

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ART CRITICISM IN MALAYSIA
1900 - 2000**

MOHD JOHARI AB. HAMID

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Art & Design

August 2008

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to study the writings of art criticisms in Malaysia. Based on evidence, the researcher has concluded that art criticism moves in tandem with the progress of the local art development.

The research is in the form of a qualitative survey. Information has been gathered from the year 1900 to 2000. In addition, the researcher has also conducted several interviews with art practitioners selected at random. Among them were artists, writers, students and members of the public. This is aimed to gather information relevant to the subject matter. The views of the respondents are vital to gauge the actual perception of the society on the importance of art criticism.

The findings from the research show that art criticism is divided into several trends and approaches that characterized its writing from year 1900 to 1950. In the early decade of the 1950s, the writings of art criticism were inclined towards the sociological approach. This approach is due to the art movements and themes common to most of the artists during that period who preferred local landscape and daily lives of the rural folks, with whom they identified.

The writings of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s were founded on the meanings of the national identity. Consequently, the critical writings too reflected the infusion of nationalism.

In the 2000s, art criticism veers towards globalization. This has left a pronounced effect on art in Malaysia. As a whole, these developments have left a positive impact on the growth of the local art scene.

The above findings show that criticism on the visual arts has long existed in our country in one form or another. However, despite the development in Malaysian art, no in-depth study has been conducted. Can reviews on art criticism be considered as a criticism on art as well? The researcher thinks it can. Art writing should be recognized as an important source of knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my appreciation and utmost gratitude to Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) for fully sponsoring my studies in this Ph.D course.

I would like to mention several individuals who have greatly assisted me during the course of this research comprising of Professor Dr. Zakaria Ali, Professor Dato' Raja Zahabuddin Raja Yaacob, Professor Abd. Shukor Hashim, Associate Professor Dr. Sulaiman Esa, Associate Professor Dr. D'Zul Haimi Md. Zain, Associate Professor Dr. Khadijah Sanusi and Professor Dr. Siti Zainon Ismail.

I would like to take this opportunity to record my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Mulyadi Mahamood who has always spared his time for me to discuss, revise, improve and contribute his ideas and suggestions to complete this study. I will always remember how he would constantly communicate with me to ensure that the study is conducted as planned, most especially, towards the end of the write-up of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEDICATIONS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Statement of the Problem	1
1.2 Objectives of the Research	1
1.3 Delimitations	2
1.4 Research Methodology	2
1.5 Significance of the Research	6
CHAPTER 2: ART CRITICISM 1900 – 1910	7
CHAPTER 3: ART CRITICISM 1910 – 1920	23
CHAPTER 4: ART CRITICISM 1920 – 1930	36
CHAPTER 5: ART CRITICISM 1930 – 1940	50
CHAPTER 6: ART CRITICISM 1940 – 1950	61