

Exploring The Birth of Modern Art in Borneo, Post-War Era 1945 to 1970

Meneroka Kewujudan Seni Moden di Borneo; Era Pasca-Perang dari 1945 ke 1970

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of modern art in Borneo particularly in Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei, after the Second World War until the 1970s. This was the period when British Colonial government dictated the education system, which consequentially inculcated visual art through art and craft subject imposed on all vernacular schools in Borneo. British influence within the state governance, social and education system designed with Western ideology, created not only westernized society and mind-set, but at the same time generated artistic opportunities for emerging local painters to be involved in the initiation of Modern Art in Borneo. Through historical method and analysis of primary and secondary data, it was obvious that the existence of colonial government departments and institutions such as museums and teaching colleges, and other social organization in Borneo at that time, contributed significantly to artistic movement? The similar structure and motivation of development in other areas of Borneo, confirmed that artistic affirmation of modern art advanced homogenously. Their understanding of easel painting as well as unique interpretation of culture once distanced from traditional art, resulting in a new visual image that transcended their ethnicity and identity through new medium and tools. These meticulous interventions modestly visualized in each painting as discussed in this paper, hopefully will give a deeper understanding and appreciation towards the history of modern art in Borneo.

Keywords: Borneo Art; Brunei Art; Sarawak Art; Sabah Art; Modern Art

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini melihat perkembangan seni moden di Borneo khususnya di Sarawak, Sabah dan Brunei, selepas Perang Dunia Kedua sehingga tahun 1970-an. Ini adalah tempoh di mana pentadbiran British dan sistem Kolonial menentukan bentuk pendidikan dalam wilayah-wilayah di bawah perlindungannya. Perkembangan ini menyemai ideologi pendidikan seni moden melalui subjek seni visual dan kraf, yang diwajibkan ke atas semua sekolah vernakular di Borneo pada masa itu. Pengaruh British dalam sistem pemerintahan, sosial dan pendidikan, yang berlandaskan ideologi Barat, mewujudkan bukan hanya masyarakat yang berfikiran kebaratan, malah pada masa yang sama menghasilkan generasi pelukis dan penggiat seni tempatan yang tampil untuk memulakan gerakan Seni Moden di Borneo. Melalui analisis sejarah, data primer dan sekunder, perkembangan sosioekonomi dan jabatan dan institusi kerajaan kolonial seperti muzium dan kolej perguruan, serta organisasi sosial lain di Borneo pada waktu itu, dengan ketara menyumbang kepada pembangunan seni, di mana perkembangan artistik di rantau ini bergerak selari dan saling berkait antara satu dengan lain. Hasil analisis terhadap karya seni era ini memperlihatkan bahawa pemahaman penggiat seni pada masa itu tentang lukisan moden dan penafsiran budaya, apabila diasingkan daripada seni tradisional, mampu menghasilkan imej visual yang melangkaui etnik dengan penggunaan medium dan alat baru. Pembaharuan dalam kesenian ini divisualisasikan dalam setiap lukisan yang disaji dalam karya era ini dan dilihat sebagai satu peningkatan dalam pemahaman dan penghargaan terhadap perkembangan seni modern di Borneo.

Kata kunci: Seni lukis Borneo; Seni lukis Brunei; Seni lukis Sabah; Seni lukis Sarawak; Seni lukis Moden

INTRODUCTION

Development of Modern Art in Malaysia have always been looked at from a regional point of view. Most studies concentrate on paintings activities accruing before Malaysia Independence Day by focusing on Penang and Singapore, while Sabah and Sarawak situated geographically outside of the Peninsular,

barely make it into the equations. Studies and research on the history of art in Borneo are usually divided according to their geographical boundaries, which Brunei, Sabah and Sarawak. And most of the time focused exclusively on crafts and cultural artefacts or on paintings particularly cave paintings and wall paintings. Artefacts of course comes in an abundance of types and variety from many ethnic