribution.

Indeed many references taken from the outside than Malaysia itself. This is because fertility in the research and publication of visual arts has yet to arrive. We do not feel lost or disappointed with the production of art objects in Malaysia. Perhaps, we are more excited about physical beauty rather than knowledge that supply in it. Thus, we are not excited about the direction to investigate the role of art objects in the mire of our art, let alone in the world of contemporary art. Production of art objects in this country seems longer need the theory but only heap objects that unidentified the subject.

“In Malaysia, I find the depth missing. The intensity of our time does not happen anymore. I don’t see young artists talking anymore, not like me and Piyadasa...There is no commonality, and no shared vision...they are more individualistic. Without theory, you can’t go deep. You need theory to go deep. Otherwise we end up imitating the west. We have produced practitioners but we have not produced thinkers, historians, philosophers, theoreticians...the thinkers are missing, the mind is not there, that’s why *buatgambarsaja!*” - Prof. Madya Dr. Sulaiman Esa-Malaysian Art Now, 2004 (p. 6).

Sulaiman Esa statement gives the impression that the artist in Malaysia is the lack of intellectual values. An art object that they produce is simply the production of images which is not supported by theory or a particular philosophy. Artists are no longer talking in order to articulate or express their own ideology. When the theory is no longer hovering on the modus operandi of the artist’s work or research done by them it can only lead to the production of an object without a subject. Thus we seem to be at loss to explain or begin to understand the ways in which objects of art in contemporary art can act as a form of communication or transformation of knowledge.

### 2.3 *The Interpretation and Perception*

According to Veverka (2007), the best definition of interpretation derived from: "Interpretation is a communication process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage, through involvement with objects, artefacts, landscapes and sites." - Interpretation Canada (1976) <http://www.heritageinterp.com/whatis.htm>.

He stated that for communication to be interpretive it should trigger provoke, relate, reveal, have unity message and address the whole. Purpose of interpretation is to provocation, not instruction. He added that the interpretation of communication not simply presenting information, but specific communication strategies to translate something to the people, to everyday language of visitor. While, Youngentob (2009) states that the interpretation is a process to facilitate the complicated ideas and share with the more general audience. When used effectively, the interpretation can even convince and motivate people to make changes in their thinking or behaviour. In some ways, the interpretation is a lot like marketing. You need to understand your audience in order to be effective.

In the world of art, interpretation is a very important aspect. Interpretation is a mechanism that can make an art community to be maturity and strengthen the thinking. Interpret a work of art requires a critical analysis and should be not merely descriptive comment. As state by Mathis (2004) analyse works of art has become a big business. In fact, it is far greater than the business of art itself. With the avant-garde is often difficult to separate artefacts from the literature interpretation. However, as we in Malaysia have not reached this stage where we only make an explanation to the artworks rather than analyse.

According to Ricouer (1981) explanation is thought to be borrowed from the natural sciences and positivism central tool. On the other hand, interpretation is a major form of understanding, is considered specific to the human sciences. He tried to deconstruct the binary between explanation and interpretation. However, the explanation and interpretation does not conflict per se, but they have complementary and reciprocal relationship and through reading are ultimately reconciled. In addition, perception is the first mechanism occurs before the presence of interpretation. It is where we have

ability to develop on what we perceive. According to Ramanov (2011) perception is feelings, ideas, thoughts, theories and including the senses. The concept is the 'final point' and allows us to see the difference. Perception is the ability to understand the difference. He added that the perception unlike as physical ability, our perception is without limits and it is something that can be changed and developed. However, perceptions vary from person to person. The same situation, but they perceive things differently. In fact, it may create a different meaning in their work.

Furthermore, there is a model built by Lachapelle *et al.* (2003) that called Model of The Aesthetic Understanding as Informed Experience to provide clarification process understanding and appreciation of art works from the perspective of education. It identifies the kinds of knowledge involved and it also pinpoints the types of learning at each stage in the process that led to understand the aesthetic object. There are two phases in the process of seeing and understanding the art works in this model. The first phase of learning experience, viewers discover the prior art and to formulate the initial interpretation. Then through a process that involves learning theory, the first interpretation or audience compares to the relevant bodies external, scientific information. The second phase is the reconstruction of knowledge about the works of art. These two processes can help audience in extending or understand the objects of art and stimulate growth in art viewing skill. Finally, interpretation will lead to effective communication between art object and viewer. As stated by Youngtob (2009) that good interpretation should establish a connection between the audience and the object of interpretation. Finally, as in Malaysia, the continuity or communication between the viewer and the artist is rarely implemented. This resulted in the lacking of art knowledge formation in order to build an intellectual art community.

