

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**THE VALUE AND ELEMENTS OF  
MALAY CULTURE AS CONTENT IN  
MODERN MALAYSIAN PAINTING**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment  
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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.


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## **ABSTRACT**

In modern Malaysian paintings, form and meaning to artwork produced by young artist are believed to be detached from Malay cultural heritage. Young artists who have the attitude of putting the Western art first are greatly regrettable. Therefore, it is imperative for researchers to carry out detailed studies on the importance of values and elements of Malay culture in modern Malaysian paintings. The objective of this research is to identify the values and the elements of Malay culture as content in modern Malaysian painting by local artists from 1970s to 1990s. Art practitioners' view and case study was applied in this research in order to obtain the data. A total 22 respondents were interviewed and 15 paintings were chosen to be analyzed. The finding from this research shows that Malay cultural values in modern painting comprise of the value of finesse in Malay culture, the value of the identity and value of the Malay culture in the global aspect. Malay cultural values in modern painting also able to uphold racial culture, practise positive values in Malay culture and portrays modern Malaysian art identity. Therefore, the outcome of this research could be related to the suggestions in developing modern Malaysian paintings which revolve around the theme of Malay cultural values.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Malay culture is known to be high in value and quality. Elements which are available in Malay culture contain good and positive values which can be seen through discussions as listed below. Rahmah Bujang dan Nor Azlin Hamidon (2002), Syed Ahmad Jamal (1992) and Aziz Deraman (1967) thoroughly discussed the elements of Malay culture in Malay art. Malay art is deemed as an art that emphasizes on good values such as being subtle, graceful, moderate, courteous as well as stressing on finesse. Mohamed Ali Abdul Rahman (1993) stated that modern artists have taken Malay values which are apparent in Malay visual art but do not stresses on the functional aspect. Siti Zainon Ismail (1985) added more insights into symbolism in Malay visual art while Zakaria Ali (1989), has listed six Malay Aesthetic Principles which are subtle, useful, together, symbolic, opposing and meaningful.

Nevertheless, Malaysian scholars lamented the lack of sensitivity among young artists towards the strength and importance of Malay cultural elements as the main content in an artwork. This perspective can be referred to the discussion provided by D'zul Haimi (2006), Siti Zainon Ismail (2002), Raja Shahrizan Raja Aziddin (2003), Mohamed Najib Ahmad Dawa (2008), Ismail Embong (2007) and Baha Zain (1999) talked about the attitude of some young artists who produce art based on the Western art without having delved deeper in to the Malay culture as their own main background content. Mohamed Noor Othman (2008) added to the discussion issues on the awareness among art practitioners to create something that is suitable for the local culture and way of thinking of the Malaysians and not to replicate ideas from the West.

A nation's identity can be portrayed through various types of art, visual art notwithstanding. Zakaria Ali (1991) and Rashidah A. Salam (2000) explained the definition of identity while Shahrani Hj. Abdullah (2005) talked about politeness, ethics and custom as the identity in the Malay culture. H. B. Sutopo (1989) and Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim (2007) discussed the significance in understanding cultural and art