

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**RETHINKING EXHIBITIONS:  
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
FOR ART SPACE FOR 21ST  
CENTURY ART IN MALAYSIA**

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## ABSTRACT

21st century art demands a new mode of display that goes beyond the "white-box" exhibition model due to changing needs of engagement in the artwork and audience. In Malaysia, art galleries are often government or private commercial ones; which are driven by social- political agendas that reinforce the white cube ideologies. This impedes development of exhibition spaces for 21st century art and this lack of appropriate platform has sparked initiatives amongst local artists to establish their own alternative spaces that fulfill this philosophical gap. However, these spaces are self-funded and are unsustainable. To boost the Malaysian art scene, there is a critical need to reinvent exhibition spaces in Malaysia to accommodate new needs of 21st century art. This study aims to empirically investigate the spatial needs of exhibitions in Malaysia catered to the needs of 21st century art. It proposes a spatial framework for contemporary art spaces in Malaysia that can accommodate the demands of 21 st century art. The objectives include exploring spatial factors contributing to appropriate exhibition spaces, identifying alternative art spaces that align with the "appropriate" exhibition model for 21 st century art in Malaysia, understanding the roles of exhibitions in nurturing 21st century art, and establishing a practical spatial framework for 21st century art exhibitions in Malaysia. Four main research questions drive this research, which are: what are the spatial factors that contribute towards an appropriate exhibition space based on evolution of exhibition between 18th - 20th century; how an alternative art space could be considered as an "appropriate" exhibition model and what spatial strategies can be found at the alternative art space; what other roles does exhibitions serve as a space that nurtures 21st century art and what are the strategies for spatial framework for 21st century art exhibition in Malaysia. The methodology employed is space/place qualitative research, utilizing two case studies: Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media in Japan and Lostgen alternative art space. Five spatial principles were identified which are, exhibitions should incorporate its immediate architecture, exhibition sites cannot be fixed to a specific location, exhibition functions as meeting points for stakeholders from the art and public, White Cube display is present but not as a neutral container for the art and exhibition-making access to emerging artists to nurture their practices. The final part of this thesis culminated with the five spatial principles for 21st century art exhibition spaces that were put forth into spatial framework for 21st century art exhibitions in Malaysia.

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