#### **2.4 The Communication in the Art Object**

The research is traditionally communicated through writing. While face-to-face conversations (or presentations) are not always possible or practical, written documents can be multiplied and distributed fairly easily. They can also be kept, contributing to the building of a shared knowledge base. This

study is to draw attention to the potential designed environments have when it comes to the communication of thoughts. Here, objects operate in quite literally different dimensions than the written text, Gröppel-Wegener, (2004). In visual art, objects mediate between the idea and meaning. The difficulty for the audience to understand or to get a wealth of art objects is a problem. Effective communication between objects of art with the audience demanded to obtain the same benefits.

In addition, as emphasised by Diamond (2004) that the knowledge in art and design needs to be communicated by demonstration rather than via precepts. If we follow this line, it leads us to consider the outcomes of art practice as needing to be viewed as 'objects of knowledge in their own right'. This study is the idea that the conveying of knowledge in art and design needs to be communicated more critical instead of descriptive way of writing. This has been reconsidered since recognising that referral to other artists work, both within and outside art education, usually takes the form of studying reproductions and not first-hand experiences of art objects themselves.

According to Eppler (2010) that especially in an international context, the focus of communication needs to shift from distributing information to communicating knowledge. In other words, the information in the form of facts, data, numbers and descriptions should be avoided and replaced by the vision, observations, discoveries and insights. In this process, visualisation is an important asset. However, Biggs (2004) argues "that objects alone cannot embody knowledge" because they need to be interpreted in order to communicate the knowledge and insight that is required of research. He demonstrates that this interpretation is dependent on both "intrinsic and extrinsic aspects", i.e. artefact and context. In contrast, as indicated by Niedderer (2004) if we accept the premise that artefacts / practices alone cannot advance knowledge and it depends on the context of interpretation. In which we must accept the fact that the object of art has to be a thesis written in order to provide the articulation and verifiability needs of research. In general, this may answer the question why there is a need for clarification of artefacts/creative practice. Discourse that link to the interpretation activities should be more conducted and it must be recorded for future references. However, we still aspire for these activities occur in Malaysia.

Professional documentation is important for substance in order to develop visual art in Malaysia. This also suggests a solution to the lack of art knowledge in Malaysia contemporary visual arts.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 3.1 Face to face Interview**

In this present study, the interview has been conducted through face to face interview. Questions that are discussed are concerned about the role of art objects, the importance of visual arts in Malaysia, the importance of thoughts / ideas / art knowledge, issues and major problems in the visual art and the future of Malaysian contemporary visual arts. Face to face interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people that can help you gather valid and reliable data that is relevant to your research objectives (Kahn, 1957). The interview was record in order to get the data. Technically, after the interview conducted, the researcher come to the listening and rewrites (verbatim transcript) process. However, the researcher also took notes during the interview for the support of the recording that may be blurred. Transcript has written according to every single word from the respondents and not exaggerated.

#### **3.2 Observation**

In this study, researcher conducted the observations by attending two art forums at National Visual Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Researcher have attended and heard the discussions in various art forums such 'Young Contemporary Art Awards (YCA) and 'Towards a Mystical Reality' in Raja'ah Exhibition by Sulaiman Esa at National Visual Art Gallery. The method used was participant observation. As described by Chua (2006) that the method of participant observation is a study in which researchers are part of the participants under observation. In other words, the researcher or observer involved directly with the events under review. Observations carried out with a rolling recording the forum for about two hours for each session. Photos were also taken for ancillary materials that can be put into writing. In this art forum, researcher only listening and seeing also recorded the interaction between the audience and panel.

#### **3.3 Document Studies**

Some data is very difficult to get from the interview or observation methods. In this study, alternative method to get the data is document study. As stated by Mahoney (1997a) methods of document study is useful for getting a data that cannot be observed or recorded regarding events, activities, procedures, or a group of people. Most data is gathered from the website articles, newspaper articles, magazines, exhibition catalogues, books, and also from the Facebook. Material from Facebook as well as articles from website is very useful because it offers the latest information. It is directly linked to the topics studied the current issues and problems of visual arts in Malaysia. Data from document studies related to the literature review that supported the interview and observation data as a validation.

#### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Analysing the observation data is also similar to the interview data in which they are using Microsoft EXCEL. Data entered in accordance with the categorisation in accordance with the interview data. This is to facilitate the process of triangulation to find the similarities and differences. According to Dane (1990) that regardless of the observation made by systematic observation or participant, the data should be analysed qualitatively. However, qualitative data can be quantitative to facilitate data analysis. In fact, the numerical data cannot be converted in qualitative data; it can only be used as additional data to support the qualitative data. The involvement of researcher in these art forums is to understand the visual art activities in Malaysia and also the issues that becomes a problem for constraint of the art knowledge. As mentioned by Mahoney (1997b) in order for researcher to understand the whole scenario of a field or activity, the researcher should be fully involved in the procedure will differently from the outsider observer. The process of content analysis involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the development of media that captures the relevant features of the contents (Merriam, 1998; Osman, 2005). This analysis provides ways of discerning, examining, comparing, contrasting and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes that have been decided (Berkowitz, 1997). The data has been written and understood, then recorded using Microsoft Excel software.

All data were analysed and crossed with data from other methods so-called triangulation method in order to gather the data and preparation for

constructive description. The main purpose of researcher to make data analysis is to find similarities between data in each of the evaluators.

Table 1. Data Analysis Sample

Respondents	Main Problems	Art Education	Art Criticism	Art Knowledge	Visual Art Future
<b>CR1 (Curator)</b>	Unbalance between skills and thinking	Lack of writing	Non-exist	Lack of publication	Ambiguous
<b>CR2</b>	Lack of thinking	Lack of research	Non-exist	Lack of publication	No definite direction
<b>CR3</b>	Sense of schizophrenia modularity				The future is what we do
<b>AC1 (Academician)</b>	Gap in the scholars world	Lack of talented students	Not much	Not much intelligent	Prepared for the scholars
<b>AC2</b>	National identity issues				Don't know
<b>AR1 (Artist)</b>	Art management	Need changes in art syllabus	No space to survive	No need to long explanation	Positive but still under 'comfort zone'
<b>AR2</b>	Lack of government support	No critical discussion in education levels	Non-exist	Lack of Art writer	Education decide
<b>AR3</b>	Not enough of government support	Lack of art consumerism	Not much	Superficial and analytical writing only	Convey the order and meaning
<b>ARC1 (Art Collector)</b>	Lack of intelligent publication	Education focus more on sciences	Almost non-exist	Not enough knowledge	No direction
<b>ARC2</b>	History of Art in Malaysia	Art history failure	No centre and non-exist	Lack of intelligent art writer, curator and institution	Malays artist will growing fast

## 4 RESULTS

The emergence of new artists increasingly showed an encouraging increase in the mire of contemporary visual arts Malaysia. Their basic understanding of visual art is also getting better and showing the significance of the world of art making. However, the question continues to linger is their contribution to the generation of knowledge in art itself. Their existence in the world of visual art is simply to give the sensation of the art scene in Malaysia. The contribution of artists is based on technical and production skills rather than the knowledge that can be debated further. Objects of art in Malaysia did not give any impact in terms of thinking that led to the critical interpretation. Absolutely, art is something that is enjoyed, but art is also a thought that capable of triggering a paradigm shift in a local visual arts. Nevertheless,

impact and displacement has not occurred in the visual arts in Malaysia. Contribution to society not only depends on the artists and the contributions in the form of art objects. In fact, it demands on a number of thoughts that generate knowledge that can be shared. As explained by the respondents, there are several major problems in the contemporary visual arts need to be improved. There are factor that contributed to the crisis of thought in contemporary visual arts Malaysia.

The art system consists of National Visual Art Gallery (NVAG), commercial art galleries, artists, collectors, curators and scholars should play a role in generating the world of knowledge instead of economy alone. As affirmed by the respondents that in improving the quality of contemporary visual arts in Malaysia, it demands many roles of the players. Perhaps, it can manifest from a variety of forms, shape and channel. Art criticism plays a very

important role for sophisticated-minded society. However, it is very sad for Malaysia because art criticism did not exist and often misconstrued. As a result of this lack, there is poverty of art knowledge in art community. Artists who were born on the 21st century seemed lost intellectual values due to the lack of art criticism. Indeed, because of its weaknesses is causing the crisis of thought in contemporary visual arts in Malaysia. Various exhibitions and a lively competition occur in our visual arts scene. Art scene likely lived in harmony with the diversity of form and shape in the production of works of art. Unlike previous years, young artists appeared with great colouring Malaysian contemporary visual arts scene.

However, it only appears with the diversity of formalistic aspects but not in the sophisticated thought. The objectives and future goals of contemporary visual art are still vague because there is no intellectual values move to claim in the today's artists. As stated by the respondents about the ambiguity of contemporary visual arts future. Perhaps, there may be a need to review the Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan and Akar-akar Peribumi as stated by the respondent. The main problem is that the art education or the art institution needs to emphasise more philosophy and art theory in their syllabus.

Pursuant to AC1 that there is a gap in the world of Malaysian visual arts regarding art scholars. The future of visual art also depends on the existence of the scholar in the field of art criticism, history, aesthetics and philosophy. Therefore, contemporary visual arts must have the thinkers that could lead to further improvements in the context of the world of knowledge construction. However, it does not turn the traditional values and culture in society. Form and meaning must be taken in tandem together to lead a bright future for the local visual arts. As stated by AR3, for visual arts future in Malaysia we need to convey the order and the meaning together equally. Therefore, the system needs to be more radical art to the development of visual arts in Malaysia. AR1 stated that the main problem in Malaysian visual contemporary visual arts is the lacking of art management. The system of art consists on private and government galleries, art institutions, artists, curators, collectors, scholars, should be more ready to drive the world of meaning. In conclusion, some of the problems that exist raised a question in the interpretation of art objects. However, researcher feels that the main

problem is the lack of concrete direction in contemporary visual art movement in Malaysia. Where, the union and cooperation required by all parties involved to develop contemporary visual art in the country. Determination on what should we achieved and work with must be proposed. Therefore, contemporary visual art seemed like the duality of different, but we want it to be a wheel that moves towards a Utopian end.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In Malaysia, the lack of research and art criticism activities in this country contributes great implications on the production of art objects. These deficiencies lead to infertility of the development for contemporary visual arts in Malaysia. An art object are often seen as a special creation of a special person but still fails to offer a total displacement and the knowledge that can be debated further. Thus, it is a paradox of interpretation in Malaysian contemporary visual arts. Art objects merely seen as a wonderful creation and money making instead of art knowledge. It might also have an arbitrary relationship between theory and practice among artists in Malaysia. Whether the objects of art are capable or successfully conveying the idea that artists try to convey need a concrete study and intelligent discourse. Malaysia also has a very strong potential for riding the new paradigm. However, the almost visual artists interpret their art merely emotional rather than intellectual processes. The interpretation and understanding can be built through the example below in order to place works of art either in the branch of epistemology or cultural studies.

The Figure 1 provides an overview of how the interpretation process occurs in the delivery of visual arts. Interpretation is the science of communication and it requires a language. Good communication will form the generation of knowledge. However, the interpretation in visualisation process can use either arm of hermeneutics or semiotics. In this process, artists will form their own contribution in terms of epistemology or cultural studies. In the contemporary art world, it seems to be the market describing value rather than a contribution of the knowledge. It is very difficult to proposed model or theory to the artist to produced art work. However, if the artists do some



research before making the art work, it is certainly beneficial to the two branches of knowledge: hermeneutics and semiotics. Artists who produce their artwork towards aesthetics will contribute to the epistemology of art if they follow the right method of study and sharing of knowledge to the audience. Similarly to the semiotic which tend to use symbols that can enrich cultural studies, the symbols used by artists can bring an audience to the interpretation that builds knowledge.

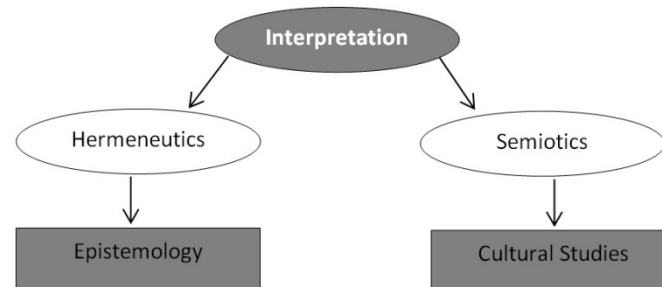


Figure 1: Diagram of the Areas that Needs to Develop

However, it's all about the presentation of works by the artist. If they choose the way of narrative to convey their work, the critical interpretation may not occur as semiotic and hermeneutics. There is no further debate about the content if the artist used narrative kind of presentation while the artwork can talk by itself. Therefore, these days there are already an alarming practice by artist in our art scene whom are producing or rather "disposing" the so-called "art works" but merely for their very own financial gain. Their centrifugal interest is the "dollars & cents" which considered as "non-sense" from the academic points of view. That is strongly opt for art forms that talk volumes of knowledge based on academic research rather than just superficial art form ornamented with clichés and usually embellished under the pretext of an individual expressions. The hope is to see the visual arts in Malaysia will jointly compete in the generation of knowledge in the art. This is a high time especially for us in Malaysia, to put forth into realisation concerning the precious contribution of visual arts as one of the nation building tools to our

contemporary society. This is a big challenge especially for us in the academic field, to educate the major public about the great role of art object.

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